

# 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

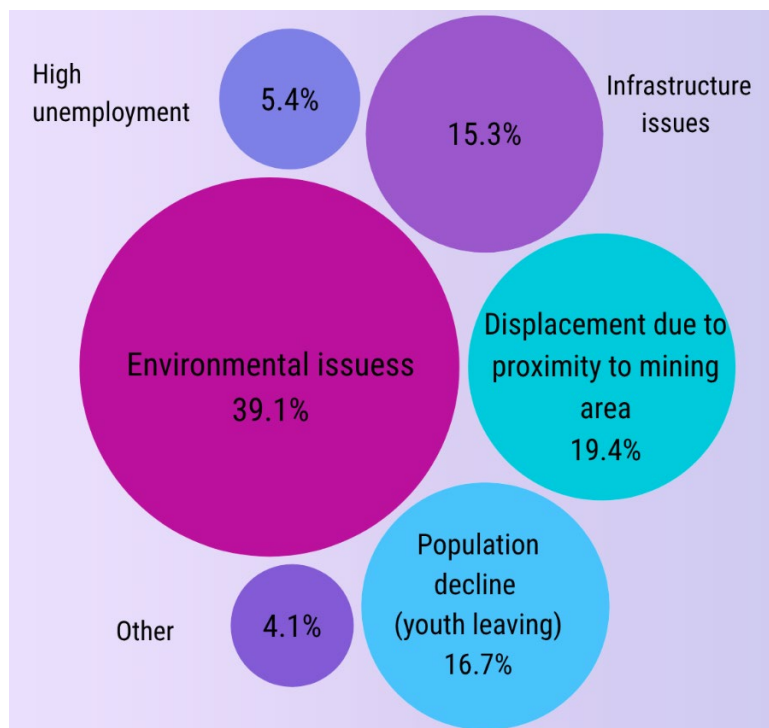
At the Technical University in Bor

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

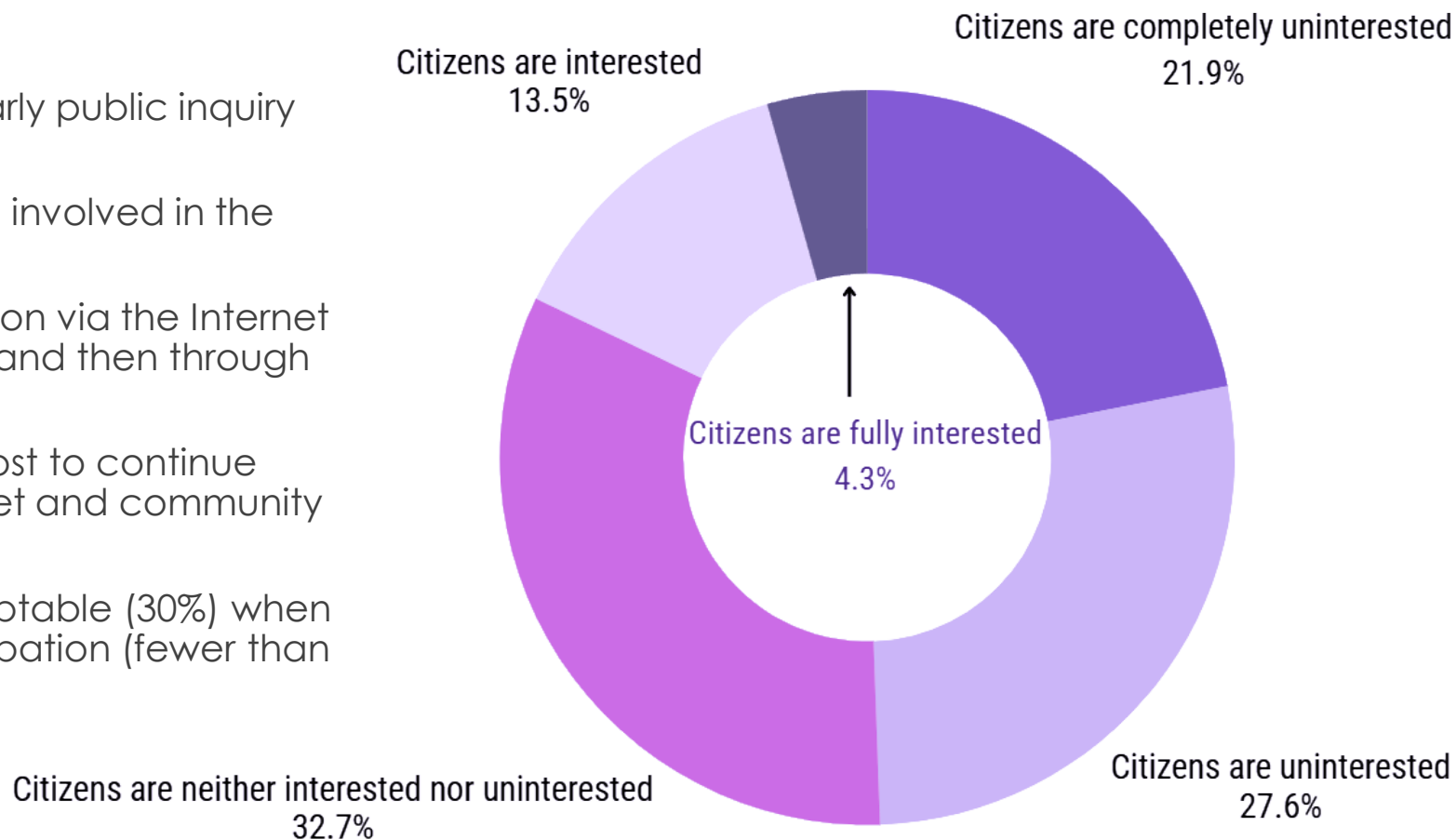


## Perceived contribution by actors

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.



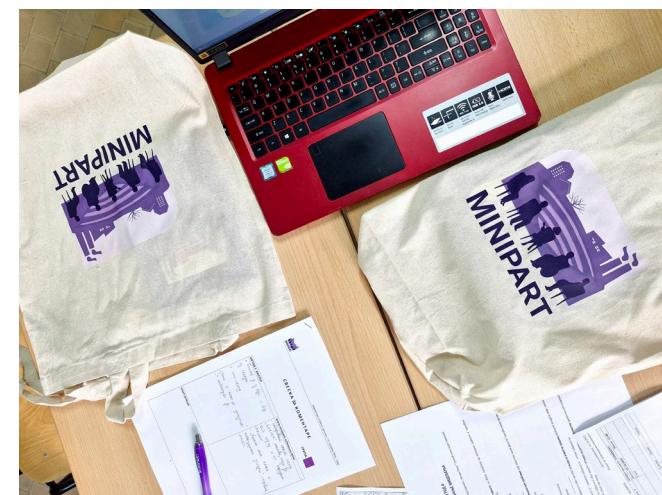
# Interviews preliminary results

- ▶ 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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