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## ACTORS IN THE PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT OF VARAŽDIN: THE CONTRIBUTION OF SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY RESEARCH IN THE URBAN CONTEXT

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For a balanced development of cities today there obviously needs to be a dialogue between different social actors. This type of approach to development was established by adopting the concept of social sustainability which emphasises the importance of civic participation in strategic development planning. This paper aims to examine the satisfaction of Varaždin residents with the level of some dimensions of social sustainability and city governance practices. The data were collected through a survey of a representative sample of the adult population of the City of Varaždin (N=500). By analysing elements of the concept of social sustainability of the city, from the point of view of the citizens of Varaždin, we arrived at the conclusion that suggests a low level of social sustainability in the city development management. This survey has also shown that the level of education is a precondition for the ability to be critical of development issues, and that the opinions of individuals with a higher level of education are closer to the concept of socially sustainable development of the city that reduces the dominance of the political sector and promotes dialogue between different social actors.

Keywords: social sustainability, urban development, participation, Varaždin

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## INTRODUCTION

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A balanced development of cities in a modern world is a complex subject involving issues from various sectors, as well as their interconnection. Solutions to problems, be they social, economic, political or cultural in nature, are sought through dialogue between different social actors. Such an approach to development became established on adoption of the concept of social sustainability. This concept seeks to achieve balance between the global and the local, the public and the private; between poverty and consumerism, social inclusion and social exclusion, in order to enable the development of an equitable, balanced and democratic society. Social and environmental sustainability, functional infrastructure and dialogue between all stakeholders in the governance processes are set as a framework for the sustainable development of modern cities (Agger, 2010; Boström, 2012; Murphy, 2012). Due to the current social and economic trends, a question arises as to the future of Croatian cities which, while facing the pressures of globalisation, underwent a transition from socialism to capitalism (Rogić, 2000). Growing urbanisation calls for new concepts and solutions that should respond to the new challenges to the cities' capacity to create and maintain a good quality of life, which has led to an ever-growing interest in the problems contemporary urban areas are facing (Čaldarović, 2010).

The Brundtland Commission report published by in 1987 is often cited as a turning point in defining the concept of social sustainability. After its publication, the concept of sustainable development became the subject of many academic discussions aimed at defining, as precisely as possible, in different ways and from different theoretical standpoints, the goals and methods that incorporate, in the widest sense, the idea of integration of environmental (protection and preservation of the environment), economic (balanced economic growth) and social (respect for and promotion of social and human rights) components, which would enable social development that includes the notion of sustainability (Boström, 2012; Elliott, 1999; Jabareen, 2008). Many authors who addressed this issue agreed that it was probably impossible to give a universal, comprehensive and context-independent definition of this concept (Koning, 2002; Redclift, 2005; Jordan, 2008; Connelly, 2007). However, as generally agreed, it is important to recognize the interconnection, complexity and multi-layered nature of the different types of sustainability.

While the notion of sustainability implies balance and coherence of environmental, economic and social components of social development, (which necessitates all three components to function), a large number of researchers and activists

DRUŠ. ISTRAŽ. ZAGREB  
GOD. 22 (2013), BR. 1,  
STR. 143-165

MIŠETIĆ, A., KRNIĆ, R.,  
KOZINA, G.:  
ACTORS IN THE...

usually relate the concept of sustainable development to the environmental protection issue, in terms of inequalities in access to environmental goods and distribution of environmental risks, and a resource management issue in general (Leonard, 1989), while the significance and objectives associated with the social aspects of sustainability (unlike the economic and environmental aspects) were often neglected and pushed into the background (Dempsey, Bramley, Power, & Brown, 2011; Casula Vifell & Soneryd, 2012; Thin, 2002; Cuthill, 2009). In the context of urban development, social sustainability of the city was, until recently, considered a means of achieving economic and environmental sustainability, rather than a goal in its own right. However, Psarikidou and Szerszynski (2012) draw attention to the fact that understanding social sustainability involves not simply adding the social component to the dominant environmental and economic dimensions, but also requires subjecting the whole concept of sustainability to a turn that takes us beyond ontological separation of society, economy and environment. A similar notion is found among the objectives of the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, which calls for integration of environmental, economic and social requirements that need to be coherent and mutually reinforcing (Council of the European Union, 2006).

Although the concept of sustainable development has been extensively discussed since the seventies, the concept of sustainability was first applied to cities only in the early nineties (Hardoy, Mitlin, & Satterthwaite, 2001). The role that cities play in economic development and the problems of social polarisation as well as their consequences made a city the basic unit of analysis when it comes to the development of the concept of social sustainability. In the early 2000s, a growing number of authors recognised social sustainability in urban context as a necessary goal, equally important as the efforts to achieve environmental and economic sustainability, and the need to stop thinking of this aspect as an isolated dimension but rather as a key link in the wider concept of sustainable development requiring consideration of local context has become increasingly obvious. Social sustainability is generally considered to be the most complex dimension of sustainability, which is very difficult to define, therefore creating numerous problems when it comes to its operationalisation, i.e., implementation of specific practices. Different conceptualisations of the term can be found in the academic discourse, which points to the difficulties in analytical understanding and defining of the concept of social sustainability that should be applicable to a variety of plans and sustainable development projects (Psarikidou & Szerszynski, 2012).

DRUŠ. ISTRAŽ. ZAGREB  
GOD. 22 (2013), BR. 1,  
STR. 143-165

MIŠETIĆ, A., KRNIĆ, R.,  
KOZINA, G.:  
ACTORS IN THE...

The problem of reductionist approach in broader discussions on sustainable development mentioned earlier in the text, pertaining to highlighting one dimension only, usually the environmental one, transferred to the early discussions on sustainability of cities. This approach highlights the problems of pollution, depletion of energy and other resources, waste management, recycling, increased traffic, etc. (Bromley, Tallon, & Thomas, 2005). However, recent discussions and theories have introduced new dimensions which have become increasingly important in conceptualising the term and may be correlated with some other concepts of urban sociology and other sociology disciplines. These are ideas of social justice, equality, cohesion, diversity, cultural values, human rights, social capital, access to employment, health care and various services, economic stability and growth, civic participation, identity, safety, social networks, sense of identity, etc. (ODPM, 2003; Colantonio & Dixon, 2011). Stren and Polèse (2000) emphasise the need for urban development led by ideas of egalitarianism improving the quality of life for all by reducing social inequality and marginalisation of vulnerable social groups. Authors define social sustainability as "development (and/or growth) that is compatible with harmonious evolution of civil society, fostering an environment conducive to the compatible cohabitation of culturally and socially diverse groups while at the same time encouraging social integration, with improvements in the quality of life for all segments of the population" (Stren & Polèse, 2000, 15-16). Beatley and Manning understand social sustainability in a similar manner (1997), pointing to the importance of tolerance and promotion of diversity in a community, equal access to basic services and goods, and promotion of equal opportunities for all, in general. On the other hand, Colantonio and Dixon (2011) tried to incorporate all three components of sustainable development in their definition by saying that social sustainability concerns how "individuals, communities and societies live with each other and set out to achieve the objectives of development models which they have chosen for themselves, also taking into account the physical boundaries of their places and planet earth as a whole" (Colantonio & Dixon, 2011, 24).

Unlike the aforementioned attempts to give a general definition of the term, some authors analyse the features and characteristics of individual dimensions of social sustainability, mentioned earlier in the text. Although we will not discuss each and every one of them, we will mention one aspect that is particularly important for this paper and that is civic participation. All major theories of planning over the last thirty years have placed emphasis on the importance of involving a wide

DRUŠ. ISTRAŽ. ZAGREB  
GOD. 22 (2013), BR. 1,  
STR. 143-165

MIŠETIĆ, A., KRNIĆ, R.,  
KOZINA, G.:  
ACTORS IN THE...

range of social actors in spatial planning processes (Purcell, 2002; Harvey, 2003; Albrechts, Healey, & Kunzmann, 2003; Healey, 2004; Vigar, Graham, & Healey, 2005). Although in the context of urban development the task to promote social sustainability is considered to be the responsibility of local authorities, according to Healey (2004), other actors such as politicians, parties, lobbyists, property owners, business groups, and residents of the cities themselves also bear a certain responsibility. The Programme of Action for Sustainable Development entitled Local Agenda 21, which was proposed at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, emphasises, among other things, the extreme importance of participation of all social sectors in development planning, that is, the partnership between the public, private, and so-called "third" sector (Mirkov, 2012).

In an effort to operationalise the term of social sustainability, Murphy (2012) looks at the fundamental pillars of social sustainability in order to establish a framework for the analysis of governance policies: equity, awareness for sustainability, participation and social cohesion.

## **OBJECTIVE AND HYPOTHESES**

In addition to many other social actors, city residents are obviously among the most important factors in the process of analysing sustainable development. Research into the opinions of the interested community is beneficial in many ways because it provides information about how the public perceives the development of their city and what it expects from this development. Participatory approaches to city planning and governance make citizens a crucial factor in the design of development strategies (Allmendinger & Tewdwr-Jones, 2002). Murphy's analysis, mentioned earlier in the text, includes participation as one of the basic pillars of the concept of socially sustainable development and, therefore, an essential framework for understanding the governance policies. The same author defines participation (in the framework of public policies) as involvement of the highest possible number of social groups in decision-making processes, in which both the state and the citizens benefit, and the whole process fosters social cohesion. Furthermore, participation is considered to reinforce social inclusion and participation of different social groups in the public dialogue, further strengthening the credibility of local authorities. Previous research in Croatia has shown that in the process of making strategic development decisions, it is important to take into account the requirements, opinions, values, and, in general, the quality of life of people who are directly, as a local community, exposed to the effects of a deve-

DRUŠ. ISTRAŽ. ZAGREB  
GOD. 22 (2013), BR. 1,  
STR. 143-165

MIŠETIĆ, A., KRNIĆ, R.,  
KOZINA, G.:  
ACTORS IN THE...

<sup>1</sup> The survey was conducted as part of the project "Social sustainability and urban transformation processes in Croatian cities" financed by the Ministry of Science, Education and Sports in the spring of 2011, using an online survey, of a sample of 241 professionals working in city governments.

lopment scenario (Mišetić & Miletić, 2007; Svirčić Gotovac, 2010). Also, experience has shown that in case of a lack of dialogue with the public, some projects may lead to various negative consequences, such as social exclusion of citizens and social conflict (Svirčić Gotovac & Zlatar, 2008; Mišetić & Uršić, 2010).

In public opinion surveys, the City of Varaždin has often been ranked high on the list of "desirable" places to live in, within the Croatian urban context (Rogić & Mišetić, 2000; Rogić, Šakić, Mišetić, & Miletić, 2003). In addition, the reputation of the City of Varaždin as a city that manages its development well was confirmed by the survey of Croatian city government officials,<sup>1</sup> as well as by the economic development analyses of the city (Cini & Varga, 2009). Therefore, the survey conducted on a sample of citizens of Varaždin was based on the fact that, in the Croatian context, this city is seen as an example of excellence and is often singled out as a model of successful development.

Taking into account the above theoretical considerations, particularly Murphy's theoretical framework for the analysis of social sustainability (which underlines equity, awareness for sustainability, participation and social cohesion as the main dimensions of the concept), this paper aims to examine public opinion, i.e., opinions of the residents of Varaždin, on selected criteria important for socially sustainable planning and development of the city. The objective is to examine satisfaction with the level of participation of individual social actors in the city governance processes, and compare answers with respect to age and level of education of respondents. The assumption was that younger respondents, and respondents with higher level of education would be more inclined towards the democratisation of decision-making processes and more critical of the current level of civic participation in decision-making, which is in line with the role that education plays in the incorporation of the concept of social sustainability in the planning and realisation of development projects (Boström, 2012). Secondly, this paper aims to identify the criteria of socially sustainable planning and development, using factor analysis to explore the latent structure established between individual variables, i.e., criteria in order to determine their common characteristics and meaning overlaps.

## **METHOD AND SAMPLE**

The data were collected through a survey of a representative, stratified sample of the adult population (aged 18 and over) of the City of Varaždin, randomly selecting units within each stratum. The sample included a total of 500 respondents. Stra-

DRUŠ. ISTRAŽ. ZAGREB  
GOD. 22 (2013), BR. 1,  
STR. 143-165

MIŠETIĆ, A., KRNIĆ, R.,  
KOZINA, G.:  
ACTORS IN THE...

tified sampling was used to ensure adequate representation of two important components of the settlement: the central, urban area and the suburban, rural and rural/urban area. Strata are organized so that one stratum included 400 respondents from the central, urban area (Varaždin), and the second included 100 respondents from nine suburban settlements (Črnc Biškupečki, Donji Kućan, Gojanec, Gornji Kućan, Hrašćica, Jal-kovec, Kućan Marof, Poljana Biškupečka, and Zbelava). Proportional representation of specified strata was subsequently adjusted by weighting to bring it in line with representation in the population, and the same procedure was used to correct deviations with respect to gender and age structure of the sample from that of the population.

The data were first analysed using descriptive statistics (percentages and measures of central tendency), which was followed by the chi-square test to measure significance of difference and analysis of variance (ANOVA) depending on the type of variables, and factor analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Participation of different social actors in the planning and development of the city**

In line with the above theoretical framework, in particular theories emphasising the importance of civic participation and the democratisation of processes of urban planning and of making important development decisions, we have measured participation, as a dimension of social sustainability, through several indicators: the influence of individual groups and institutions on the development of the city, taking into consideration expert opinions, and the dialogue between the city government and citizens.

There are a number of different social actors interested in participating in making urban development decisions. Seferagić (2007) gives a sectoral typology of urban actors that covers well all areas of interest and, on a general level, can serve as a first step in the analysis of social actors: politicians, business entities, experts and civil society organisations. Taking into account the representation of the mentioned actors, the respondents were given a choice of eight actors and asked to assess the extent of the current, real influence of each individual actor, and give their opinion on how strong this influence should be.

While assessing the actual and desirable influence of various actors on the development of the city, the respondents had to make a separate assessment for each individual actor (Table 1).

	Not at all	Very little	Quite a bit	Extremely	Cannot assess
Politicians	5.1	10.8	26.9	50.2	7.0
City government	4.7	12.9	29.9	45.9	6.7
Local entrepreneurs	7.2	20.6	44.0	21.8	6.5
Experts	5.0	27.5	37.6	22.5	7.4
Foreign entrepreneurs	8.0	26.7	37.4	18.4	9.5
Large multinational corporations	11.7	23.1	29.7	18.3	17.2
Civil society organisations	25.2	31.9	21.0	5.3	16.5
Citizens	38.8	36.6	15.5	4.2	4.9

**TABLE 1**  
To what extent do individual social actors influence the development of the city? Answers are ranked from the highest to the lowest percentage in the category "extremely" (%)

If we look at the category "extremely", respondents believe that politicians have the strongest and citizens the weakest influence on decisions important for the development of the city. According to the respondents, the city government itself has a major influence (though not greater than that of the politicians) and civil society organisations have some influence, too. The ranking of actors who might be interested in participating in making decisions relevant to the development of the city, suggests a low level of social sustainability of decision-making processes. This is evidenced by the dominance of politics over civil society, which was rated as less influential than entrepreneurs and other interest groups. Overall, we can identify four "groups" of actors according to the extent of their influence: politicians and city government are at the top, with the greatest influence. The second group is made up of experts and local entrepreneurs, while the third group, with only a slightly lower percentage of answers in the category "extremely", is made up of foreign entrepreneurs and multinational companies. At the bottom, with a very low, almost negligible percentage of answers in the category "extremely", there are citizens and civil society organisations. Those data must be complemented by respondents' opinions about who should have the greatest influence (Table 2). Assessment of a desirable level of influence paints a somewhat different picture. Experts ranked highest; as much as 86.8% of respondents felt that they should be "extremely" influential. Also, according to the respondents and contrary to the observed practices, politicians are in a group which is expected to have the weakest influence, along with foreign actors (entrepreneurs and multinational corporations). Between these two actors, there are two more groups with respect to the desirable level of influence: after experts, city government and local entrepreneurs are expected to have the strongest influence. We are inclined to interpret this ranking order as a result of the development of the city so far, due to which Varaždin has often been referred to as an example of good development practice,



which probably resulted in city government earning the trust of citizens, and an example of positive experiences with entrepreneurs (Cini & Varga, 2009).

	Not at all	Very little	Quite a bit	Extremely	Cannot assess
Experts	0.2	0	10.6	86.8	2.4
City government	0.8	2.0	27.0	67.7	2.5
Local entrepreneurs	1.3	6.3	22.9	67.0	2.5
Citizens	0	3.8	40.3	53.7	2.2
Civil society organisations	0.8	8.9	38.1	48.1	4.1
Politicians	20.0	18.8	22.8	35.5	2.8
Foreign entrepreneurs	7.2	22.0	32.2	35.4	3.3
Large multinational corporations	11.8	25.1	29.3	30.6	3.0

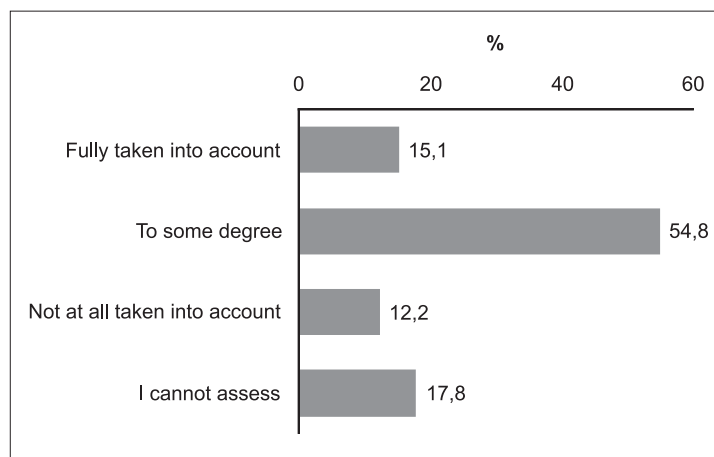
**TABLE 2**  
To what extent should individual social actors influence the development of the city, answers ranked from the highest to the lowest percentage in the category "extremely" (%)

Furthermore, about half of the respondents noted the extreme importance of citizen participation in decision-making processes, either directly or through various civil society organisations. In any case, the discrepancy between the actual influence on the development of the city and one that would be desirable and expected is evident, and manifests itself most clearly in a different ranking of individual actors. As for the other actors, the proportion of respondents who see their current influence is smaller than the share of respondents who feel that this influence should be "extremely" strong. In other words, all the actors are seen as desirable participants in the development process; however, the "balance of power" between the perceived and expected influence has been shifted. In this respect, we cannot be satisfied with the level of social sustainability of decision-making processes because it is based on the right balance of participation of interested actors. Especially in terms of the position of citizens and civil sector, it became evident that there is still room for democratisation of the city development management. The same is evident in the fact that the majority of respondents (54.8%) assess that the opinion of experts in the planning and development of the city is taken into account only "to some degree" (Figure 1). If we add that only 15% of respondents believe that professional studies are fully taken into account, we can conclude that there is room for improvement of the decision-making process in this segment as well, although the situation is better in comparison with citizen participation.

Satisfaction with specific aspects of social sustainability, as well as the ability of the community to implement this concept as a management standard are associated with some aspects of the social status of individuals and as a result, the willingness to engage through various civil society organisa-

tions is most often attributed to the younger population and the population with higher level of education (Bežovan & Zrinščak, 2007; Gerometta, Haussermann, & Longo, 2005). In the second phase, we compared the answers to these questions by dividing respondents into three groups: by age (18-34, 35-64, and 64 and older) and by level of completed education (primary school qualifications, secondary school qualifications and university qualifications). Answers are grouped in the following three categories describing the extent of influence: "not at all or very little", "quite a bit or extremely" and "cannot assess". The significance of statistical difference between groups was tested and results showing statistically significant difference indicated (at the level  $*p < 0.01$  or  $**p < 0.05$ ).

➔ FIGURE 1  
In your opinion, to  
what extent is the  
opinion of experts  
used in the planning  
and development of  
your city?



The results showed that a statistically significant difference among respondents classified into three age groups was confirmed in the assessment of the current influence of civil and economic sector actors (Table 3). We observed that the respondents in the youngest age group (under 35 years of age) took a more critical view of the current influence of citizens and civil society organisations in particular; with only 19% of them perceiving it as "extremely" strong. On the other hand, unlike other age groups, younger respondents see the influence of the economic sector as stronger whether it comes from local entrepreneurs (69.9%) or large multinational corporations (53.8%).

We observed that a large proportion of respondents in the oldest age group (over 65 years of age) were in the category "cannot assess" in all cells. The highest percentage of these answers is recorded in the assessment of the current influence of civil society organisations (28.0%) and large multinational corporations (24.7%). Such a large number of respon-

dents who cannot assess the current influence of individual actors can be interpreted in several ways (which are not necessarily mutually exclusive). It can be associated with a lack of respondents' competence to discuss particular aspects of this phenomenon; it can be the result of lack of interest in the topic, but also the result of lack of trust in the transparency of the procedure and credibility of information on which public opinion is formed.

TABLE 3  
To what extent do individual social actors currently influence the development of the city (%) – comparison by age of respondents

		Not at all or Very little	Quite a bit or Extremely	Cannot assess	$\chi^2$
City government	<35	14.0	79.0	7.0	6.274
	35 – 64	19.8	75.5	4.7	
	65+	16.3	72.8	10.9	
Experts	<35	35.0	58.0	7.0	5.957
	35 – 64	31.3	62.9	5.8	
	65+	32.3	54.8	12.9	
Citizens	<35	75.4	19.0	5.6	11.423*
	35 – 64	78.3	19.4	2.3	
	65+	67.7	21.5	10.8	
Large multinational corporations	<35	28.0	53.8	18.2	11.743*
	35 – 64	36.8	49.2	14.0	
	65+	39.8	35.5	24.7	
Civil society organisations	<35	62.2	23.8	14.0	12.483*
	35 – 64	58.5	27.5	14.0	
	65+	45.2	26.9	28.0	
Local entrepreneurs	<35	23.8	69.9	6.3	10.116*
	35 – 64	30.2	65.5	4.3	
	65+	26.9	60.2	12.9	
Foreign entrepreneurs	<35	34.7	55.6	9.7	4.976
	35 – 64	34.9	57.8	7.4	
	65+	33.7	51.1	15.2	
Politicians	<35	16.8	76.2	7.0	7.758
	35 – 64	16.3	79.1	4.7	
	65+	13.0	73.9	13.0	

\*\*p<0.01; \*p<0.05

In terms of expected/desirable influence on the development of the city, no statistically significant difference between age groups was observed (Table 4). The result observed in the previous table, where the older population predominantly chose the answer "cannot assess" was not repeated in this question. In view of that, we could say that the interpretation involving incompetence and indifference of this age group is no longer convincing.

		Not at all or Very little	Quite a bit or Extremely	Cannot assess	$\chi^2$
City government	<35	2.8	93.7	3.5	4.945
	35 – 64	1.9	96.5	1.5	
	65+	5.4	91.3	3.3	
Experts	<35	0.7	94.4	4.9	9.691*
	35 – 64	0.0	99.2	0.8	
	65+	0.0	97.8	2.2	
Citizens	<35	2.8	93.0	4.2	6.291
	35 – 64	4.7	94.6	0.8	
	65+	3.2	94.6	2.2	
Large multinational corporations	<35	36.4	59.4	4.2	2.221
	35 – 64	37.6	60.5	1.9	
	65+	36.6	59.1	4.3	
Civil society organisations	<35	7.0	88.1	4.9	2.171
	35 – 64	10.4	85.7	3.9	
	65+	11.8	84.9	3.2	
Croatian entrepreneurs	<35	8.4	87.4	4.2	5.049
	35 – 64	6.2	92.3	1.5	
	65+	10.8	87.1	2.2	
Foreign entrepreneurs	<35	30.1	65.7	4.2	1.293
	35 – 64	29.7	67.6	2.7	
	65+	25.8	71.0	3.2	
Politicians	<35	35.7	60.8	3.5	4.313
	35 – 64	42.9	54.8	2.3	
	65+	32.3	64.5	3.2	

\*\*p<0.01; \*p<0.05

**TABLE 4**  
To what extent should individual social actors influence the development of the city (%) – comparison by age of respondents

Comparison of respondents by level of education showed that this variable generates statistically significant differences in almost all cells (Table 5) when it comes to the assessment of the current influence of individual social actors. In comparison to other groups, there are fewer respondents with associate and university qualifications who perceive the influence of experts as "quite or extremely" strong, and more respondents in this group who see the influence of multinational corporations and politicians as such. On the other hand, more respondents with primary school qualifications assess the influence of experts and civil society organisations as "quite or extremely" strong, and fewer of them perceive the influence of citizens, multinational corporations, local and foreign entrepreneurs, and even politicians as such in comparison to other respondents. It should be noted that a significantly larger proportion of respondents in this group "cannot assess" the influence of the mentioned actors. When it comes to large multinational corporations, one-third of respondents with primary school qualifications "cannot assess" the influence, 30% of them "cannot assess" the influence of civil society organisations.

DRUŠ. ISTRAŽ. ZAGREB  
GOD. 22 (2013), BR. 1,  
STR. 143-165

MIŠETIĆ, A., KRNIĆ, R.,  
KOZINA, G.:  
ACTORS IN THE...

**TABLE 5**  
To what extent do  
individual social actors  
currently influence the  
development of the  
city (%) – comparison  
by level of education  
of respondents

Relative to other groups, more respondents with secondary school qualifications see the influence of domestic and foreign entrepreneurs as "quite or extremely" strong, and a significantly smaller percentage of them, in comparison to those with university qualifications, see the influence of politicians as such. These findings lead to the conclusion that respondents with university qualifications are, as expected, most critical of the current influence of the mentioned social actors. Also, as expected, respondents with primary school qualifications were in comparison to other groups less willing to give a definite answer about the influence of individual social actors on the development of the city.

	Not at all or Very little	Quite a bit or Extremely	Cannot assess	$\chi^2$
<b>City government</b>				
Primary school qualifications	11.1	74.1	14.8	7.523
Secondary school qualifications	18.0	76.5	5.4	
University qualifications	18.6	75.2	6.2	
<b>Experts</b>				
Primary school qualifications	17.0	62.3	20.8	18.355**
Secondary school qualifications	34.1	60.1	5.8	
University qualifications	34.9	58.9	6.2	
<b>Citizens</b>				
Primary school qualifications	67.9	15.1	17.0	19.078**
Secondary school qualifications	76.4	20.5	3.1	
University qualifications	76.6	19.3	4.1	
<b>Large multinational corporations</b>				
Primary school qualifications	27.8	38.9	33.3	11.757*
Secondary school qualifications	35.4	50.0	14.6	
University qualifications	37.0	47.3	15.8	
<b>Civil society organisations</b>				
Primary school qualifications	38.9	31.5	29.6	14.763**
Secondary school qualifications	55.8	27.7	16.4	
University qualifications	66.4	21.2	12.3	
<b>Local entrepreneurs</b>				
Primary school qualifications	24.5	54.7	20.8	27.896**
Secondary school qualifications	24.2	71.3	4.4	
University qualifications	36.6	57.9	5.5	
<b>Foreign entrepreneurs</b>				
Primary school qualifications	33.3	44.4	22.2	22.717**
Secondary school qualifications	30.5	62.7	6.8	
University qualifications	43.8	45.9	10.3	
<b>Politicians</b>				
Primary school qualifications	11.1	68.5	20.4	20.245**
Secondary school qualifications	18.8	75.7	5.5	
University qualifications	11.6	82.9	5.5	

\*\*p<0.01; \*p<0.05

**TABLE 6**  
To what extent should individual social actors influence the development of the city (%) – comparison by level of education of respondents

If we start the interpretation of the responses on the desirable influence given by respondents with primary school qualifications, we observe that, compared to other groups, a significantly larger percentage of them were not able to assess which group of actors should have more/less influence (Table 6).

	Not at all or Very little	Quite a bit or Extremely	Cannot assess	$\chi^2$
<b>City government</b>				
Primary school qualifications	1.9	88.9	9.3	19.459**
Secondary school qualifications	1.7	97.3	1.0	
University qualifications	6.1	90.5	3.4	
<b>Experts</b>				
Primary school qualifications	0.0	92.6	7.4	11.083*
Secondary school qualifications	0.0	99.0	1.0	
University qualifications	0.7	95.9	3.4	
<b>Citizens</b>				
Primary school qualifications	5.6	87.0	7.4	14.395**
Secondary school qualifications	3.8	95.9	0.3	
University qualifications	3.4	92.5	4.1	
<b>Large multinational corporations</b>				
Primary school qualifications	29.6	59.3	11.1	23.080**
Secondary school qualifications	34.5	64.5	1.0	
University qualifications	45.2	50.7	4.1	
<b>Civil society organisations</b>				
Primary school qualifications	7.5	83.0	9.4	6.031
Secondary school qualifications	10.9	86.0	3.1	
University qualifications	7.5	88.4	4.1	
<b>Local entrepreneurs</b>				
Primary school qualifications	5.7	86.8	7.5	8.827
Secondary school qualifications	8.8	89.8	1.4	
University qualifications	5.5	91.1	3.4	
<b>Foreign entrepreneurs</b>				
Primary school qualifications	27.8	61.1	11.1	12.525*
Secondary school qualifications	28.0	70.0	2.0	
University qualifications	32.7	63.9	3.4	
<b>Politicians</b>				
Primary school qualifications	20.4	70.4	9.3	23.136**
Secondary school qualifications	37.5	61.1	1.4	
University qualifications	48.6	47.9	3.4	

\*\*p<0.01; \*p<0.05

In comparison to other groups, the proportion of respondents with university qualifications who see the influence of local entrepreneurs (91.1%) and civil society organisations (88.4%) as desirable is higher, while the proportion of respondents with primary school qualifications who believe that the influence of politicians should be "quite or extremely strong" (70.4%)

is higher compared to other groups. In general, one may say that relative to other groups, there is a significantly higher proportion of respondents with secondary school qualifications who expect the influence of most of these actors (city government, experts, citizens, large multinational corporations, foreign entrepreneurs) to be "quite or extremely" strong, and their proportion in the "cannot assess" category is the smallest.

The question about the extent to which expert opinion is taken into account in the planning and development of the city also showed statistically significant differences with respect to the age and level of education variables (Table 7). Respondents with university qualifications are more critical when assessing the degree to which the opinions of experts are considered in making decisions that are important for the development of the city. The ones who had an opinion among respondents in the 'youngest' group were more "optimistic" than others. A quarter of respondents under the age of 35 was not able to assess the degree to which professional studies are used in the development process. The percentage of respondents with primary school qualifications who cannot assess this is even higher (35.8%). When it comes to respondents with lower level of education, the inability to assess can be attributed to lack of competence. When it comes to young people, the answer "cannot assess" may primarily be the result of inadequate access to experts' opinions on certain issues, which is why expert opinions, even when they do exist, remain reserved for a small circle of actors involved in decision-making. Indirectly, this interpretation underlines the problem of public dialogue between the city government that makes the decisions and other interested actors, primarily the public.

TABLE 7  
To what extent is the opinion of experts used in the planning and development of the city – comparison by age and level of education of respondents

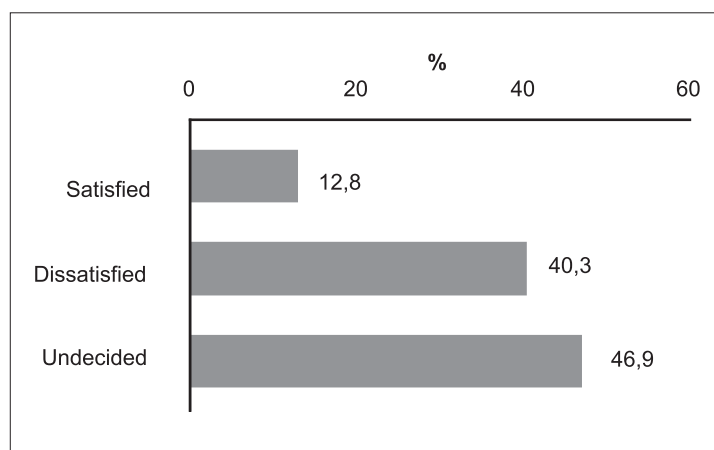
	Not at all	To some degree	Fully	Cannot assess	$\chi^2$
Age					
<35	7.0	54.9	12.7	25.4	12.567*
35 – 64	14.1	56.2	16.0	13.7	
65+	15.1	50.5	16.1	18.3	
Level of education					
Primary school qualifications	9.4	30.2	24.5	35.8	27.526**
Secondary school qualifications	11.4	60.0	15.5	13.1	
University qualifications	15.1	53.4	11.0	20.5	

\*\*p<0.01; \*p<0.05

The fact that none of the respondents answered that he/she was extremely satisfied with the dialogue between the city government and citizens on issues concerning the development of the city indicates the inferior status of citizens as actors in the development of the city. The mean on a scale from 1 (ex-

tremely dissatisfied) to 5 (extremely satisfied) is 2.55, which indicates that on average the respondents' assessments here are between dissatisfied and undecided.

➔ FIGURE 2  
Are you satisfied with the current dialogue between city government and citizens concerning the planning and development of your city?



		N	M	SD	F	P
Age	<35	140	2.58	0.939	0.252	0.777
	35 – 64	256	2.52	0.951		
	65+	91	2.57	0.859		
Level of education	Primary school qualifications	52	2.51	0.979	1.604	0.202
	Secondary school qualifications	589	2.60	0.884		
	University qualifications	144	2.44	0.992		

➔ TABLE 8  
Level of satisfaction with the dialogue between city government and citizens concerning the planning and development of the city – comparison by age and level of education

If we take into account only those respondents who answered this question and classify their answers into three groups, we see that only 12.8% said they were satisfied (Figure 2), while the majority of the respondents were undecided. However, the most alarming fact, in terms of social sustainability, is that 40% of respondents were mostly or extremely dissatisfied with the dialogue between city government and citizens of Varaždin. Dissatisfaction was expressed by respondents from all groups. The data were sorted by age and level of education of respondents and these groups were then analysed. No statistically significant differences were detected (Table 9).

### Analysis of latent structure of criteria for sustainable planning and development of the city

We looked at the role of social sustainability and its different elements from the point of view of the citizens of Varaždin by analysing the latent structure of ten variables/criteria that represent social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainability.



	Completely irrelevant	Mostly irrelevant	Mostly relevant	Extremely relevant	Cannot assess
Preservation of a traditional way of life, respect for the identity of the city	0.4	4.2	33.4	60.5	1.5
Success in the market, profit	0.3	5.6	30.6	61.2	2.3
Environmental friendliness and cleanliness of activities that are planned and developed	0.0	2.4	20.4	76.3	0.9
Interest from entrepreneurs and investors	0.0	4.1	22.4	71.7	1.8
The opinion of the majority of citizens	0.0	2.7	26.7	69.9	0.6
Needs of specific social groups (children, the elderly, people with disabilities, etc.)	0.2	2.1	24.2	73.2	0.2
Young people's interests	0.2	1.9	19.1	78.6	0.2
Experts' opinions	0.0	0.6	10.8	87.8	0.8
Promotion of social integration of different social groups	0.3	3.8	32.9	60.5	2.6
Strengthening the role of public space in the social life of the city	0.0	5.4	28.8	62.4	3.4

TABLE 9  
Which criteria should be more and which less important for the planning and development of your city? (%)

TABLE 10  
Factor analysis: Criteria for planning and development of the city

Besides descriptive interpretation of the criteria using the following categories "experts' opinions", "young people's interests" and "environmental friendliness of activities" (Table 9), we analysed the common features in order to reduce the number of variables and get a smaller set of underlying ideas. To do that, we used factor analysis technique, i.e., principal component analysis with varimax rotation, and interpreted the variables projecting on factors greater than 0.5.

	Characteristic root	Interpreted variance after rotation (%)	Interpreted cumulative variance (%)
1	4.118	27.8	27.8
2	1.063	24.0	51.8

The results of factor analysis, given in Tables 10 and 11, show that latent structure of the criteria for planning and development of the city is made up of two factors with cells projecting above 0.5, while Cronbach's alpha value confirms the statistical reliability of factors.

Factor 1 clusters the variables that, as criteria, describe social, environmental and economic components of the *planning and management model*. Social and environmental components can be described, using Murphy's definition mentioned earlier in the text, by expressions "awareness for sustainability" (preservation of a traditional way of life, respect for the identity of the city, environmental friendliness of activities) and "social cohesion" (promotion of social integration and strengthening the role of public space in the social life of the

city). Closely connected is the economic component expressed by the following criteria: "success in the market, profit" and "interest from entrepreneurs and investors". This factor connects social, environmental and economic criteria and as such, one could say, it describes the desirable principles of functioning.

Factor	Variable	Projection		Cronbach's alpha
		1st component	2nd component	
1	Preservation of a traditional way of life, respect for the identity of the city	0.590	0.297	0.783
	Success in the market, profit	0.691	0.175	
	Environmental friendliness and cleanliness of activities that are planned and developed	0.610	0.337	
	Interest from entrepreneurs and investors	0.659	0.057	
	Promotion of social integration of different social groups	0.643	0.271	
	Strengthening the role of public space in the social life of the city	0.720	0.253	
	2	Opinion of the majority of citizens	0.108	
Needs of specific social groups (children, the elderly, people with disabilities, etc.)	0.242	0.771		
Young people's interests	0.272	0.669		
Experts' opinions	0.276	0.606		

TABLE 11  
Latent structure of  
criteria for planning  
and development of  
the city

Factor 2 clusters the variables that, as criteria, describe the desirable *actors in the planning and management process*. Variables clustered around the second factor can be interpreted by referring to the other two "pillars" of social sustainability in Murphy's definition: "participation" (opinion of the majority of citizens, experts' opinions, and young people's interests) and "equality" (needs of specific social groups: children, the elderly, people with disabilities). In any case, this factor clustered social actors concerned with the public interest: citizens, because that interest is inherent to their nature, and experts because they are obliged by professional ethics. Factor analysis confirmed that respondents see participation of citizens in partnership with experts, while entrepreneurs are the only actors assessed who were not covered by this factor.

## CONCLUSION

Considering that participation is an essential element of social sustainability, it can be concluded from the point of view of the citizens of Varaždin that the level of implementation of this concept in city management policies is low. This is evident in the discrepancy between the expected and observed influence of individual social actors; in the observed domi-

DRUŠ. ISTRAŽ. ZAGREB  
GOD. 22 (2013), BR. 1,  
STR. 143-165

MIŠETIĆ, A., KRNIĆ, R.,  
KOZINA, G.:  
ACTORS IN THE...

nance of the political sector over the civil sector; dissatisfaction caused by the degree to which expert opinions are taken into account; and especially in the dissatisfaction with the level of dialogue between government and citizens. Respondents' inclination to assess participation of almost all actors as highly desirable, especially those from the civil sector, indicates that regardless of the observed practices, the public supports the concept of inclusion of various social actors in the process of urban planning and development.

Despite being limiting due to differences in situation in individual cities in Croatia, the example of Varaždin may be useful in the beginning of research into socially sustainable development of the Croatian urban network. The fact that the excellence of this city has often been mentioned over the recent decades has led to it taking on the role of "a good example" or "model of development". In the context of social and spatial transformation of Croatian cities occurring under the globalisation pressures and under the influence of local transition processes, this survey confirmed the initial hypothesis that the level of education is an important element in forming opinions about development issues and the ability to think critically about the development process, both of which are the preconditions of civic participation and democratisation of the decision-making process. Also, it showed that the opinions of individuals with higher level of education are closer to the concept of socially sustainable development of the city that reduces the dominance of the political sector and promotes dialogue between different social actors, especially those from the civil sector, which confirmed that the level of education is not only a dimension of sustainable development, but also its prerequisite. This research, as well as the aforementioned conclusions by Zrinščak and Bežovan (2007) confirmed, on the example of Varaždin, that even at the level of opinion, younger and more educated respondents are more inclined towards concepts advocating participation of different social actors in decision-making processes. When it comes to the criteria of sustainable development in the context of planning and development of the city, two factors, i.e., two fundamental ideas have been singled out: the first links the social, environmental and economic planning model, while the second connects the actors concerned with the public interest. This survey confirmed that, in addition to social, environmental and economic development criteria, the participation of the general public and experts is one of the fundamental factors in the planning and development of the city, as well as the willingness of citizens to participate in these processes. In view of that, the findings of this survey support ef-

forts to promote civic participation in managing the development through continuing education, but also to keep exploring this issue, particularly through case studies, taking into account specific urban contexts and experiences.

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STR. 143-165

MIŠETIĆ, A., KRNIĆ, R.,  
KOZINA, G.:  
ACTORS IN THE...

## Akteri planiranja i razvoja Varaždina: prilog istraživanju socijalne održivosti u urbanom kontekstu

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Danas je jasno kako uravnoteženi razvoj gradova zahtijeva postizanje dijaloga među različitim socijalnim akterima. Takav pristup razvoju zaživio je usvajanjem koncepta socijalne održivosti, koji, između ostalog, podrazumijeva isticanje važnosti sudjelovanja gradske javnosti u oblikovanju strateških razvojnih planova. Cilj je ovog rada ispitati zadovoljstvo stanovnika Grada Varaždina razinom nekih dimenzija socijalne održivosti s procesima upravljanja njihovim gradom. Prikupljanje podataka provedeno je metodom anketnog istraživanja, a istraživanje je provedeno na reprezentativnom, stratificiranom uzorku punoljetnoga stanovništva Grada Varaždina (N=500). Sagledavajući elemente koncepta socijalne održivosti razvoja grada, iz perspektive građana Varaždina, došlo se do zaključka o niskoj razini socijalne održivosti u procesima upravljanja razvojem grada. Istraživanje je pokazalo i da je obrazovanje građana preduvjet za kritičko oblikovanje stavova o razvojnim pitanjima te da su stavovi obrazovanije populacije bliži konceptu socijalno održivog razvoja grada kojim se smanjuje dominacija političkog sektora, a afirmira dijalog različitih socijalnih sudionika.

Ključne riječi: socijalna održivost, ubrani razvoj, participacija, Varaždin