# Community Satisfaction in Post-socialist Cities: Factors and Implications

ANDREJA CIRMAN & IRENA OGRAJENŠEK

**ABSTRACT** Community satisfaction is an important determinant of the perceived overall quality of life, and can be defined as a function of opportunities a community provides to its residents. Although measurable at a specific point in time, it does not only reflect current communal activities, but also past developments and their path dependency.In this paper we identify and empirically verify factors influencing community satisfaction in post-socialist urban settlements. In the process we are using the Slovenian post-socialist cities of Nova Gorica and Velenje as illustrative examples, and the average Slovenian community satisfaction in urban settlements as a benchmark. This unique combination of data allows us to derive important lessons for community residents, community planners, and local policy-makers.

**KEYWORDS:** • community satisfaction • post-socialist city • ReNewTown project • survey measurement • Slovenia

CORRESPONDENCE ADDRESS: Andreja Cirman, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Economics, Kardeljeva ploščad 17, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia, email: andreja.cirman@ef.uni-lj.si. Irena Ograjenšek, Ph.D., Associate Professor, University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Economics, Kardeljeva ploščad 17, 1000 Ljubljana, Slovenia, email: irena.ograjensek@ef.uni-lj.si.

## 1 Introduction

Community satisfaction is an important determinant of the perceived overall quality of life, and can be defined as a function of opportunities a community provides to its residents. Although measurable at a specific point in time, it does not only reflect current communal activities, but also past developments and their path dependency.

In this paper we identify and empirically verify factors influencing community satisfaction in post-socialist urban settlements. In the process we are using the Slovenian post-socialist cities of Nova Gorica and Velenje as illustrative examples, and the average Slovenian community satisfaction in urban settlements as a benchmark.

Both Nova Gorica and Velenje were planned and built after the World War II, but for entirely different reasons:

- Velenje, which today is one of the most important industrial centres of Slovenia (with a coalmine, an electrical power plant as well as an important European household appliances producer), was a designated city of light and gardens for miners who spend half of their day in the darkness of the pit;
- Nova Gorica, which today is one of the most important service centres of Slovenia (with highly developed tourism industry built around numerous casinos) was created to outshine the 'old' Gorica (Gorizia), the regional capital which became part of Italy after the World War II, artificially separated from its hinterland by a state border.

They both match the profile of a socialist city as described by Seiler-Fliege (1999) very well: they are compact cities with relatively homogenous functional areas and with a limited extent of suburbanisation. City centre is of major functional importance with prevalent tertiary and residential functions, and is easily accessible by means of [public] transportation. Economic activity is focused on large enterprises in over-dimensioned industrial [and service] areas. High priority is given to neighbourhood concepts and extensive green areas. Centrally planned housing construction is based on high-rise housing estates with small standardised flats. Given that both cities were built from scratch, the only characteristic which does not match the Seiler Fliege profile is that of decaying old [pre-socialist] housing stock. The few remnants of the aristocratic heritage have been carefully restored and now serve either as representative communal buildings or tourist attractions.

On the other hand, Nova Gorica and Velenje do not seem to share the current problems of post-socialist cities related to decline of their traditional industries (Slavuj et el., 2009; Lorens, 2012) and consequent abandonment of industrial [and

service] sites along with structural unemployment on one, as well as huge development disparities among neighbourhoods and poor quality of pre-fabricated housing on the other hand. In our opinion this is due (a) to city fathers of both cities being visionary modernists who had been implementing contemporary state-of-the-art solutions at the neighbourhood level and (b) current relatively secure economic situation of the majority of cities' inhabitants in comparison with those Slovenian industrial centres which started to grow as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution (e.g. Kranj, Celje or Maribor).

We hypothesise both components to have a positive impact on community satisfaction levels in Nova Gorica and Velenje so that these, in comparison with the average Slovenian community satisfaction in urban settlements, are significantly higher.

Beyond the introduction the paper has three parts. We start by operationalizing the concept of community satisfaction and providing an overview of existing approaches to its measurement in part one. Part two consists of a brief discussion of methodology applied in our empirical research which is followed by the sample description and presentation of results. Discussion in part three is based on lessons learned which we hold relevant for community planners, community residents, and local policy-makers.

## 2        Community Satisfaction: Concept, Dimensions, and Approaches to Measurement

Community satisfaction is an important element of the overall quality of life and individual well-being (Sirgy et al., 2000; Theodori, 2001; Auh & Cook, 2009; Sirgy & Cornwell, 2002). While quality of life reflects a broader condition in the totality of human life, community satisfaction is concerned with an evaluative judgment of needs fulfilled within the community (Matarrita-Cascante, 2010: 108).

Community satisfaction implies an evaluative judgement of achievements and aspirations (Theodori 2001: 44) and represents a group of socio-economic and environmental indicators that contribute to the livability and desirability of the region (Epley & Menon, 2008: 285). Due to the multidimensional character of local communities, community satisfaction is a multidimensional concept and a function of personal, economic, physical, and services opportunities present in a community (Christakopoulou et al., 2001; Matarrita-Cascante, 2010).

In general, two approaches to community satisfaction measurement exist. One uses *objective indicators*, for example Mercer's Quality of Living index for over 380 cities worldwide that uses 10 key categories and 39 criteria or factors, each having coherent weights reflecting their relative importance (Mercer, 2007). In a

similar manner, Epley and Menon (2008) developed a measure of quality of life at the local level that combines several economic, social and health indicators into one single index.

The second approach is based on the use of *subjective indicators*. These can be categorised as *global* or *facet-based* (Sirgy et al., 2010). Global subjective measures of community well-being focus on capturing residents' global feelings about the community in terms of ''global satisfaction with one's community,'' or simply ''community satisfaction'' (Sirgy et al., 2010). However, this measure provides us solely with the global picture. If we are interested in determining the sources of resident's community satisfaction, we have to use facet-based measures.

Sirgy et al. (2010) categorise subjective facet-based measures of community well-being in *deductive* and *inductive* ones. Deductive facet-based measures of community well-being are formative measures in which the dimensions involved in the measure are theory-driven. In defining these dimensions, researchers (e.g. Sirgy et al., 2000; Auh & Cook, 2009; Sirgy el al., 2010) refer to bottom-up spillover theory.

Bottom-up spillover theory recognizes that there is a hierarchical relationship in how people experience satisfaction in individual life domains to achieve global life satisfaction. According to this theory "global satisfaction with a given life domain (community life) is mostly determined by satisfaction with the life conditions/concerns (i.e., community services and conditions) making up that domain" (Sirgy et al., 2010: 297-298). Therefore, the affect within a life domain (or subdomain) spills over bottom-up to most superordinate domain (life in general), influencing life satisfaction (Lee et al., 2002: 159). Satisfaction hierarchy according to the bottom-up spillover theory is presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1:** Satisfaction hierarchy according to the bottom-up spillover theory



Life

Satisfaction with Life Domains (e.g. community, work,

Satisfaction with Events and Experiences within the Various Life Domains
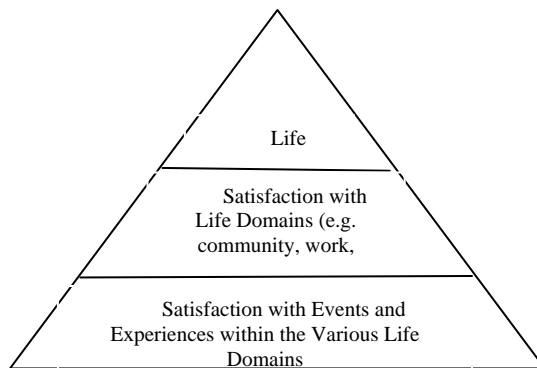
Source: Lee et al., 2002, pp. 159.

In contrast, inductive measures are derived from past research or formed as the judgment of a panel of experts (Sirgy et al., 2010). Filkins et al. (2000) examine several aspects of the community such as human, local government, transportation, environment and consumer services as well as its social attributes and respondents' personal and economic attitudes. Similarly, Christakopoulou et al. (2001) identify six dimensions that capture the concept of community well-being: area as a place to live, social community, economic community, political community, personal space and area as a part of the city.

As shown in the next segment, our empirical research builds on subjective faced-based measures of the community satisfaction, bottom-up spill over theory as well as findings from the existing research.

## 3        Empirical Research

### 3.1        Methodology

Our empirical research was carried out in the framework of the project entitled "New Post-Socialist City: Competitive and Attractive" (in short the ReNewTown project: http://www.renewtown.eu) funded by the Central Europe Programme co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund in the period April 2011 – March 2014.

In order to derive subjective faced-based measures of community satisfaction we developed a comprehensive questionnaire with seventy questions divided into eleven topics. In our analysis we used the following four:
- introductory (screening) questions (10);
- questions on residential area or neighbourhood (14);
- questions on place of residence (5);
- questions on household economic status (8);

The *2012 ReNewTown Telephone Survey on Quality of Life* was conducted in the period October 18th - December 20th, 2012, using the simple random sampling. In some cases computer-assisted telephone interviewing was supported with computer-assisted web interviewing to reduce nonresponse.

### 3.2        Sample Characteristics

The pooled ReNewTown sample consists of 1,009 respondents and is divided into three representative subsamples – a representative sample of 396 respondents from Slovenia, a representative sample of 307 respondents from the Municipality of Nova Gorica, and a representative sample of 306 respondents from the Municipality of Velenje.

For the purpose of community satisfaction research, we filtered out all respondents who do not live in urban settlements, and ended up with a pooled sample of 657 units: 229 from Slovenia, 192 from the Municipality of Nova Gorica, and 236 from the Municipality of Velenje. 277 (42.2 %) of them are male and 380 (57.8 %) female. The average age of our respondents is 42.3 years (the youngest respondent is 18, and the oldest 75 years of age; with the average of 41.4 years our female respondents are slightly younger than our male respondents with the average of 43.6 years). Almost one half (49.8 %) of our respondents have resided in their city their entire life.

Distribution of respondents' highest attained education levels is given in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Distribution of respondents' highest attained education levels

| Highest Level of Education Attained | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Unfinished elementary school | 2 | 0.3 |
| Elementary school | 22 | 3.3 |
| 2- or 3-year vocational school | 88 | 13.4 |
| 4- or 5-year secondary school | 249 | 37.9 |
| Junior college, college, university education | 267 | 40.6 |
| Prefer not to answer | 7 | 1.1 |
| Missing | 22 | 3.3 |
| **Total** | **657** | **100.0** |

Perhaps most notable in Table 1 are two issues: (1) complete absence of persons with a master's or PhD degree among the respondents, and (2) almost equal shares of respondents with finished secondary school and either junior college, college, or university education.

Table 2 shows our respondents' current employment status. The unemployment rate of 9.3 % is lower than the Slovenian average registered unemployment rate of 12.0 % for the year 2012 (Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia, 2013). Of those who elaborated on the kind of employment they currently hold (355 out of 657 respondents), 20.3 % are employed part-time, and 79.7 full-time.

**Table 2:**     Respondents' current employment status

| Current employment status | Frequency | Percent |
|---|---|---|
| Student | 91 | 13.9 |
| Worker (employed in non-management position) | 178 | 27.1 |
| Clerk (employed in public / government sector. performs office work) | 71 | 10.8 |
| Middle manager | 56 | 8.5 |
| Senior manager | 13 | 2.0 |
| Self-employed. entrepreneur (individual private entrepreneur) | 37 | 5.6 |
| Work on a contract basis (authorship agreement or specific task contract) | 9 | 1.4 |
| Housekeeper | 5 | .8 |
| Unemployed | 61 | 9.3 |
| Retired | 109 | 16.6 |
| Other | 11 | 1.7 |
| Prefer not to answer | 16 | 2.4 |
| **Total** | 657 | 100.0 |

426 of our respondents (64.8 %) live either in an apartment building or in a multi-family house. 131 (19.9 %) own a single family house, 20 (3.0 %) live in a studio apartment. The rest either rent a room or occupy provisional premises. The average number of persons per household is 3.

Approximately one quarter of our respondents' households have to live with an average monthly income of less than 1,000 EUR. And around 16 % have more than 2,500 EUR per month at their disposal.

### 3.3     Model

In the analysis we use a linear regression model with global community satisfaction measure as a dependent variable.
The global community satisfaction measure is obtained by asking "Overall, how satisfied are you with the living in your community?" with four response options: 1 – completely dissatisfied, 2 – somewhat dissatisfied, 3 – somewhat satisfied, and 4 – completely satisfied.

The average value of global community satisfaction in Slovenia is 3.18. In both post-socialist cities of Nova Gorica and Velenje, community satisfaction is

statistically significantly higher, with an average of 3.30 for Nova Gorica (t=1.97, α=0.05) and 3.27 for Velenje (t=1.68, α=0.09) as shown in Figure 2.

**Figure 2:** Global community satisfaction in Slovenia, Nova Gorica and Velenje
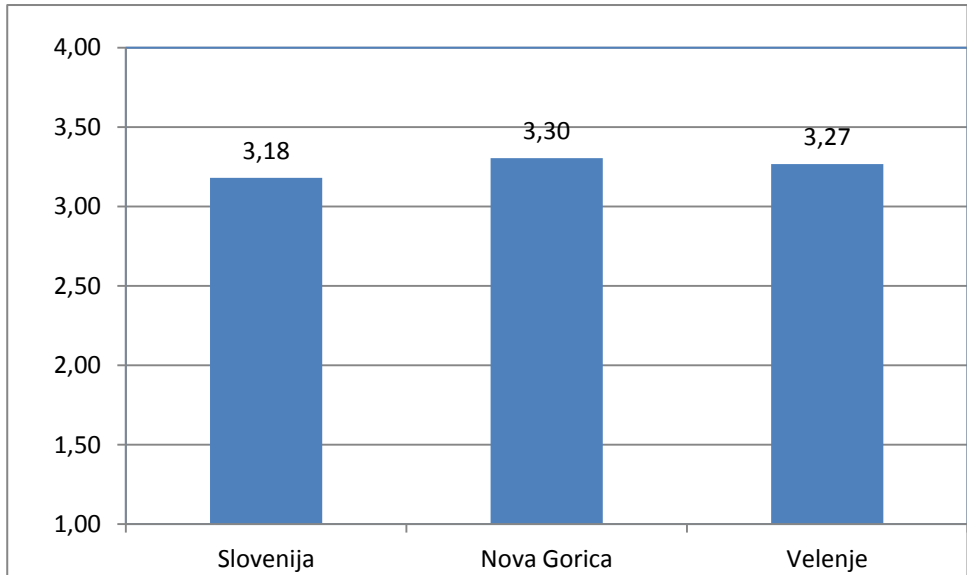


In line with Sirgy and Cornwell's (2002) classification of predictors we next relate subjective measure of community satisfaction to physical. social and economic features of the neighbourhood and respondents' personal characteristics.

**Physical features** are related to several aspects of the quality of environment and the quality of individual community services. Community services involve governmental services (e.g. education, public transportation, health care, child care, etc.). business services (e.g. retail outlets, banks) and non-profit services (cultural, religious, etc.) (Grzeskowiak et al., 2003). The greater the satisfaction with services available in the community and the better the community conditions (such as environmental quality), the greater is the satisfaction with the community (Sirgy, 2010).

In our survey respondents were asked to what extent do statements in Table 3 apply to their own community on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 – this does not apply to my community at all, to 5 – this applies to my community completely.

**Table 3:** Univariate statistics of variables in the factor analysis of physical attributes (pooled sample)

| To what extent do the following statements apply to your community? My community … | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|---|---|
| … offers plenty of entertainment options | 3.23 | 1.133 |
| … Has an adequate retail supply | 4.29 | .865 |
| … Has a pleasant and convenient position | 3.98 | .935 |
| … is a culturally rich place | 3.53 | 1.078 |
| … is a place rich in green areas | 3.96 | .921 |
| … is a clean place | 3.73 | .942 |
| … is a place where healthcare is well organized | 4.16 | .839 |
| … offers suitable child care services | 4.07 | .868 |
| … offers high-quality secondary education | 4.00 | 1.056 |
| … offers high-quality tertiary education | 3.28 | 1.288 |
| … offers a healthy residential environment | 3.52 | .894 |
| … offers high-quality services to its inhabitants | 3.62 | .880 |
| … has an efficient system of public transportation | 3.85 | 1.115 |
| … offers a tranquil living environment | 3.66 | .952 |

Since physical features include various community attributes and are therefore related to a larger number of indicators, we use factor analysis as a statistical method to analyse interrelationships among a large number of variables and to explain these variables in terms of their common underlying dimensions − factors (Hair et al., 2005).

Using Principal Axes Factoring with Varimax Rotation we obtain two latent variables (factors) and manage to explain 51.8% of variance (see Table 4). The first factor refers to the quality of public services, similar to the satisfaction with government, business and non-profit services as used by Sirgy et al. (2000). The second factor refers to the quality of the environment. Both factors display adequate reliability with Cronbach's Alpha values of 0.879 and 0.841.

**Table 4:**     Results of the exploratory factor analysis of physical attributes

| Physical features | Factor | |
| --- | --- | --- |
| | Quality of public services | Quality of the environment |
| Offers plenty of entertainment options | **0.586** | 0.237 |
| Has an adequate retail supply | **0.762** | -0.044 |
| Has a pleasant and convenient position | 0.234 | **0.640** |
| Is a culturally rich place | **0.634** | 0.226 |
| It is a place rich in green areas | -0.012 | **0.671** |
| It is a clean place | 0.134 | **0.711** |
| It is a place where healthcare is well organized | **0.725** | 0.002 |
| Offers suitable child care services | **0.510** | 0.280 |
| Offers high-quality secondary education | **0.846** | -0.113 |
| Offers high-quality tertiary education | **0.751** | -0.102 |
| Offers a healthy residential environment | -0.044 | **0.791** |
| Has an efficient system of public transportation | **0.689** | 0.007 |
| Offers a tranquil living environment | -0.091 | **0.765** |
| **Cronbach's alpha** | **0.879** | **0.841** |
| **% of variance explained** | **30.379** | **21.424** |

**Social features** play an important part in determining community satisfaction. Grounded in the bottom-up spillover theory and empirically demonstrated by Auh and Cook (2009) neighbourhood attachment and housing satisfaction affect community satisfaction.

Neighbourhood attachment encompasses satisfaction, a sense of connectedness, and a sense of ownership and control long-term integration (Kim & Kaplan, 2004; Filipović, 2008). It is related to the length of residence in the community; however. the positive effects of the length of residence on community satisfaction have been shown to diminish when social capital variables were added to the models (Filkins et al., 2000). Social capital has been shown as a robust predictor of community satisfaction (Auh & Cook. 2009). In our model we use neighbourhood attachment as an indicator of the social capital present in the community. In the questionnaire it is directly evaluated by the respondents on a

five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 – the attachment is very low, to 5 – the attachment is very high).

Auh and Cook (2009) establish that community satisfaction is also affected by housing satisfaction since community attachment is developed with personal investments (i.e. economic and social ones as well as investments in terms of time and history) in the community. Moreover, neighbourhood attachment demonstrates a direct as well as an indirect effect on the community satisfaction through its impact on the housing satisfaction.

In our survey we have data on respondents' general evaluation of housing satisfaction (a five-point Likert scale from 1 – not satisfied at all, to 5 – completely satisfied). However, due to indirect effect of the neighbourhood attachment on housing satisfaction in our empirical model on community satisfaction, we only include residuals from the linear regression regressing the neighbourhood attachment on housing satisfaction.

**Income levels and employment prospects in the community** have also been associated with community satisfaction (Brown, 1993; Filkins et al., 2000; Christacopoulou et al., 2001; Auh & Cook, 2009). Both of them are regarded as economic features of the community. Community economic conditions such job opportunities have been found to be a significant predictor of community satisfaction.

In our survey the presence of adequate job opportunities in the community was subjectively evaluated by respondents on a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 – this does not apply to my community at all, to 5 – this applies to my community completely). As an indication of the income level we also include average households' monthly income (in EUR).

In our model we further include a **set of respondents' personal characteristics** such as gender (with values 0 for male and 1 for female respondents), age of the respondent, level of education, and an indication of the length of residence in a given city. The latter is used as a dummy variable with value 1 assigned the respondents that have been living in the same city from the day they were born. Also included are the dummy variables for the Nova Gorica and Velenje samples as well as cross effects of the two samples on physical, social and economic features of the communities.

Given that our interest lies in determining the sources of residents' community satisfaction in Slovenian urban communities, we design a linear regression model with facet-based measures of sources of satisfaction. Descriptive statistics of variables used and the estimated parameters of the regression model are reported in Tables 5 and 6.

**Table 5:** Univariate statistics of variables in the regression model of community satisfaction (pooled sample)

| Variable | Mean | Std. Dev. |
|---|---|---|
| Community satisfaction | 3.266 | 0.654 |
| Quality of public services (factor) | 0.424 | 0.666 |
| Quality of the environment (factor) | -0.208 | 0.889 |
| Housing satisfaction (residual) | -0.018 | 1.044 |
| Attachment to the neighbourhood | 3.342 | 1.181 |
| Adequate employment opportunities | 2.388 | 1.042 |
| Household income | 1471.162 | 825.955 |
| Gender | 0.568 | 0.496 |
| Education level | 4.172 | 0.849 |
| Lenght of living | 0.502 | 0.501 |
| **Velenje sample** | **0.373** | **0.484** |
| **Nova Gorica sample** | **0.299** | **0.458** |

**Table 6:** Standardised regression coefficients of the regression model of community satisfaction[*]

| Model | Unstandardized Coefficients | | Standardized Coefficients | t | Sig. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | Std. Error | Beta | | |
| (Constant) | 2.757 | 0.199 | | 13.822 | 0.000 |
| Quality of public services (factor) | 0.219 | 0.063 | 0.222 | 3.460 | 0.001 |
| Quality of the environment (factor) | 0.219 | 0.051 | 0.297 | 4.269 | 0.000 |
| Housing satisfaction (residual) | 0.091 | 0.039 | 0.145 | 2.330 | 0.020 |
| Emotional attachment to the neighborhood | 0.122 | 0.036 | 0.220 | 3.414 | 0.001 |
| Adequate employment opportunities | 0.084 | 0.042 | 0.133 | 1.990 | 0.047 |
| Household income | 0.000 | 0.000 | 0.027 | 0.694 | 0.488 |
| Sex (M=0) | -0.084 | 0.049 | -0.063 | -1.713 | 0.087 |
| Education | -0.021 | 0.030 | -0.027 | -0.703 | 0.482 |
| Lenght of living | -0.038 | 0.049 | -0.029 | -0.765 | 0.445 |
| Velenje sample (VE) | -0.021 | 0.293 | -0.016 | -0.073 | 0.942 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quality of public services (factor)*VE | -0.083 | 0.116 | -0.057 | -0.714 | 0.476 |
| Quality of the environment (factor)*VE | -0.041 | 0.081 | -0.034 | -0.504 | 0.614 |
| Housing satisfaction (residual)*VE | -0.009 | 0.058 | -0.028 | -0.155 | 0.877 |
| Emotional attachment to the neighborhood*VE | -0.041 | 0.053 | -0.116 | -0.781 | 0.435 |
| Adequate employment opportunities*VE | 0.065 | 0.061 | 0.140 | 1.058 | 0.290 |
| Nova Gorica sample (NG) | 0.411 | 0.306 | 0.287 | 1.344 | 0.180 |
| Quality of public services (factor)*NG | -0.140 | 0.108 | -0.081 | -1.295 | 0.196 |
| Quality of the environment (factor) *NG | 0.081 | 0.084 | 0.057 | 0.962 | 0.337 |
| Housing satisfaction (residual) *NG | -0.066 | 0.060 | -0.187 | -1.112 | 0.267 |
| Emotional attachment to the neighborhood*NG | -0.034 | 0.058 | -0.086 | -0.587 | 0.557 |
| Adequate employment opportunities*NG | 0.015 | 0.066 | 0.025 | 0.233 | 0.816 |

* F (21 d.f.) = 14.730. sig.= 0.000. Adj.$R^2$ = 0.357.

## 3.4    Results

With the proposed model we explain 37.5 percent of variability in community satisfaction in Slovenian urban communities. All variables indicating physical, social and economic features of the community are statistically highly significant. The positive signs confirm the findings from the literature and show that the higher the satisfaction with physical, social and economic features of the community, the higher is the global satisfaction. Moreover, physical attributes seem to influence the general level of satisfaction with the community more strongly than any of the other community attributes. The largest standardised coefficients stand for the quality of the environment and the quality of public services.

An important role in determining the community satisfaction is played by the social attributes in the community. Strong social capital, shown with high attachment to the neighbourhood, significantly increases the level of community satisfaction. Contrary to other studies (e.g. Filkins et al., 2000; Therodori, 2001; Auh & Cook, 2009), in our model the length of residence does not have a significant effect on community satisfaction. This could be ascribed either to the use of binary variable due to the limited data on the length of residence in the survey or – which we believe more likely - to the extremely low residential mobility of Slovenian households. According to Mandić (2001), residential mobility of Slovenian households is only 3 % and, as already stated, 49.8 % respondents included in our pooled sample have resided in their city all their life.

Housing satisfaction also significantly influences community satisfaction. This finding along with the above mentioned influence of the neighbourhood attachment supports the bottom-up spillover theory put forward by Sirgy and Cornwell (2002) in which the individual's satisfaction with specific sub-domains (in our case housing and neighbourhood) predicts individual's perception of community satisfaction. The results are also in line with empirical results established by Auh and Cook (2009).

Structure and relative strength of local economic activity affect employment prospects and income levels of local residents. Our results show that there is a significantly higher level of community satisfaction in those communities where the residents have better access to adequate employment opportunities. However, the income variable that is not affected only by the relative strength of local activity, but also by a number of other factors, was not proven to be significant.

The results further reveal that the control variables for the socialist legacy are not statistically significant. This holds for the dummy variables standing for the two post-socialist cities as well as the cross effects and indicates that in Slovenian post-socialist cities the socialist legacy does not necessary reduce community satisfaction. Both cities enjoy high community satisfaction stemming from rich green areas, clean and healthy environment, and a decade-long history of sound economic activity offering jobs to the community as well as supporting high quality of public services. Despite the problems that many post-socialist cities have due to their past development, the two Slovenian cities prosper - they build on the advantages such as abundance of green areas as well as availability and proximity of employment opportunities, and thus managed to establish a level of satisfaction among their residents which is significantly higher than the average Slovenian community satisfaction in urban settlements. Our working hypothesis is thus confirmed.

## 4 Discussion and Implications

Community satisfaction is a path-dependent multidimensional concept, difficult to measure because of its determination both with past development and present situation, yet for precisely these reasons very relevant for several different groups of community stakeholders. In our discussion we focus on community residents, community planners, and local policy-makers.

For **community residents**, satisfaction is the pre-condition of both well-being and happiness (Redek et al., 2012), and could therefore be labelled an intangible asset in their personal balance sheets.

For **community planners**, measures of community satisfaction provide an assessment of community well-being over time and in comparison with other communities. If they understand the sources of community satisfaction (or dissatisfaction), they are capable of recommending (or even help designing) target programmes aimed at increasing community satisfaction and decreasing dissatisfaction (Sirgy et al., 2010).

For **local policy-makers** community satisfaction represents an output of community action (Eckersley, 2000; Myers, 1988; Sirgy, 2011) which, in turn, can serve as an input into future planned actions to improve community conditions (Lorens, 2012).

The analysed post-socialist cities of Nova Gorica and Velenje are important regional centres of economic activity. Both still feature city centres of major functional importance and numerous neighbourhoods characterised by high-rise pre-fabricated multi-dwelling buildings with small standardised flats as well as spacious common areas. And both are also subject of substantial urban restructuring processes which aim at preserving their initial modernist urban plan while improving functionality and consequently residents' quality of life. which, in turn, should positively influence their personal and community satisfaction.

In these undertakings, the urban planners and local decision-makers respect the heritage yet (1) follow the evolving needs of the community (this includes support of sound business inititives) and (2) build on the existing social capital (Ograjenšek and Cirman, 2013). This validates the notion that local public policies should be public actions to protect and improve local conditions and citizens' lives in line with the evolving needs of the community (Eckersley, 2000; Myers, 1988; Sirgy, 2011).

Consequently, local governments should prioritize policies which will most improve their citizens' quality of life. Given that communal priorities sometimes shift, a closed loop for continuous (annual, bi-annual, or urban project-related) survey measurement of individual and community satisfaction should be created to help urban planners and local decision-makers prioritize efficiently, build on the identified stock of social capital, and achieve the goal of target quality of life for their residents.

### References

Auh, S. & Cook, C. C. (2009) Quality of Community Life among Rural Residents: An Integrated Model, *Social Indicators Research*, 94(3), pp. 377-389.

Brown, R.B. (1993) Rural Community Satisfaction and Attachment in Mass Consumer Society, *Rural Sociology*, 58(3), pp. 387-403.

Christakopoulou, S., Dawson, J. & Aikaterini, G. (2001) The Community Well-Being Questionnaire: Theoretical Context and Initial Assessment of its Reliability and Validity, *Social Indicators Research*, 56(3), pp. 321-351.

Eckersley, R. (2000) The State and Fate of Nations: Implications of Subjective Measures of Personal and Social Quality of Life, *Social Indicators Research*, 52(1), pp. 3-27.

Epley, D.R. & Mohan, M. (2008) A Method of Assembling Cross-sectional Indicators into a Community Quality of Life, *Social Indicators Research*, 88(2), pp. 281-296.

Filipović, M. (2008) Influences on the Sense of Neighbourhood: Case of Slovenia, *Urban Affairs Review*, 43(5), pp. 718-731.

Filkins, R., Allen, J.C. & Cordes, S. (2000) Predicting Community Satisfaction and Rural Residents: An Integrative Model, *Rural Sociology*, 65(1), pp. 72-86.

Grzeskowiak, S., Sirgy, J.M. & Widgery, R.N. (2003) Resident's Satisfaction with Community Services: Predictors and Outcomes, *The Journal of Regional Analysis and Policy*, 33(2), pp. 1-36.

Hair, J., Black, B., Babin, B., Anderson, R. & Tatham, R. (2005) *Multivariate Data Analysis* (New York: Prentice Hall).

Kim, J. & Kaplan, R. (2004) Physical and Psychological Factors in a Sense of Community: New Urbanist Kentlands and Narby Orchard Village, *Environment and Behaviour*, 36(3), pp. 313-340.

Lee, D., Sirgy, J. M., Larsen, V. & Newell, D.W. (2002) Developing a Subjective Measure of Consumer Well-Being, *Journal of Macromarketing*, 22(2), pp. 158-169.

Lorens, P. (2012) *Rebuilding the Post-Socialist Cities in the Age of Neo-Liberalism – Issues and Challenges for the Planning Profession*, 48th ISOCARP Congress 2012 (The Hague: ISOCARP).

Mandić, S. (2001) Residential Mobility versus "In-place" Adjustments in Slovenia: Viewpoint from a Society in Transition, *Housing Studies*, 16(1), pp. 53-73.

Matarrita-Cascante, D. (2010) Changing Communities, Community Satisfaction, and Quality of Life: A View of Multiple Perceived Indicators, *Social Indicators Research*, 98(1), pp. 105–127.

Mercer (2007) *Defining Quality of Living* (Warshaw: Mercer), avaliable at: http://www.imercer.com/uploads/common/pdfs/definingqualityofliving.pdf (October 2, 2013).

Myers, D. (1988) Building Knowledge about Quality of Life for Urban Planning, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 54(2), pp. 347-358.

Ograjenšek, I. & Cirman, A. (2013) *How to Transform Residential Landscapes in Post-Socialist Cities: Lessons in 'Supported Voluntarism' from the ReNewTown Project. The New Residential Landscapes of Post-Socialist Cities: Between State and Market* (Stockholm: Södertörns Högskola).

Redek, T., Ograjenšek, I., Kostevc, Č. & Godnov, U. (2012) On the Value System as a Precondition for Sustainability: An Overview of Preliminary Survey Results for Slovenia, *Zagreb International Review of Economics & Business*, 15(Special Conference Issue), pp. 35-52.

Sailer-Fliege, U. (1999) Characteristics of Post-Socialist Urban Transformation in East Central Europe, *GeoJournal*, 49(1), pp. 7-16.

Slavuj, L., Cvitanović, M. & Prelogović, V. (2009) Emergence of Problem Areas in the Urban Structure of Post-Socialist Zagreb, *SPATIUM International Review*, 21, pp. 76-83.

Sirgy, J. M. (2011) Theoretical Perspectives Guiding QOL Indicator Projects, *Social Indicators Research*, 103(1), pp. 1–22.

Sirgy, J. M. & Cornwell, T. (2002) How Neighbourhood Features Affect Quality of Life, *Social Indicators Research*, 59(1), pp. 79-102.

Sirgy, J. M., Rahtz, D. R., Čičić, M. & Underwood, R. (2000) A Method of Assessing Residents' Satisfaction with Community-Based Services: A Quality-of-Life Perspective, *Social Indicators Research*, 49(3), pp. 279-316.

Sirgy, J. M., Widgery, R.N., Lee, D. & Yu, G.B. (2010) Developing a Measure of Community Well-Being Based on Perceptions of Impact and Various Life Domains, *Social Indicators Research*, 96(2), pp. 295-311.

Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (2013) *Aktivno prebivalstvo (po Anketi o delovni sili), Slovenija, 2012 - končni podatki* (Ljubljana: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia).

Theodori, G. (2000) Level of Analysis and Conceptual Clarification in Community Attachment and Satisfaction Research: Connections to Community Development, *Journal of the Community Development Society*, 31(1), pp. 35–58.

Theodori, G. L. (2001) Examining the Effects of Community Satisfaction and Attachment on Individual Well-Being, *Rural Sociology*, 66(4), pp. 618-628.