

Social Capital and Local Development: Citizen Participation in Decision-making Processes

SINISA ZARIC

Abstract Social capital as a term has been used widely to operationalize interpersonal trust among citizens, trust in local and other institutions, trustworthiness, as well as citizens' networking in various associations, clubs and organizations at local and other levels. Confidence is the most important component of social capital. Trust enables the realization of complex, non-routine projects by a community. There is a correlation between social capital and local development. In local communities, social capital has predominantly been interpreted as a function of trust. It has recently been identified as a special type of intangible property of the community which fosters the collecting of ideas and suggestions from citizens, and the selection of projects based on this procedure (Jordan et al. 2010). The process of citizen sourcing has been defined and described as "tapping into the collective intelligence of citizens" (Howe 2008). Local communities which possess significant stocks of social capital are expected to engage in better forms of mutual cooperation. Significant limitations of these collaborative procedures (Sharma 2010) are a) social capital has predominantly been proposed as a means of creating alternatives to local projects, and for selecting the most suitable of these; b) the process of proposing projects should occur within certain financial-methodological parameters, and proposals should be supported by statistical surveys and model calculations, and c) it is necessary to evaluate the results of findings obtained by the use of crowdsourcing techniques (Zaric 2014). This paper analyzes the social capital of several case-study cities in Serbia, Finland, and Belgium.

Keywords: • collaborating • crowdsourcing • citizensourcing • policy process • trust in local institutions

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS: Sinisa Zaric, Ph.D., University of Belgrade, Faculty of Economics, Kamenička 6, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia, email: sinisa@ekof.bg.ac.rs.

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1 From collaborative strategies to crowdsourcing, and from crowdsourcing to citizen sourcing

Crowdsourcing is a model of problem-solving distributed among many individuals. The potential and talents of a “crowd” are sometimes also called the “power of the many”. Discovering this potential is one of the most recent results of social and economic development. In the business model of crowdsourcing, the “crowd” plays a crucial role. “Citizen sourcing” is a different model that is derived from crowdsourcing: here, citizens are the focus. The aim of citizen sourcing is to involve citizens in various activities: for example, in public work or other projects of local governments.

The “power of the many” has been harnessed in the activities of a wide range of companies, such as in production processes and in marketing for designing promotional campaigns. Recently, citizen sourcing has been used as a component of the process of community development and in the planning and implementation of public projects. These remarkable participative solutions and strategies are employed for the purpose of establishing closer relationships with customers (Ogawa and Piller 2006), as well as other stakeholders or citizens.

When exploring the practices of crowdsourcing, attention should be paid to the expenses and costs of this approach and to identifying ways of reducing these. Both in terms of outsourcing and crowdsourcing, managers are investigating the possibility of getting input at a lower price. Crowdsourcing is an engaging process that is not easy to manage. Efficient crowdsourcing requires the close cooperation of different functions, departments and business lines within a company to be successful. Delegating processes to a crowd is costly, but it is more frequently efficient to do this than to outsource the process to an external company; i.e., to a subcontractor.

- In outsourcing, the partner to whom the company “delegates” a part of their process is known and is well defined.
- With crowdsourcing, on the contrary, the process is “outsourced” to an undefined group of people.

In citizen sourcing, the group of people who participate in the so-called “co-creation”¹ of a city – for example – are citizens. Efficient citizen sourcing has been made possible by widespread internet access and the rapid development of social media creates fertile ground for such opportunities. In the case of citizen sourcing, the inputs of citizens may help local governments or other public bodies. The point of citizen sourcing is the belief that the crowd/citizens ...

- Sometimes know more than the employees of the company or local government responsible for implementing the project in question; or
- Have some different skills, knowledge or capacities additional to the responsible internal managers; and

- Can most probably precisely express their needs, wants and perceptions. This is of crucial importance for creating inclusive and democratic local government.

2 From collaborative strategies to crowdsourcing and citizen sourcing

The history of economic models offers some evidence about complete economic systems based on the participation of employees. Whether these models have been institutionalized and instrumentalized or not, these attempts are of interest to economic theory. The major examples are self-management in Yugoslavia² and “*Mitbestimmung*”³ in Germany. Besides these macro-level approaches, management theory has been specifically interested in the problem of how to involve employees in the process of implementing tasks and attaining the goals of a company.

In the theory of crowdsourcing, there are four basic questions which are of crucial importance:

- What does the crowd (citizens) want?
- What can the crowd (citizens) create?
- What does the crowd (citizens) think?
- What will the crowd (citizens) fund (finance)?

Crowdsourcing has been, until now, mainly thought of as a management process (Sherman 2011). However, recent approaches have also taken into consideration the fact that crowdsourcing has been successfully implemented in the processes of business, co-creation (Bruni *et al.* 2018), and in community projects implemented by local governments. Therefore, in the recent professional literature crowdsourcing has been investigated within a hybrid conceptual framework that mixes terms from business, organizational theory, technology, sociology and social psychology.

3 Definition of crowdsourcing: from collaborative strategies to crowdsourcing and citizen sourcing

As with many new terms in management and marketing, the term crowdsourcing was also recently coined.⁴ Crowdsourcing comes from the words “crowd” + “outsourcing,” and the first known use of this expression can be found in writing by Jeff Howe⁵ (Howe 2008). The term citizen-sourcing is a derivative of crowdsourcing (coined from “citizen” + “outsourcing”) and, according to dictionaries of management, means outsourcing the tasks of (local) government to citizens, as a well specified part of the crowd.

Some definitions of crowdsourcing have become a part of glossaries and business dictionaries. “The practice of obtaining needed services, ideas, or content by soliciting contributions from a large group of people and especially from the online community rather than from traditional employees or suppliers”.⁶

Jeff Howe (2008) points to the correspondence of crowdsourcing and outsourcing. The author finds the process of outsourcing crucial for understanding crowdsourcing as a process that is driving the future of business. He states that crowdsourcing is a process that involves the outsourcing of certain tasks to a distributed group of people. Consequently, the model of citizen sourcing concerns managing citizens' inputs in order to improve the decisions of local government. This process can occur both online and offline, and the difference between crowdsourcing/citizen sourcing and ordinary outsourcing is that tasks or problems are outsourced to an undefined public rather than a specific body, such as paid employees (Howe 2008), or paid professionals from the organizations of local government.

Recently, two authors – Estelles Arolas and Gonzales Ladron-de-Guevara – defined crowdsourcing as a type of participative online activity in which an individual, an institution, a non-profit organization or company proposes to a group of individuals of varying knowledge, heterogeneity, and number, via a flexible open call, the voluntary undertaking of a task. The authors emphasize the benefits of both sides: the crowd and the crowdsourcer:

“The undertaking of the task, of variable complexity and modularity, and in which the crowd should participate bringing their work, money, knowledge and/or experience, always entails mutual benefit. The user will receive the satisfaction of a given type of need, be it economic, social recognition, self-esteem, or the development of individual skills, while the crowdsourcer will obtain and utilize to their advantage that what the user has brought to the venture, whose form will depend on the type of activity undertaken” (Estellés Arolas and González-Ladrón-de-Guevara 2012, 197).

4 Trends: The rise of strategies that are based on the participation of many actors

Originally, the instrument of crowdsourcing came from the business world. From the very beginning, the model was associated with certain benefits. The major costs incurred by the crowdsourcer are associated with organizing and maintaining social groups and networks. In many cases, the crowdsourcer has to introduce some form of monetary incentive to stimulate the participation of the crowd.

The respective costs are always measurable, but the associated benefits are not measurable in all cases. For example, in the case of citizen sourcing when the technique of crowdsourcing is applied to public affairs there may be measurable benefits, but those associated with the general well-being of the community are frequently intangible. The motivation of citizens (Hars and Ou 2002) comes from a desire to improve the conditions of local communities and neighborhoods through the projects that are selected and

implemented. However, the crowd/citizens generally participate as unpaid or underpaid innovators.

The role of members of the crowd or of participating citizens can be threefold:

1. As active participants they can be considered as value-adding workers or managers in the administration of a project;
2. They may possess capacity which represents a valuable economic asset in the project;
3. They may be systematically integrated into the corporate structure or may be activated within the citizen-sourcing platforms.

5 Types of citizen sourcing

The technique of citizen sourcing can be applied in a rich variety of ways. Here are some of the most common areas of application:

- Various local development projects may rely on citizen sourcing. This approach is also called the collaborative development of a territory, whereby the term “territory” may refer to neighborhood, settlement or region.
- Urban planning projects involve neighborhood intervention. Such projects, as a rule, require the co-operation of a wide range of stakeholders in proposing, designing and implementing spatial interventions that improve the quality of the urban environment.
- Competitive bids in relation to specifically defined tasks or problems. In such cases, the most important task is to create platforms that can facilitate the access of citizens, improve presentation of the related ideas, and help with management activities related to collecting and processing the ideas of citizens.
- Permanent open calls. Keeping calls open is one of the more important tools in terms of creating permanent relations with creative communities and groups (Leadbeater and Miller 2004). This may be understood as part of the effort to establish so-called open government (Obama 2009). This technique may be implemented in various forms:
 - Community reporting. This helps citizens and policymakers to become partners who provide true, authentic information about problems in local communities.
 - Project evaluation. This technique is very much in use. Project evaluation by citizens occurs in many cities and local communities.
 - Citizen-to-citizen support. Such support is articulated via chats and discussion forums. It can strengthen networking and generalized trust, having indirect but positive impacts on local development.⁷

The citizen-sourcing model puts citizens at the center of focus by identifying them as a resource. Citizen sourcing is crowdsourcing practice applied by governments with the goal of tapping into the collective intelligence of citizens. Through citizen sourcing, governments can collect ideas, suggestions and opinions from their citizens, thereby

creating a permanent feedback loop of communication. Thanks to modern technologies, the time has come to unlock the wisdom of the crowd and the wisdom and creative potential of citizens.

In the citizen sourcing model, cities are interpreted as powerhouses of collective intelligence. More precisely, it is citizens who are considered capable of detecting and identifying the need for local common and public goods. But the process is not only about identifying preferences and making opinions and voting available on the internet. Additionally, it is citizens who can suggest projects, select projects from various alternatives, and participate in monitoring the process of implementation of these local projects.

Citizen sourcing has its own typology and criteria for evaluation. Nam (2012) suggests a very simple dichotomy of approaches to citizen sourcing by identifying the contents as “cool” or “hot”. The criterion according to which citizen sourcing project may be evaluated is the extent and impact of citizens’ involvement in the decision-making process in local government projects and public policies.

Table 1: Citizen sourcing: Cool or hot?

Cool	Hot
The aim of citizen sourcing is only to improve the image of the (local) government. As a result of the citizen sourcing exercise, the (local) government hopes to look “cool”.	Information creation with citizens Service improvement with citizens Solution development with citizens Policy making with citizens

Source: Author’s construction adapted from Nam (2012, 14; Table 2).

The proposed distinction could be enriched by inserting a third category: a “moderate” type of citizen sourcing. The “hot” type of citizen sourcing could thus delineate four activities:

- Solution development with citizens;
- Monitoring projects derived from a citizen-sourcing platform (monitoring the process, auditing facts and figures);
- Policy making with citizens;
- And public expertise (Dutton 2011).

The enriched, extended table would thus be as follows.

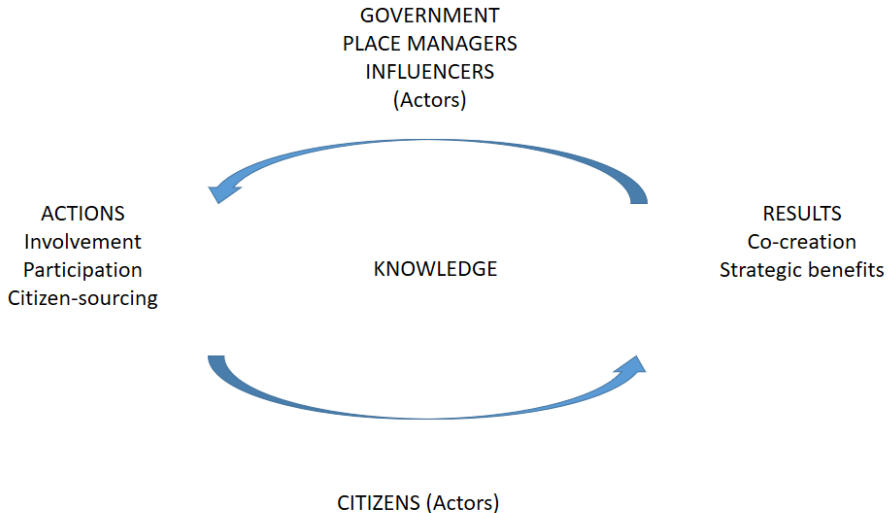
Table 2: Citizen sourcing: Cool, moderate and hot

Cool	Moderate	Hot
Improving the image of (local) government	Information creation with citizens	Solution development with citizens
		Public expertise
	Service improvement with citizens	Monitoring (controlling, auditing)
		Policymaking with citizens

Source: Author’s construction, adapted from Nam (2012).

This typology suggests the importance of “shaping “the crowd (e.g. citizens). While all citizens can take part in cool approaches to citizen sourcing such as image making, not all can participate in solution development, and especially in monitoring. This problem is due to the role of knowledge (See Figure 1). In these terms, one may understand citizens as a kind of specific human capital that has a significant impact on the quality and quantity of local government products/services.

Figure 1: Actor-to-actor relationship and the role of knowledge



Source: Bruni et al. (2018, 18).

Citizens are able to undertake certain roles in project monitoring. This does not imply that these citizens have to be certified auditors or accounting managers: it is enough if they are able to undertake performance auditing; i.e., if they are able and qualified to

evaluate whether the goals and objectives of the monitored or evaluated public project have been fulfilled.

Dilemmas arise about whether so-called “hot” activities should be limited to a restricted group of qualified citizens, or should be open to the whole body of citizens. There are arguments both for and against such kind of limitations. The supporting arguments for the former approach concern the qualifications (or lack thereof) of citizens. The “contra” arguments are inspired by the desire to adhere to the principles behind citizen sourcing and its potential for open innovation (Table 3).

The areas for the application of citizen sourcing, as described by Nam (2012), represent a matrix of possibilities for fostering the means of co-creating in local environments and community lives.

Table 3: Areas of application of citizen sourcing

Dimension	Category
Purpose	Image-making Information creation Service co-production Problem solving Project design and formulation Policy making
Type of wisdom collected	General opinion/supportive thinking Professional skills and knowledge Innovative ideas
Strategy in decision making	Contests Co-working with professionals from administrative bodies Wiki Social networking Social voting

Source: Author’s construction, adapted from Nam (2012, 14; Table 1).

There are three main stages in the process of evaluation (design evaluation, process evaluation, and outcome evaluation – Table 4) each of which is characterized by specific evaluation criteria. In many of the completed projects of citizen sourcing in different countries (Belgium, Iceland, the USA, Colombia, and Serbia) most of the evaluation criteria have been already introduced (albeit not all of them in every project).

Table 4: Evaluation Criteria

Focus	Criteria
Design evaluation	Sociotechnical design Functional design Procedural design Government 2.0 policy design
Process evaluation	Transparency Openness of information about operations and decisions of government Openness of information for participation and collaboration Openness of participation and collaboration processes Participation Inclusiveness Representativeness Diversity Collaboration Communication Partnership Deliberation
Outcome evaluation	Effectiveness Impact

Source: Nam (2012, 16; Table 5).

6 Citizen sourcing in practice, and the case of the city of Pancevo (participative budgeting)

Citizen sourcing is a useful model for developing more inclusive and democratic cities, but its application does not look back on a longer tradition (Torres 2007). However, there are already a number of cases that offer evidence of the feasibility and practicability of applying the philosophy of crowdsourcing to the problems of local governments and local communities. Citizen-sourcing projects are present in many cities worldwide: from Latin America (e.g. in Medellin⁸) to Europe (e.g. in Ostend⁹). Some projects have become very well known and have started to serve as the benchmarks for further applications of the approach. There have been various contributions to the general methodology of the citizen-sourcing approach as a result of these many completed projects. One of them is the creation of the internet-based platform called Citizenlab.¹⁰

In spite of the large number of positive outcomes of developing citizen sourcing projects, there has been a lack of a critical approach to completed initiatives. In particular, many authors have failed to recognize that this inclusive and democratic approach may be used

to manipulate voters by giving them the illusion that they are becoming decision-making factors in community development.

In Serbia, citizen-sourcing projects are carried out under the name of "participative budgeting". These projects are supported from EU funds with the cooperation of BIRN¹¹ and NALED.¹² The projects involve citizens in the process of decision making and increase the transparency of economic development measures. The program has initiated the implementation of citizen-sourcing projects in ten Serbian municipalities, the city of Pančevo being one of them.

Citizen-sourcing projects involving participative budgeting – including the case-study project in Pančevo – are implemented in the following way, as a rule:

1. First, the budget which is available is identified, about which the opinion of citizens is collected. In many cases, this budget is a residual amount of the annual budget of the local government which remains unspent. In selected cases, however, the local government exclusively devotes finances to participative budgeting in order to facilitate the co-production of public services and municipal activities (Cassia and Magno 2009).
2. The second step consists of elaborating and investigating various alternative ideas and attaching budget lines and costs to the related hypothetical tasks.
3. The third step is to vote on the previously defined alternatives and to compare the number of "likes" and "dislikes" associated with them.
4. Finally, the chosen project is implemented.

The framework of the Pančevo participative budgeting project for 2016 was based upon six characteristics.

- For the year 2016, the budget to be decided on was approximately five million dinars (cca, 42,000 euros).
- The proposed and selected projects had to conform with the aims and constraints defined by the document *Strategy for development of the city of Pančevo for the period 2014–2020*.¹³
- The project proposals had to fit into one of four areas: they had to be either ecological [pro-environmental], or cultural, or social proposals, or facilitate industrial development.
- The call for proposals and the ideas received were completely transparent to the public.
- The compilation of the shortlist and the selection of proposals had to be carried out by the local municipality team on the basis of the following criteria: a) to what extent the project proposal was clear and feasible; b) how well the project proposal matched the priorities defined by the aforementioned "Strategy..."; and, c) the required financial resources.
- The project proposals were uploaded and presented on the internet and the winning entry was decided based on the number of "likes" received by each proposal.

One of the critical aspects of citizen sourcing is motivating citizens to take part in initiatives (Brabham 2009) and, crucially, getting them engaged in the development of solutions, monitoring and performance auditing, and ultimately policy making. Since the level of trust towards institutions is relatively low in Serbia, the response rate to the participative budgeting call of the Municipality of Pančevo was also relatively low.

In total, 903 votes were collected, a number which was evaluated by the Pančevo municipality as a good response. Four project proposals were nominated, with the results being as follows:¹⁴

- Purchasing a catamaran boat for tourists – 353 votes;
- Developing cultural-tourist paths – 279 votes;
- Renovating the public clocks in the city – 194 votes;
- Publishing a services guide to the city of Pančevo – 77 votes.

The process of evaluation was based on a table that included some well-defined criteria:

- The project should be important to the city; its deliverables should significantly improve the quality of life in Pančevo (1–5 points).
- The project should be understandable to citizens, and the recommended intervention should serve some specific need of the city (1–5 points).
- The benefits of the project should be enjoyable by a huge number of citizens (1–5 points).
- The project costs should be small (1–5 points).
- The implementation period should be short (1–5 points).

As a result of the voting, Pančevo obtained a catamaran boat for cruising on the nearby Timiș river.¹⁵

Critical evaluation of this example reveals the following facts:

- For this proposed project only some 353 citizens voted from a total of 76,200 inhabitants living in the urban area.¹⁶
- Pančevo is known as an industrial city (it has major processing industries), and has pollution-related problems. The nomination of the tourist boat as the winning option from the participative budgeting process signifies that the local government is dealing with peripheral problems that are not of crucial importance.
- As a general conclusion, it seems that in the process of launching a citizen-sourcing project the local administration should have started from the principles contained in theories of local economic development and should have assessed more thoroughly its resources and capacities (Blakely and Bradshaw 2006). Starting from the right place is critical from the point of view of the success of participative budgeting projects (Loukis 2018).

7 Conclusions

Integrating the ideas and knowledge of citizens through the process of fostering cooperation between citizens and local governments is a dynamic and sensitive task (Surowiecki 2004). Crowdsourcing techniques and the results thereby obtained rely on outcomes previously generated in the area of business. Citizen sourcing could benefit from the collection of successful case studies of commercial crowdsourcing and from citizen sourcing projects, as well as from learning the lessons of crowdfunding platforms, as summarized in publications and studies that address the topic. Schmidthuter and Hilgers (2017) are right when they state that studies and research on citizen sourcing are lacking compared to the range of publications about the business applications of crowdsourcing. ICT-based methods (Bertot *et al.* 2010a; Bertot *et al.* 2010b) were first introduced by companies. In particular, crowdfunding platforms established by the so-called creative industry have been very significant contributors. The technique is increasingly implemented by government agencies in the framework of citizen-sourcing projects.

Evidence collected from local communities such as Pančevo (Serbia), Ostende, Hasselt, Brussels (Belgium), Reykjavik (Iceland), Medellin (Colombia), etc. confirm the fact that collaborative strategies, including crowdfunding and citizen sourcing, have a better chance of being successful in those cities and regions which are characterized by bigger stocks of social capital (Beugelsdijk and van Schaik 2005). The level of generalized trust and institutional trust (Parent *et al.* 2005) drives the willingness of citizens (Lukensmeyer and Torres 2008) to participate in calls and to select and manage projects in local communities. An analysis of the success of citizen-sourcing projects in Flanders (Belgium) shows that there is a positive correlation between the success of citizen sourcing on the one hand, (Ostend, Hasselt, etc.) and the level of social capital as measured at the level of European regions. In particular, trust scores at the NUTS 1 level in Europe are highest for Flanders, Belgium.

Notes:

¹ “Co-creation” is defined by Wikipedia (2019) as follows: “Co-creation is a management initiative, or form of economic strategy, that brings different parties together (for instance, a company and a group of customers), in order to jointly produce a mutually valued outcome”. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Co-creation> (15 March, 2019).

² “Self-management” is defined by Wikipedia (2019) as follows: “Workers' self-management (also referred to as self-management, labor management, autogestión, workers' control, industrial democracy, democratic management, and worker cooperative) is a form of organizational management based on self-directed work processes on the part of an organization's workforce”. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Workers%27_self-management (15 March, 2019).

³ “*Mitbestimmung*” is defined by Wikipedia (2019) as follows: “Codetermination in Germany is a concept that involves the right of workers to participate in management of the companies they work for. Known as *Mitbestimmung*, the modern law on codetermination is found principally in the *Mitbestimmungsgesetz* of 1976. The law allows workers to elect representatives (usually trade

union representatives) for almost half of the supervisory board of directors". Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Codetermination_in_Germany (15 March, 2019).

⁴ Examples of other management and marketing terms that have been coined relatively recently include e-commerce, telemarketing, stakeholder, etc.

⁵ Jeff Howe is a technology and management journalist and theoretician who in 2005, together with Mark Robinson as editors of the technology periodical "Wired", coined the term "crowdsourcing" to describe how businesses were using the internet to "outsource work to the crowd".

⁶ Defined by the Merriam Webster Dictionary. Available at: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/crowdsourcing> (15 March, 2019).

⁷ Another example of crowdsourcing is the "Coop-Online Coach" in Switzerland: a site where users can trade information about healthy eating and exercise. Available at: www.coopcoach.ch (15 March, 2019).

⁸ The website "Mi Medellin" is a citizen-sourcing initiative of the city of Medellin (Columbia). See: <http://www.mimedellin.org/> (15 March, 2019).

⁹ Oostende is a city of more than 70,000 inhabitants in Belgium. In 2018 its local government launched a project which aims at asking citizens for their creative ideas to improve life in the city on an ongoing basis (CitizenLab 2019). See: <https://www.citizenlab.co/case-studies-en/ostend> (5 March, 2019).

¹⁰ CitizenLab is a Brussels-based company that produces citizen participation software for local governments to help them engage citizens and drive better policy decisions. See: <https://www.citizenlab.co/> (5 March, 2019).

¹¹ BIRN is the abbreviation for the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network. This is a civil sector organization for advancing critical journalism. See: <http://www.birmsrbija.rs> (15 March, 2019).

¹² NALED is a civil sector organization designed to promote Local Economic Development. Its name is an abbreviation for *Nacionalna Alijansa za Lokalni Ekonomski Razvoj* (National Alliance for Local Economic Development). See: <http://naled.rs/> (15 March, 2019).

¹³ The document is available at: <http://www.pancevo.rs/sadrzaj/uploads/2014/07/City-of-Pancevo-Development-Strategy.pdf> (15 March, 2019).

¹⁴ Report on the results of the participative budgeting voting. See: <http://www.pancevo.rs/vesti/rezultati-glasanja-u-okviru-projekta-participativno-budzetiranje/> (15 March, 2019).

¹⁵ Report on the implementation of the project involving the purchase of a catamaran by the city. See <http://www.pancevo.rs/vesti/pancevo-dobilo-svoj-katamaran-panuku/> (15 March, 2019).

¹⁶ Data retrieved from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pancevo> (15 March, 2019).

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