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Impact of physical geographical factors on sustainable planning of South Baltic seaside resorts

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Abstract The objective of the article is to give a comprehensive assessment of the impact that physical geographical factors of the coastal environment have on the South Baltic seaside resorts in the way it is reflected in planning documents (comprehensive plans, regional and tourism development strategies) of South Baltic seaside territorial entities. The seaside resorts and the adjacent coastal protected nature areas, particularly coastal national parks and UNESCO biosphere reserves, are the main focus of this study. The contents of 141 valid documents of spatial planning, management and development has been analysed. The studied comprehensive development plans, tourism strategies and other documents demonstrate that virtually all seaside municipalities in the South Baltic Region express a strong concern in increasing risk of coastal erosion and sea level rise related to the global climate change.

Keywords • physical factors • planning documents • seaside resorts

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INTRODUCTION

In spite of a very tiny size on the global scale, the South Baltic Region (SBR), its coastal areas in particular, can boast an exceptionally rich diversity of coastal landscapes, geomorphological features, and habitats. This diversity is remarkable even if compared with other coastal areas of Europe: from the rocky shores of skerry archipelagos scattered along the coast of Sweden to the south Baltic barrier spits and coastal lagoons, from the 100-m high steep coastal cliffs to the vast and flat river deltas, from the mobile coastal sand dunes to the glacial boulder ridges and shingle beaches.

The rich coastal diversity of the SBR forms the basis for its rich recreational resources (Grigelis 2013). As a result, the SBR, regardless of country, has a long-lasting international reputation of an attractive seaside tourist destination. Yet, to maintain this distinction, attractiveness, competitiveness, and sustainability as a seaside destination of an international scale becomes ever more difficult in the current era of low-cost airlines and resulting tourism globalisation.

Analysts of global trends in tourism development point to the matching rise of tourism possibilities, ideas, flexibility, and tourist satisfaction benchmarks (Povilanskas, Armaitiene 2011). These ‘post-mass’ tourists are ever more savvy, inquisitive and discerning whilst taking ever shorter and more frequent trips with multiple aims (Dwyer *et al.* 2009; Milne, Ateljevic 2004; Uriely 2005; Yeoman *et al.* 2006). Such tourism multiplicity is rooted in a fundamental diversity of interests and motivations of post-mass tourists, which implies pursuing a varied mix of experiences while traveling (Prideaux 2015).

Changing consumer demand and preferences lead to a heightened rivalry among tourist destinations and their shortened life cycles (Dwyer, Chulwon 2003; Fuchs, Weiermair 2004; Saarinen 2004). These trends represent an increased attention on territories rather than on destinations, on networks of tourist attractions rather than on the monoculture tourism economies marking the traditional mass tourist destinations (Conti, Perelli 2009).

The shift in focus is particularly pertinent when one considers the post-mass transformation of Euro-

pean seaside resorts. This process implies the reinvention of a resort, repositioning of its image and identity while offering a wider choice of activities through integration of a seaside resort with its natural hinterland (Povilanskas, Armaitiene 2011). The integration of the South Baltic seaside resorts with their rich and well-preserved coastal hinterland based on sustainability gives a clue to possible ways of mitigating their disadvantages in tough international competition where warm coastlines lure away sun-seekers from Northern and Western Europe (Povilanskas, Armaitiene 2014).

Hence, the objective of the paper is to give a comprehensive assessment regarding the impact that physical geographical factors of the coastal environment have on the South Baltic seaside resorts in the way it is expressed in various planning documents (comprehensive plans, regional and tourism development strategies) of South Baltic seaside territorial entities of NUTS 3 or LAU1 levels (Swedish and Danish municipalities, German districts, Polish and Lithuanian counties, Latvian planning regions). Kaliningrad Oblast (Region) is also considered equivalent to a NUTS 3 level territorial entity of the European Union (EU) nomenclature (Chubarenko, Domnin 2008).

STUDY AREA

The SBR as interpreted in this study comprises an area covered by the Interreg South Baltic Programme 2014-2020. It additionally includes the island of Gotland (Sweden), the Capital Region of Denmark, the municipalities of Denmark located along the Kiel Bay, as well as the Baltic Sea coast in the federal state of Schleswig-Holstein (Germany), the Kaliningrad Region (Russian Federation), and the Kurzeme Planning Region (Latvia). Hence, the study area of the present study is the southern coast of the Baltic Sea *sensu lato* and its adjacent natural hinterland stretching over 79,838 sq.km in seven countries: Denmark (10,596 sq.km), Germany (19,771 sq.km), Latvia (5,013 sq.km), Lithuania (4,298 sq.km), Poland (9,293 sq. km), Russian Federation (2,173 sq. km), and Sweden (28,694 sq. km) (Fig. 1).

In terms of sub-basins of the Baltic Sea proposed by the Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission (HELCOM 2014), the study area covers the Baltic Sea coasts of the South Baltic Proper and Central Baltic Proper sub-basins: The Sound, Kiel Bay, Bay of Mecklenburg, Arkona Basin, Bornholm Basin, Gdansk Basin, Eastern Gotland Basin and Western Gotland Basin. It also covers the southeast coast of Kattegat. For the sake of geographical convenience, throughout this paper, the analysed territorial entities are presented not in an alphabetical order, but in a geographical, counter-clockwise order – from Gotland



Fig. 1 South Baltic seaside region as defined for this study (drawn from a GIS map by Egidijus Jurkus). South Baltic seaside tourism sub-regions: (I) the Southeast Scandinavian coast and islands; (II) the South Baltic coast and islands; and (III) the Southeast Baltic graded coast

in Sweden to Kurzeme in Latvia.

The seaside resorts and the adjacent coastal protected nature areas, particularly coastal national parks, UNESCO World Heritage sites and UNESCO biosphere reserves, are the main focus of the present study (Table 1). The South Baltic coastal urban areas are interspersed with protected nature areas and seaside resorts, which are the greatest assets for coastal tourism development in the SBR. It is no surprise then, that four south Baltic coastal landscapes and features are included into the UNESCO World Heritage list: the Agricultural Landscape of Southern Öland (Sweden), the Curonian Spit (Lithuania/Russia), and the Stevns Klint (Denmark), as well as the Ancient and Primeval Beech Forests of Europe, including the ones on the island of Rügen (Germany).

There are five coastal UNESCO Biosphere reserves designated in the SBR: Møn (Denmark), the Southeast Rügen (Germany), Słowiński (Poland), the Blekinge Archipelago and Kristianstad Vattenrike (both in Sweden). Some of these World Heritage sites and biosphere reserves listed by UNESCO are also designated by the south Baltic countries as national parks, along other coastal landscapes and seascapes altogether comprising eight national parks in all countries, two regional parks in Lithuania and two landscape parks in Poland.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

Content analysis of comprehensive plans and development strategies of seaside territorial entities in the SBR has been applied as the main method using a ‘nuts-and-bolts’ approach (Bowen 2009). The key principle of the method is to combine skimming (superficial ex-

Table 1. National parks, UNESCO World Heritage sites and Biosphere reserves, and seaside resorts of the SBR

Territorial entities	National parks ¹		UNESCO areas ²		Designated resorts and spa towns
	Area, km ²	% of total entity area	Area, km ²	% of total entity area	
Gotland County	44.90	1.42%	12.44	0.39%	0
Kalmar County (Sweden) ³	1.98	0.02%	3839.14	24.98%	0
Blekinge County (Sweden) ³	0.00	0.00%	2149.69	32.98%	0
Scania County (Sweden) ³	20.15	0.19%	1043.75	10.08%	0
Capital Region (Denmark) ³	390.00	18.51%	66.56	3.16%	0
Zealand Region (Denmark) ³	0.00	0.00%	456.18	6.84%	0
Schleswig-Holstein (Germany) ³	0.00	0.00%	3.00	0.04%	23
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany) ³	835.00	6.49%	259.00	2.01%	36
West Pomeranian Voivodeship (Poland) ³	109.37	1.94%	0.00	0.00%	4
Pomeranian Voivodeship (Poland) ³	374.22	10.25%	507.44	13.90%	2
Kaliningrad Oblast (Russian Federation) ³	66.21	3.05%	66.21	3.05%	2
Klaipėda County (Lithuania) ³	608.72	14.16%	120.00	2.79%	2
Kurzeme Region (Latvia) ³	265.00	5.29%	0.00	0.00%	1
TOTAL	2715,55	3,40%	4944,27	6,19%	

¹ Also including landscape parks of Poland and regional parks of Lithuania

² UNESCO World Heritage sites and Biosphere reserves

³ Including only coastal territorial entities of the Baltic Sea

amination), reading (thorough examination), and interpretation of a set of documents done in an iterative way and aimed at eliciting the main societal concerns and the ways they are dealt with in the documents.

According to Bowen (2009, p. 32): ‘The process involves a careful, more focused re-reading and review of the data. The reviewer takes a closer look at the selected data and performs coding and category construction, based on the data’s characteristics, to uncover themes pertinent to a phenomenon.’ It is necessary to review line, phrase, sentence, and paragraph segments from the documents and other sources to code the data. It is also important to take into consideration the original purpose of the document (the reason it was produced) and the target audience. Information about the author of the document and the original sources of information are also important in the assessment of a document (Bowen 2009).

Altogether, the contents of 141 valid documents of spatial planning, management and development has been analysed (Table 2). Due to big differences in the spatial planning cycles and procedures between the different South Baltic countries, and even between the different federal states of Germany, the time span of the analysed documents covers the entire period of the 2000s and 2010s, depending on the date when the most recent version of a valid document has been approved. The task has been made complicated by the fact that all these documents are in seven national languages. A particular attention is paid to understand adequately the addressed key issues related to the global climate change and applied mitigation measures.

The most common types of the analysed planning documents are comprehensive plans and regional de-

Table 2. Analysed spatial planning, management and development documents

Territorial entities	Development plans	Tourism strategies	Other documents
Gotland County (Sweden)	1	1	1
Kalmar County (Sweden)	8	8	3
Blekinge County (Sweden)	4	2	4
Scania County (Sweden)	14	6	4
Capital Region (Denmark)	16	4	1
Zealand Region (Denmark)	20	6	1
South Denmark Region	2	2	1
Schleswig-Holstein (Germany)	3	1	0
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany)	3	2	2
West Pomeranian Voivodeship (Poland)	6	1	1
Pomeranian Voivodeship (Poland)	5	2	2
Kaliningrad Oblast (Russian Federation)	1	0	0
Klaipėda County (Lithuania)	1	0	1
Kurzeme Region (Latvia)	1	0	0
TOTAL	85	35	21

velopment strategies. Throughout the SBR, most of coastal municipalities have also adopted non-binding tourism development strategies, which are a valuable source of information for the issues addressed in the present study. Many coastal territorial entities in the SBR have also adopted Agenda 21 and climate change mitigation strategies and/or plans, which are directly pertinent to physical geographical factors and provide valuable insights into the current state-of-the-art on this topic.

In recent years ever more attention in spatial planning of the SBR is given to the development of Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) plans, and to Maritime Spatial Planning (MSP), usually in close collaboration among neighbouring entities (Blažauskas *et al.* 2015). Additionally, two regional management plans of a higher order, i.e., the Master Plan of the Kaliningrad Oblast of Russian Federation and the Development Programme for the Planning Region of Courland (Kurzeme) in Latvia have been analysed in the present study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Diversity of South Baltic coastal features and related recreational resources

As mentioned above, all coastal territorial entities in the SBR are featured by a very high diversity of coastal habitats, landscapes, and seascapes (Fig. 2). Concerning the resulting different patterns of seaside tourism development in the SBR in terms of recreational resources and facilities, we distinguish three large seaside tourism sub-regions (Fig. 1, Table 2): (I) the Southeast Scandinavian coast and islands; (II) the South Baltic coast and islands; and (III) the Southeast Baltic graded coast.



Fig. 2 Most important seaside features of the territorial entities of the SBR as mentioned in the analysed planning documents
 ■ Beach, ■ Dunes, ■ Sand, ■ Skerry

Southeast Scandinavian coast and islands

This seaside tourism sub-region comprises a rocky Scandinavian coast and three large skerry archipelagos in Blekinge and Kalmar counties: Tjust, Oskarshamn and Blekinge, as well as three of the ten largest Baltic Sea islands: Gotland (Sweden), Öland (Sweden) and Bornholm (Denmark). The Southeast Scandinavian coast and islands as a seaside tourism region is primarily featured by an exceptionally mild temperate maritime climate compared to the adjacent Scandinavian mainland. Mild winters, warm summers, relatively many hours of sunshine during the long Nordic summer daylight, rich nature of deciduous forests and alvar meadows make this region equally popular among the seaside visitors, as well as among enthusiasts of outdoor sports, nature, boating, riding, golf, and leisure fishing.

With island tourism prevailing in this region, most of skerries are accessible either by boat, or are connected by regular small-ferry summer traffic. They are predominantly small-scale, second home summer destinations. As a contrast, three large islands, particularly Öland, which is connected with the mainland by a bridge, are large-scale, post-mass tourist destinations where seaside leisure is combined with more diverse pleasures of active tourism relying on exotic local landscape, nature, and cultural heritage.

South Baltic coast and islands

This seaside tourism sub-region comprises a very diverse coastal region with indented coastlines of predominantly glacial origin in four South Baltic coun-

Table 3. Key physical geographical factors of South Baltic seaside tourism sub-regions

Physical geographical factors	Sub-region I	Sub-region II	Sub-region III
Backwaters (förd, fjard, bodden and haff)		X	X
Cliffs	X	X	X
Coastal erosion and sea level rise	X	X	X
Coastal foredunes and mobile dunes		X	X
Coastal lakes and wetlands		X	X
Islands	X	X	
Longer sunshine hours	X	X	X
Mild climate	X	X	X
Nature	X	X	X
Sandy beaches	X	X	X
Skerries	X		
Wind and wave climate	X	X	X

tries – Sweden, Denmark, Germany and Poland. It is characterised by large islands: Zealand (Denmark) is the largest island in the Baltic Sea, whereas Lolland and Falster (both Denmark) and Rügen (Germany) are among the ten largest ones. Numerous Danish straits (sounds and belts) connecting the Baltic Sea with the Kattegat, as well as the indented fjord, fjard and bodden backwaters and adjacent coasts make this region an ideal location for all kinds of sea-related tourism – from seaside recreation, to sailing, biking, hiking, horse-riding, angling, golfing, to mention few.

Being located on the crossroads between the metropolitan centers of Western and Northern Europe, the South Baltic coast and islands as a seaside tourism region is characterised by a very intensive traffic of motorized summer tourists (Povilanskas *et al.* 2015). The numerous seaside resorts scattered along the south Baltic Sea coast are currently in very different stages of their life-cycles – from traditional and mass health resorts trying to rejuvenate and find their new unique selling proposal to the post-mass ones catering to the needs of short-stay, motorised visitors and offering them a wide range of entertainment opportunities.

Southeast Baltic graded coast

The landscapes, and seascapes of the Southeast Baltic graded coast are in sharp contrast with the natural features of the other two South Baltic seaside tourism regions. The Southeast Baltic graded coast comprises the Baltic Sea coast and its hinterland in four countries: Poland, Russian Federation (Kaliningrad Region), Lithuania, and Latvia.

The landscape features of the Southeast Baltic graded coast have resulted from the post-glacial fluctuations of the Baltic Sea level combined with the sediment input from large rivers, erosion of glacial promontories, and a strong, longshore marine sediment drift (Gelumauskaitė 2003). These strong external forces have created a remarkable coastal landscape mosaic with wide sandy beaches and sand dune ridges interspersed with large coastal lagoons, coastal lakes and wetlands, as well as ancient and active coastal cliffs, bluffs and gulleys.

Three large barrier spits (Hel, Vistula and Curonian), two of the largest river deltas in the Baltic Sea Region (Vistula and Nemunas), as well as two of the largest lagoons in Europe (Curonian and Vistula) – all can be found along this relatively short strip of the Baltic Sea coast along with some of the best sandy beaches in the entire Baltic Sea Region (Žaromskis, Gulbinskas, 2010).

An important historical feature of this region, which has left a deep imprint in the seaside tourism pattern, is that throughout the Modernity, except of a brief interwar period, this coastline belonged to the German and Russian Empires, and later, to the Soviet

Union and its satellite Polish People's Republic with a centrally-planned, state-owned socialist economy prevailing in the region from 1945 to 1989.

Both exceptional geomorphology and history of this seaside tourism region predetermined the prevalence of large, mass seaside resorts where large-scale state-owned holiday homes were built in the communist era to a large extent erasing or neglecting the historic seaside resort heritage: Kolobrzeg and Sopot (Poland), Svetlogorsk (Russia), and Palanga (Lithuania). Even after a quarter-century transformation of the mass, communist era seaside tourism sector, these resorts, although still being the leading destinations in terms of mass seaside tourism, continue to suffer from the vicious circle of an ongoing transformation of the tourism industry, chaotic urban planning, and maladministration.

Seaside tourism development priorities in different South Baltic coastal environments

Most of the analysed planning documents, whether it was a comprehensive plan for a Swedish municipality on the Southeast Scandinavian coast, or a tourism strategy for a Polish county on the Southeast Baltic graded coast, shared similar visions of sustainable tourism priority as their main economic development goal relying on attractive urban 'honeypots', coastal amenities, cultural heritage and convenient geographical position (Table 4).

Remarkably, only a few of the analysed documents explicitly mentioned 'sustainable tourism' as a development vision, probably due to the vagueness of the concept. Just a few comprehensive development plans for seaside municipalities in Sweden still mention local Agenda 21 as their sustainability framework whereas, by the turn of the century, in Sweden, for example, all local governments have implemented a Local Agenda 21 initiative (Jörby 2002). Nevertheless, almost all studied comprehensive plans and development strategies pursue the key tenets of sustainable tourism development highlighted in the Local Agenda 21 for Tourism (ICLEI 2003):

- i) Establishing effective structures for multi-stakeholder participation, both in setting the direction for tourism in the community and in working together to develop and manage it.
- ii) Identifying a strategy for sustainable tourism within the context of a wider sustainable development strategy that reflects stakeholders views and that allows tourism management to be integrated with other management functions in the destination.
- iii) Identifying and implementing a set of actions, in line with the strategy, that address the economic, social and environmental sustainability of tourism in the territorial entity.

Table 4. Key coastal tourism notions in different South Baltic territorial entities

Territorial entities	'Sun, sand, sea' tourism	Active outdoors	Ecotourism	Cultural heritage tourism
Gotland County (Sweden)	X	X	X	X
Kalmar County (Sweden)		X	X	X
Blekinge County (Sweden)		X	X	X
Scania County (Sweden)	X	X	X	X
Capital Region (Denmark)		X		X
Zealand Region (Denmark)	X	X	X	X
South Denmark Region	X	X		X
Schleswig-Holstein (Germany)	X	X	X	X
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (Germany)	X	X	X	X
West Pomeranian Voivodeship (Poland)	X	X	X	X
Pomeranian Voivodeship (Poland)	X	X	X	X
Kaliningrad Oblast (Russian Federation)	X	X	X	
Klaipėda County (Lithuania)	X	X	X	X
Kurzeme Region (Latvia)	X	X	X	X

Almost every planning document in its chapter on tourism focuses on qualitative instead of quantitative seaside tourism development since in many territorial entities the seaside resorts and camping sites have reached the limits of their carrying capacity in the peak of the summer season, particularly on the South Baltic coast and islands of Germany and Denmark. All territorial entities are therefore aspiring to develop tourism services that deliver higher added value: combination of seaside tourism with urban-, cultural heritage- and nature-based tourism, golf tourism and similar.

A very distinctive feature of seaside tourism development throughout the entire SBR is sophisticated care for green spaces, protected nature areas, and the rural hinterland around the seaside tourism hubs - resorts, camping sites and marinas: establishing of an explicit zoning pattern for development and conservation areas, preservation of period villas, guesthouses, historical parks, and seaside tourism infrastructure (e.g., narrow-gauge railways, promenades, alleys, and piers).

On the other hand, the territorial entities in all three South Baltic seaside sub-regions share similar concerns, first of all, the need to control seaside urbanisation. Many of the most beautiful coastal areas suffer from the urban sprawl, particularly from the second home development along the South Baltic coast and islands, which needs to be controlled. In the meantime, the outer archipelago skerries in Sweden and the lesser islets in Denmark or Germany suffer from depopulation that imposes heavy stress on municipal infrastructure.

Yet another area of common concern regarding seaside tourism sustainability throughout the SBR is the necessity to combine the needs of tourism development, which is mainly in the interest sphere of municipalities or counties, with the national interests

in the coastal zone. The two most commonly cited national interests that in many aspects are in conflict with sustainable seaside tourism, are the maintenance of coastal military installations and training grounds, and the offshore windfarm expansion.

The military interests in the coastal zone impose access restrictions to certain coastal areas, which are attractive for hiking, biking (dune ridges and heath), and leisure boating (many nearshore and offshore areas). On the other hand, the restricted access to the coastal military areas provides a safe refuge for wildlife, which is only sometimes disturbed by military exercises.

A nearly ubiquitous development of the offshore windfarms throughout the entire SBR is considered as being in stark conflict with sustainable seaside tourism by all territorial entities. This concern is explicitly expressed in nearly all analysed planning documents due to 'visual pollution' of the windfarms spoiling pristine and attractive South Baltic seascapes as seen from the seaside resorts and beaches.

As mentioned above, differently from the military installations and the windfarm development, the national (and EU) interests in nature conservation of coastal, maritime and hinterland areas are not seen by the seaside territorial entities as being in conflict with tourism development. Rather contrary, green spaces and protected areas are seen as a key asset strengthening the competitiveness of the South Baltic seaside resorts as tourist destinations.

Interpreting green spaces and protected nature areas as an asset for sustainable seaside tourism development is also closely related to a yet another common concern shared by all the South Baltic seaside territorial entities, i.e., extending of the tourism season and reducing tourism seasonality, which plagues most of the South Baltic seaside resorts.

Conversion is the keyword that is also pervasive

in many studied spatial planning documents and development strategies. On the one hand, there is a need for the conversion of obsolete military installations and training grounds, which are usually converted into attractive seaside tourism and outdoor leisure areas, the Fårö island north of Gotland (Sweden) being the best example. On the other hand, with the decline of commercial fisheries in the Baltic Sea, there is an acute need for the conversion of the many fishing harbours dotting the South Baltic coastline into well-equipped marinas offering a full range of services for leisure boats and yachts.

All the South Baltic seaside municipalities and higher-level territorial entities share common concern to keep the integrity, stability, and cleanliness of their leisure beaches combined with efforts to maintain good bathing water quality. This concern is articulated in a comprehensive range of measures aimed at preventing beach erosion, reducing nearshore water pollution, and mitigating the long-term negative impact on the coastal stability from the imminent global climate change. The Blue Flag award for beaches and marinas is considered by many seaside municipalities – most in Denmark, less on the southern Baltic seacoast, and least in Sweden – as a token appraising their efforts in this field.

All countries in the SBR, including the Kaliningrad Oblast of Russian Federation and both riparian federal states of Germany, have enacted a 100-m wide minimal beach protection strip from the high-water mark where any permanent constructions are strictly prohibited. In many instances, particularly in seaside areas vulnerable to coastal erosion, this protected strip is extended to 300 m, whereas in coastal nature conservation areas it could be extended to 1000 m from the high-water mark.

Although there is an interest of many coastal municipalities in the SBR to develop golf tourism, just a few of the studied planning documents or tourism development strategies explicitly discuss its environmental pros and cons, in spite of the well-documented negative impact of golf courses on natural biodiversity, landscape integrity, as well as ground- and surface water quality (Mill 2008).

Besides the highlighted similarities of the seaside tourism development in the SBR, there are significant intra-regional differences predetermined by different coastal geomorphology, long-term littoral dynamics, and human history. For instance, almost every holiday cottage, second home, or bathing beach dotting the indented Baltic Sea coastline in Sweden and Denmark has a small, wooden pier for bathing and/or leisure boat mooring.

Sometimes there are several such piers at each location – one for bathing, and one for boat mooring, although nowadays waterfront planning regulations

in Sweden and, particularly, in Denmark tend to limit their number to just one at each coastal leisure location. The construction of a small seaside pier – common to Scandinavian countries – is unimaginable on the graded and dynamic southern Baltic Sea shoreline in Germany, Poland, Russia, Lithuania, or Latvia. Instead of small wooden piers, the beaches of the seaside resorts in all these countries are featured by long, exquisite piers, most often the restored ones from the past heydays of the Imperial seaside spa towns of the late 1800s or early 1900s.

Related to this feature, a yet another particularity, distinguishing the vision, development perspectives, and planning patterns of the Scandinavian and the continental South Baltic seaside resorts should be mentioned. In both, Denmark and Sweden, a traditional spa town status of seaside destinations became ubiquitously obsolete in the Modernity, and most of the early seaside spa towns (e.g. Mölle in Scania, southern Sweden) have been turned into heritage tourism destinations.

Meanwhile, Germany, Poland, Russia, Lithuania and Latvia still maintain the spa town status and the nation-wide certification systems of awarding that status to seaside tourist destinations – inherited from the early and mid-1900s – largely intact. Hence, most of the seaside resorts in the continental part of the SBR still enjoy an official spa town, or, alternatively, seaside resort status, and the development of health tourism facilities, typically based on public-private-partnership, is still present in large-scale seaside resorts parallel to other leisure offers.

SEASIDE RESORT PLANNING IN SOUTH BALTIC COUNTRIES

Sweden

The analysed long-term, comprehensive development plans for seaside municipalities in Sweden allocate certain coastal areas for the development of seaside tourism and recreation which are designated as areas of special national interest, along with the priority areas of special national interest for nature conservation, national defense, offshore windfarm development, public infrastructure of a supraregional scale (e.g. roads, pipelines, cables), and other areas exempt from any industrial or urban development.

All coastal municipalities in Sweden have approved not only the Local Agenda 21 plans of measures to facilitate sustainable development, or the plans of adaptation to and mitigation of eventual negative effects from the long-term climate change, but also the municipal plans (or chapters in the comprehensive municipal development plans) aimed to meet the objectives of the Swedish national environmental

quality improvement programme *The seas in balance and a living coast and archipelago*.

Some coastal municipalities in southeast Sweden have already prepared and adopted, or are currently in a preparation process of municipal Integrated Coastal Zone Management plans or even maritime spatial plans of their own. Other municipalities are cooperating with their neighbours to develop joint regional ICZM or maritime spatial plans since coastal and marine environmental processes and human interests do not recognise municipal boundaries. The designation of seaside tourism and recreation areas as areas of national interest in Sweden means that in ICZM, MSP, and other regional or municipal spatial planning processes, the interests of seaside tourism and recreation are considered as the priority ones compared to municipal or private interests of local urban, industrial, or agricultural development.

The long-term, comprehensive development plans for seaside municipalities in Sweden demonstrate exceptional concern of the municipalities over the long-term climate change and the eventual resulting water level rise in the Baltic Sea. In many instances, apocalyptic scenarios of the sea level rise are considered taking into account a presumption that in 50 to 70 years the Baltic Sea water level might increase from 1 m to 2 m, and even, in some scenarios, up to 3 m from the present high-water mark.

All seaside municipalities of southern Sweden are considering seriously the eventual Baltic Sea level rise, and are taking precautionary measures in terms of contingency plans to relocate urban areas and public infrastructure under threat to a safe distance. Bearing in mind this circumstance, any exemptions from the construction ban in a 100-m wide beach zone are allowed ever more rarely and need a joint consent from the municipal and county authorities.

A rapid depopulation of skerries in the outer areas of Blekinge, Oskarshamn and Tjust archipelagos is a more acute and pressing problem of spatial development in southeast Sweden than the looming apocalypse of the global climate change. This process is matched with the opposite trend of local migration and urban development, which is the conversion of former seaside resorts and holiday cottage colonies into suburban dwelling areas of the main urban centres. The comprehensive development plans of the municipalities in Blekinge and Kalmar counties address this problem duly with the set of measures to improve connectivity and provide other incentives aimed to facilitate a more balanced distribution of population in the coastal zone.

Denmark

Currently almost half of all overnights in the South Baltic seaside areas of Denmark are made at camping

sites dotted along the coastline (Campingrådet 2014), particularly in the Zealand Region. With the aim to keep the development of camping sites under control, the municipal plans of Danish seaside municipalities regulate that new camping sites can only be located in connection with existing urban centres and larger leisure facilities.

Efforts are taken by the municipalities and regional tourism associations to promote experience-based seaside tourism and the classical beach holiday as a tourist offer of higher added value than short-term, low-budget stays at camping sites. In particular, the municipalities on the northwest coast of Zealand – traditionally known as the Danish Riviera – take efforts to ensure that visitors receive a high-quality offer based on cultural and experience tourism, and providing that local amenities in terms of nature and coasts support efforts of the tourism industry.

In Denmark, the officially designated coastal zone is a planning strip along the coast where special planning requirements are to be met, including a specific planning justification for each construction site location in the vicinity of the coast and special requirements for visualisation of planned measures. Usually it is a 3-km wide zone from the high-water mark. The designated zone supports the public interest to keep coastal areas free from buildings and installations that are not dependent on coastal proximity, so as to maintain the natural condition of the coast as far as possible.

In the urbanised seaside resorts, the municipalities must assess future housing conditions with a view to five principal preconditions:

- (1) relocating buildings from the coast,
- (2) taking into account nature conservation values and interests in the surrounding areas,
- (3) taking into account traditional building heights, colours and shapes,
- (4) taking into account any necessary infrastructure, including ports, and
- (5) ensuring that the public is provided a free access to the coast.

According to the Nature Conservation Act of Denmark, citizens are entitled to walk, go swimming or stay at the coast. However, walking, bathing, or staying is restricted to further than 50 m from private dwellings. At designated public beaches, limited facilities such as parking areas, benches, shelters, boat and bathing piers, fishing spots and kiosks can be placed after a local plan is approved.

In Denmark, as a rule, a beach with good water quality and proper facilities is awarded the Blue Flag. At the designated beaches, bathing water quality is monitored from May 1 to September 1. Many exposed coasts and beaches are protected by boulder groynes. Yet, ever more frequent storms might in-

crease the beach erosion in the future. Therefore, the seaside municipalities consider stronger coastal protection measures starting from a more detailed zonation of the coast.

Schleswig-Holstein federal state, Germany

The regional plans drawn for groups of districts in Schleswig-Holstein distinguish tourism priority areas and tourism sub-areas. It is noted, that due to the attractiveness of Schleswig-Holstein, particularly its North Sea and Baltic Sea coasts, for tourism, both types of areas appear on the verge of carrying capacity during the summer tourism season with the population number increasing significantly. In many places, the number of holiday guests exceeds that of the local population many times over. Therefore, the regulations, which are imposed on any further development of tourism facilities, particularly in the seaside tourism priority areas of Schleswig-Holstein, are strict.

Schleswig-Holstein has a coastline of 1,190 km and about 3,700 km² of flood-prone coastal lowlands (Hofstede 2008). In these lowlands, that represent almost 25% of total surface area, 345,000 people live and economic assets worth of 47 billion Euros are concentrated. In recognition of the high assets at stake and of future climate change, the Schleswig-Holstein Government adopted in 2001 a master plan: *Integrated Coastal Defence Management in Schleswig-Holstein*. It contains the strategy and the financial concept for coastal defence in the coming decades.

A limited development of seaside tourism facilities in Schleswig-Holstein might take place only as a result of detailed planning with the consent of local communities. The regional development plans infer, that on the coasts, the contiguous development of recreation and tourism facilities is to be largely avoided. Instead, seaside leisure facilities should be scattered in small patches at most suitable coastal and beach sections interspersed with green buffer spaces and natural coastal landscapes.

Related to this recommendation, is an emphasis on promotion of sustainable tourism based on a strong regional appeal through preservation of region-typical local and landscape images, and the development of landscape and seascape experiencing opportunities, such as cycling, horse riding, golfing, sailing, water tourism, and leisure fishing, through upgrading of hiking trails, cycling and horse-riding paths, and marinas. In this context, strengthening connections between the seaside resorts and tourism sub-areas in the hinterland is particularly important.

Conflicts between tourism and other coastal uses should be eliminated and prevented by integrated planning measures. No offshore windfarms may be established in the waters of Schleswig-Holstein in front of the seaside tourism priority areas. Instead,

small-scale commercial fisheries are to be facilitated catering to the needs of local residents, seaside visitors, and tourists alike, and contributing to the touristic attractiveness of coastal towns and seaside resorts, not least, due to the traditional direct sale of the fish from boats.

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern federal state, Germany

In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the regional plans drawn for groups of districts envisage that diverse forms of tourism and recreation offers are to be tailored to the needs of a wide range of target groups and open up to new market segments, with continued emphasis on wellness and health tourism. Especially the traditional spa towns are to be further developed as health and wellness tourist destinations due to the already existing special infrastructure.

The seaside resorts of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern have an ambition to become the leaders of the health and wellness tourism industry in Germany and beyond, due to a wide range of health-related competencies, both in medicine and care, and in wellness sectors. The health resorts of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern are attractive to visitors for health-oriented recreation stays (health leave) and prescribed rehabilitation treatments, and therefore are instrumental in extending the relatively short seaside tourism season.

The natural conditions which are beneficial for human health such as invigorating seaside climate, clean air, and bathing water, as well as local natural remedies like thermal and medicinal deep groundwater, curative peat and chalk provide good conditions for innovative, holistic, and high-quality health and wellness services. Seaside resorts, where healthy climate is an important amenity, are to be secured as zones of high air quality all year round. Also, meeting surface water quality standards prescribed by the EU Water Framework Directive is essential for seaside tourism and recreation.

Like in Schleswig-Holstein, also in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in tourism priority areas, which are already intensively used for tourism, particularly in the seaside spa towns, measures of customer-oriented quality improvement, differentiation of the tourism offer, and extension of the tourism season are envisaged as the decisive success factors. Besides the professional health care quality certification, also quality management systems are to be increasingly used as a key measure for the upgrading of seaside resort destinations and tourism offer quality.

The tourism development areas are planned as a hinterland for the tourism priority areas, using their nature and landscape amenities, and contributing to relieve the seaside resorts that are under tourism pressure. The regional plans recommend, that appropri-

ate measures should be taken to ensure their environmentally friendly recreational use. These can be, for example, the expansion of hiking trails and cycling paths, spatially differentiated management of leisure and recreation facilities, their development according to the approved quality standards of sustainable tourism.

For the Mecklenburg Bight, which covers the western, most attractive part of the Mecklenburg-Vorpommern coast in tourism terms, the highest risk of coastal erosion at storm events of more than 10% probability (87% of affected areas) is in the vicinity of the Baltic Sea coastline (Bohling 2005). Areas, which are designated for protection from coastal erosion and inundation, are to be made void of any constructions in order to secure the existing and future coastal protection measures. Also, beaches, beach ridges, dunes and coastal protection forests are to be made void of any constructions. Considering any spatial development plans, the present and future risk of coastal erosion and inundation must be taken into account.

Poland

Seaside tourism in West Pomerania is mainly concentrated in and around two large seaside resorts – Międzyzdroje and Kołobrzeg, and Świnoujście, which is a ‘seaport cum health resort’ city with a versatile tourism sector relying on its convenient geographical position, rich resources of natural remedies, and striking landscape diversity of the hinterland (islands, lagoon, sand beaches and dunes, high cliffs, primeval beech forest). In its development strategy, Świnoujście positions itself as ‘the city of 44 islands’, which is a unique feature for Poland.

Health tourism packages based on traditional remedies, curative treatments, and wellness procedures is seen by many West Pomeranian seaside resorts as their unique selling proposal on the South Baltic international seaside tourism market, particularly, taking into account the proximity of West Pomerania to Germany and southern Scandinavia and still competitive prices of health, wellness, and hospitality services in Poland. The offer includes about 50 different types of natural treatment procedures. Traditional remedies like mineral water rich in iodine and bromine, organic mud and curative peat still play an important role in Poland’s health tourism industry with the main focus on palliative treatment of rheumatic, cardiological, skin, and respiratory diseases, and, recently, on obesity treatment at special rehabilitation clinics.

In lesser seaside resorts, efforts are taken to combine seaside and wellness tourism with agrotourism in designing competitive and unique tourism packages catering to domestic, German and Scandinavian tourist markets. Rich and wild coastal nature dotted with dune fields, forests, and glacial hills in the hin-

terland are considered as a valuable asset in this development, particularly on Wolin Island (Kolander *et al.* 2013; Kostrzewski *et al.* 2015). Hence a growing interest of the seaside counties in the West Pomeranian Voivodeship to build a network of hiking and horse-riding trails, as well as biking paths around the seaside resorts.

The comprehensive development strategies of Sopot and other seaside resorts and seaside counties in the Pomeranian Voivodeship emphasise wide sandy sea beaches, which are most attractive in Poland, growing tourism and leisure service quality, particularly in the field of spa, health and wellness tourism, and diverse cultural events as the main competitive advantage of this seaside tourism region, as well as a long-term positive image of Sopot and the Hel peninsula as internationally renowned seaside tourist destinations (Pruszek 2004).

All the seaside tourism development in the Pomeranian Voivodeship centres on Sopot. This is also true for other seaside resorts of the Pomeranian Voivodeship – Ustka, Łeba, **Jastrzębia Góra** and Władysławowo – where, along with the connections to Sopot and other two cities of the Tricity, close links to the hinterland of the Kashubian Highlands, to the Vistula Spit, and to the Hel Peninsula are emphasised in the development strategies. The Hel Peninsula is a prime seaside tourist destination renowned for its clean sandy beaches, tiny seaside resorts and the diversity of opportunities for water sports.

A distinct planning feature of Sopot, Świnoujście and other large seaside health resorts in Poland is that there are three resort zones designated: A) the core zone, B) the resort proper, and C) the 500-m wide zone from the high-water mark. Only facilities and activities directly relevant to health, wellness, and leisure services are allowed to be developed within the zones A and B.

Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation and the Baltic States

Five major uses of sea space in the Russian sector of the southeastern Baltic Sea (SEBS) are navigation, fishery, mining, recreation, and military uses (Ulyanova, Danchenkov 2016). The most extensive zones are occupied by commercial fishery and military uses, which cover almost the entire exclusive economic zone. Special attention is made for potential marine protected areas (especially in offshore areas of the Curonian Spit, which is included in the UNESCO World Heritage List), which are not under legislation of the Kaliningrad Region but require a particular defence. It is anticipated, that future intensification of the marine space use will result in increased negative load to the marine environment.

A present version of the long-term development

strategy of the Kaliningrad Region asserts, that the region is considered as being one of the most promising regions of the Russian Federation in terms of developing domestic and inbound tourism, *inter alia*, due to the availability of two designated federal seaside spa towns: Svetlogorsk-Otradnoye and Zelenogradsk. Creating an aesthetically pleasing seaside resort environment with modern and efficient hospitality infrastructure is highlighted in the long-term development strategy as a priority development goal aimed to strengthen the region's international competitiveness in tourism.

The ongoing project *From the Spit to the Spit* (along the coast of the Baltic Sea – from the Vistula Spit to the Curonian Spit) is one of the key development strands in the formation of an integrated tourism cluster in the Kaliningrad Region, including the development of both designated federal seaside spa towns into major seaside tourism 'honeypots' with exclusive facilities providing high quality of leisure, health treatment and cultural tourism, as well as international meeting places.

The Master Plan of the Klaipėda County in Lithuania (2016) envisages the creation of an integrated seaside tourism and leisure zone along the better part of a 90-km long Lithuanian Baltic Sea coast, the Curonian lagoon coast, and the Rusnė island in the Nemunas river delta, with the exception of the Klaipėda City and the onshore part of the oil export/import terminal in Būtingė (Milerienė *et al.* 2014). It is convenient in terms of coastal planning and seaside tourism development, that the entire coastal zone of the Baltic Sea and the Curonian lagoon in Lithuania lies within a single Klaipėda County.

A particular attention is paid to the development of health tourism in Neringa and Palanga, the two officially designated seaside resorts of Lithuania (Žilinskas 2008). While developing leisure facilities in Palanga and Neringa, the priority should be given to health and wellness services based on a public-private partnership. Along with the two designated resorts, several suburban areas on the Baltic Sea coast (Karklė and Smiltynė), as well as two elderships on the Curonian lagoon coast (Rusnė and Kintai) are under consideration to be designated as resort areas (a lower status than of a designated resort). The development of several new marinas, as well as the construction of a new small fishing harbour is planned on the Baltic Sea coast.

Tourism and outdoor activities on the Curonian Spit, which is a UNESCO-listed World Heritage landscape, and in the Nemunas River delta, which is a Ramsar wetland (Taminskas *et al.* 2012), are to be developed in conjunction with the protection of natural habitats, cultural values, and biodiversity. In order to protect the territories located in the coastal zone

of the Baltic Sea (Klaipėda, Palanga, Neringa), and to mitigate the effects of coastal erosion, storm surge and other natural disasters, it is planned to implement coastal protection measures (Bagdanavičiūtė *et al.* 2012). The integrated shoreline management programme for the Klaipėda County has been recently updated and includes specific measures to combat the coastal erosion and facilitate integrated beach management.

The development strategy for the Kurzeme (Courland) Planning Region of Latvia till 2030 emphasises the role of the Baltic Sea for both passive seaside leisure and active coastal tourism sectors. The Baltic Sea coast of Kurzeme still has a great unexploited potential for tourism and recreation (Eberhards *et al.* 2009). Yet, the ecological integrity of the coastal zone and its valuable marine habitats might be threatened by the increase in tourism pressures. Therefore, more attention in planning should be paid to the interests of nature conservation and cultural and historical values, 'slow life', which is the main seaside tourism asset in Kurzeme.

At the same time, an ever-increasing coastal erosion poses a threat to the development in the immediate vicinity of the Baltic Sea and requires these processes to be taken into account while planning the development of seaside tourism facilities (Lapinskis 2005). The seaside tourism sector in Kurzeme has a great deal of opportunities to develop regional tourism packages focused on nature tourism, active outdoors, seaside recreation, cultural, and military heritage. Restricting the accessibility of public areas, especially beaches, and reducing the value of landscape resources is prohibited. The transformation of small fishing harbours in Roja and Pavilosta into attractive marinas will have a regional significance for yacht tourism. In Liepāja, which has recently been awarded a seaside resort status, the priority should be given to seaside recreation, and future specialisation in health tourism – e.g., medical tourism, health and wellness services etc.

CONCLUSIONS

The studied comprehensive development plans, tourism strategies and other documents demonstrate that virtually all seaside municipalities in the SBR express a strong concern in increasing risk of coastal erosion and sea level rise related to the global climate change. The paradox of the situation is that the seaside municipalities of southern Sweden are much more concerned with the anticipated Baltic Sea rise than the municipalities of any other South Baltic coastal region. This is despite the fact that southern Sweden experiences a 0.5 to 1 mm annual tectonic uplift of

the Earth crust (Meyer 2003), and should worry less about a possible inundation than their southern neighbours whose coasts are much more prone both to a long-term Baltic Sea level rise, and to an increasing risk of coastal inundation due to an increasing westerly storm occurrence because of the global climate change (Valdmann *et al.* 2008).

Regardless the coastal type, the largest majority of the studied coastal territorial entities in their planning documents consider sandy beaches as the key seaside tourism amenity. This consideration gives the entities of the Southeast Baltic seaside tourism sub-region a competitive advantage for international tourism development. The availability of an attractive natural environment or cultural heritage on the coast and in the hinterland, is also considered as an advantage. Yet, in spite of this consideration, and in spite of changing global tourism patterns, seaside tourism in the SBR still suffers from the stark seasonality to such an extent that it may be labelled as 4S – ‘Sun, Sand, Sea, and Summer’ tourism. This peculiarity, combined with the increasing threat of coastal erosion discussed above, urges for an in-depth investigation of strengths and weaknesses of the South Baltic seaside resorts implied by the physical factors.

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