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The Significance and Role of Multidimensional Long-Term Planning in Urban Development: The Case of the City of Kraków

Abstract

Objective: The article examines the significance of strategic, long-term planning in urban development, using Kraków as a case study. The aim is to demonstrate the role of a city development strategy as a tool supporting urban management and to analyse residents' opinions on developmental challenges and initiatives in the context of the current Kraków Development Strategy, titled *I Want to Live Here: Kraków 2030*.

Research Design & Methods: The study adopted a diagnostic survey approach. A questionnaire was administered to 355 Kraków's residents between May and June 2024 (both online and in person). The survey comprised six single- or multiple-choice questions covering key strategic goals, priority developmental areas, perceived challenges, and the level of public participation. Descriptive statistics was used to evaluate the responses.

Findings: The results indicate varying levels of public awareness regarding the city's strategic goals. The respondents identified transport infrastructure as the most critical developmental priority for Kraków, followed by environmental protection and support for the local economy and innovation. The findings also reveal communication and participatory gaps – many residents perceive a misalignment between municipal actions and community expectations, and the majority desire greater involvement in decision-making.

Implications / Recommendations: The study highlights the need for Kraków's authorities to increase transparency in governance, strengthen mechanisms for citizen participation, and improve strategic communication with the residents. Addressing the key areas identified (transport infrastructure and environmental sustainability) and actively engaging the local community constitute two recommended aspects that could enhance the effectiveness of the city's development strategy implementation.

Contribution / Value Added: This research provides empirical evidence on how a long-term urban development strategy is perceived by the residents of a major Polish city. It underlines the importance of integrating social, economic, and spatial dimensions in strategic planning as well as demonstrates the value of resident feedback in aligning the city's strategic objectives with community needs.

Keywords: Kraków Development Strategy, city management, strategic management, strategic planning, city development strategy, local development, developmental challenges, developmental goals, sustainable development

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Introduction

Contemporary cities face complex and dynamic challenges arising from economic, demographic, social, and environmental transformations. This requires local government authorities to implement forward-looking and comprehensive developmental strategies that enable the effective management of urban space. As Gawroński emphasises, strategic management is an important element of local policy, enabling not only the planning of development but also effective adaptation to changing environmental conditions (Gawroński, 2010). Gęšina (2015), in turn, notes that strategic planning in cities should combine the economic, social, and environmental dimensions, and that its effectiveness largely depends on the involvement of the local community. Similarly, Józwiakowski (2016) highlights the need to take local resources and social capital into account in the planning process, which promotes the durability of developmental activities.

Kraków, as one of the largest and fastest-growing cities in Poland, possesses significant cultural, social, and infrastructural potential. At the same time, it struggles with such problems as a growing population, an ageing population, environmental pressures, and intensifying metropolitan competition. In response to these challenges, the city authorities adopted the Kraków Development Strategy document under the name *I Want to Live Here: Kraków 2030*, which sets out six key developmental goals, including, among others, building Kraków's position as a metropolis of innovation and science, developing a knowledge-based economy, improving the residents' quality of life, strengthening the local self-government community, and introducing modern management methods.

Modern cities operate under the conditions of increasing socioeconomic and environmental instability, which influences the way in which developmental strategies are shaped. Volatile macroeconomic conditions, crisis phenomena such as the COVID-19 pandemic, rising energy costs, and armed conflicts in Europe make strategic planning a process fraught with significant uncertainty. As a result, some local governments are focusing on solving current problems at the expense of long-term thinking. This makes it all the more crucial to create strategies that are flexible and shock-resistant as well as that enable rapid adaptation to changing environmental conditions. Therefore, cities' ability to adapt and manage under the conditions of uncertainty is becoming a key criterion for the effectiveness of contemporary strategic planning.

The purpose of this article is to present the significance of strategic planning in urban development and to analyse the opinions of Kraków's residents regarding developmental challenges and activities undertaken in the context of the current municipal strategy. The study attempts to assess the degree of familiarity with strategic goals and the degree to which they are aligned with the expectations of the local community. The research hypothesis assumes that a clearly formulated developmental strategy that takes into account both goals and challenges affects the effectiveness of city management and the quality of life of its residents. The subsequent sections present the methodological assumptions of the empirical study, discuss the results obtained, and formulate practical recommendations related to the processes of planning and implementing developmental policies at the local level.

Literature review regarding urban strategic management

The multidimensionality of local development precludes pointing to a single unambiguous definition of this concept. "In general terms, it is perceived as the quantitative and qualitative changes

taking place in the social and economic functioning of local government units” (Józwiakowski, 2016). “Local development is a process of directional transformations in the course of which there is a transition from simpler and less perfect forms or states to more complex and more perfect states in certain respects” (Encyklopedia PWN, 1997). Important terms that are worth clarifying in order to better understand the essence of local development include:

- locality;
- local community;
- local authority;
- development.

Locality refers to the properties of a relatively small, distinct area, taking into account specific features such as historical past; social, economic, and financial conditions’ as well as customs and culture that shape the space of a given region. “In modern societies, internally differentiated and embedded in diverse media contexts, the rationale for understanding locality as a spatial category that constitutes the paradigm of the traditional local community is being lost” (Hajduk-Nijakowska, 2012). “The local community is a certain collectivity inhabiting a distinct, relatively small territory, such as a parish, village, or municipality, in which there are strong ties resulting from a community of interests and needs, as well as from a sense of rootedness and belonging to the area inhabited” (Podedworna, 2007). Local authority should be understood as an authority capable of influencing the creation of regulations in force in a given local community. It has been distinguished on the basis of state decentralisation – i.e. the transfer of certain tasks, competencies, funds, and responsibilities to the local level – and is part of state authority. “Residents, through the local authority, have the right to decide on all matters concerning the local community, with the exception of areas reserved for state institutions” (Myna, 1998). In seeking a definition of development, it is worth bearing in mind that it may concern various aspects of the life of a given individual or community, such as social, economic, cultural, or technological. Most generally, development is equated with a process of change aimed at improving and expanding capabilities and enhancing the potential of selected entities. In near-synonymous terms, development can be understood as progress in the context of change over time and change for the better.

“Local development can be divided according to the functional criterion into three planes (Gęsina, 2015):

- **local economic development** – including service and manufacturing enterprises owned privately or by the state, economic institutions, and nongovernmental organisations supporting entrepreneurship;
- **local social development** – concerning social behaviours: these include households, health and social care institutions, educational establishments and schools, cultural institutions, public order, and security;
- **local development of the natural environment** – concerning issues related to ecology and environmental degradation.”

The areas of local development presented above are not, of course, the only possible functional division criteria for this concept. In the literature one can also find a division into the local development of the labour market, spatial development, or infrastructural development. These functions enable the implementation of the goals of local development policy. “In the economic sphere, local development consists primarily in the development of entrepreneurship, both private and created by local authorities, as well as local self-government institutions and local communities” (Bagdziński, 1994).

Every territorial unit strives to ensure the best possible living conditions for its residents. “To live better means to satisfy at a higher level one’s own needs and the needs of those with whom a person, as a social being, forms basic social cells such as the family, and with those with whom people, as economic beings, form households and enterprises, as well as local communities and sectoral groups” (Adamowicz, 2020). In line with their adopted intentions, territorial units conduct broadly understood social activity by using the resources and opportunities they possess for the benefit of the local community. In the literature this is referred to as local development, which is not defined unequivocally. Various fields and disciplines of science deal with this issue. Local development is an important element of socioeconomic development both at the level of the local community and at the national level. The pace and level of the development of each territorial unit is a component of the development and economic growth of the entire country, and the aspirations of the local community form the basis for the development of the selected region. Sekuła (2001) distinguishes the following criteria for the division of definitions of local development: the local community and its needs, and the changes taking place within the territorial system. In the first group, emphasis is on the community for whose benefit development is to serve, and in the second one, the effects arising from the development of a specific area are assessed. The changes that have occurred within a given territory can be captured as a territorial approach to development. This means the effective and fuller use of the territorial potentials possessed by a given municipality, for example on the basis of significant natural, cultural, or tourist potential. Furthermore, the capabilities of particular regions contribute to shaping infrastructure, thereby increasing their competitiveness, which remains a current challenge for developmental policy. According to Orłowska (2018), local development is, above all, flexibility; it is the idea of an economy capable of rapid adaptation and management of systems that are complex and diverse in terms of culture, communities, techniques, as well as tastes and the variability of needs and the products that satisfy those needs. Also, “Local development can also be defined as a process of economic, social, cultural, and political changes that lead to raising the general level of residents’ well-being” (Adamowicz, 2020). Escalating the predispositions of territorial units to improve the conditions and quality of life of the population fosters dynamisation and raises the prestige of a given area.

“A characteristic feature of local development is the relatively low mobility of the main developmental factors, which include, among others: the state of infrastructure, the qualifications of the labour force, the region’s social structure by class and strata, and the branch structure of the local economy, as well as the general and technical knowledge of society” (Jóźwiakowski, 2016). Accordingly, the main goal of developmental policy at the local level should be the fullest possible use of the resources that distinguish a given territory from others. These resources are characterised primarily by the fact that they cannot be transferred to another area, for example due to the lack of suitable conditions conducive to their multiplication and use.

“Taking into account various definitions and interpretations, the following properties of local development can be identified (Gęsina, 2015):

- local development is a cycle of events, not a state; it is a series of interconnected activities that solve a specific problem or lead to achieving a specific effect / positive transformations;
- the executor of development is not solely the local authority but also the residents of a given area;
- this development is characterised by the awareness of needs and purposiveness; goals are adjusted to the existing developmental conditions;

- progress is determined by internal factors found in the local space and by external factors;
- steps towards local development should be accepted with the participation of the local community.”

Although the literature on defining the concept of local development exhibits certain divergences and does not indicate a single accepted explanation, it does make it possible to present common, overlapping conclusions regarding the characteristics of local development, as shown above by Geşina (2015).

Concepts of city governance, city co-governance, and city co-management, which contribute to shaping urban policy, are gaining increasing popularity today. “Through the implementation of these ideas, new models of the institutional infrastructure of development emerge, leveraging cooperation in multilevel and multi-sectoral systems” (Noworól & Noworól, 2018). Cooperation between various entities operating in urban areas and local governments makes it possible to make fuller use of the potential of given areas through the planning, implementation, and monitoring of activities. These processes reflect strategic management in local government units. When presenting the concept of strategic city management, it is worth focusing on a reliable explanation of what strategic management is and how to manage a city effectively and efficiently so as to foster its development. “Strategic management is the conscious, fact-based steering of an organisation’s development, aimed at exploiting opportunities and avoiding threats emerging in its environment, taking into account different versions of strategic plans for different scenarios and images of the future” (Gawroński, 2010). Strategic management aims to seek appropriate ways for units to adapt to changing conditions occurring both inside and outside the unit, and to introduce them by modifying adopted goals and the methods used thus far to achieve them. “The process of strategic management should be continuous and characterised by:

- **identifying problems**, i.e. recognising and indicating the most important issues that have a strategic impact on the level of the satisfaction of collective social needs and on the scale and pace of developmental processes;
- **comprehensiveness** in solving problems and treating a given local government unit as part of an environment that constitutes for it a set of both developmental opportunities and threats, and that also determines success in action;
- **future orientation**, i.e. solving current problems through the lens of the future;
- **results orientation**, i.e. achieving goals through the systematic, effective, and efficient implementation of previously planned specific implementation tasks” (Sierak, 2013).

More effective management is particularly important from the point of view of the development of local government units, as it contributes to stronger ties between entities and raises their competitiveness.

The basic tool of strategic management in a local government unit is the socioeconomic developmental strategy – a kind of development plan for the given unit. “It is defined as a set of long-term assumptions indicating ways of acquiring and retaining buyers of particular products of local government units” (Gawroński, 2010). Strategic management within the preparation of a municipal development strategy comprises two basic stages:

- **strategic planning**, which includes preparing strategic plans, setting strategic goals, and formulating a developmental strategy;
- **implementing the developmental strategy** through carrying out actions based on the previously adopted strategy (this stage also comprises administering and controlling the correctness of the actions performed).

The dynamisation of developmental processes in the surrounding space means that cities, in order to fully satisfy the needs of their residents, should particularly take care of the efficiency and effectiveness of management. “Proper management should therefore be understood as the organised, systematic, and comprehensive (direct and indirect) impact of the authorities on the local community, economy, space, and natural environment with a view to creating optimal conditions that stimulate the exploitation of opportunities and the limitation of threats to local development” (Ziółkowski, 2015). Cities are therefore obliged to act actively, creatively, and innovatively for the improvement of living conditions, as well as to use modern management methods and introduce appropriate instruments affecting the pace of their development. The most important thing in choosing appropriate management methods is to recognise and analyse the problems that have arisen in the unit, as well as the nature, scale, and strength of their interconnections. A professional approach to city management will increase the entity’s adaptive predispositions to a changing environment. In line with the essence of this subsection, the best management concept in the light of the foregoing reflections is strategic management. Ziółkowski (2015) shows that this idea is a well-thought-out, prospectively planned, effectively organised, efficiently implemented, and constantly controlled process of formulating and implementing an organisation’s developmental strategy. Strategic management focuses on the most effective and optimal exploitation of resources and on promoting the assets of a given territory over the long term. This concerns the endogenous (own) potential of a territorial unit, confirming the unit’s locational and competitive attractiveness compared to other regions.

In the context of contemporary territorial developmental management processes, the changes were introduced by the Act of 15 July 2020, which entered into force on 13 November 2020 (Act of 15 July 2020). This Act introduced a new, integrated development planning system for local government units, combining the previously separate spheres of spatial and socioeconomic planning. Its goal is to ensure coherence between strategic and planning documents and to increase the effectiveness of local developmental management.

Under the new regulations, a municipal or city developmental strategy should constitute the primary planning document, taking into account both long-term goals and spatial development directions. As the legislator emphasises, the integration of these dimensions is intended to foster the building of a sustainable foundation for development, particularly by strengthening the links between social, economic, and environmental aspects. This approach is particularly important in large metropolitan centres such as Kraków, where space, economy, and society form a strongly interconnected functional system.

National strategic planning analyses are significantly supplemented by the experiences of European and global cities implementing modern developmental management models. For example, Barcelona and Copenhagen have developed urban strategy concepts based on broad public participation, innovation, and sustainable transport. In Lipsk and Munich, emphasis was placed on integrating spatial planning with economic development as well as on active cooperation between the public sector and the private sector. The lessons from these experiences indicate that the effectiveness of urban planning depends on the coherence between the strategic vision and effective implementation mechanisms, as well as on the city’s ability to engage citizens in the developmental co-management process. Reference to similar examples can enrich the Polish planning practice with solutions that increase the effectiveness of strategy implementation and strengthen the participatory dimension of urban policies.

Contemporary territorial developmental management is based on an integrated approach combining spatial, social, and economic aspects. Legal changes introduced in 2020 created a new developmental planning system in local government units, ensuring the coherence between strategic and planning documents as well as greater effectiveness of developmental activities. A municipal or city development strategy has become a key tool for integrating long-term goals with spatial development guidelines.

The experience of European cities such as Barcelona, Copenhagen, Lipsk, and Munich demonstrates that the effectiveness of strategic planning depends on the consistency of vision with implementation, as well as the active participation of residents and local partners in the developmental co-management process.

To sum up, the concept of strategic management gathers all activities directed towards the continuous enhancement of the investment attractiveness of municipalities and cities, paying particular attention to the most adequate satisfaction of the needs and expectations of residents and potential customers through tailoring an appropriate product offering. In this context, strategic management becomes a dynamic process, requiring the integration of various dimensions of development and continuous improvement of planning tools, which ultimately leads to building lasting foundations for the competitiveness and sustainable development of territorial units.

Research methodology

Research design and objectives. The empirical study was designed as a diagnostic and descriptive survey aimed at verifying the research objectives and hypothesis outlined in the introduction. The study sought to assess the significance of strategic planning in Kraków's development and the extent to which the residents are familiar with and support the city's developmental strategy. Four key research questions guided the inquiry, examining: (1) the extent of Kraków's residents' familiarity with the goals of the *I Want to Live: Kraków 2030* developmental strategy; (2) which development areas residents consider the most critical for the city's future; (3) the perceived alignment of the strategy's goals with local needs and the quality of city governance; and (4) the residents' self-assessed level of involvement and influence in decision-making regarding the city's development. In line with these questions, the central hypothesis posited that a clearly formulated developmental strategy, accounting for both key goals and challenges, has a positive effect on the effectiveness of city management and the residents' quality of life.

Data collection and sample. The survey was conducted between 25 May and 25 June 2024, on a sample of 355 adult residents of Kraków. The respondents ranged from 18 to 65 years old, with a predominance of young adults (the 18–34 age group constituted around 64% of the sample). The research sample was randomly selected, and participation was voluntary. The questionnaire was distributed both electronically (via municipal social media channels and online platforms) and in paper (available at the Kraków City Office and during in-person sessions). This approach ensured the inclusion of respondents who are active online as well as those less present in digital channels.

Research instrument. The survey instrument comprised six questions (a mix of single-choice and multiple-choice formats) focusing on the respondents' evaluation of strategic goals, priority development areas for Kraków, the greatest challenges facing the city, and the perceived level of public participation in local governance. To allow for more nuanced feedback, most questions provided an option for the respondents to add a short written comment alongside selecting from predefined answers. The response options were developed based on prior analyses of Kraków's

strategic documents and relevant literature, which ensured that the questionnaire contents were aligned with the study's objectives and covered the key issues of interest.

Data analysis and limitations. The collected responses were analysed using basic descriptive statistics (frequency counts and percentage distributions) and presented in the form of figures and narrative descriptions. Given the diagnostic and exploratory nature of the study, the results reflect the views of the participants within a specific timeframe and social context. The relatively limited sample size and the overrepresentation of younger respondents are important limitations of the research, as they constrain the generalisability of the findings to the entire population of Kraków. Therefore, the conclusions drawn should be interpreted with caution. Nevertheless, the survey provides valuable empirical insights into the residents' attitudes towards the city's developmental strategy and highlights areas for potential improvement in strategic urban management.

Results and discussion

The Kraków Development Strategy titled *I Want to Live Here: Kraków 2030* lists six main developmental goals for Kraków as a city of the future. These are (Kraków Development Strategy, 2018):

- an open and harmonious metropolis of international significance in the spheres of innovation, science, the economy, and culture;
- a city developing a knowledge-based economy;
- a creative, modern metropolis harnessing its cultural potential;
- Kraków as a city friendly to live in;
- a strong local self-government community of Kraków's residents;
- a metropolis managed in a modern way.

The perspective of the Kraków Development Strategy 2030 assumes that the city will be one of the two main urban centres in Poland. In addition, the goals of the city authorities include making Kraków a strong European metropolis and an intelligent city (in the spirit of the 'smart city' idea). All of Kraków's developmental goals are described in detail in the subsections of the Kraków Development Strategy. The city's key assets include, above all:

- **people** – high-quality human capital;
- **culture** – building Kraków's own national and cultural identity and tradition in the form of both material and spiritual resources;
- **the academic centre** – which builds the knowledge resources of the society and constitutes competitiveness and innovation relative to other cities and the region;
- **a knowledge-based economy** – the use of knowledge and information as a source of competitive advantage on the market;
- **an important religious centre** – Kraków, as a showcase of the lives of many saints, uses its potential to build global and local religious tourism.

In the Kraków Development Strategy, the city authorities indicate particularly important areas that can increase Kraków's competitiveness as a regional and global leader. The authorities mainly focus on the creative development of the technology and start-up sector, attracting skilled and qualified staff, developing infrastructure and spaces for leisure (including tourism development), maintaining prestige and leveraging Kraków's potential as a scientific and educational centre (investing in research infrastructure and laboratories that are competitive on the international market), improving the quality of life of city residents, creating a sense of place (Kraków as

a source of cultural heritage and national identity), and developing the local art sector, including by supporting creators and artists.

A modern Kraków, in the spirit of the ‘smart city’ concept, is built by (Kraków Development Strategy, 2018):

- **human and social capital (smart people)** – as initiators of changes in the city, who seek to improve the quality of life owing to their competencies, skills, creativity, and education;
- **the natural environment (smart environment)** – an intelligent city optimises and limits the impact of pollutant emissions on the environment and pays attention to reducing energy consumption. These activities are undertaken in favour of climate change adaptation and are based on the principle of sustainable development with the use of modern technologies;
- **an intelligent economy (smart economy)** – based on the provision of modern services, it involves an innovative industry, a well-developed R&D sector, and a dynamic business support base that guarantees the development of creative industries and innovation;
- **intelligent governance (smart governance)** – here, the main role is played by competencies as well as civic engagement and participation in decisions made by the city authorities that are important to residents in relation to Kraków’s development and the entire idea of public management. In the spirit of intelligent governance, it is necessary to shape an integrated system for managing a given local government unit so that all city users can participate in it. Moreover, it is important to strive to develop an effective system of cooperation between the public sector and the private sector;
- **mobility (smart mobility)** – Kraków should have an efficient network of transport links enabling rapid movement within the city and on its outskirts. Modern transport infrastructure, designed and created based on technological and innovative solutions, will provide an integrated and fully safe transport system for its users;
- **the quality of life (smart living)** – in this aspect of the intelligent city, the focus is on creating a friendly and safe urban space for its residents while ensuring access to a wide range of public services (both stationary and online), high-quality learning and education, healthcare, support for seniors, as well as modern infrastructure covering both technical and social and integrative infrastructure. All this is achievable by building safety in the city, creating an attractive cultural offering, organising leisure time events, and protecting the natural environment as well as green and recreational areas in the city.

The Kraków Development Strategy presents key issues from the perspective of the city’s development, paying particular attention to improving the quality and living conditions of its residents. The document assumes that, in addition to Kraków strictly as a city, the surrounding metropolitan area is also a target area of development. The main goal adopted in the *I Want to Live Here: Kraków 2030* strategy is to concentrate on Kraków’s developmental policy and the residents’ quality of life. The developmental strategy is also a plan for the future funds coming mainly from the city’s own resources. The developmental goals identified in the Kraków Development Strategy are described in more detail below.

The first development goal for Kraków is to create an intelligent and modern metropolis. According to experts, Kraków has the potential and real chances to be among Europe’s leading cities. This is evidenced, among other things, by the city’s rich palette of global and European functions in such spheres as science and education, tourism, and international business. This creates ideal conditions for building stable, high-quality jobs. It should also be noted that Kraków is becoming a global competitor in new technologies, driven by the development of firms, schools

and universities, as well as culture and art. Kraków is the showcase of a beautiful, historic city distinguished by tradition and has new, excellent congress–business infrastructure. In building an intelligent metropolis, it is important to create a stable hub in the Poland–Europe–world network. In this way, Kraków will shape conditions that are conducive and inviting to the location of prestigious international entities in the city. Such actions will also lead to greater activity in organising global economic, political, scientific, and cultural events. This will contribute to building Kraków’s position on the international stage and will create ideas based on the transfer of knowledge and innovation.

The Kraków of the future also relies on a modern economy and scientific potential. The future is characterised by creativity, openness, innovation, and rationality. The future means a high level of R&D activity and the creation of specialised, well-functioning public institutions, e.g. hospitals or higher education institutions. All investments help shape the showcase of a given area. In the 2017 investment attractiveness ranking, Kraków ranked 2nd in Europe and 8th in the world (Kraków Development Strategy, 2018). Standing out among competing cities will be ensured by developing a knowledge-based economy. The foundation here is the local intellectual potential possessed by the city, as well as a qualified staff and an improved and expanded scientific base. Kraków also has a dynamic business environment that builds the city’s prestige. In Kraków’s advanced business services sector (Business Process Outsourcing – BPO), 76 international companies operate and about 60,000 people are employed, which constitutes over 28% of total employment in the entire country, and notably as many as 41% of them in Kraków work in the information technology industry (Kraków Development Strategy, 2018).

An important goal for Kraków is the development of culture and cultural heritage, implemented by building a community of citizens engaged in and participating in decision-making, fulfilling their interests and ambitions. The premise of these activities is to ensure equal access for all to cultural events organised in Kraków as well as to recreational places that foster social integration and discussion. Kraków is linked to the lives of certain renowned – even saintly – figures. It is the city of John Paul II, Copernicus, Wyspiański, Wajda, Lem, Szymborska, Penderecki, and Miłosz (Kraków Development Strategy, 2018). The most famous library operating in Kraków is the Jagiellonian Library, which is also the national library. Parts of Kraków are inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. The city stands out among other cities for its distinctive cultural history and tradition. In addition to cultural and national heritage, it is characterised by the development of literature, science, and art education, as well as by the organisation of exceptional cultural events and by a significant number of outstanding monuments and museum pieces. Furthermore, Kraków is the 7th city in the world to have been awarded the titles of the “City of Literature” (UNESCO) and the “World City of Festivals and Cultural Events 2016” (Kraków Development Strategy, 2018).

The authorities of the City of Kraków strive to build the city residents’ quality of life. This is possible by ensuring an appropriate level of safety and comfort in the city. A high quality of life for Kraków’s society is the priority of all activities undertaken under the Kraków Development Strategy. Safety, universally accessible public services, and a balanced and environmentally-friendly transport system are only some of the issues important in the perspective of raising the quality of life in the city. The life expectancy of children born in Kraków in 2016 is among the highest in Poland and is 82.6 years for women and 76.8 years for men, and more than 25% of the residents are over 60 years of age (Kraków Development Strategy, 2018). Public spaces also have a significant impact on the residents’ quality of life: places where they can rest, relax, meet, and integrate with

others, talk and exchange views on certain topics, and spend free time actively and effectively. Kraków's leaders pay special attention to the need to revitalise selected areas of the city in order to improve the living standards of these spaces' users and to create a city that is friendly to live in.

The Kraków of the future means human capital – i.e. building a strong local self-government community of residents. The city belongs to no one; therefore, it requires joint care both from local government authorities and from the residents. Building interpersonal bonds and strengthening the sense of belonging and community of a given population manifests itself in increased resident engagement in city affairs. In this way, the awareness of civic solidarity develops. Data cited in the Kraków Development Strategy indicates that 85% of the residents declare they are attached to Kraków, 82% declare they are proud to live in Kraków, and only 50% declare interest in city affairs (Kraków Development Strategy, 2018). These results indicate that the city authorities should act towards building a strong local self-government community of residents, because without this group of recipients of the local authorities' actions it is not possible to manage the city properly by achieving designated goals and promoting values common to both groups' interests. Increasing the level of social participation in city affairs will strengthen in residents the sense of co-responsibility for the implementation of selected goals and activities and will allow the development of communication between local government authorities, residents, and other stakeholders involved in decision-making processes concerning Kraków's development.

The last development goal presented in the current Kraków Development Strategy is the desire to present Kraków as a metropolis managed in a modern way. Modern and professional city management means both efficient and transparent coordination of public policies implemented in the city and active civic participation (Kraków Development Strategy, 2018). Furthermore, the basis of city management also includes the provision of high-quality public services as well as rational spatial planning and development that reconcile different interests of various interested groups. The main actions undertaken within this goal include:

- **friendly, professional, and efficient self-government administration** – including the provision of high-quality services owing to the high competencies of self-government administration employees and the monitoring of the efficiency of employees' activities and processes;
- **striving for high-quality strategic city management** – shaping Kraków's image as a smart city.

The Kraków Development Strategy in the residents' opinions – survey results

The empirical part of the article utilised a survey method to gather the opinions of Kraków residents on key aspects of the current Kraków Development Strategy and identify priority directions for the city's development. The study was diagnostic and descriptive in nature, and served to verify the general hypothesis that a clearly formulated developmental strategy, one taking into account goals and challenges, positively impacts the effectiveness of city management and the residents' quality of life. The following research questions were formulated as part of the study:

1. To what extent are Kraków's residents familiar with the goals of the Kraków Development Strategy under the name *I Want to Live Here: Kraków 2030*?
2. What developmental areas are considered key to the city's future by the residents?
3. To what extent are the strategy's goals perceived as aligned with the needs and expectations of the local community and the quality of city governance?
4. How do the residents assess their level of involvement in and influence on decision-making processes regarding Kraków's development?

The study assumed a relationship between the level of knowledge of strategic goals and the assessment of their implementation as well as the residents' sense of influence on the actions of local government. It was assumed that the degree to which the residents identified with the strategic goals would influence their perception of the quality of governance and their willingness to participate in the city's public life.

The research sample was randomly selected. The survey was attended by 355 people (including 215 women, which constitutes 60.6% of the respondents; 131 men, which constitutes 36.9% of the respondents; 8 people who did not want to disclose their gender, constituting 2.3% of the survey target group, and 1 non-binary person (i.e. 0.3% of the respondents) – mainly residents of Kraków aged 18 to 65, with the dominant group aged 18–34. The survey was conducted between 25 May and 25 June 2024, in electronic and paper form. The questionnaire included six single- and multiple-choice questions concerning, among others, the assessment of strategic goals, developmental areas, challenges for the city, and the level of social participation. The structure of the questionnaire was to enable obtaining both quantitative and qualitative data while providing the respondents with the opportunity to express their opinions more broadly. The survey questionnaire included both closed-ended and semi-open-ended questions. It allowed the respondents to select one or more responses from a proposed list and further refine their position in the form of a short statement. The response cafeterias were developed based on previous analyses of Kraków's strategic documents and the literature on the subject, ensuring consistency with the study's objectives. This structure allowed for the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, reflecting the residents' opinions more comprehensively.

It should be emphasised that the study is exploratory in nature, and its results reflect the opinions of respondents within a specific time period and social context. Limitations include the relatively small sample size and the overrepresentation of young people, which limits the ability to fully generalise the results to the entire population of Kraków. Nevertheless, the data obtained provide valuable empirical material for further analysis of residents' attitudes towards local development policy.

The target group of the survey is divided into six age categories. The percentage share of each age group in the study is presented in Figure 1. The most numerous group of the respondents was in the 25–34 bracket, which accounts for about 34%. The second place was taken by the 18–24 bracket, with a share of 30.4%. The smallest share in the survey was people aged 65+, who account for about 1% (4 people). The survey was shared mainly on Kraków's social media (i.e. on the website of the Municipal Transport in Kraków) and in the Kraków City Office. In addition, interviews with the residents were conducted, during which the paper version of the survey could be completed. These results were then processed electronically. The largest group of the respondents – nearly 47% (165 people) – were people who have lived in Kraków since birth. Almost 34% of the respondents were people who had moved to Kraków, and about 20% were people staying in Kraków because of school, studies, or work.

The survey contained five questions on the most important areas, the greatest challenges, and developmental directions for the City of Kraków. The first question concerns selecting the most important area of development for the City of Kraków. The respondents' answers are presented in Figure 2. Out of the 355 people surveyed, as many as 174 consistently stated that the most important area of development for Kraków is urban infrastructure, including both the condition of roads and public transport. The second place was taken by environmental protection and sustainable development, which received 75 votes – more than twice fewer indications than for

urban infrastructure. Next, 57 respondents indicated economic development and job creation as the most important areas of development for Kraków. The remaining answers were as follows: 34 of the respondents chose culture and heritage, 8 people selected education and innovation, 3 of the respondents indicated the real estate market, 3 of the respondents chose tourism and sport, and 1 person selected counteracting the atomisation of society.

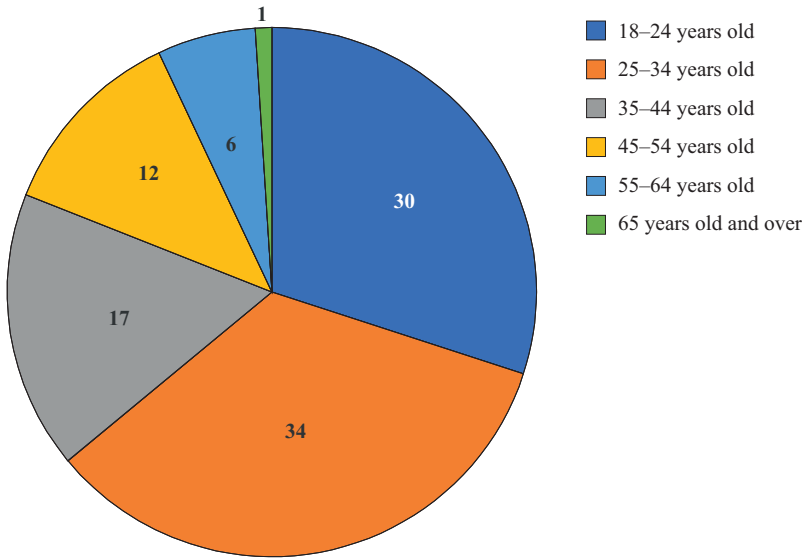


Figure 1. The percentage of each age group in the research group (in %)

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey conducted.

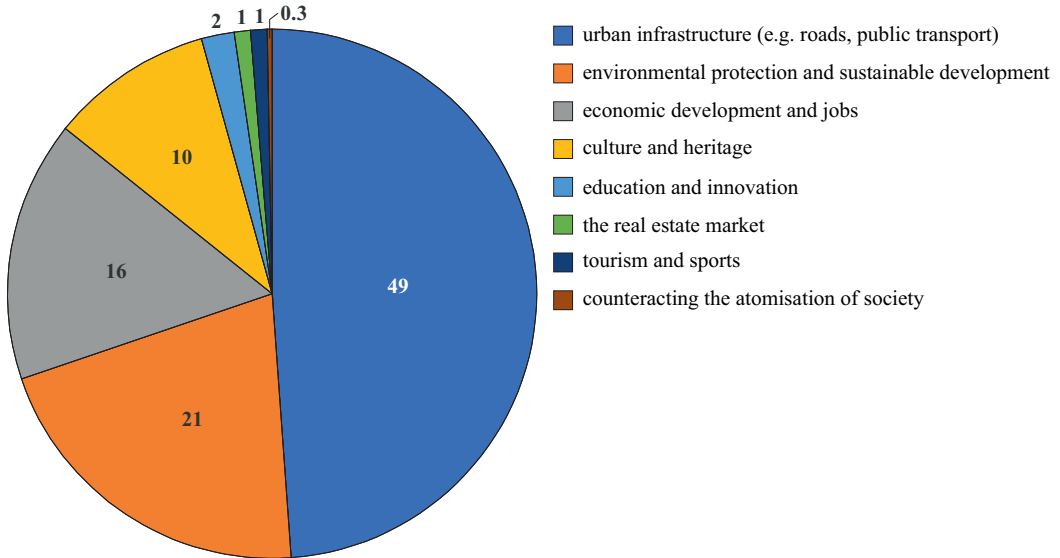


Figure 2. The respondents' answers regarding the most important area of Kraków's development (in %)

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey conducted.

The next survey question concerned selecting the greatest challenge for Kraków’s development in the coming years. The results are shown in Figure 3. The most indications (as many as 235, which constitutes about 66% of all answers) can be seen for overburdening transport infrastructure. The results clearly show that Kraków’s transport system and infrastructure causes concern among the city residents. This challenge may lead to longer travel times and higher transport costs, and may require increased investment outlays to adapt infrastructure to the needs of its users and other road users. Out of the 235 respondents who indicated infrastructure overburdening as the main challenge for Kraków, 122 have lived in Kraków since birth, 70 moved to the city from another locality, and 43 live in Kraków temporarily due to school, studies, or work. As the second answer, the respondents indicated environmental pollution. This challenge was selected by 63 people, which is almost 18% of all answers to this question. A small difference in the number of indications can be seen between the lack of jobs and maintaining the city’s cultural identity.

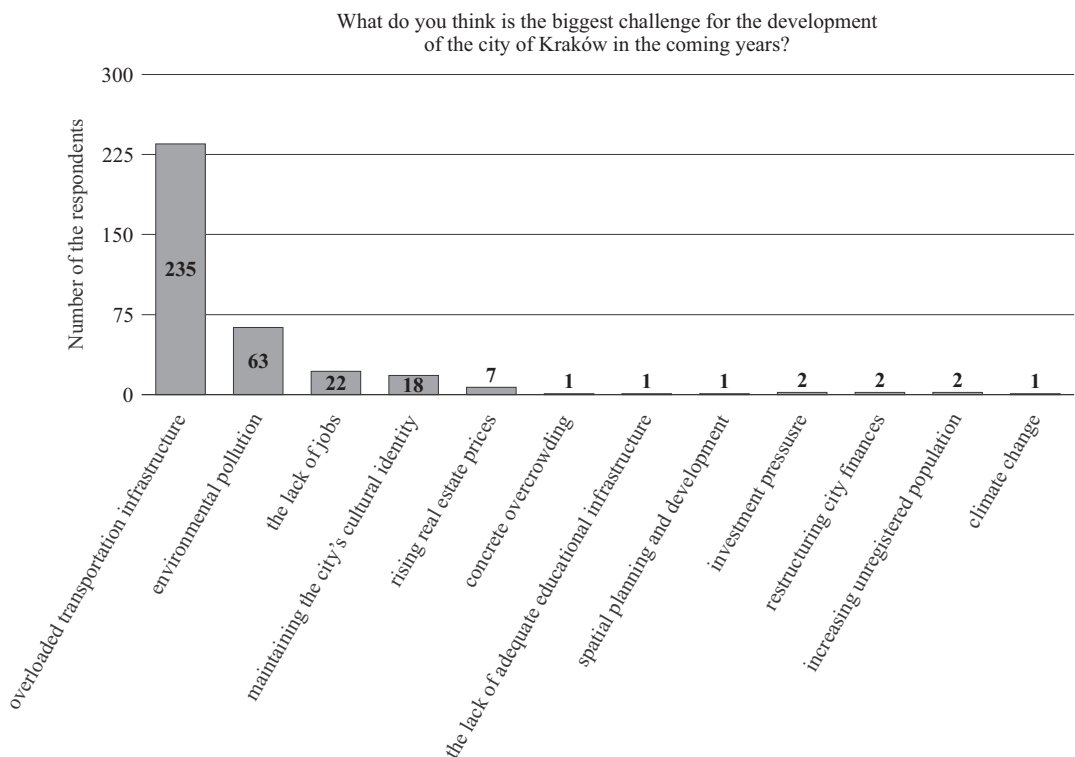


Figure 3. The respondents’ answers regarding the greatest challenge for Kraków’s development

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey conducted.

The lack of jobs, as the third challenge selected by the respondents, received the support of 22 people, including 12 people who had moved to Kraków from another locality, 6 people who have lived in the city since birth, and 4 people who live in Kraków temporarily. The next challenge – maintaining the city’s cultural identity – received 18 votes, among which 10 belong to people who have lived in Kraków since birth, 5 – to people who had moved from another locality,

and 3 – to people who live in Kraków temporarily. Seven people indicated that a challenge for Kraków’s development may be rising real estate prices. Individual respondents pointed to such challenges for Kraków’s development as the concretisation of the city (excessive paving over), the restructuring of the city’s finances, climate change, spatial planning and land use, an increase in the number of people not formally registered in the city, investment pressure, and the lack of adequate educational infrastructure.

The survey also asked about specific actions considered key in the Kraków Development Strategy. The results are shown in Figure 4. Each respondent could select two actions they considered most important. The most answers concerned investments in transport infrastructure; this answer was indicated by 300 people, which is about 85% of all responses.

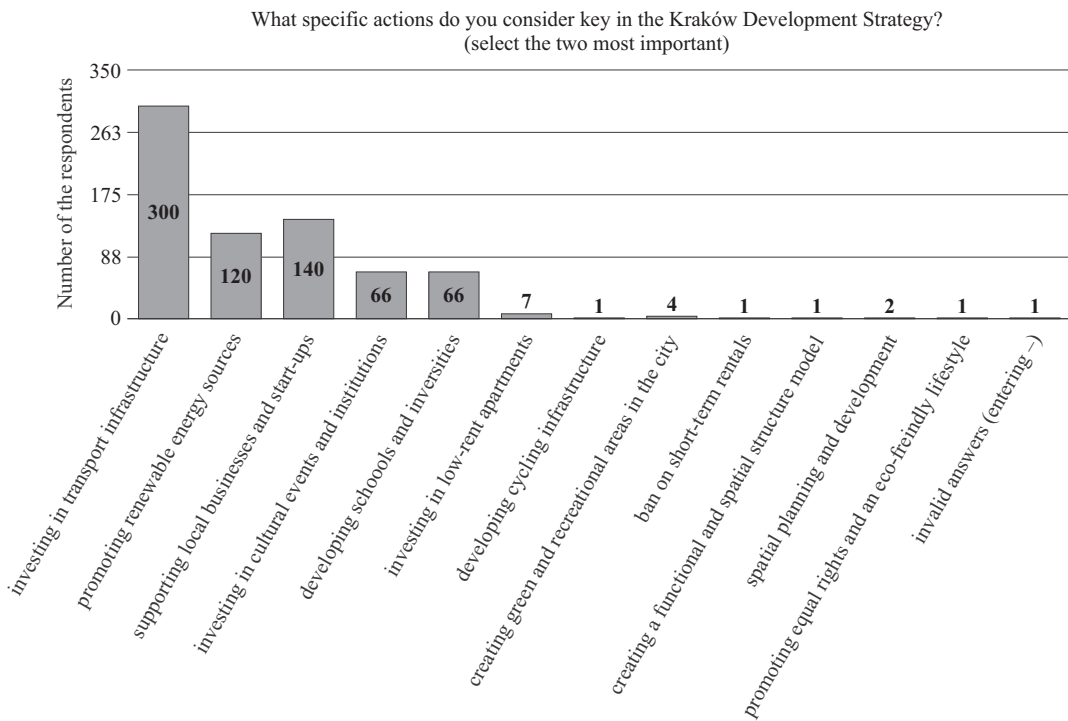


Figure 4. The respondents’ answers regarding key actions in the Kraków Development Strategy

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey conducted.

It is noteworthy that out of the 355 people surveyed, as many as 300 indicated investments in transport infrastructure as a key action in the Kraków Development Strategy. This means that a significant portion of the residents indicate a balanced and community-tailored transport system with its entire infrastructure as a key action to improve the quality of life in the city. Investments in transport infrastructure, in addition to supporting and financing road infrastructure, also include the development of sustainable transport, i.e. public transport and rail. As the second key action in the Kraków Development Strategy, the respondents indicated supporting local enterprises and start-ups. This answer was chosen by 140 people, which is about 39% of all responses. The third place among key actions in the Kraków Development Strategy was taken by the action

of promoting renewable energy sources; this was supported by 120 people. Investments in cultural events and institutions as well as the development of schools and universities each received 66 indications. Seven respondents believe that investments in low-rent housing constitute a key action in the Kraków Development Strategy. Only 4 people indicated that creating green and recreational areas in the city is key. Individual respondents selected as key actions in the Kraków Development Strategy: developing bicycle infrastructure, a ban on short-term rentals, creating a model of the functional and spatial structure, spatial planning and land use, and promoting equality and an ecological lifestyle. A drawback of the analysed results is that one answer was deemed invalid due to the entry of a dash in the additional “other” option.

The respondents were also asked about the most desirable types of economic development for the City of Kraków. Each respondent was asked to select two answers they considered most important. The results are shown in Figure 5. The most people – 230 out of the entire group surveyed (nearly 65%) – indicated that the most desirable type of economic development for Kraków is infrastructure development, including roads, bridges, energy and water networks, public transport, as well as all sports and recreational infrastructure. In the second place, the residents indicated two answers: the development of the technology and innovation sector as well as sustainable development and environmental protection. These two types of development received 110 votes each, which is 31% of all the respondents.

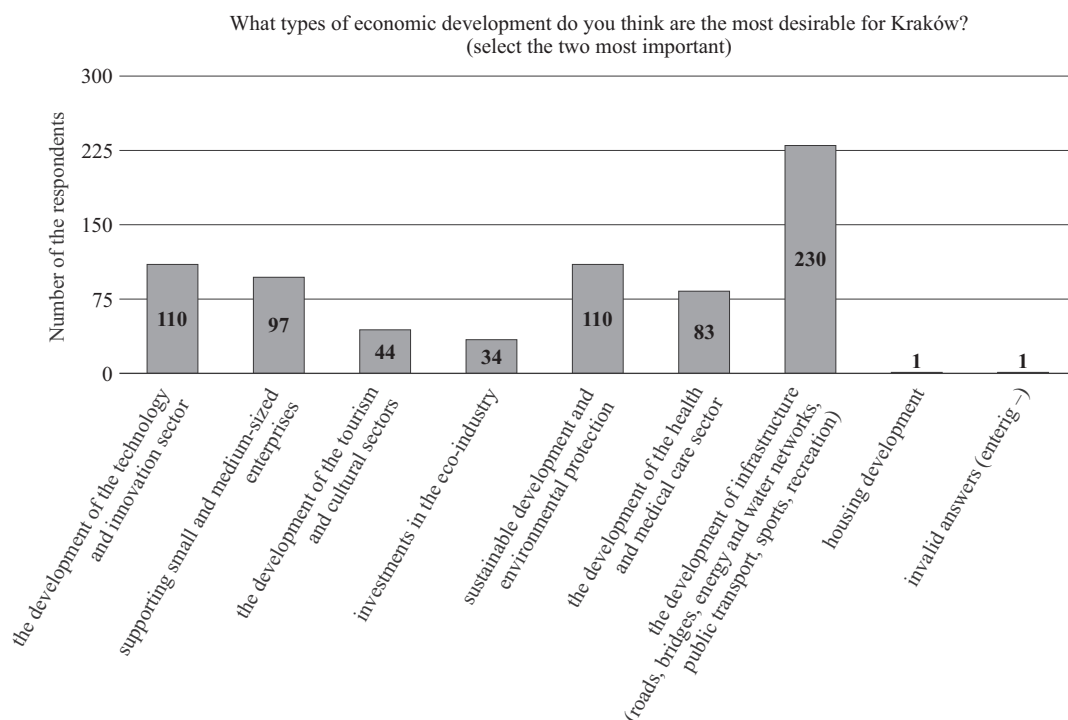


Figure 5. The respondents’ answers regarding the most desirable types of economic development for Kraków

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey conducted.

Supporting small and medium-sized enterprises was supported by 97 people; the development of the health and medical care sector was indicated by 83 people; the development of the tourism and the cultural sector was chosen by 44 people; 34 of the respondents opted for investments in the green industry; and 1 person indicated housing development as desirable for Kraków. One answer was deemed invalid due to the entry of a dash in the additional “other” option.

Another question concerning Kraków’s development was about social initiatives or municipal programmes that, in the residents’ views, are most needed in the city. The respondents were asked to select three such initiatives or programmes. The results are shown in Figure 6. According to the respondents, the most needed social initiatives or municipal programmes for Kraków include: the development of transport infrastructure, a programme to improve healthcare, as well as programmes supporting seniors and persons with disabilities.

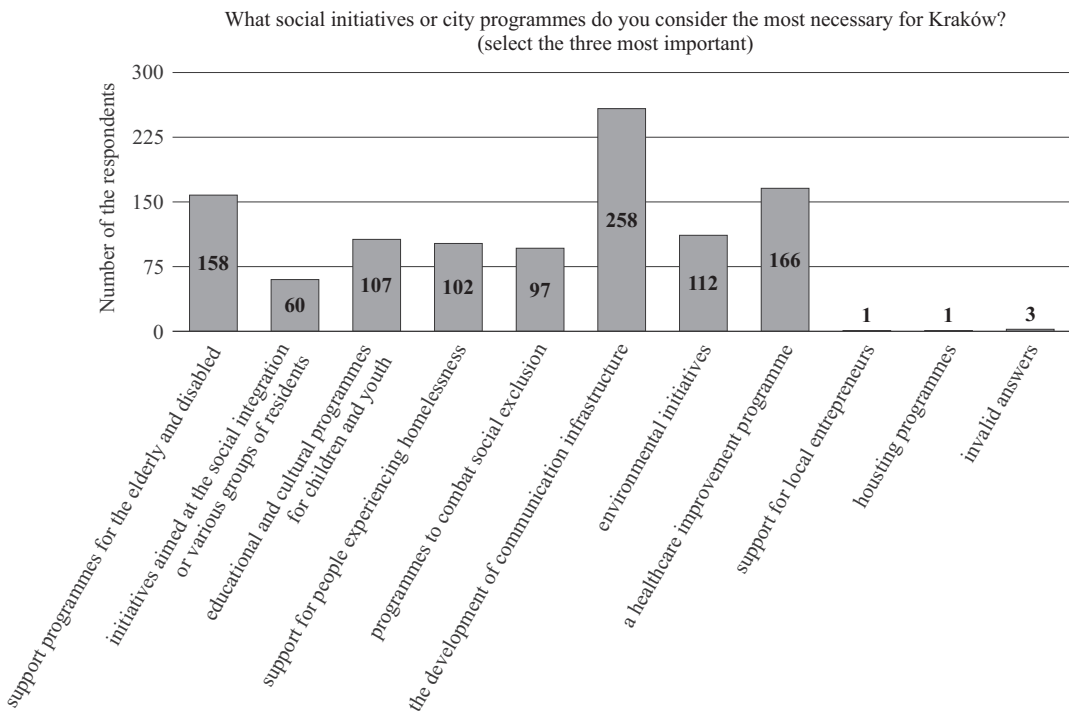


Figure 6. The respondents’ answers regarding the most needed social initiatives or municipal programmes for Kraków

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey conducted.

The most people indicated the development of transport infrastructure as the most needed initiative for Kraków. Out of the 355 people surveyed, 258 chose this answer. 166 respondents opted for programmes to improve healthcare, while programmes supporting seniors and persons with disabilities were chosen by 158 respondents. Over 100 people simultaneously selected environmental initiatives (112 people), educational and cultural programmes for children and youth (107 people), as well as support for people experiencing homelessness (102 people). Programmes to combat social exclusion received 97 votes, and 60 respondents chose initiatives

aimed at the social integration of different groups of residents. Individual respondents indicated support for local entrepreneurs and housing programmes. In interpreting the results, three answers were invalidated due to the lack of connection between the answer and the question asked.

The final survey question reads – “Do you think the city authorities should engage the residents more in the decision-making process concerning the city’s development?” The results are presented in Figure 7. Out of the 335 respondents, as many as 273 indicated an affirmative answer. This constitutes nearly 80% of all the responses to this question. Such a high result in favour of greater resident engagement in actions related to city development indicates the residents’ desire to participate in decision-making processes. Feeling the need to participate in matters that are important to them, the residents seek to improve the quality of life in the city.

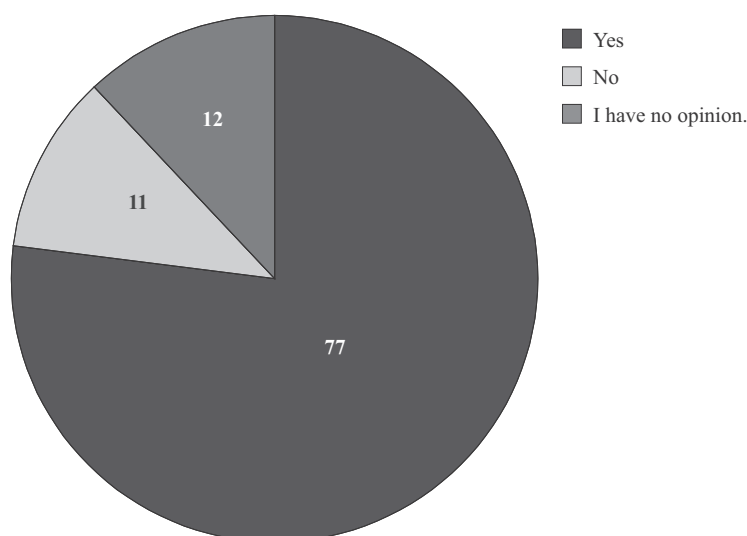


Figure 7. The respondents’ answers on residents’ engagement in the city authorities’ decision-making processes (in %)

Source: Own elaboration based on the results of the survey conducted.

It should be noted that, among the 273 people supporting increased resident engagement in decision-making related to the city’s development, 126 have lived in Kraków since birth, 95 moved to the city from another locality, and 52 live in Kraków temporarily. This distribution of responses means that engagement in the city authorities’ decision-making processes is particularly important both to the city’s native residents and to people who have come from elsewhere and live permanently in Kraków. Roughly the same numbers of people responded that the authorities should not engage the residents more in the decision-making process regarding city development or had no opinion on the matter. The negative answer was selected by 40 people (about 11% of all the collected opinions) and 42 people indicated no opinion (about 12% of all the answers to this question).

Discussion

The results of the study confirm the hypothesis that a clearly formulated developmental strategy which takes into account both long-term goals and current challenges has a positive impact on the effectiveness of city management and on the residents' quality of life. The respondents pointed to the need to modernise and expand transport infrastructure, which reaffirms that transportation overload is perceived as one of Kraków's main developmental challenges. High importance was also attached to environmental protection and to supporting local entrepreneurship and innovation, which aligns with Gęsina's (2015) and Józwiakowski's (2016) recommendations that strategic planning should integrate economic, social, and environmental dimensions as well as leverage social capital.

The findings reveal several important relationships between the perception of the city's developmental strategy and the residents' sense of empowerment. The large share of the respondents calling for greater citizen participation in decision-making indicates that the effectiveness of an urban strategy depends not only on its contents but also on how it is communicated and implemented. This observation is consistent with the literature, which emphasises that public engagement and the transparency of local authorities' actions are key factors in building trust and legitimising urban policies (Noworól, 2016; Sroka, 2009). Moreover, the trends observed in Kraków mirror those in other European cities – e.g. Berlin, Prague, or Vienna – where residents similarly prioritise improvements in transport infrastructure, greater availability of public services, and stronger participatory mechanisms (Castells, 2012; Ostrom, 2013). This suggests that even at the local level, strategic planning processes should be viewed as complex systems of interdependencies between the authorities, the local community, and urban space.

Another noteworthy aspect emerging from the research is the role of strategic communication between the city authorities and the residents. The low level of public awareness of the goals of Kraków's *I Want to Live Here: Kraków 2030* strategy suggests a need for intensified informational and educational efforts. Such actions could improve the residents' understanding of the city's development policies and foster a sense of shared responsibility for shaping Kraków's urban space. The study also highlights a strong demand for social participation – almost 80% of the respondents expressed that residents should be more involved in the city's decision-making processes. This underscores the importance of community engagement in urban governance (cf. Gawroński, 2010). The results suggest that the effective implementation of the current Kraków Development Strategy will require parallel efforts to develop social dialogue mechanisms, increase transparency in municipal actions, and systematically communicate strategic objectives to the public. In the light of these findings, it can be stated that the success of strategic planning in Kraków largely hinges on integrating the social, economic, and spatial dimensions of development, as well as on the ability of the local authorities to create conditions for active citizen participation in decision-making. Strengthening this integrative and participatory approach may significantly enhance the strategy's impact on the city's sustainable development.

Conclusions

The results of the study make it possible to confirm the hypothesis that a clearly formulated developmental strategy that takes into account both goals and challenges has a positive impact on

the effectiveness of city management and the residents' quality of life. The respondents pointed to the need to modernise and expand transport infrastructure, which confirms that transport overload is one of Kraków's main developmental challenges. Significant importance was also attached to environmental protection and to supporting local entrepreneurship and innovation, which fits with Gęsina's (2015) and Józwiakowski's (2016) recommendations regarding the combination of economic, social, and environmental dimensions in the strategic planning process as well as the inclusion of social capital.

The obtained results reveal several significant relationships between the perception of city development strategies and residents' sense of social empowerment. The high percentage of responses indicating the need to increase resident participation in decision-making processes confirms that the effectiveness of urban strategies depends not only on their contents but also on the manner of communication and implementation. The literature emphasises that public engagement and the transparency of local government actions are key factors in building trust and legitimising urban policies (Noworól, 2016; Sroka, 2009).

The results of the research conducted in Kraków are consistent with trends observed in other European cities – including Berlin, Prague, and Vienna – where residents most frequently point to the need to improve transport infrastructure, increase the availability of public services, and strengthen participation mechanisms (Castells, 2012; Ostrom, 2013). This confirms that strategic planning processes, even at the local level, should be viewed as complex systems of interdependencies between the authorities, the local community, and urban space.

Another important aspect emerging from the research is the importance of strategic communication between the city authorities and the residents. The low level of the awareness of the goals of the Kraków Development Strategy may indicate the need for intensified information and educational activities. These actions could increase the public awareness of developmental policy and a sense of shared responsibility for shaping Kraków's urban space.

The study also showed a strong need for social participation – almost 80% of the respondents expected greater resident engagement in decision-making processes, which confirms the importance of local community participation in shaping urban policy (Gawroński, 2010). The results suggest that the effective implementation of the current Kraków Development Strategy requires the parallel development of mechanisms for social dialogue, increasing the transparency of actions, and systematically communicating strategic assumptions among residents.

In the light of the data obtained, it can be stated that the effectiveness of strategic planning in Kraków depends largely on the integration of the social, economic, and spatial dimensions, as well as on the ability of the local authorities to create conditions for active participation of citizens in decision-making processes. It should, however, be emphasised that the study mainly covered young people, which may limit the representativeness of the results for the city's entire population. Therefore, future studies should include diverse social and age groups as well as comparisons between cities, which will allow for a more accurate assessment of the effectiveness of implementing urban strategies and their impact on the residents' quality of life.

To sum up, the study indicates that Kraków's residents' main expectations focus on modernising transport, pro-environmental actions, and increasing social participation. The results underscore that strategic planning should integrate economic, social, and environmental aspects, take into account local resources and social capital, and create mechanisms enabling the active participation of the community in the city's developmental process.

Further research should expand the analysis to include comparisons between cities of different sizes and assess the impact of the new 2020 regulations on the effectiveness of developmental strategy implementation in local government units. A comparative analysis could reveal differences in the integration of socioeconomic and spatial dimensions as well as identify good practices that could be implemented in Kraków's urban policy.

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Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

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Data Availability Statement

All data will be available and shared upon request.