

## **Spatial Planning and Tourism Development: Sectors forming parallel routes**

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## **Abstract**

This paper focuses on participatory tourism which is an ongoing trend related to participatory procedures taking place during tourism planning as well as spatial planning procedures. It is about integrating tourists as well as local societies in creating authentic tourism product through a procedure that both locals and visitors can benefit from. This topic has not been discussed in Greece where no special spatial planning for tourism is valid. With reference to an island area of the country for which regional spatial planning is going to be institutionalized, in the near future, this topic is initially studied. More specifically, an attempt is made to identify correlations between spatial and tourism planning, based on the theoretical framework. Findings that emerge are used not only for criticizing the planning directions for the case study area but also for drawing conclusions that will add to the theoretical discussion.

**Keywords:** Tourism; Development; spatial planning; community; sustainable development

### **1. Introduction**

Throughout human societies' organization history -in terms of sociology and economy-, various ways of time management and optimization were attempted to be understood. Indeed, by reviewing the literature on leisure time, it is easy to find that alternative perspectives, whose theoretical starting points are different, are pointed out: (a) on the one hand, leisure time has been viewed as a non-productive time that somebody can spend (Veblen, 1994); (b) on the other hand, it is perceived as the time used for self-development (i.e., Marx's view (see more in Koronaiou, 1996), which is lied close enough to the leisure Aristotelian view (Veal, 2020)) and, as a result, for social evolution (i.e., Huizinga's view which was affected by Freud's perception (Roberts, 2018)). According to Friedman (1984), this kind of time compensates for working time.

The need for understanding the nature of time is linked with the fact that various human activities take place in space; such activity is tourism which entails other activities in the scale of a settlement, neighborhood, and urban coefficients (i.e. street and square).

Taking all the above into account, a similar evolutionary route between (a) spatial planning and (b) planning for tourism and leisure time can be identified. In the case of spatial planning, four main evolutionary stages can be found (see Delitheou, Bakogiannis, and Kyriakidis, 2020; Siolas, et.al., 2015; Aravantinos, 2007; Metaxas and Lalenis, 2006): sector planning which is an initial method of autonomous studies conducted per each sector; parallel planning which is structured on individual studies that have a common contact point; comprehensive planning whose philosophy is based on understanding reality as a system in which equivalent and reciprocal relations between its elements can be found; (d) strategic planning according to which reality is seen through as a system whose internal components' importance varies. In such a context, new planning approaches, based on community engagement and governance, have emerged (see Delitheou, Bakogiannis, and Kyriakidis, 2019; Aravantinos, 2007; Wassenhoven, 2002). In the case of tourism (as a product), five evolutionary stages can be identified (Butler, 1980): (a) exploration, (b) involvement, (c) development, (d) consolidation, and (e) stagnation; after the last stage, one occasion can trigger the motion of the circular 5-stages process. This is the reason why (spatial and tourism) planning tends to be more of a cyclic process than a linear one. Both planning types seem to be evolved in a parallel way in which community engagement plays an important role.

Indeed, participatory processes in both sectors came to the forefront of the academic debate during the last decades, as a result of the rapid technological change (see Apostolopoulos and Potsiou, 2022), when traditional methodologies (i.e. consultations) (Somarakis and Stratigea, 2014) have been criticized and challenged. In this framework, new terminologies came to the fore, like “neogeography” (Turner, 2006) which was first described by Eisnor, during the 2000s (Haklay et al., 2008; Stamatopoulou, 2013). As a concept, it reflects a new perception of cities as well as their residents (Flanagin and Metzger, 2008); locals are engaged in the planning process (Bakogiannis et al., 2019a) as active members of each local community (Bakogiannis, et.al., 2021). Active people participation can be expressed through various actions, such as the collection of Volunteered Geographic Information (VGI) (Goodchild, 2007), crowdsensing, and crowdsourcing (Surowiecki, 2004). In such a way, it is more likely - and, at the same time, necessary - for cities to become smart since collective intelligence expands a citizen’s personal perception (Surowiecki, 2004).

This paper aims in reviewing objectives related to the participatory character of tourism planning which is being in a parallel orbit with spatial planning. Based on the theoretical background (Section 2), correlations between these two planning sectors are attempted to be identified, by applying the “case study” methodological tool (Section 3). Findings are utilized not only for criticizing the existing planning directions and proposing new ones but also for drawing wider conclusions and expanding the existing theoretical discussion (Section 4).

## **2. Literature Review**

During the last decades, tourism, as a product, is transformed as a result of communication with new cultures. Focus is shifted to knowledge acquisition and experience. This development can be interpreted as an expected maturation of tourism, over time, according to Butler’s (1980) cyclic approach. Another interpretation can also be provided by the Regulatory Theory that came to the fore due to the transition from the Ford to the post-Fordist economic context (Milne and Ateljevic, 2001). The second approach has been associated with resilience, on the one hand; on the other hand with the concept of sustainable development, which is characterized by holistic thinking, futurity, and the idea of precaution and equality in terms of the environment and the quality of human life.

Indeed, a few decades ago, the emergence of the term "alternative tourism" pointed out a transition process. The initial approach focused on environmental protection (Buttler, 1990), since alternative tourists were interested in authenticity (Valeri and Fadlon, 2016) and special features of lived places, showing a sharp variation of the Butler cycle (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2010). In time, however, it became clear that, despite the similarities in the motivation (Nunkoo and Ramkissoon, 2010), the new tourism model had significant potential for further development through various individual models. The recent approach of “participatory tourism” (Agaliotou, Martha, and Vrasida, 2019) is expanding constantly the meaning of an alternative tourist, who temporarily gird like a local trying to accomplish a particular purpose. In that process, both the local community and him/herself gather benefits that are expressed in terms of economic, social, cultural, and personal development. Therefore, it turns out that this type of tourism contributes to local development and to the good use of leisure time that is in relation to tourism.

At this point, it is necessary to clarify the term participatory tourism as well as the way in which it is referred in the literature. Two are the main approaches:

- According to the first point of view, participatory tourism refers to the lived experience of tourists as a result of their participation in a series of activities that may vary according to their interests (Agaliotou, Martha, and Vrasida, 2019). Hunting for memorable and meaningful experiences, that strengthen place attachment, consists of their motive (Ritchie and Hudson, 2009). According to environmental psychologists (Hidalgo and Hernandez,

2001; Lewicka, 2008; Lewicka, 2010; Halpenny, 2010; Ujang, 2012; Loureiro, 2014), place attachment theory approaches the emotional connection that is developing between individuals and specific natural spaces, in which they feel safe, relaxed and familiar (Jaśkiewicz, 2015). Experiencing places -even through passive activities- contributes to the understanding of mnemonic images and meanings with which a place is connected (Uzzell et al., 2002; Moser and Uzzell, 2003). In that way, it is concluded that not only adults, who are mainly attached to a place by developing symbolic links and emotional bonds (Loureiro, 2014), but also children, who are attached to a place by manifesting activities (Morgan, 2010), can be better attached to a place by engaging in activities, during their vacations.

Various mild types of participatory tourist activities contribute to discovering social representations (see in Bonnes and Secchiaroli, 1995) of places (see Nora, 1989). Urban walking tours and storytelling carried out by locals (Rabbiosi, 2016) are typical examples of such activities. Missionary activities on various topics are, also, related to crowdsourcing and gamification techniques (Kawanaka et al., 2020; Koens et al., 2020; Kawanaka et al., 2018; Chen and Chen, 2011; Guttentag, 2009; Brown and Morrison, 2003). Fulfilling a "mission" may be transformed into the main motivation of a tourist who is not interested anymore in typical tourist activities, such as sightseeing. Taking into account that discovering knowledge and gaining experiences is the motivation of tourists and, at the same time, the result of such trips (Anon, 2018), participatory planning -it falls under the experience tourism model, the creative tourism one (De Bruin and Jelinčić, 2015) and the volunteer vacation concept (Brown and Morrison, 2003)- may be located in the first stage of Butler's cycle (1980).

Based on this approach, the effectiveness of such a tourism model is related to the production of "value-in-use", namely the satisfaction derived from the use of each tourist service (Basile et al., 2021).

- According to the second point of view, tourism product planning is considered participatory tourism (see Dragouni and Fouseki, 2018; Bello, et. al., 2016; Grybovyeh, 2012; Shani and Pizam, 2012; Hasse and Milne, 2005; Timothy, 1999). The way citizens are involved in the process is not clearly described in the literature. Thus, it can be applied in various ways (Tosun, 1999); each one of them may also vary in the degree of engagement (see Arnstein's scale in Eondirad and Ewnetu, 2019; Shani and Pizam, 2012). Although such a model is mainly applied in cultural tourism (Hasse and Milne, 2005; Basile, et. al., 2021) and ecotourism (Kantsperger, Thess, and Eckert, 2019), it may also be applied to other tourism types.

It is believed that participatory tourism -according to this interpretation- would particularly contribute to developing countries. However, significant barriers to participation (low educational level and lack of skills in digital tools and infrastructure as well as repressive legislation) (Kantsperger, Thess, and Eckert, 2019) can be found. According to this interpretation, the effectiveness of participatory tourism converges on the benefits of participatory spatial planning; enhancement of consultative democracy in local communities may also be a significant benefit (Mark, Cheung, and Hui, 2017).

Taking the above into consideration, participatory tourism, some main conclusions are drawn concerning participatory tourism:

- It is a manifestation of deliberative democracy in terms of planning and tourism product production. Community engagement through conventional or electronic methods (Panagiotopoulou, Somarakis, and Stratigea, 2018) contributes to producing a more effective (in terms of economic, environmental, and social) product that approaches the goal of sustainability (Garrod, 2003; Murphy, 1985 in Pongponrat, 2011). Thus, enhancing people's participation in organizing and developing tourism product is one of the parameters of the sustainable tourism model. (Mark, Cheung, and Hui, 2017).

- People participation is a two-way process: on the one hand, local communities contribute to the production of an authentic tourism product; on the other hand, visitors, who participate in activities, produce new ideas, products, and services, share knowledge, (co-)create experiences and develop skills (Creatour, 2017 in Richards, 2019).

- Consequently, participative tourism resembles creative tourism -it falls under cultural tourism; it actually constitutes one of its subsets, since it does not only refer to creative industries. The identification of common elements with various forms of experience tourism - it is a model with which ecotourism is significantly related-, brings participatory tourism on verge of these two broad fields and, at the same time, makes it a potential broader context in which other types of tourism can be integrated.

Somebody could find an analogy between (a) tourism planning and tourism product and (b) spatial planning. A brief investigation of the topic is taking place in Section 3. Focus has been given to the Region of South Aegean, which has been selected as a case study.

### **3. Participatory spatial planning and participatory tourism**

#### *3.1. Setting the context*

Fifteen years ago, when spatial planning has been established in Greece, much attention has been paid to tourism, due to: (a) the already advanced tourist tradition in the country (Buhalis, 2001; Tsartas, 2010; Belias, et. al., 2017) and the available resources (Delitheou, Karaggiani and Michalaki, 2020); (b) its perception as a growth dynamic when other productive sectors were less developed (Sinclair, 1998). Indeed, tourism was recognized as a means of attracting new investments, creating jobs, and improving the infrastructure and the standard of living in many Greek towns (Andriotis, 2003). At the beginning of the 1970s, a massive tourism model was dominated; specific towns and islands had been developed as tourism nodes (Bakogiannis, et. al., 2020), the glamour of which contributed to their emergence in the Greek network of settlements. This fact is also reflected in the (General and Special) Frameworks for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development (FSPSD) whose role was to eliminate the contradictions observed across the country.

Those national frameworks as well as the ones referred to each region of the country were conducted according to the Act. 2742/1999. Moreover, taking into account the directions of this act, Regional FSPSDs, as well as the Special FSPSD for Tourism, had been revised. It is crucial that this legal act was innovative enough for the time period it was institutionalized since initial steps had been made in order for community engagement to be introduced in spatial planning procedure (more specific, “Opinion Procedure Release” was introduced in spatial planning procedure) (Somarakis and Stratigea, 2015).

The situation concerning participatory planning and participatory tourism are on the same wavelength. Mass tourism based on recreation (sun lust touristic model) (Georgakopoulou and Delitheou, 2020) is the dominant model. However, during the last decade, alternative tourism models have emerged; many of them are sustainable enough (Pavlogeorgatos and Konstandoglou, 2005) and, thus, planners tend to promote them in order for the negative impact of mass tourism on the natural, cultural, and economic environment (Bakogiannis, et. al., 2020; Bakogiannis, et. al., 2019; Theng, et. al., 2015; Farmaki, 2012; Andriotis, 2003) to be limited. The various forms of sport tourism -i.e. cycling and hiking tourism for which much research has been conducted (Tsitoura, et. al., 2021; Bakogiannis, et. al., 2020; Bakogiannis, et. al., 2019; Georgiadis, et. al., 2019); as a result, it is easy for them to be promoted in the near future- may be classified as alternative tourism models.

This assumption is based on global trends. The absence of spatial planning (Special FSPSD) for tourism –the two most recent plans for tourism were canceled by issuing the CMD 24208/2009 and CMD 67659/2013; in those plans, the need for transforming the mass

tourism model in many places across the country into another more alternative and sustainable is noted- supports uncertainty since tourism development lies only in the directions of the FSPSD for each Region. This observation means that no holistic approach is studied at a national level. Even in case Regional FSPSDs can give ideal directions for tourism planning, they are obsolete, and queries raised concerning the degree they can correspond to modern trends.

In order to examine the extent to which spatial planning can promote participatory tourism, a Region whose economy is based on tourism (Region of South Aegean) was selected. One of the reasons why this region was selected is the fact that its Regional FSPSD is under review. More specifically, the study (Tsekouras and Mavrogeorgis, 2020) has been recently completed and the institutionalization of the plan is going to be made in the near future. Section 3.2 focuses on the planning initiatives found in the study.

### *3.2. The Region of South Aegean: Planning Directions*

The Region of South Aegean is located at the southeastern end of the country. This fact makes its position important in terms of geopolitics, at a national and international level. Its remote position from the center of the European and national area, its multi-islands and small island character with its, by extension, consequences (Garau, Desogus, and Stratigea, 2020), as well as the significant intra- and inter-regional variations identified therein, are some causes of weaknesses which, however, are compensated for by the intensity of tourism activity. Indeed, due to tourism, the Region of South Aegean is the only one with an insular character that satisfies the condition: (a) per capita GDP higher than the national average and (b) a lower unemployment rate than the national average. The main causes related to the increased tourist traffic - it is a destination for 25% of the country's tourists - are (a) the significant cultural and environmental identity, (b) the high specialization of developed islands in tourism, and (c) the emergence of brand-names for certain destinations, such as Mykonos and Santorini.

In that context and taking into account the fact that no valid Special FSPSD for Tourism is available, the Regional FSPSD which is under review seeks to mitigate the inequalities identified in the various islands and enhance tourism activity in a sustainable way in order to balance the production of all economic sectors. At the same time, benefits are expected in terms of resilience as it is crucial for islands to face socio-economic and natural disasters. A brief summary of the main planning directions of the under review study (see Tsekouras and Mavrogeorgis, 2020) is presented below:

- Classification of islands into four categories (Figure 1), based on their demographic and developmental characteristics as well as their tourism development characteristics. The first group includes small islands facing development problems, population fluctuations, and geographical isolation. The second includes islands that grow in tourism, while they have other resources to be exploited. The third group refers to the islands with significant tourist activity and where environmental pressures are recorded, while the latter includes the very small islands of periodic habitation. It is typical that the first three groups of islands differ in the way tourism is managed: all tourism types are accepted in islands of the first group; in islands of the second group, planning has paid attention to complementarity in order for specialization to be avoided; tourism volumes should be under control in islands included into the third group.

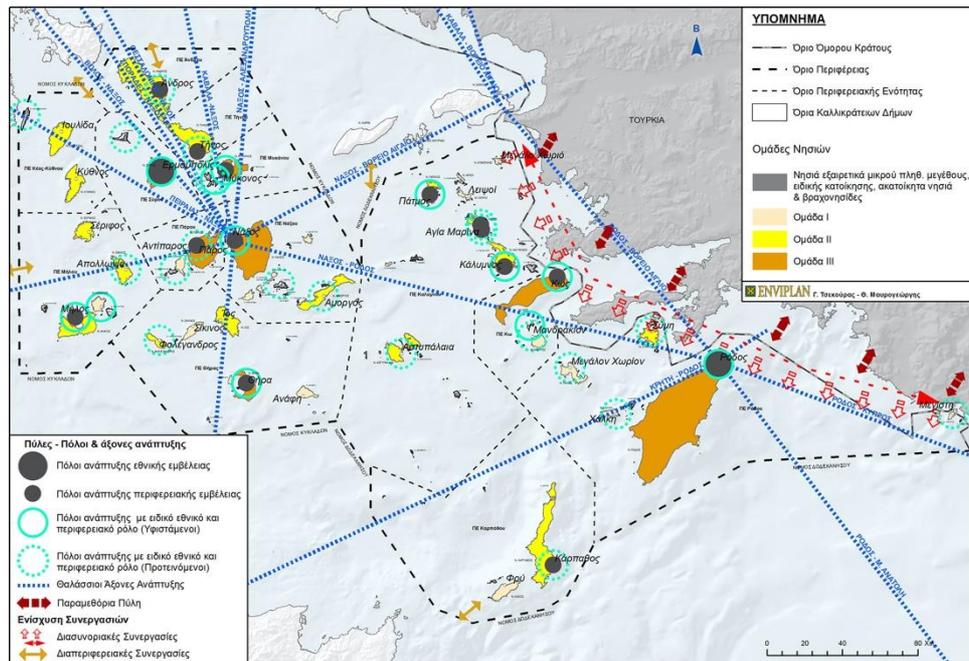


Figure 1. Proposed classification of the islands in the South Aegean Region, based on the spatial organization guidelines. Source: Tsekouras and Mavrogeorgis, 2020.

- Demonstration of urban planning tools to limit or enhance tourism activity, depending on the case. In this way, new developments should follow specific rules that may defer from one spatial unit to another. Thus, the aforementioned classification was utilized for the promotion of Areas of Specially Regulated Urbanization for Vacation Housing and Tourism (ΠΕΠΠΟ Β' Κατοικία/Τουρισμού) and Areas of Organized Development of Productive Tourism Activities (ΠΟΑΠΔ Τουρισμού) on the islands of Groups II and III. With regard to specific forms of tourism, such as diving, there is no restrictive provision, since there is the possibility of developing diving parks on all islands. A similar provision exists for special tourist infrastructure, provided that this is sufficiently presumed. In this way, it is expressed the shift from a large-scale model of tourism development to a new one based on receptor models which are based on both tourism and residential development.
- The network of settlements is proposed to be reorganized. Ermoupolis and Rhodes are the focal points in this network. They are proposed to function as primary national levels (Level 2 of the settlement hierarchy). Kos and Naxos are classified as secondary national poles (Level 3 of the settlement hierarchy) while Paroikia, Mykonos, Fira, and Pothea are classified as poles of national importance (Level 4 of the settlement hierarchy). This hierarchy of the network of settlements differs from the one institutionalized by the previous Regional FSPSD (2003) and the Genetal FSPSD (2008). At the same time, restructuring of transport infrastructure (ports and airports) is suggested. This fact demonstrates the importance that infrastructure plays in order for cities and towns to emerge in the network of settlements.
- Specific residential areas, like dynamic settlements, are proposed to be strengthened for being more compact. Such a direction may eliminate informal housing which is a phenomenon that is also evident in coastal zones. This objective is supported by the institutionalization of urban development zones that absorb residential pressures that are intense not only in coastal zones but also in productivity zones. The demarcation of non-demarcated settlements, the promotion of traditional settlements, the revitalization of abandoned settlements through the acquisition of functional roles, and the restoration of degraded ecosystems and other natural elements, such as riverbeds, are more specific actions promoted at the regional level.

- The strengthening of the advertising of the tourism product of the region, ensuring (a) the safeguarding of the flow of tourism, (b) the development of new tourism products, which may be the result of the participation of local communities and tourists in the planning and in various actions and (c) the quality, innovation, and flexibility of the tourism product, taking into account the existing trends and the identity of each island. It is characteristic that, for this reason, the islands were examined as to their physiognomy and the dominant tourist pattern followed them.

### *3.3. Participatory tourism in the Region of South Aegean*

From the brief presentation of the main planning proposals of the Regional FSPSD under review, it is found that one of its main objectives is to reduce inequalities, without perishing on the dynamic that can be identified on specific islands. With this in mind, the promotion of alternative tourism is not a one-way path for the Region, as a whole; it may be promoted in particular islands where tourism is not as developed as elsewhere or an existing alternative model is active. The conference, spa/wellness, (sub)sea, diving, cultural and golf tourism are the types of alternative tourism promoted by the Regional FSPSD under review. Moreover, other alternative tourism models (agrotourism and ecotourism, religious and cultural tourism, adventure tourism, etc.) that already exist in the islands are enhanced by institutionalizing special regulations.

Considering that participatory tourism is on the verge between the creative tourism model (and, more broadly, cultural tourism) and experience tourism, it emerges that it succeeds in the context of strengthening some of the above alternative types. This hypothesis is reinforced by the multiple references to volunteering as a direction that will contribute to the desired result. Volunteering extends to the local community in order for an authentic tourist product to be produced and traditional-based activities to be developed. Fields like culture and creative industry are expected to be the area of more intensive reconciliation between local community and visitors; this fact supports a significant likelihood of developing a participatory tourism model.

In order for this participatory framework to be easier achieved, community engagement in tourism planning seems to be crucial. The reason why more attention must be paid to the participation process is that citizen participation in development programs for private and public works and investments is at low levels. The Regional FSPSD under review (Tsekouras and Mavrogeorgis, 2020) recognizes this problem and underlines the importance of giving word to representatives of bodies, such as the municipal authorities that were expressed not only during the elaboration of the B1 stage of the study but also during its maturation stages. However, “deeper” participation procedures were not applied; enhancement of the participatory planning process has been transferred to the individual municipalities.

## **4. Discussion- Conclusions**

The increased interest in sustainable development is expressed in various ways within the United Nations initiatives agenda, at a global level. Such directions may be specialized at a national level in terms of spatial planning. The general proclamations for an equitable distribution of resources and the alleviation of inequalities may become true through the directions set by upper-level spatial plans to their inferior ones (urban planning at a municipal level).

The island area in Greece falls under the above category since it is a priority area for applying development policies due to geographical isolation, lack of transport and other types of technical infrastructure, and difficulties in dealing with health problems. Intending to address the above, spatial planning of island areas of the country provides a set of guidelines to aid tourism products and their balanced distribution in the area. Pivotal is the role of spatial

planning at the regional scale, given the fact that there is not a valid FSPSD for tourism. the absence of specific planning for tourism in recent years. For that reason, updating regional FSPSDs is urgent to understand the trends and the prospects of tourism and to reveal the best synergies with other productive sectors.

In the case of the Region of South Aegean, is a period of transition from the previous regional planning to the revised one, since imminent the institutionalization of the new study was recently completed. Its directions and network of settlements in islands are being restructured as island hierarchy is also re-established. The synergy between settlements and islands, and their complementarity seem to be pillars for the formulation of a new development model. In that model, tourism continues to play a key role. Although the international trend demonstrates the absolute shift to alternative tourism models, the Regional FSPSD under review does not renounce massive tourism facilities and infrastructure that created a brand name for specific islands. Its direction focuses on complementarity and thus, supports there-existence of massive and alternative tourism models with respect to the natural and cultural resources of each island.

In the planning and organization of tourism activities, local community participation is important. Voluntary participation is preferred as an ideal alternative; additional consultation procedures that are scheduled to take place when spatial planning is conducted are not set aside.

However, a vital element is linked to the reinforcement of the active role of tourists visiting islands in South Aegean. The reference to voluntary activity is extended to visitors, but the guidelines are not clear in this direction. Indirect references to voluntary tourism and interactive experiences are more supported by references to alternative models that can bring benefits to the islands for which they are proposed. In any case, there is no emphasis on the importance of switching to a more participatory tourism model, such as the one that is widely spoken of in the international literature, mainly as experience tourism or creative tourism. Even so, however, the result can be positive, given the emphasis on the importance of cultural infrastructures which can be further highlighted through participation. The promotion of the concept of creativity and its locality can contribute more positively to future planning both for the region in question and for the rest of the country.

As expected, in the next few years, the tourism model that will be developed is a direct result of the planning and philosophy of the latter. A participatory planning process is probably more likely to promote similar participatory processes in individual sectors, such as tourism. The evolutionary trend of spatial planning in this direction is encouraging the emergence of development models that more closely embrace local communities and, in this case, visitors. Therefore, an initial conclusion derived from this paper is the parallel tracks that tourism planning and spatial planning keep of. The topic is necessary to be further studied. In the near future, empirical research may be applied in order for the research hypothesis to be demonstrated.

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