

Methodological Advances in Participatory Processes in Serbia

ENHANCING SPATIAL PLANNING AND
LIVING ENVIRONMENTS IN MINING REGIONS

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MINIPART – Improving Participation in Spatial Planning of Mining Areas

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Methodology

Survey

Random sample
n = 300 respondents
Bor and Majdanpek
July-September 2024
Rural and urban citizens

Interviews

Experts
n = 19 interviewees
March-April 2025
Live and via Zoom
Planners, authorities, NGOs

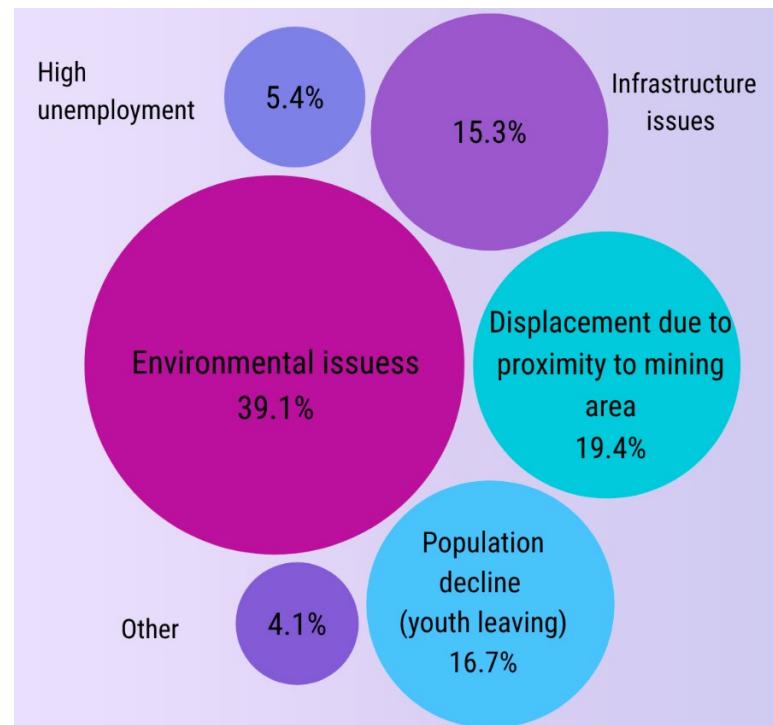
Focus groups

Vulnerable groups
n = 26 participants
October 2025
At the Technical University in Bor
Women, the elderly, youth, rural population, persons with disabilities, and national minorities

+ desktop research

Context – environment in mining regions

Key issues in the local community

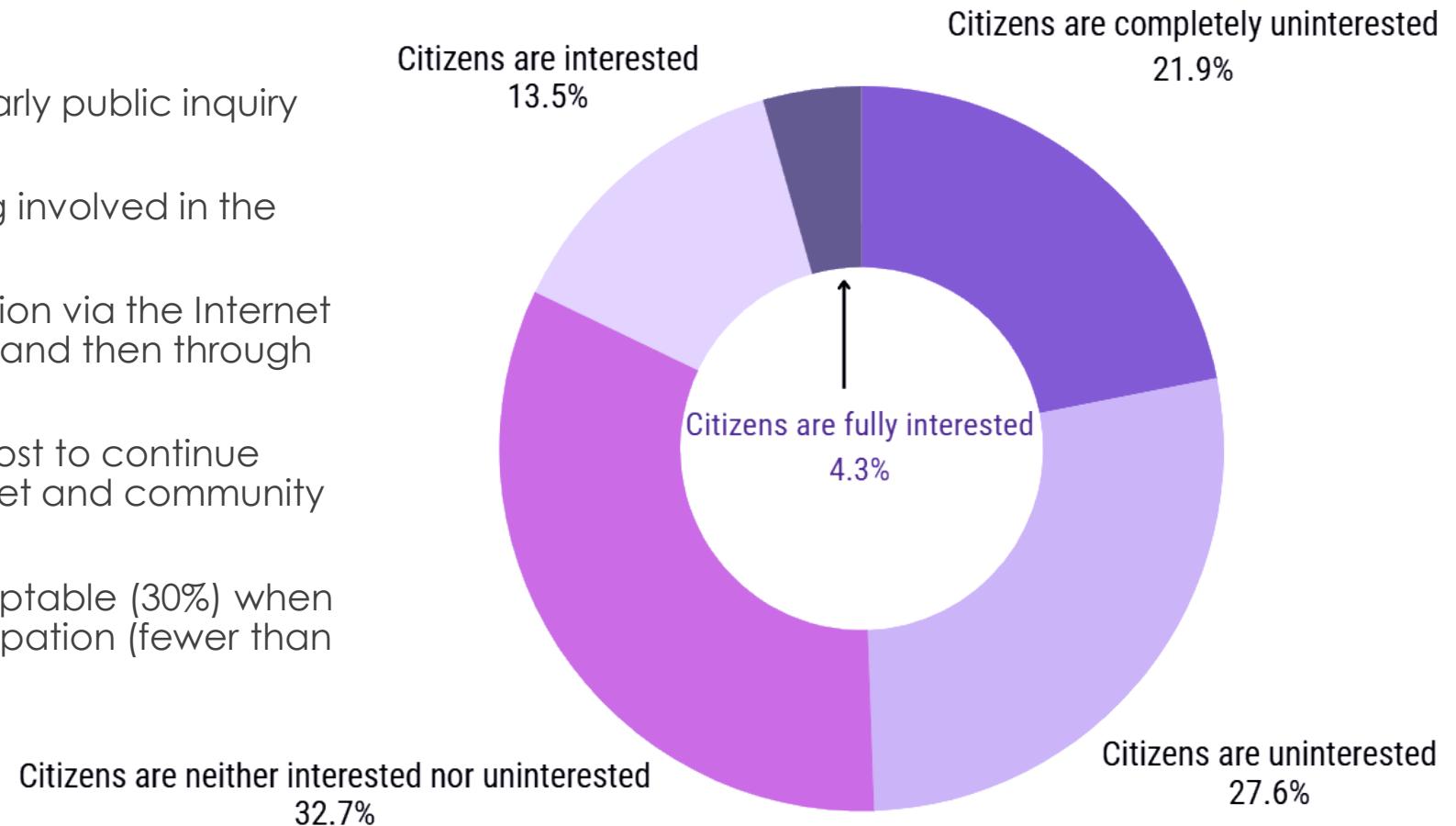


Perceived contribution by actors

Perceived Contributions of Major Actors to Solving Issues Related to Mining Activities (%)	No contribution
National government	52.0
Local government	56.0
Private companies	59.6
NGOs	64.0
Experts and scientific community	67.0
European Union	66.9
Citizens – local activism	34.9

Survey results

- ▶ Less than 10% participated in an early public inquiry or a public inquiry.
- ▶ About 18% are interested in getting involved in the future.
- ▶ Most respondents receive information via the Internet – websites and social media (22%) and then through informal networks (19%).
- ▶ In the future, they would like the most to continue receiving information on the Internet and community meetings, but also on national TV.
- ▶ Live public discussion is more acceptable (30%) when compared to other forms of participation (fewer than 11%) – face-to-face contact.



Interviews preliminary results

- ▶ The most important thing is to **improve the methods of informing stakeholders**, particularly when decisions of national interest are to be made.
- ▶ The roles of different sectors shape their contrasting views on planning and public participation, with **governmental and non-governmental actors often at opposite ends**.
- ▶ For participation to be meaningful, **citizens must understand the scope of spatial and urban plans**; otherwise, their efforts address matters outside planning's reach.

Focus groups preliminary results

- ▶ There is a significant gap between the needs of persons with disabilities and their opportunities to participate.
- ▶ National minorities require certain adjustments in participation methods, though not as extensively as expected.
- ▶ For women, the key issue lies less in the methods themselves and more in changing the broader social context shaped by patriarchal norms.
- ▶ Rural residents, older adults, and minorities with generally lower educational attainment still depend on analogue forms of communication that cannot be replaced by digital participation tools.
- ▶ Young people recognize the importance of analogue methods and believe that digital tools should not replace them. Even youth would rather avoid complex methods such as SWOT or matrix analysis.



Conclusions

- advances in participatory processes -

- 1 We need a social agreement and **clarification on the very purpose of planning** and participation — do we plan for the interests of the majority or the powerful minority, and how much power do we truly give to the citizens?
- 2 The development of digital methods and the inevitability of **digitalization should not lead to the abandonment of analogue participation** methods and face-to-face formats — at least not yet.
- 3 National and local governments should introduce incentives for the use of **informal participation methods**, as these contribute to strengthening trust, informing and educating stakeholders, fostering strategic thinking, and promoting an understanding of the common good as opposed to individual interests.



Thank you for your attention

Project partners:



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