

# AN ANALYSIS OF URBAN PLANNING IN POSTSOCIALIST SOCIETIES THROUGH THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: Evidences from Budapest and Belgrade

Carlos ZEPEDA  
Gil, PhD candidate,  
University of Bath,  
Great Britain  
Sinisa ZARIC  
professor of Economics,  
Faculty of Economics,  
University of Belgrade

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*In the postsocialist societies, such as Hungary and Serbia, the urban planning and development reflects confronting injustices of economic, environmental and social character. In this study were shown the similarities, and the differences that are characteristic for the modern development of Budapest and Belgrade, and their districts. The survey undertaken in the two capitals gives evidence of the opinion of the citizens on some development issues. Besides the initiatives, some of bottom-up character (Savamala in Belgrade, Jewish quartier in Budapest), the results are similar and cannot be taken as encouraging: most of the citizens report of the prolonged time for acces to the open urban spaces, even to the retail areas. The conclusions are that the identified problems of the urban development, particularly of the city centers (Erzsebetvaros) and of New Belgrade ( mainly residential area with increasing status of a business center), have a negative impact on creating local social capital and the sense of pride of their citizens.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

THE CONCEPT SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT has been a matter of wide multidisciplinary discussions which definition has evolved throughout the years, booming after Rio's Earth (Hammond, 1995). The root of the word comes from the Latin root "sustinere" which means: "to hold, to sustain", and according to Munn (1992) the context and a series of preconditions will determine what is it that shall be "sustained". The modern definition of sustainable development originated from Kidd's (1992) conceptualization, defining the term under 6 roots which encompass: "population growth, prudent use of resources, pressure on environmental care, built environment, ecological transport capacity and a critique to technology". Sadler (1994) settled the most accepted definition (Ball & Milne, 2005; Herremans & Reid, 2002; Milne, 1996) by conceptualizing Kidd's 6 roots into 3 superimposed circles that represent three dimensions: social, economic and environmental development.

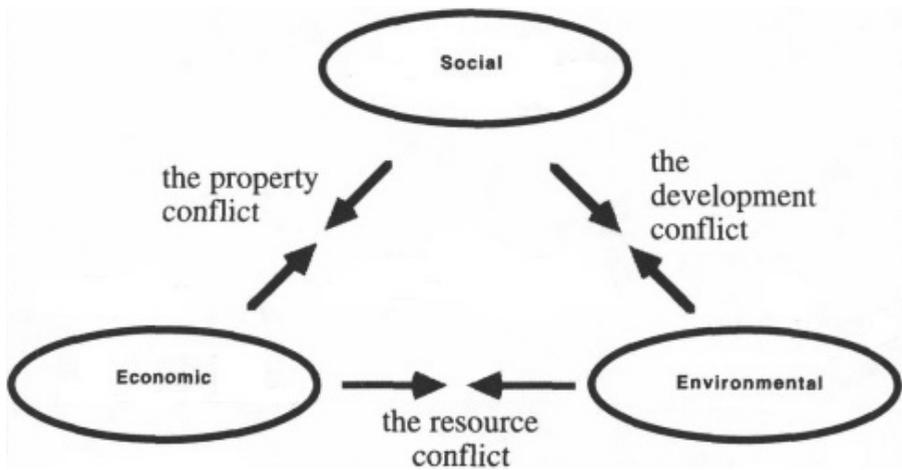


Figure 1: The "conflicting triangle" of Sustainable Development

Source: adapted from Campell, 1996.

This paper follows Sadler's approach to sustainable development, and uses a methodological framework that analyses different patterns from two post-socialist societies, Belgrade and Budapest. Although both cities share many things in common from their past, an important point of diversion has happened in 2003, when a referendum celebrated on 12 April 2003 in Hungary asked the following:

76 "Egyetért-e azzal, hogy a Magyar Köztársaság az Európai Uniótagjává váljon?" ("Do

you agree that Hungary should become a member of the European Union?”). The results were conclusive, 83.4% of the voters leaned towards a “yes”, allowing Hungary to become a member of the European Union on 1st May 2004, consequently joining the Schengen-area in 2007. EU’s regional development policy from 2007 to 2013 allocated Hungary 25.7 billion euros from cohesion funds.(Molnár, 2013). On the other side, Serbia officially applied for European Union membership on 22nd December 2009 (Phinnemore & İçener, 2016), and it became an official candidate on October 2011. There is a debate on whether EU integration may be beneficial for the country but it is passing through the accession process opening the chapters in harmonization with the EU standards. As some authors (Zeković & Maričić, 2008) argue that Serbia must prepare national development strategies that are coherent with the Lisbon agenda, and other European policy frameworks. It is estimated that the accession process could last till 2025, continuously working on opening and closing the accession chapters ([www.europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/12/11/Serbia-opens-two-new-chapters-eu-accession-talks/](http://www.europeanwesternbalkans.com/2017/12/11/Serbia-opens-two-new-chapters-eu-accession-talks/)). Glasson (2007) discusses the discrepancies caused by the expansion of the European Union to the east. Whilst less developed countries may not have the infrastructure to compete against the industrialized, EU may cause a risk of losing not only presence in markets, but also human capital which in seek for a better life may emigrate towards countries with higher salary rates.

## ***2. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND CITIES***

Sustainability is a term that everyone likes, but no one knows what it means. Its ambivalence let the popularity of such word grow, to the point where now everything must be “sustainable” to be good, funded or approved. Projects and policies get automatically self-enhanced when the word sustainable is next to it. Such popularity had exceeded its capacity for objectivity, as the broadening of its meaning and the behaviour of the word itself, has widen its ambiguity and the difficulty of effectively tracing the real impact of policies and projects. However, the importance of knowing the real impacts of policies from both governmental and non-governmental bodies is vital as these generally affect (positively or negatively) the quality of life of people, considering that the most vulnerable sectors of the population are those which impact can benefit or harm more severely.

## **2.1. Economic sustainability**

Economic activity fuels the engine of the context we live in. Placing a price tag on goods and services had shaped the way western societies work. Unfortunately, this practice has harmed the quality of the natural environment. By prioritising the capital stock, a resource can become replaceable (Pearce, Markandya, & Barbier, 1989), and therefore disposable. Martinez-Alier (2002) agree that bad economic practices lead to the deterioration of the environment, making a profit oriented scheme leading to the imminent disappearance of natural resources. There is enough evidence to argue that traditional economics neglected the aspects of environmental and social by only focusing on market performance. It wasn't until the early 1990s when the idea of making an economic system work without endangering our planet took relevance, when Solow (1991) included the concept of inheriting natural resources to future generations and making the economic system work. Anand & Sen (2000) explored it further landing that maintaining a balance between resource consumption and economic activity leads to economic sustainability. The economic aspect within any sustainable development scheme must then consider welfare of stakeholders, but without endangering in any way the natural ecosystems. Instead of equally distributing natural resources, sustainability policies must focus on enhancing the capacity of wellness to future generations improving the quality of the natural environment instead of just maintaining a balance. As Marxism promoted a collective identity, city planning, and development was a tool to achieve these political. Eastern European governments had, during communist era, the power to model cities according to its purpose. Such freedom made them able to balance the needs of society, environmental and their own.

## **2.2. Social sustainability**

The social leg, focus to the quality of life of people and the system behind the different social structures, communities, and anything related to maintaining and improving living standards. It does not focus on material possessions, but instead it aims to finding equality, social benefits, access to cultural, educational, leisure, health facilities, etc. Factors included on the concept of quality of life. Across all the literature reviewed, there were disagreements and ambiguities. It was considered that the concept has gone beyond to other areas such as: social capital, social cohesion, social inclusion, etc., neglecting social sustainability; without realising that these terms are already implied. Sachs (1999) aims to conceptualise the term

while including a series of sub-concepts such as: “cultural sustainability, political sustainability”. This approach leaves field for further discussions, leaving the term somewhat vague. Vallance (2011) found a gap on the definition, describing that key aspects to defining and understanding the term rests on the conflicts in society; for instance, a difference in behaviours on what is “environmentally correct” and what “always” has been done. This approach does not consider societies as evolutionary entities. Cultural patterns are in constant change, society’s customs and behaviours move parallel, so such definition is not valid for the purposes of this paper. Of all, Magis (2010) suggests that resilience within a society directly indicates its level of sustainability. This statement, isolates the concept from its two brothers “environmental” and “social” contextualising society and its values and increasing fairness in comparative policy evaluations, as it does not consider any preconditions, but focuses on the actual impacts of the project. This idea focuses on leading towards frameworks that would be able to quantify changes in quality of life after project or policy implementation. When there is an adversity within a society, its resilience will be proportionate to their ability to develop the resources needed to deal with it (Ahmed, Seedat, Van Niekerk, & Bulbulia, 2004). Therefore, the best way to measure social sustainable development includes the aspects that focus on enhancing the quality of life of the stakeholders, while increasing the resilience of the community.

The concept of quality of life includes aspects such as: equity, inclusion, empowerment and supports (Schalok & Verdugo, 2003), but when it relates to building practices, it must prioritise the wellbeing of the inhabitants. Indicators must be able to describe the health condition, and find whether its circumstantial, or dependant of the internal living conditions. Therefore, aspects should also include habits (sports, recreational, cultural, etc.), visits to the doctor, sleep quality, and other factors that can help to find whether there is a correlation between this and the stakeholder’s wellbeing, or is just pure causation. Moving on to an urban scale, Hemphill (2004) highlights the importance of the sense of community pride, as this relates to the levels of resilience.

### *2.3. Environmental sustainability*

The environmental aspects focus on enhancing the quality of the natural ecosystems. A common denominator amongst the three terms discussed is its ambiguity. The broadness of the environmental aspect is a double-edged sword,

as definitions must be clear when evaluating a sustainable policy, for instance the criteria of a policy evaluation in “sustainable forestry” must differ to one of “sustainable agriculture”. The methods towards an effective environmental program must focus on the goals (Shearman, 1990). The trend left by Solow was taken by Goodland(1996), who provided a definition that highlights the importance of maintaining the natural capital through a balance between inputs and outputs of the different actors involved in the process (see table 1)

**Table 1: Concepts within the definition of Environmental Sustainability**

Outputs	Waste emissions: to be kept as minimum, within the boundaries of no environmental degradation
Inputs	Renewables: harvest rates to be re-generable of the natural system Non-renewables: calculate amount of inputs
Operational principles	Scale of economic subsystem limited to sustainable capacities Increase of technological resources for sustainable development Renewables should be optimized according to profitability

Source: Adapted from Goodland (1996)

This chart, as well as other definitions reviewed showed a common denominator, which was that most of the authors only defined the characteristics of the term; and fewer explored its impacts. Morelli (2013) went beyond Solow’s intergenerational balance of resources, and instead focused on providing a definition which targets a minimum usage of resources, without compromising the health of natural ecosystems; implicitly highlighting the importance of enhancing the environment when taking natural resources to our own benefit. The impact of an environmental policy must not settle for maintaining a balance of the natural resources, but must aim for enhancing and regenerating the natural environment.

### **3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND MEASURING PERFORMANCES**

There are various ways to measure performance. Hara (1976) concluded that “measuring development performance may lead to problems because there are not many standards to assess progress”. Pinter(2005) argues that whilst sustainability indicators keep growing, there is not any general agreement for the best methods or standards to measure sustainable development. Moreno(2014) discusses the

wide variety of approaches taken to analyses in sustainable urban development and proposes to homologate different European regulations.

The methods chosen for this study derives from a study that focuses on urban regeneration schemes, by Hemphill (2004), but however encompasses all the elements of sustainable development to a series of indicators selected from a bottom-up approach. From the 5 series of indicators selected by Hemphill, the surveys that focused on social aspects called “community benefits” were selected an applied to a randomized sample in both cities Belgrade and Budapest.

The surveys were applied online via voluntary participation, for people in the areas of Novi Beograd, in Belgrade, and district 8 “XIII. Kerület Józsefváros” in Budapest. The samples correspond to a 90% level of confidence with a margin error of 5% to the respective populations of the mentioned areas. The confidence level determines the certainty of the study. With our sample, we can say that we are 90% certain that our data represents the true. The formula to calculate the confidence levels and margin errors are presented as follow:

$$n = (x^2 * N * P * (1 - P)) / ((ME^2 * (N - 1) + (x^2 * p * (1 - P) ) )$$

Where  $n$  is the sample size,  $x^2$  is Chi square for the specified confidence level at 1 degree of freedom,  $N$  is the population size,  $P$  is the population proportion,  $ME^2$  is the desired margin of error. The formula is used proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), and the calculation was made through a file obtained by “*The Research Advisors group*”.

Having this in mind, a numerical scale was initially suggested; i.e., how do you rate the access to medical facilities from 0 to 10. as convenient as it may sound, this strategy may not cover any potential retrogression within the area. So, numerical factors were abandoned, and instead added a series of answers: “Increased, Decreased and Remained.” This way the interviewee would be able to give an accurate opinion based on a real change, whether there has been development or the opposite. There are some areas in which the expert did not feel comfortable, and so the option “no response” was added, that way the expert would not have to compromise to give an answer to which he/she may be unsure.

Hatry (1972) also considers that when trying to measure development, there are 3 reference points that shall be considered: “Time-lapse comparison” which focus on providing information on progress, “comparison across different areas with similar characteristics” and “comparisons made to particular activities”. 2

surveys were created, with the intention of targeting two different groups. The first survey requests for specific information, and is targeted to experts in different areas. These experts include: University Professors, development practitioners, real estate agents, architects, activists, urban planners, space planners, bloggers, consultants, etc.

The basic premise of each question within both types of surveys is: In the last ten years". The survey targeted to specialists contains categories related to the 5 indicators previously mentioned. The second survey targets the sample described above, under the same premise, in the last 10 years as it is aiming to show the evolution of their cities from a time they could easily relate.

This survey has been translated to Serbian and Hungarian, so it could have a higher range of surveyed people, but not only those who speak English.

#### **4. RESULTS FROM THE SURVEY**

Indicators focused on the social aspects from the concept of sustainable development. Highlighting the importance of improving the quality of life of the local inhabitants, social development literature identifies factors such as: as access to open space, retail educational, medical and cultural facilities are the main actors of the above-mentioned concept. Given the context, an extra question was added to the questionnaires applied in Belgrade with the question: When should Serbia join the EU? 44% of the responses stated that Serbia should never join the EU, whilst a relatively small percentage of 20% thinks that Serbia should had joined at the time when they answered the survey.

The general trend in both cities depicts a similar amount of open spaces in both cities. However, a quarter of the answers from Belgrade stated that an average journey walking to an open space increased. In terms of community group involvement, a large percentage of the population in Budapest replied that it has increased in the last 10 years. This may reflect all the social groups that were created after the change of political systems, and that remain. According to Prof. Szabó, many interventions related to public spaces in Budapest were due to community based projects, for example a park in district 7, which urban furniture was designed and constructed by the children of the community, raising a sense of ownership amongst the parents. The last question related to community ownership, where it was the case of both cities showing large percentages within the

“decrease” section, 43% and 50% in Budapest and Belgrade respectively, as shown in figure N.

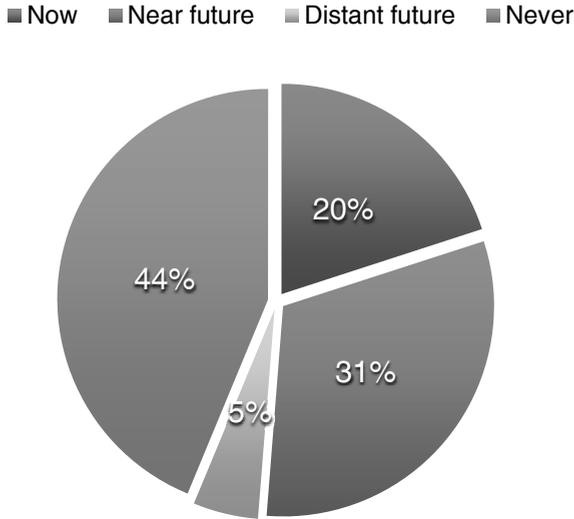


Figure 1: Responses to the question: “When do you think Serbia should join the European Union?”

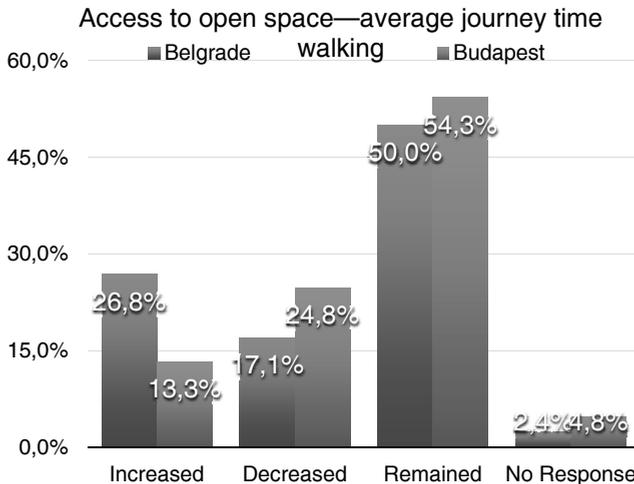


Figure 2: Responses to the question: “In the last 10 years, access to open space has? – increased, decreased, remained or no response”

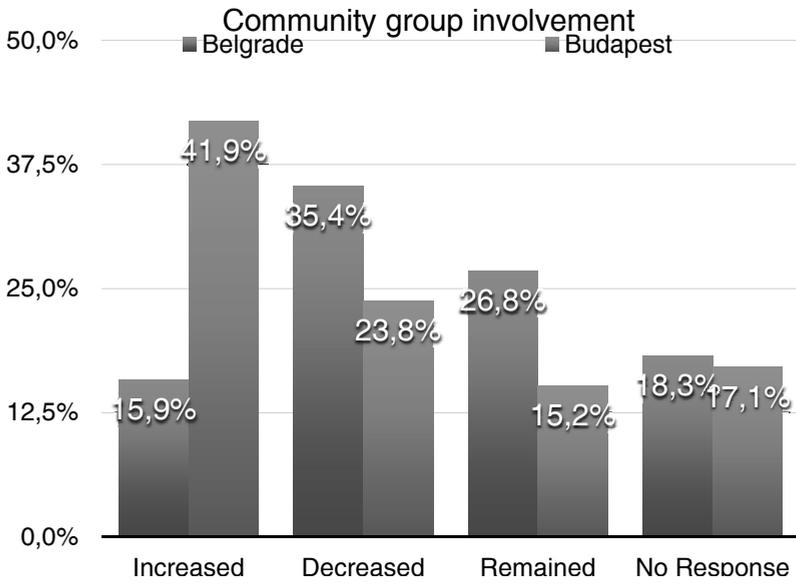


Figure 3: Responses to the question: “In the last 10 years, community group involvement from your area has? - Increased, decreased, remained or No response”?

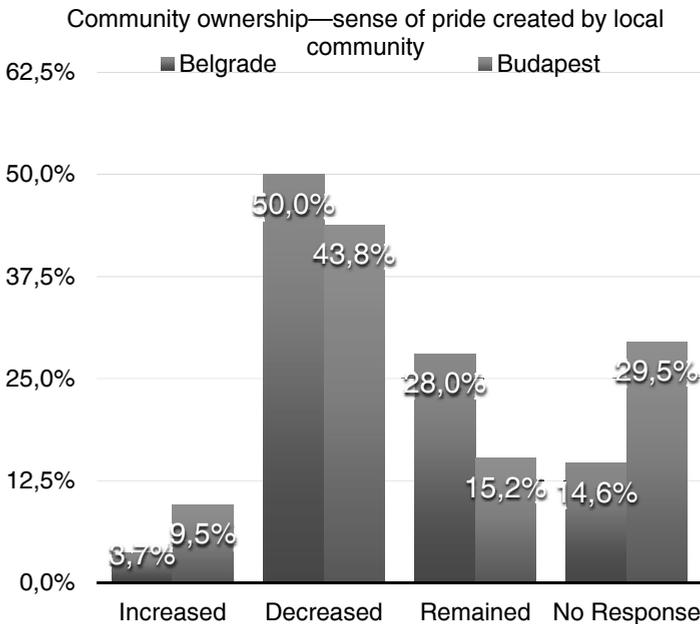


Figure 4: Responses to the question: “In the last 10 years, the sense of pride created by the local community has? – Increased, decreased, remained, and no response”

## 5. DISCUSSION OF THE OBTAINED RESULTS

The figures above may correspond to the activity of citizens into the involvement of local aspects after the transition. For instance in the case of Budapest, there is no evidence that mentions if the decentralization efforts from the government and the power transferred to 22 districts was reflected, this decentralization was successful in other areas, like the environmental agenda, which originally had a low priority by the government, but thanks to citizens involvement gained importance. The key issue was not the decentralization of powers alone but how open the district local governments were to movement demands. (C.G. Pickvance p.232). The fact that there is a high response in *community group involvement* in Budapest, is linked to the fact that after the fall of socialism, new governments wanted to show that they could make things differently, and then they allowed citizen organizations to be more involved; issue which could not be found in the case of Belgrade, where the local impression was that the actual socialist regime brought welfare to the local population.

Perhaps the phenomena of New Belgrade as a new district being not exclusively a residential area, but also a business district where thousands of the new middle class members are working in the modern buildings of international banks and companies, reflects on the responses from 62% of people who agrees that access to retail has increased or remained. Regardless of the boom of shopping centers that Prof. Arpad Szabo mentioned, a surprising figure of 58% of the sample from Budapest concur that the average journey to retail has remained, against a few 4.8% who believes it has increased. surprising results considering the amount of (private) investment in retail from both cities.

Asking the journey time walking to open space, it is implied whether new infrastructure had been created or not in the past 10 years. open spaces near to their homes, against a few 13% of the sample who considered that the access time to open space has increased. In Belgrade the situation seems to be the same: some 50% of the sample considers that the access to open space has remained, while only 1/4 of the sample agreed that this had increased. The ability to get accustomed to use cultural and open spaces has the precondition of being equally accessible to all the citizens of the New Belgrade municipality. In Bourdieu`s (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977) terms (lately discussed in the works of Dasgupta and Endress), there is a strong interconnection between the social spaces and social capital. For commu-

nities such as New Belgrade, creating the culture of belonging (Thoma et al, 2015) has a strong impact on social capital stocks and on cultural capital (Florida, 2003).

Community pride, is perhaps the most important aspect of the social aspects within sustainable development. Its strength relies on how would the inhabitants look after their community. P Waley (2011) declared New Belgrade “a city at war with itself”, and is not surprising to see that the selected sample seems to agree with him. On the same time, the potentials are great, concerning the fact that average net salaries and wages per employee are the second highest (after the central municipality of Belgrade, The Old City) in Serbia. Also, according to the final and selected results of 2011 Census ( Municipalities and Regions of the Republic of Serbia, 2016), we can see that the population of Novi Beograd has a biggest share of population with higher education. Adding the data on a stronger presence of mixed population, regarding the national characteristics (strong presence of Macedonians, Muslims, Bosnians, Hungarians, Yugoslavs, differences concerning the mother tongue and religions), it seems that the community must take stronger role in encouraging the places for creating meetings, communication and social capital formation. Looking at the urban matrix of this vibrant, new district of the Serbian capital, we could notice that the central zone of Novi Belgrade has never been constructed (although planned to be located in front of the Palace of Serbia). The very good review of the concepts of central, pedestrian zones, and their role in many cities (from Munich and Vienna, up to Novi Sad and Belgrade) was presented in Stanojlović (Stanojlović, 2016).

The low level of community pride and low potentials for familiarizing with the open spaces (and events) organized, in the case of New Belgrade, could also minimize the transfer of the assets of cultural capital into entrepreneurial projects and new business units in New Belgrade (and in Belgrade, in general). A number of characteristics of social capital are analyzed in order how to understand the process of creation of its stocks. Having in mind the positive influence of social capital on countries (regions) economic performance, some authors list the factors of social capital directly linked with the city planning, local events, local governments: participation, diversity, sense of belonging, citizen power, proactivity, feeling of trust and safety. Coming back to the original notion of the term “cultural capital”, coined by Florida (Florida, 2002), having in mind the fact that more and more banks, businesses (and recently even healthcare organizations) have its headquarters in

86 | New Belgrade, we can conclude that there is a sub-class of creative professionals.

Still, it is early to speak about stronger concentration of the super-creative class (in Florida's sense), but the creative professionals, as knowledge based workers, could contribute in under certain conditions, a number of new businesses, giving the evidence of transferability of the capital (from creative and social to physical).

Figures are showing a decrease in community ownership and sense of pride from local people. Policy makers and local NGO's should not only focus in developing infrastructure and techniques to mobilize economy. As mentioned social aspects can be as important as these two. This is directly related to community group involvement. It would be difficult for someone who could not care less about their city to involve in activities to enhance it.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS

New tendencies commit to ensuring new planning trends to follow sustainable paths, coupled to urban regeneration strategies coherent in developing sustainable communities, particularly focusing on achieving the target of achieving sustainable development at local level.

An evaluation of the development paths is accepted to deliver a holistic sustainable local development strategy. To establish an infrastructure which would settle regeneration programs, a lot of resources are needed. However, once the consequences of these strategies take effect, the results are expected to deliver results within economic, social and environmental regeneration.

Sustainability assessments can also help to provide robust policies and reforms that can have deeper impacts, re-distributing budgets, refocus services; and private sector can also gauge more effectively allocation of resources when developing newer projects.

The social aspect considered for this paper, has been an effective way to measure and quantify sustainable development for both countries. Although, originally one of the objectives of this study was set to determine whether European Integration reflects at local level, external circumstances around Belgrade made this premise impossible.

Traditional development evaluations would had made an unfair comparison in both cities, considering the events during the late 1990's in Belgrade. War itself, and its consequences bring a reverse development, which, according to scholars, recovery can go from 5 to 20 years, depending on the situation. Therefore, the

comparability of these cities would had not fall on a traditional study on a sustainable development framework, but in measuring the social patterns followed by both cities, 10 years ago, compared to the patterns witnessed in Belgrade.

Entrepreneurship in Belgrade can be a topic of discussion. Efforts to promote an open market have been overshadowed by elevated levels of corruption. It is interesting to notice the dramatic decrease of enterprises in Belgrade from 2005 to 2006, of almost 35,000 enterprises less. The question is if Budapest's (slow but) consistent economic growth is due to European financial policies, or due to policies applied at national and regional levels. Janos Kornai and Susan Rose-Ackerman (Kornai and Ackerman, 2004) call it "second generation" issues of democratic consolidation (after establishing the basic market structures and fundamental institutions of the democratic state.

Both cities show similar trends on social development, and general contentment of the people seem to had increased, or in some aspects remained. Benefits related to policy development at local level, can be obtained from a holistic approach towards the different aspects of sustainability.

As demonstrated in this study, it is possible to illustrate where good practice is happening, and which areas could have the potentials to produce a higher impact through different development strategies. From a policy making point of view, this approach may give the opportunity to have higher impacts more effectively, targeting resources in areas that really require plans of action.

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## *Analiza urbanog planiranja u postsocijalističkim društvima putem koncepta održivog razvoja: Svedočanstva iz Budimpešte i Beograda*

U postsocijalističkim društvima, kakva predstavljaju Mađarska i Srbija, urbano planiranje i razvoj odražavaju suprotstavljene nepravde ekonomskog, ekološkog i društvenog karaktera. U ovoj studiji su prikazane sličnosti, ali i razlike koje karakterišu moderni razvoj Budimpešte i Beograda, kao i njihovih opština i krajeva. I pored inicijative od kojih su mnoge imale „bottom up” karakter (Savamala u Beogradu, Jevrejski kvart – VII Distrikt u Budimpešti), rezultati su slični i nemogu se smatrati ohrabrujućim. Većina građana smatra da je produženo vreme dolaska do otvorenih gradskih prostora, pa čak i do lokacija za maloprodajne aktivnosti. Zaključci su da identifikovani problemi urbanog razvoja, posebno u gradskim centrima (Eržebet Varoš) i na Novom Beogradu (uglavnom, zona za stanovanje, ali i sa rastućim statusom poslovnog centra), imaju negativni uticaj na kreiranja lokalnog socijalnog kapitala i osećaja ponosa njihovih stanovnika.

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*Ključne reči:* održivi razvoj, socijalni kapital, kulturni kapital, kreativni distrikti, urbano planiranje

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