

SUSTAINABILITY, QUALITY, DIGITALIZATION AND CURRENT RESEARCH CONFERENCE ARSTRACT BOOK



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MEDIA DISCOURSES AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION IN MINING PROJECTS

Milovan Vuković¹ Tamara Maričić² Marijana Pantić²

ABSTRACT

The rise of populist movements and resource based conflicts worldwide is not only stressing democracies but also call for scholars to recognize how best to prepare and defend democratic standards. Creating shared value can support community planning efforts because they may clearly indicate economic, environmental and socio-cultural relationships and outcomes as associated with local or regional developmental projects. The attainment of these three goals is often referred to as sustainable development. However, deciding what to include in a shared development strategy presents a significant challenge, as including all aspects of a community and local development is not an easy task. Also, including only some aspects leads to a non-acceptable developmental plan. In mining-impacted areas it is even more difficult to achieve a general strategy of land use, following the principle of shared value. Yet, they might be accepted through increased participation of citizens, especially those interested in the extraction of particular mineral resource. The interests of communities, particularly underrepresented groups, ought to be taken into account. To demonstrate challenges and opportunities to acceptance of huge mining projects, we describe recent disputes in a mining-impacted region in Western Serbia. We then compare dominant narratives that mainly shape general public perceptions about the project dealing with the lithium excavation in the Jadar region. It has been known, for a long time, that media, especially daily newspapers, have a decisive role in the process of dissemination of reliable messages due to their larger number of published analytical texts. Among objectives of this research was to find out the number of articles dealing with lithium excavation, their frequency of appearance, and the journalist form used on the example of daily Serbian national newspapers *Politika* and *Danas*. The lack of transparency at the early stage of this project led to a surprisingly high citizens' mobilization, and, latter on, politicization of this particular case (along with other similar land use practices) during the last two years. It was noticed that simultaneously overlap two competing narratives: the first one highlighting the economic benefits of the project, and, the second, that focuses only on environmental values (with elements of ecological radicalism), ignoring a wider picture. This mining dispute, dealing with potential excavation of lithium in Serbia, is considered through the lenses of democratic backsliding concept, in order to explain the growing deep divisions resulting in and from political polarization.

Key words: Mining project in Jadar, participation of various stakeholders, media narratives, content analysis, *Politika*, *Danas*, democracy backsliding.

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