

## **Cities, Communities and Homes: Is the Urban Future Livable?**

**Paper / Proposal Title:**

Social perception (and construction) of space: assessing the socio-environmental impacts of urban development projects

**Format:**

Written paper

**Author(s) Name:**

J. Andrés Domínguez-Gómez

**University or Company Affiliation:**

Department of Sociology, Social Work and Public Health. University of Huelva (Spain)

**Abstract (300 words):**

A selection of results from the socio-environmental impact assessment of a golf-based tourism-urban development in south-west Spain are presented. Social constructionism theory applied to space yields the best explanation of these results. Among the most significant conclusions: an urban development project cannot aspire to real sustainability (environmental, social, economic and political) without taking into account (and taking on board) perceptions of space and of the project's impacts in the area where it is to be carried out. Perceptions of space and of project impacts construct reality and have objective effects on the environment. The crisis of 'social sustainability' in many projects already implemented involves serious risks for both the local and global dimensions of sustainable development. Factors such as local social, demographic and economic structures and power relations should be taken into account as key sources of information for reducing the risks (environmental, financial, social and political) stemming from a project. Otherwise, decision-makers will need to accept, a priori, shortcomings in the sustainability and legitimacy of their development initiatives.

**Author(s) Biography (200 words each):**

Professor of Social Research Methods, Environmental Sociology and Tourism Development at the University of Huelva (Spain) and the University of the Algarve (Portugal). Since 1995 his main research line has centered on the environmental and social impact assessment of development schemes such as tourism projects. Supported by the ESEIS (Univ. Of Huelva) and CIEO (Univ. Of Algarve) research groups, he has developed or led seven state-funded research projects on cited issues. He is also a founding partner of EISmethods LTD, a spin-off company of the University of Huelva.