

EXAMINATION OF THE MÉNFŐCSANAK DISTRICT IN TERMS OF SUSTAINABILITY

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In this paper, we aim to examine a specific local society in Győr, in the spirit of sustainability. More precisely, we focus on the awareness of the population regarding the Győr-Ménfőcsanak district. We cover the infrastructural provision of the district (built-up institutional system, public transport, bicycle paths, civil organizations, etc.). We primarily use previous research results commissioned by the local government as a basis. We undertake a second analysis of these statistical data, and in the framework of empirical research, we map the awareness and information of the population of the district regarding the topic. The online questionnaire, published on an online platform covering that specific part of the city, is prepared for the purpose of collecting data from the population, and also provides information from the point of view of environmental awareness. Topics to be explored include food waste and distribution, selective waste collection; delivery and rental of household goods, transport habits (car, public transport, cycling, walking), the importance of keeping green areas close to nature. During the research, the population reflects on existing problems, and this can lead to the enhancement and strengthening of communication and collaboration between the local residents, civil organizations, and the local government. As a result, the local government can take concrete steps to address what is perceived as urgent tasks.

1. Introduction

Sustainability is an unavoidable issue nowadays. Numerous scientific articles emphasize the importance of intervention, whether on a national or global scale. Within the subject matter consistently related to the content of this article, the widespread flow of information is essential. In the case of Győr, it is exceptionally important to address issues such as shortcomings in selective waste collection, decreasing green areas, the distribution of local producers' goods, and gaps in public transportation. Due to its industrial development and proximity to the Slovak and Austrian borders, as well as the presence of Széchenyi István University, it is one of the main destinations for internal migration. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of global objectives aimed at addressing various challenges, including poverty, inequality, climate change, and environmental degradation, at the local, national, and international levels. (un.org/sustainabledevelopment/development-agenda). This article focuses on community-based sustainability initiatives. Researchers often examine community-led sustainability projects and initiatives worldwide.

The primary objective of our study is to identify and present the district's best practices within defined areas of sustainability. We are also interested in the environmental awareness of the local society, the inhabitants of the district, and how satisfied they are with the already existing and available green initiatives. Finally, our goals include getting to know and collecting the ideas and suggestions of residents related to the studied topic areas.

2. Theoretical framework

Sustainability in local communities (such as Ménfőcsanak) is a significant area of research and interest, as it focuses on developing environmentally, socially, and economically responsible practices at the community level. Celata and Sanna (2019) categorized community-based sustainability initiatives into six typologies: community gardens, solidarity purchasing groups, food cooperatives, community energy, recycling, and mobility initiatives. These encompass environmental, social, and economic dimensions involving the social capital as a resource, mentioned in terms of trust for this study. The empirical investigation examines each of these elements while interconnecting the three dimensions.

Community-Based Sustainability even contains community participation, strengthening local economy, preserving culture, solving local environmental issues, social inclusion and collaboration, and long-term commitment that we have to take care of. Sustainability efforts should consider social equity and inclusion to ensure that the benefits and burdens of sustainable practices are shared fairly within a community.

Resilience and adaptation are even more important. With the increasing frequency of natural disasters and the impacts of climate change, studies look into ways local communities can build resilience and adapt to changing environmental conditions (Rasul and Cheng, 2023). Morsetto (2020) investigates strategies for local communities to adopt circular economy principles, such as recycling, upcycling, and sustainable resource management, to reduce waste and promote sustainable consumption patterns.

Examining the role of local governance and policies in promoting sustainability is crucial. Studies often focus on identifying effective policies and strategies for sustainable development and the barriers to implementation (Salvador and Sancho, 2021). Environmental conservation and environmental management require democratic decision-making. The local government's environmental policy approach, the involvement of experts, the activation of the population, and increasing environmental awareness are crucial in sustainability-related measures. However, this requires the presence of genuine communities and trust among their members, which promotes cooperation instead of competition, and cooperation also entails the strengthening of identity (Fodor, 2019). This study emphasizes the importance of collaboration between the local government and local communities. Information flow serves not only to provide information but also to facilitate a dialogue during which civil organizations are mediating in the examined district.

3. Research methodology

Among our research methods, document analysis played an important role, during which we processed the relevant strategic documents of the municipality of Győr. In addition, the collection and use of articles published in print and online media were also of great help. In our empirical research, we used online and paper-based questionnaires to interview members of the examined local community on selective waste collection, the Green Ménfőcsanak Program, community garden, local products, local market, protection of swallows, and transport. An interview was also conducted with the local councilor of the district, on the basis of which we can collect and identify good local practices.

The population of the studied district (Ménfőcsanak) is approximately 12,000 people. According to official sources, there are 10,138 individuals with a permanent address. This number is associated with those who have a temporary residence (628 people) as well as those who do not appear in the registry but live in the district on a regular basis (Mayor's Office, 2023).

The motivation for our research is twofold. On the one hand, we aim to assess the population's engagement with various sustainability topics, and on the other hand, we want to inform the residents about existing infrastructural and other opportunities. In addition to this, we provide an opportunity for the formation of independent opinions. These results can enable the local government to create a specific development plan for the district along these lines, filling any gaps.

We are conducting quantitative research both online and through paper-based surveys. We strive to ensure that residents who are not active in the digital sphere have the opportunity to express their opinions. To achieve this, we involve associations, educational institutions, senior clubs, and sports clubs operating in the

district. We see the need to involve a wide spectrum of respondents, including those who are not active on online platforms.

The foundation of our empirical research began in the summer of 2023. The questionnaire was made available online two days before the manuscript submission, so in this article, we rely only on preliminary results. The survey could be filled in starting September 6th and is also now available and open in order to get the opinions of as many residents as possible. Therefore, the final analysis of the final data will take place thereafter.

In addition to mandatory questions in the online survey, we included questions related to each subfield that allowed for free-text responses. Respondents' answers to open-ended questions are exceptionally high in volume and contain lengthy descriptions. Therefore, when presenting the various areas, we highlight the main points. Due to the small sample size currently available (112 people), we do not attempt to provide demographic data.

3.1. Identification of good practices in Ménfőcsanak district

In both green matters and sustainability initiatives and programs, the Muszój Nature Conservation Coordination Association is a key association in the district. The organization (as its name indicates, "must") deals with pressing problems such as environmental protection. Their creed is to help the population develop a nature-friendly lifestyle. To this end, they organize sessions, lectures, and camps for all ages. As a result of the close cooperation of the above-mentioned civil association, the Local Government, and the local government representative, the Green Ménfőcsanak Program was launched in 2021, within the framework of which a number of green and sustainability initiatives, events, and ideas have already been implemented by involving the population. The Program also has a social media page called Zöld Ménfőcsanak (Green Ménfőcsanak), in order to reach as wide a range of people as possible and involve them in local initiatives.

3.1.1 Selective waste collection islands

In Győr, the first selective waste collection containers appeared in public areas in 2004, and since then, the system has expanded significantly. Nowadays, the Győr Hulladékgyűjtési Nonprofit Kft. operates about 179 selective islands in the city. Plastic, paper, glass, and metal waste can be deposited free of charge on the selective waste collection islands. Selective islands are located in busy places - at road intersections, next to shops and schools. There are currently 11 selective waste collection islands in Ménfőcsanak, 1 of which was transported due to the opening of a new street but will be returned as soon as its new location is ready. Several locations operate with double containers for certain types of waste, one location operates a double island (each container has a double), and one location has a sunken island.

Otherwise, since 2015, a designated waste depot for the disposal of accumulated household waste has been organized in Ménfőcsanak. This service, known as the waste depot, is provided at least once a year, but sometimes, it occurs twice a year. The waste depot practically 'comes to the doorstep' of the district during these occasions.

The collection of used cooking oil is closely related to waste collection. In Győr, oil collectors were installed next to the selective waste collection points in 2021. In Ménfőcsanak, two were installed in 2022. Unfortunately, as of July 1, 2023, these oil collectors were removed, and this form of residential collection ceased for a while. As a consequence, the most dedicated individuals transport it there. Used cooking oil can still be delivered free of charge to waste depots operated by GYHG Nonprofit Kft. Thanks to lengthy negotiations, oil cans were again deployed throughout the city in August, including one in the Ménfőcsanaki district.

3.1.2 Community garden

The Muszój Association's Raspberry Garden project (community garden) also encourages household farming. The purpose of the garden is to offer the joy of greenery to those whose homes do not provide such an opportunity. The essence of the community garden is that everyone can receive a plot for free, which they

have to cultivate, weed, and water. The Muszáj Nature Conservation and Coordination Association provides the seeds, tools, and gardening equipment needed for gardening. (gyorplusz.hu) Currently, the residents can cultivate 23 plots voluntarily, and the produce from these plots can be taken home by the growers.

3.1.3 Consumption of local products

In November 2021, the “Egy kosár hazai” (One Basket of Domestic Goods) Ménfőcsanak Handicraft and Producers’ Market was launched, and since then, the 12th edition was organized in May this year. The aim of the market is to provide a space for local and nearby producers to sell their seasonal produce and handicraft products locally, thereby supporting local small-scale farmers and entrepreneurs. For visitors, it offers the opportunity to purchase seasonal, fresh, and healthy fruits and vegetables directly from the source. During the intervals between markets, the Ménfőcsanak Market Point operates in the center of the district, providing another opportunity for the sale of produce.

Among these are dairy products, eggs, and seasonal vegetables. As residents of a family house neighborhood, people make use of the opportunities provided by their gardens and yards.

3.1.4 Closer to the nature

There are several efforts in the district that draw attention to living in harmony with nature. The district won the “Bird-friendly Community” competition, and as part of this, the community is trying to assist swallows as well by installing two swallow hotels. Swallows, in turn, will help us control the mosquito population. Also, thanks to the grant, we were able to establish a birdwatching trail in the park in front of Bezerédj Castle. With this trail, visitors can learn about various-sized nest boxes. Information boards provide details about the barn owl nest box, the sparrow colony, and the bird feeders. The protection of swallows is a priority for the whole city, a unique project started three years ago.

3.1.5 Transportation

The establishment of new bus stops is aimed at reducing traffic. Additionally, among the short-term plans is the creation of separate bike lanes on two more sections of the district to ensure safe cycling, as mentioned earlier. Based on data from a project completed in 2010, which surveyed the transportation habits of the district’s residents, it was revealed that the most popular means of transportation was cars. Respondents were least satisfied with the quality and frequency of public transportation. (Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan Győr, 2023)

3.1.6 Results

Based on the preliminary results, 99 % of respondents engage in *selective waste collection*. In addition to PET bottles, glass waste, metal waste, and cardboard, compostable waste appears in a high proportion. However, despite this, nearly 60 % of respondents are dissatisfied with the frequency of emptying the selective waste collection points and the surrounding environment (Figure 1). Among the suggestions made by residents, the most common ones include increasing the frequency of emptying and placing selective collection points in more locations throughout the district. Among the responses, changing people’s attitudes and installing a camera system were mentioned in at least 40 cases as potential ways to improve the current situation.

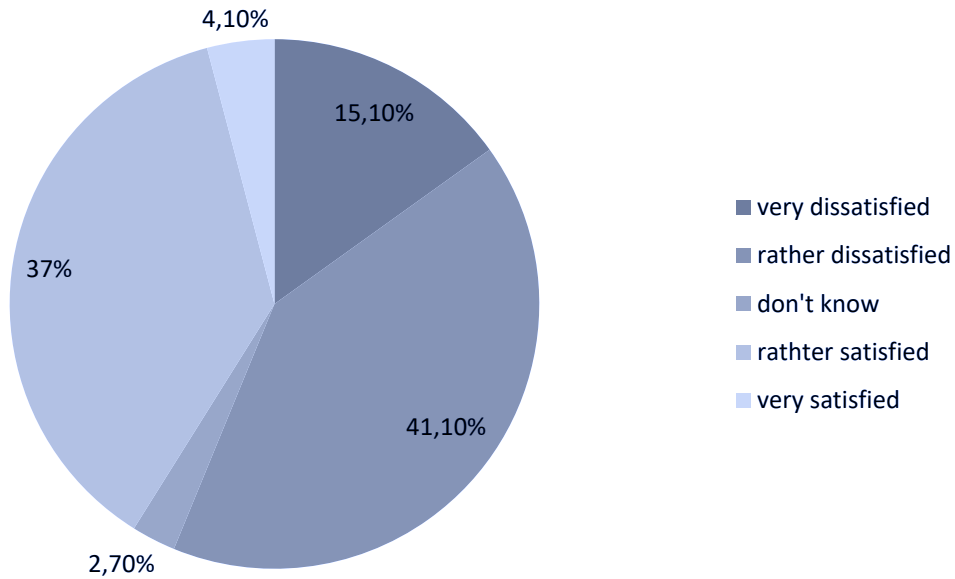


Figure 1: The satisfaction of respondents with the selective waste collection points (%)

Moving on community garden, 90 % of the respondents consider the establishment of a community garden useful for those who do not have a plot. The service is beneficial for those living in the district's condominium zone. 80 % of respondents cultivate vegetables and fruits within their own gardens, with the majority having plots ranging from 5 to 20 m² (Figure 2). Survey participants strongly assert that the local government should assist those striving for self-sufficiency. Based on the pre-filled questionnaires, the most suggested ways to support this are by providing seedlings and seeds, as well as offering plant-specific, public lectures.

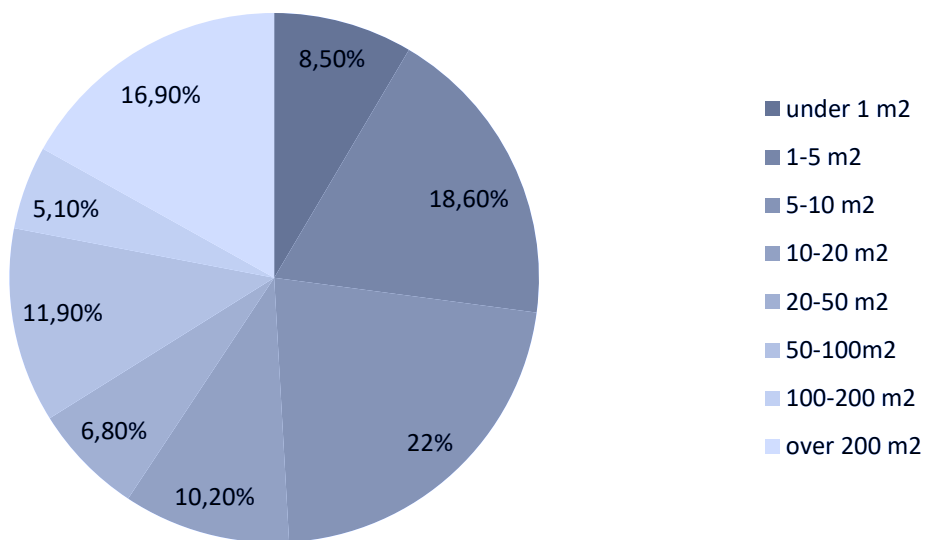


Figure 2: The size of respondents' own garden used for growing vegetables (%)

In terms of consumption of local products, the vast majority of respondents (78.1 %) expressed their willingness to purchase essential food items such as eggs, milk, meat, cheese, and honey from local producers (Figure 3). However, only 30 % of respondents regularly visit the local market (Figure 4).

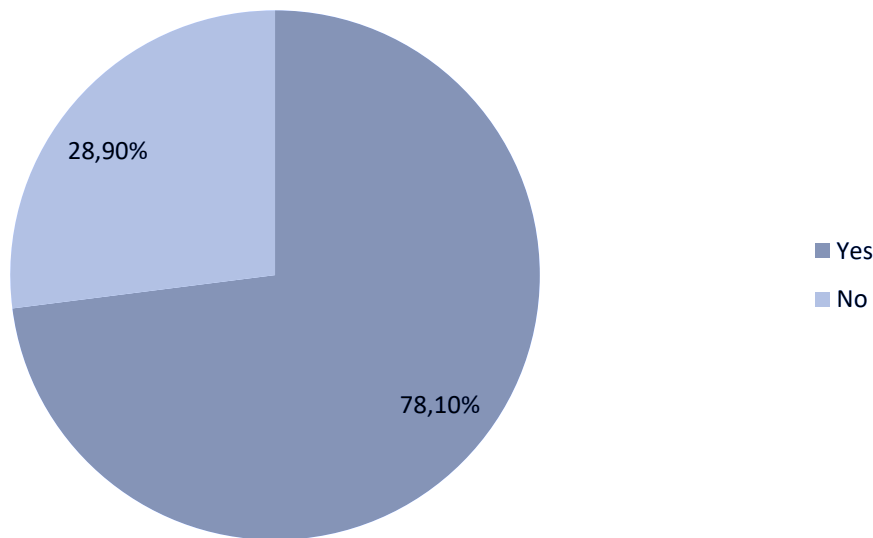


Figure 3: Preference among respondents to purchase vegetables, fruits, handicrafts produced locally and in neighboring settlements (%)

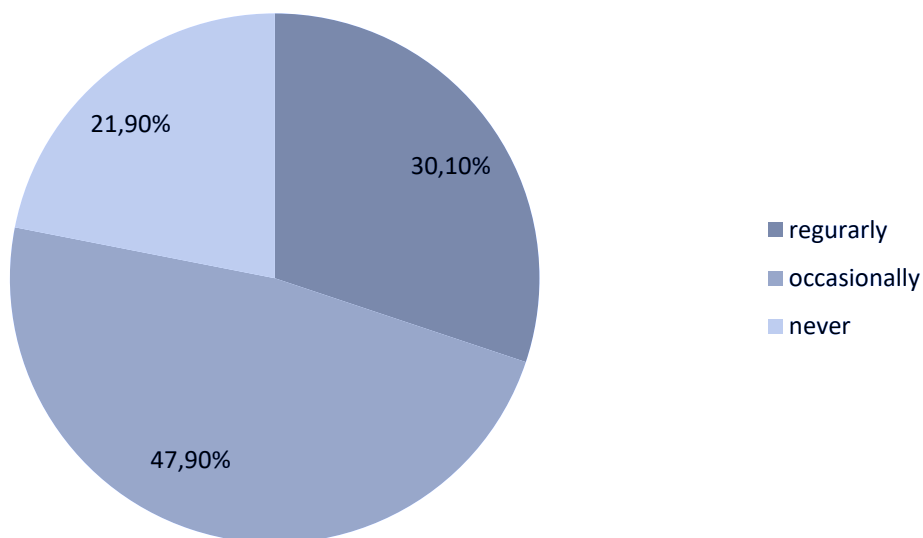


Figure 4: Frequency of respondents' visits to the local market in Ménfőcsanak (%)

In relation to swallows, 69 % of respondents have noticed a decrease in the swallow population this year. According to their claims, swallows did not build nests on their own property or neighboring properties. In order to initiate the growth of the swallow population, they have formulated suggestions and causal relationships, such as permitting and promoting backyard animal husbandry. Barns and stables attract abundant insects that can serve as natural food sources for the birds, acting as natural pest controllers. Swallows, in turn, will help us control the mosquito population. As a result of this argument, the frequency of chemical insecticides can be reduced if the undisturbed functioning of the food chain is restored. It is worth considering a permaculture approach to addressing the mosquito issue.

According to our preliminary research on traveling habits, car travel remained overrepresented among the residents, but 38 % of them regularly use bicycles for transportation. The city administration has also introduced a community bike-sharing system in the Ménfőcsanak neighborhood, but none of the interviewed respondents make use of this service. The most pressing needs identified include the establishment of dedicated bike lanes and the marking of cycling routes, with the latter being done in parallel with road main-

tenance. The development of public transportation has been mentioned several times, and the residents who filled out the survey consider it necessary to improve pre-rail transportation, utilize existing stops, and create associated P+R parking facilities.

4. Conclusions

Overall, it can be said that sustainability is a two-way process in which both the local government and members of the local community, as well as the civil organizations they create, must play equal roles. Assessing the needs of the population is essential in democratically organized (local) societies, and together with responses to these needs, progress can be promoted. Using the results of the public survey, we will present the issues perceived by the community and make recommendations to the local governments regarding the future direction of developments.

Based on the preliminary results of our ongoing research, it can be stated that each of the surveyed sub-areas requires further intervention, both in terms of selective waste collection and efforts to promote local products and assist local producers. Increasing the swallow population is a complex, multi-faceted process with interconnected elements, each of which can contribute to promoting sustainability. A critical issue is the prompt development of transportation and public transit, road improvement, and the alleviation of traffic on major routes within the district. Ensuring safe cycling opportunities for the population through the creation of new bike lanes and marking cycling routes is crucial. Our goal is to maintain and deepen cooperation for the sake of a livable, sustainable community.

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