



**Széchenyi István University**  
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**Social participation in the local  
development policy – with a special focus on  
the role of civil/nonprofit organizations**

Doctoral dissertation

THESES

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# 1. The aim and structure of the dissertation

The development of a given settlement, territory, region or country is a deliberate intervention, which affects the operation of the given space to guarantee an adequate living standard for the inhabitants and to assure the future of the given territory or settlement.

The national and local governmental actors have a very important role in the development process as they can assure a frame for carrying out the aims by making laws and decrees. However the key actors of the development are those citizens and local actors who can fill up the development with content through their activities. They will carry out the development through their everyday activities and by grasping the opportunities provided by the frames.

It can only be done effectively and successfully if people have a strong connection to the given territory or settlement, so they have relations with the help of which the aims become feasible. These local connections can be created for example by civil/nonprofit organizations<sup>1</sup>. This way, they can affect directly and indirectly the development of the given territory or settlement.

The formation of the initial versions of the above-mentioned connections began in that period of human history, when people tried to meet the requirements of life by giving up the wandering lifestyle and forming communities (Stöhr 1990b). In the point of view of my topic it is essential to mention this period of history because this way the formation of the organization of social and economic life can be followed up. The formation of communities revealed the fact that those people are responsible for the established units (it can be any kind of spatial unit, like nation, intranational or supranational level) who live in the given territory. People's wealth depends on to what extent they can form their own future and develop their environment by using their own resources and creativity with the help of the available resources.

During history this local development view formed sometimes significantly, sometimes not the life of communities. If we examine the history of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we can say that the local development conceptions gained ground in the 1970s, as the conception of economic policy concentrating on mainly the nation's role after the 2<sup>nd</sup> world war did not prove to be able to satisfy the demands (Stöhr 1990a, Stöhr 1990b, Cséfalvay 2004, Pike – Rodríguez-

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<sup>1</sup> In my doctoral dissertation I use the terms civil and nonprofit as the followings. In the first two theoretical chapters of my dissertation I use the civil/nonprofit terms to designate the organizations, since we cannot make a perfect distinction between the civil and/or nonprofit organizations in the theoretical assumptions. It is much harder in the foreign literature where the citizen's participation and the role of civil/nonprofit organizations often merge. As civil/nonprofit organizations I mean every form of organization which is partly or fully formed spontaneously by citizen's wish to carry out personal, communal or public purposes (Kuti 1998, Bartal 2005). In the empirical chapter of my dissertation I use the term 'nonprofit organizations', because during my doctoral research I only examined organizations with legal status thus the subjects of the research were the nonprofit organizations (associations, foundations and quasi nonprofit organizations).

Pose – Tomaney 2006). In the development policy of western countries there was a strong demand that the basics of developments should be determined firstly by resources available at local levels, which means that also local actors should have an influencing role in making decisions. The participation of citizens in developments and local political decisions began in the 1980s as an everyday usage.

In Hungary the processes mentioned above began later because of the different history and they are still at the beginning phase. The components and techniques of participating democracy applied in the western countries are not so spread in the domestic development processes, thus the development process based on the partnership of local and national economic and social actors still less helps the improvement of the given place.

In practice the citizen participation can happen in three ways: directly through the activities of citizens, and through the activities of civil/nonprofit organizations that are based on mainly citizen participation. We also have to mention the case when the citizens take part in local development processes through market and public organizations, however in this case the organizational interests predominate. The citizens can use different methods and communication means to enforce their interest either individually or within organizational bounds (social participation) during the development processes.

In the centre of my doctoral dissertation are the local development processes with a special focus on studying social participation. My aim is to study how the social actors – especially civil/nonprofit organizations – can be initiated effectively in the local development processes, and how they can contribute to the successful development process in both social and economic sense. In the centre of my empirical research is the group of civil/nonprofit organizations which practise local development and settlement development activities in the West-Transdanubian Region. The aim of my research based on questionnaires and interviews is to report the situation about what characterizes the local development activity of organizations.

The aim of the theoretical chapters that support my research is to provide a summary about the methods of participating techniques, their applying techniques, but before this I tried to study the topic I chose in a wider and deeper way. In favour of this, the dissertation's theoretical chapters contain more than just presenting the means of participation, but also place the definition of participation within the theoretical frames of local development, local governing and citizen participation. With this my aim is to illustrate in details which are those definition systems, theoretical conclusions that support the occurrence of social participation in practice. In this sense the illustration of social participation is based on wide literature, which enables me to study the topic in a deeper way and from a different approach than the earlier analyses (mainly the domestic ones) did.

In the first chapter of my doctoral dissertation I demonstrate the aims of the research, its topicality, and I also make my hypotheses. In the following two chapters I explain the theoretical background of my research topic. The aim of the first theoretical chapter is to show the hypothetical background of local development and participating democracy. In this

chapter I illustrate in details how local development, settlement development and spatial development appear in development policy, what historical roots the local development has, and who are its actors. I make clear how the participating democracy and the social participation appear in the sphere of thought of local development and local governing, and I also provide an answer to the question who should be involved and in what. In my dissertation I use the definition of local governing as the direction of local development policy, thus the two definition systems can connect to each other. While illustrating the theory of local development and participating democracy I concentrated on putting the strategic development processes in the centre. It was also the first chapter's purpose to define civil society and nonprofit sector focusing on similarities and differences in the definitions. It is also the content of the first chapter to define what role of civil/nonprofit organizations have in the development policy and what is the reason for the growing importance of this role in today's democracies.

In the second theoretical part I introduce the participating techniques of civil/nonprofit organizations, focusing on the Hungarian opportunities supplemented with foreign examples. The aim of the chapter is to show the applicable methods in the local development and citizen model set up by me and based on the elements of strategic development. The next chapter of the dissertation illustrates the operating characteristics of nonprofit organizations dealing with settlement development with the help of analyzing secondary data. The fifth chapter of the dissertation includes the results of my situation analyzing research based on questionnaires and interviews among West-Transdanubian nonprofit organizations dealing with settlement development. The last chapter contains a brief summary of theories and empirical research followed by my experiences and recommendations.

The formation of my doctoral dissertation's topic dates back my college studies. During the writing of my TDK study about the transportation possibilities of handicapped people (tutor: Tátrai Dr. Körmendi E. Katalin) I got into touch with the Association of Handicapped People of Győr-Moson-Sopron County. By knowing this organization I was impelled to study civil/nonprofit sector in a deeper way, thus I dealt with this topic later in my thesis and in my diploma work too with the supervision of Márta Nárai fellow researcher, sociologist. It was/is also a help that I have the possibility to lecture nonprofit economics at Széchenyi István University.

Later during my research I concentrated on mainly the civil/ nonprofit sector with a special focus on the connection of the sector and the local development processes and the study of the possibilities for citizen participation. I have had the possibility to make my knowledge of development processes and of civil/nonprofit organizations deeper and to gain practical experience during my research at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences Centre for Regional Studies West-Transdanubian Scientific Institute.

So I was inspired to write this dissertation by my personal interest and on the other hand by my work related to this topic.

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## 2. Hypotheses

- 1) Among nonprofit organizations dealing with settlement development local development activities can be interpreted widely. Based on this nonprofit organizations dealing with settlement development can be distinguished as the followings:
  - participation in the local government’s work,
  - participation in creating development documents,
  - report on development documents,
  - realization of development aims,
  - managing and implementation of investments, projects,
  - renovation, maintenance,
  - community building and formation,
  - stating of opinion,
  - functioning as a communication channel (‘bridge role’).
- 2) The nonprofit organizations concerning with settlement development rarely take part in the local government’s work. Within this hypothesis I would like to study the statements of Kákai (2004) in connection with settlement developing organizations:
  - It is the characteristic of shire-towns (towns of county rank) that organizations take part in ad hoc committees as invited experts, whereas in other towns they participate in both standing and ad hoc committees, and in villages all three are usual.
  - The smaller the settlement is, the more often the organizations are invited to general assemblies.
- 3) Most of the nonprofit organizations dealing with settlement development have the possibility to take part in the drafting of local development documents, but also in the spatial planning, however they have a limited role in local and spatial implementation, moreover their initiatives and suggestions don’t appear in the development plans of the settlement.
- 4) Nonprofit organizations concerned in settlement development cannot take part in projects, investments and competitions requiring many and/or significant human and money capital because of their economy and the structure of incomes and employment.
- 5) Organizations dealing with settlement development have a wide range of local connections because of their activity.

- 6) The role as a communication channel between organizations dealing with settlement development and citizens doesn't appear in local development.

### **3. The actuality of the research subject**

The aim of my dissertation is to introduce the methods and possibilities of civil/nonprofit organizations to take part in local development based on a strategic development model set up by me. In contrast to the earlier applied traditional system the strategic development counts on the actors of the given territory, planners, experts and the people affected by the plans (Rechnitzer 1998). In practice it means a constant relationship establishment and nursing, participation and cooperation as well. Thus this new type of planning requires a new type of communication from the personal point of view of Rechnitzer. To my mind it is necessary to study this new communication method from a participating aspect to be able to apply the strategic planning in practice. In my dissertation I do not apply an approach based on planning theory but I utilize the steps used during strategic planning.

The subject becomes more up-to-date because of the fact that democratic countries in their current state of development are somewhere between participating and representative democracy; so the participating techniques appear in their development practices but in varying degrees. Agreeing with some author (Pateman 1970, Rechnitzer 1998, Ploštajner 2001, Unger 2005, Verlet – Steyvers – Reynaert – Devos 2007) I am on the viewpoint that the types of participating elements should be spread first at local level because the actors are the closest to each other here, so here they can learn the participating types of development the most effective way. Having this knowledge the actors will be capable of applying the different techniques in higher levels of territory in an adequate way. That is why I see it important to deal with the meaning of local level and the definition system of local development and local governance in details in my dissertation.

The reason for the local governance's<sup>2</sup> application in practice and within this the coming to the front of civil/nonprofit organizations can be found in the changed social and economic environment where only national and local actors' governance is not enough for the development of a given territory or country (Shah 2006). For the exploitation of endogenous resources the role of civil/nonprofit sector is indispensable, what is more they are said to be one of the determining actors of the new type of governance.

I also emphasize that domestic elaboration of theories and practice of local development used in my dissertation is in an early stage, which means that in domestic literature the writings about development and civil sector concentrate only on a very few topic without a

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<sup>2</sup> According to Anwar Shah (2006) local governance is the changed function of local governments taking into consideration the approach of local governance. In this case the task of local governments is not only to provide services but also to allow opportunity for participation and civil dialogue.

wider theoretical basis. The analysis of connections between domestic civil/nonprofit organizations and settlement and local development is unique among domestic analyses. The main aim of my dissertation is to provide answer to the following question: why is it necessary in both economic and social sense for civil/nonprofit organizations to take part in a settlement's development processes.

## 4. The methodology of research

My research conducted during the writing of my dissertation is based on the following methodological basics:

- The exploitation of *domestic and foreign literature* focusing on the following theoretical subjects (It is important to note that I used mainly foreign literature during the exploitation.):
  - the definition and characteristics of local development and settlement development,
  - the definition of local governance,
  - the characteristics of participating democracy,
  - the methods and means of citizen participation,
  - the definition of civil/nonprofit sector,
  - the characteristics and steps of strategic development and based on this the creation of an own model,
  - the advantages and disadvantages of civil participation.

While exploiting the literature I tried to be multidisciplinary so the theoretical chapters reflect economic, social, political and judiciary aspects. It was essential to be able to introduce the theoretical background of local development in a wider way as I have already mentioned in the introduction.

- The introduction of prevailing *laws* regarding settlement development, local development and civil participation.
- *Analyses of KSH data:*
  - Based on statistical publications the illustration of characteristics of both domestic nonprofit sector and nonprofit organizations dealing with settlement development in the form of analysis of time series,
  - based on KSH data the regional characteristics of nonprofit organizations dealing with settlement development,
  - the local activity of organizations dealing with settlement development based on the 1% of personal income tax offer (the exploitation of KSH and APEH data).
- *A survey based on questionnaires* among nonprofit organizations dealing with settlement development in the West-Transdanubian Region during the autumn of 2007. There were 195 organizations in the sample. The *location* of the research

was the West-Transdanubian Region of Hungary because I was wondering how organizations operating in the so-called developed part of Hungary can contribute to the development of their environment, how they can take part in local development policy, and what kind of economic and human capital background they have to carry out development aims. The survey based on questionnaires had the following 3 *aims*:

- to gain information about the operation of organizations (foundation, basic activity, public utility, the number of employed people, volunteers),
  - to review in details the activities of organizations and to study their role in local development and their participating activity,
  - to be familiar with the management of organizations.
- *Survey based on interviews:*
- among leaders or representatives of 13 organizations from the ones earlier asked to fill in the questionnaire (13 persons),
  - and among the mayors or experts of local governments dealing with settlement development from the same settlements (9 persons).
  - The interviews were held in the following settlements between November 2008 and March 2009: Győr, Vámoszabadi, Kisbajcs, Répceszemere, Mosonmagyaróvár, Szombathely, Keszthely, Nádasd, Zalaegerszeg, Szilvagy.

## **5. The evaluation of hypotheses and new results**

At the beginning of my dissertation I hypothesized six things the evaluation of which is based on an extensive literature elaboration and an empirical research too. My hypotheses focused on the role of those nonprofit organizations in local development that are concerned in settlement development. My statements are based on my knowledge of literature and my previous research experiences.

I answer to the two statements of my first hypothesis separately. In the first part of my assumption I stated that settlement developing organizations interpret the definition of local development in a wider sense (H1). To prove this statement I analyzed particularly – based on domestic and foreign literature – the definition of local, settlement development, the subject and actors of development and the range of activity of West-Transdanubian settlement developing organizations and the opinions of nonprofit sector and local governments about local development. During research I found that the range of activity of organizations dealing with settlement development is wide and most of the organizations operate first of all to fulfil public demands.

Some methodological and practical questions arose in me because of this result. If we interpret settlement development in a proper sense, the analyzed organizations should deal with construction and carrying out of investments. But if we interpret development in a wider

sense – as I did during my whole dissertation –, any kind of process that leads to the improvement of living standards can be defined as development. Accordingly the public approach of organizations' operations ranges with the local development's definition. Conversely, if we study the public featured operations in a deeper way, we can say that in most cases it is in connection with some kind of sport, cultural or free time activity. They can also shape the community but in my point of view not in the same sense as the definition of local development says because they are more ordinary since they cover only the main reason for founding a nonprofit organization and the offer of public services. This made me wonder why the KSH classifies these organizations to the category of settlement development. To my mind common/public development as a form of activity should be defined in a wider sense and based on another approach, thereby it could include activities like community shaping and community building. Other typical activities of settlement developers: embellishment of settlement, clearing of ragweed, planting flowers, organizing events, making publications.

*In my investigation I accepted the first part of my first hypothesis to be true which means that organizations interpret settlement development in a wider sense and they deal with the community shaping and more rarely the community building part of developments. I didn't study the reasons for this but during my research the following questions arose in me providing a basis for future researches:*

- It is an important question whether the local authority allows the set up of organizations that could actively participate in developments (not only community shaping but also the realizing of investments) and how they can evolve.
- From nonprofit point of view the following question can arise: do the organizations want to take part in wider developing activities or they are satisfied with just organizing events, embellishing the settlement and so they don't want to participate in more active developing processes.

The statement of the second part of my first hypothesis is that the classification of activities of settlement developing organizations is linked up with the previous statement. I assume that organizations can be classified to the given category based on their activity. I accepted this statement based on theory, but it is in contrast with the empirical research conducted among organizations dealing with settlement development in West-Transdanubia. The organizations have such a wide range of activities (often dealing with development in an indirect way) thus in this case this type of classification didn't prove to be the best one. Instead of this during analyses I applied a classification that consists of 15 areas of activities based on the answers of the organizations, but I couldn't classify the organizations to only one category in this case too. *Based on these I rejected the second part of my first hypothesis.*

I stated in my second assumption that settlement developing organizations rarely have the chance to take part in the decision-preparatory work of local governments; furthermore

my aim was to study the statements of a previous research regarding settlement developers (H2). During my survey I found that the major part of organizations do have the chance to participate in the local government's work although rather casually than regularly but at least sometimes they are allowed to participate in the general assemblies, committees and this way they can come to know the processes of local governments. I must add that all of this can show up if organizations grab the chance and really take part in these meetings. *Based on this I reject the first part of my hypothesis, but based on my research the major part of organizations are allowed to take part in the decision-preparatory work* (further researches are needed to find out the experiential forms of it).

*I tested to the settlement developers the previous researches of Kákai László (2004) referring to participation in local government's work; and the statement that organizations in towns of country rank usually participate in ad hoc committees and as invited experts proved to be true whereas I rejected the statements articulated in connection with other towns and villages.* The organizations operating in other towns mainly have an opinant role, whereas among those operating in villages the participation in regular committees is dominant. My research based on questionnaires and my survey based on interview have an antinomic result referring to the question whether organizations in towns or those in villages have the bigger chance to take part in general assemblies. The survey based on questionnaires shows that there is a little difference between the chance of organizations in town and those in villages whereas based on the answers of interviews the organizations operating in villages have the bigger chance to participate in the work of local governments (mainly in general assemblies) because of their personal relations and their positions in the management of both organizations and the settlement. *So I partly accept the statement referring to participation in general assemblies.*

To prove my statement referring to participation in planning and carrying out of development documents (H3) I studied how many organizations take part in local, spatial and national planning and in reaching the goals. During my research I found that organizations rather take part in planning than in carrying out them, although it is true for only less than half of the organizations at local level. The participation is lower in case of plans referring to a small area or a larger territory. The participation in planning usually means stating opinion and not a close cooperation. The phenomenon that nonprofit organizations operating in smaller settlements have bigger chance to cooperate with local governments mainly because of their personal relations was dominant again in case of interviews. *Based on this I reject the first part of my assumption, but I accept the second part of it; furthermore I reject the statement saying that ideas of organizations don't show up at local level, however it is true that they only have the chance to state one opinion or idea (at least one idea of 71% of the organizations show up in settlement development).*

I also analyzed the income and employment structure of organizations because I state that settlement developing organizations don't have enough economic resources to realize

weighty investments (H4). The answer to this statement is in connection with my first and second assumptions (I accepted that organizations usually define local development in a wider way and they see it as a community shaping thing). During my research I found that more than half of settlement developers have less than half a million forints to manage themselves, and their main income sources are the 1% personal income tax offers, the state support and the income from tenders. What's more I rated 60% of the organizations as unsafe because of their income sources, as these organizations have less than 4 types of income sources which can make them exposed in my opinion. It is particularly true knowing that the major part of these organizations manages from mainly dues and the 1% personal income tax offers both of which is hard to be forecasted.

Although organizations gain most of their incomes from tenders, only a few organizations have made a tender dealing with settlement development since 2000. The submitted tenders refer mainly to smaller developments and to provide common services. Organizations don't make capital intensive tenders as one of my interviewed people said they were afraid of tenders and projects that require a bigger amount of capital because they felt they weren't able to manage them. Having evaluated the activities of organizations we can say that the same is true for the other organizations. A reason for this among other things is that the major part of organizations (almost 90%) doesn't have employees, so they do their activities with the help of members and/or volunteers whose main task is to organize different types of events and to do the administrative tasks and not to carry out projects requiring more severe expertise.

During my research it became unambiguous that the diverse activities of organizations are related to their degree of money and human capital supply. The income realized by organizations is necessary to cover the conditions of everyday operation, because from a couple of ten or hundred thousand forints is hard to carry out even a smaller development not to mention the wages of employees. However a question arose in me whether the settlement developing organizations need to possess more millions of income and more employees because their sources are enough for making the settlement more beautiful and shaping the community. According to me the major part of organizations does the given task because they have the sources for doing that and they wouldn't be able to gain capital for bigger investments. I think that the task of an organization dealing with settlement development should be – beyond carrying out smaller or bigger investments – to participate actively in the formation and carrying out of developing aims of a settlement, small area by transferring opinions and taking part in the decision-preparatory work. For this they need first of all human resource, but to my mind those kind of organizations would be needed that would focus on this aspect of development during their activities. It requires employing experts – and of course money for paying their wages – who are able to represent the interest of organizations in front of the decision-makers and are also able to make the organizations function as a communication channel among local actors.

*Based on the above-mentioned I state that the major part of settlement developing organizations is not suitable for carrying out or taking part in bigger projects because of their economic and human resource background so I accept my fourth hypothesis.*

My fifth hypothesis referred to the relations system of organizations, and I stated that settlement developers have a wide range of relations because of their activity (H5). To prove this hypothesis I analyzed in details the organizations' relations within the sector and out of the sector and with local governments too and as well as their intensity and character. During research I proved that almost all organization (97%) has relation at least with one social or economic actor, but it is typical that one organization keeps in touch with only a couple of other actors (36% of them keep in touch with maximum two). This number can be said to be high since the essence of settlement developers' activity should be to contribute to the development of the settlement and its environment by listening and transferring the opinions of local actors during developing processes, however most organizations don't do so as we could see it from the first hypothesis. Most organizations hold an intercourse with local governments and entrepreneurs. *Based on the above-mentioned I reject my fifth hypothesis which means that organizations dealing with settlement development can't be characterized by a wide range of relations.*

I composed my last assumption connecting to the previous one and it says that the role of a communication channel between settlement developers and citizens doesn't show up in the practice of local development (H6). I experienced during the research that citizens don't turn to settlement developing organizations with settlement developing aims, but their relation is rather characterized by an everyday cooperation like we could see in the case of their relations with local governments. The listening to opinions is not organized but happens in an ad hoc way. *Based on my research I take my last assumption to be proved.*

The new scientific results of the dissertation are in connection with the elaboration of literature and on the other hand with the empirical research and these are the followings:

- Opinion-stating principle instead of participating principle: I explained in the dissertation that in my point of view it is more practical to mention the participating right as an opinion-stating principle because of the practical limits of participating in decision-making processes.
- The introduction of the definition of active democracy which means a type of democracy in which the citizens and civil/nonprofit organizations actively take part in development processes – primarily based on the validation of opinion-stating principal – cooperating with local actors and the representatives chosen by them.
- The triple definition system of citizen participation: civic participation personally, thorough civil/nonprofit organizations and indirectly through other institutional and market organizations.

- The use of social participation instead of citizen participation which expresses the civic participation both personally and through civil/nonprofit organizations.
- Social and economic arguments for and against social participation.
- The elaboration of civil/nonprofit organizations' role in development policy.
- The drawing of a potential model of local development and social participation.
- The introduction of participating means in the process of strategic development.
- I revealed that in 2007 only 57,3% of Hungarian settlements had a settlement developing organization and the rate was the highest in the Central-Hungarian Region (87%), furthermore I also revealed that most of the organizations operate in villages with at least 1 000 inhabitants.
- One fifth of settlement developing organizations received from the 1% personal income tax offers in 2007; they received averagely 147 thousand forints and the offer was the biggest in the Central-Hungarian Region. 71,4% of organizations receiving from these offers operate in villages, and averagely the organizations operating in larger villages and in smaller towns gained the biggest amount from 1% personal income tax offers. More than half of the organizations received less than 100 thousand forints from these offers.
- More than half of the analyzed settlement developing organizations (55,4%) deals with providing services and communal events and also with shaping the community.
- 58% of the organizations have the possibility to take part in any kind of way in the decision-preparatory work of local governments.
- It is the characteristic of organizations operating in villages not to participate in planning and carrying out development documents.
- I revealed that 60% of the settlement developing organizations doesn't operate safely regarding the number of income sources, because they have to manage from less than 4 types of sources annually.
- The type of the settlement doesn't affect the amount of organizations' incomes.
- Most of the interviewed organizations had income from the 1% personal income tax offers in 2006, the highest income came from the national tender sources (55 million forints), and furthermore the 1% personal income tax offer was the dominant source of organizations' income.
- Almost 12% of the organizations employ a full-time employee and 57,4% of them employ a volunteer; and both organizations in towns and those in villages employ volunteers.
- 97% of the organizations keep in touch with at least one social or economic actor, and most of the organizations (78%) cooperate with the settlement's local government in a relatively intensive way, however the subject of the cooperation is not settlement development but participation in events and mutual tenders.

- Settlement developers have the similar number of relations with nonprofit organizations having the same or a diverse field of activity, but they have a stronger relation with those organizations that operate in the same field.
- Out of the sector the relation with entrepreneurs is the most typical (56,4%).
- While cooperating with citizens the major emphasis is put on the operation of organizations and not on the change of opinions regarding the development.

## **6. My summarizing thoughts about local development**

My doctoral dissertation had a dual aim: on the one hand to introduce local development and the definition systems belonging to this (local governance, participating democracy, citizen and social participation), and the system of ways and means of participation in local development, and on the other hand to illustrate with the help of empirical research the special features of participation showing up in practice, with a special focus on the forms of activities and the features of relations of settlement developing organizations operating in the West-Transdanubian Region and also focusing on their participation in decision-preparation. In the theoretical part of the dissertation I introduced the complex meaning of local development and how wide-ranging the definition system of local government is. I reviewed their features, theoretical backgrounds and the potential fields of their practical applicability (also stating the national legal environment), then I analyzed the appearance of them through the example of West-Transdanubian Region.

I set up a theoretical local development social participation model with the aim to illustrate those development processes in which local actors, especially citizens and civil/nonprofit organizations can take part in favour of effective development (from the stage of planning through the carrying out to the evaluation of processes). As a result of my empirical research I had the chance to see where the settlement developing organizations can participate in these processes, in which fields they can be active. I must emphasize that during my research I couldn't analyze the actualization of the whole process in practice but only the elements regarding the parts of the process among organizations. I found that the model of citizen participation set up by me doesn't work properly in practice, in some elements of it the civil/nonprofit organizations take part based on their possibilities which happens not in an organized but in an informal way through free talks and other events. During the research I revealed that organizations have the biggest opportunity to collect and transfer ideas regarding development documents whereas they have a minor role in carrying out and evaluating development processes (I didn't analyzed in details the latter one so I drew my conclusions from the other answers).

I haven't investigated yet how my model could work in foreign countries, but during the international research I found – based on the introduced examples – that the participation is better organized and legally more confirmed in more foreign countries. We can also find positive examples in Hungary (I introduced them) to improve the effectiveness of local

participation, however based on the elaboration of theoretical background and my empirical research I drew the conclusion that in Hungary the appearance of local development and citizen participation in practice is in an early stage. Besides the economic and political elements of democracy I think democratic social processes and the acquirement of the way how they could connect to other systems requires the most time. I add that we can't call the given society to account for where they are<sup>3</sup>, but it is better if we analyze the current situation and while drawing conclusions we define the problems and the ways to solve them, and we also begin to accomplish them. Every country has its own special features deriving from their history and the evaluation of processes should be based on these features.

It can be ascertained that civil/nonprofit organizations have a significant role in carrying out the development by meeting the local demands, which means informal relations in the national practice. The aim would be that more and more people and organizations should perceive that they have a role in development and spatial processes and they should improve the opportunity as well.

While analyzing the theory and practice of organizations' participation I defined those problems that can impede the evolvement of local development's processes in Hungary. I am going to illustrate these ascertainments of mine then I demonstrate my recommendations to solve them.

## **7. Problems conceived during research and recommendations**

I try to demonstrate the problems and shortcomings conceived during my research in legal, economic and social point of view:

- I think that one of the main problems is that there is no act in which the participation in development and its validation in local, regional and national level and also the rights and duties of people in these processes would be defined unequivocally. As a result of this neither the tasks nor the actors are known exactly thus the accordance between actors, experts and planners often misses. Currently if we talk about the relation between civil/nonprofit organizations and participation in Hungary, the social reconciliation comes to the front as a mean of social participation and partnership mainly in connection with European planning. The participation in regional and local development partly appears in legal level, however the appearance of this in practice is not really known.
- Neither settlement development and arrangement nor the standard legal regulation referring to the level of small areas exists in Hungary, and as for local development level it isn't mentioned at all in acts.
- The current national acts enumerate only the traditional means of participation, but they don't detail the features of them.

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<sup>3</sup> Every study has its own necessary duration.

- Means of participation aren't connected to development processes by acts.
- The national acts mention more terms without their definitions (eg. social reconciliation, stating of opinions, public investigation).
- Our building act prescribes the stating of opinions only in case of the documents of plan for settlement arrangement.
- Agreeing with the statement of László (2003) it can be said that the building act can't guarantee the publicity.
- In practice it is usual that development plans become known for the inhabitants and other local organizations right before acquiescence so they can't affect them on the merits (László 2003). In this context it can be mentioned as a deficiency that national researches mainly focused on the decision-preparatory processes till now, and the possibilities of local actors in achieving the development aims and in the constant evaluation are less known.
- In many cases a passive or sometimes negative attitude can be perceived from the part of decision-makers in connection with the participation of local actors, so they don't allow these processes.
- More organizations can only get information about the settlement's processes because they actively take part in (by their leaders, members) the settlement's political life.
- The organizations usually know the opportunities of participation but they can't improve them effectively during their everyday activity.
- During the research I revealed that according to the local government and the actors of nonprofit sector the local governance term can't be interpreted in today's Hungary – especially in smaller settlements – because the institutional background which is necessary for this doesn't exist. We can draw the conclusion from this that in Hungary those types of coordination are missing which would be able to generate processes that could guarantee an organized frame for the cooperation of local actors.
- Settlement developing organizations aren't able to realize more severe investments because of their low capital intensiveness (it is also a problem that usually they don't want to do so or if yes they don't have the chance).
- The relation system of organizations – aside from some organizations with active relations – is characterized by passivity. During my research I found that most of the relations are formal and ad hoc, and although the major part of organizations keep in touch with the local government, the intensity of this relation is weak and manifest itself in the form of rendering help to the operation or asking for help for a project.
- The relation between organizations and citizens is shallow as they are in connection with the operation and not the settlement development.

During my research I defined the following recommendations regarding the national participation in local development:

- In the future an act would be necessary that covers both settlement development and the level of small area, and another that covers local development. In connection with this it must be ensured that these acts are unambiguous for every actor involved and applicable in practice.
- To my mind it would be necessary to launch another act covering the social participation connecting to strategic planning in which the focus will be on the local level and the practical forms and financial sources of applicable means.
- It has to be realized that communication channels are needed between decision-makers and citizens, and besides media the civil/nonprofit organizations have to take this role on themselves.
- While answering to my first hypothesis I have already referred to that the subdivision of settlement developing activities applied by KSH doesn't express the real activities of organizations, and it also interprets the shaping of communities in a broader sense. Furthermore I have already mentioned in the methodological part that because of this it is hard to find those organizations that actually deal with settlement development so researchers are enmeshed in difficulties when they research the territoriality of organizations (if the organizations aren't known exactly, their area distribution is also unknown). The way I see only those community building organizations should be classified into settlement developing organizations that shape the community and organize forums in favour of the settlement. I wouldn't mention here the community shaping role of organizations operating in the field of sport and culture. To explore these differences an investigation of activities of settlement developing organizations would be necessary at a national level. Another reason for this is the problem revealed during my research that there are organizations who deal with settlement development but aren't mentioned in the database of KSH, what's more they are sometimes more active than those mentioned in the database of KSH.
- Settlement developing organizations should organize formal events and programs to inform the inhabitants about the ideas of organizations and decision-makers regarding local processes, and inhabitants could state their own opinions here. To reach this the local government, the inhabitants and the nonprofit organizations should be opened to these processes.
- The meetings mentioned in the previous point could methodize the different forums and public investigations, and in an optimal case the organizations could organize them instead of local governments thus a closer relation could evolve between organizations and local governments that could focus on questions regarding the settlement.

- The employment of experts: organizations could more effectively appear in front of public opinion and other local actors by employing experts.
- Settlement developing organizations should follow other methods and techniques in smaller and in larger settlements because the personal and institutional conditions are different. I think that organizations operating in larger towns – as their number are higher – should cooperate with each other or should employ an expert representing their mutual interest to be in touch with local actors, especially with local governments, whereas in smaller settlements the leaders of organizations could handle these tasks.
- Organizations should attempt to manage from more income sources to assure their safe operation, and they should rely on the offers of local actors. But they can count on this if they do tasks that have an effect on the people.
- Since the connection system of organizations is characterized by passivity, they should attempt to realize that cooperation with other organizations can make their operation more effective by receiving professional and material help from each other. I see the tightening of the cooperation with local governments significant in a form where the local government and the organizations communicate with each other regularly, organizations are invited to meetings and committee meetings and they do so because they think that the commitment of citizens are important. I also see it essential that settlement developers should have relations with at least those organizations that have the same activity to be able to coordinate their activities and they could represent the interests of citizens in front of decision-makers.
- Positive initiatives should be emphasized during daily communication (both in case of information and publications shown up in the media and also in case of free talks), and not only actual shortcomings should be highlighted. The latter makes sense if besides defining problems, the possible solutions are also described and their realization begins.

The conditions mentioned in the theoretical chapters have to come true so that the above-mentioned processes could be operable or at least some sort of shift is necessary so that the changes could start. I confirm the opinion of Böhm (1987), Boda (2008) and Battistoni (2000) with my research according to which local actors – both economic and social ones and local governments – should be enabled to realize that they are all needed for a successful development. One basis of effective local development is the intensive communication and the partnership between local and spatial actors. The successfulness of developing activities depends on the type of actors involved in the processes and the way how they are involved, and on how effectively they can cooperate with each other and with other actors of the economy and the society. The enabling could be the task of those experts who have the adequate theoretical and practical knowledge to be able to transfer the information necessary

for participation to the involved actors via events, forums and education. People and representatives of organizations of course should take part in these meetings to reach this objective. A reason for the motivation can be the broad spread of publications that illustrate the successful examples of local development in a plain language.

I think that the restitution of trust between people could be a basis for the growth of participating activity. I think it has two ways: on the one hand because of historical features people should experience – while studying democracy – how to trust in social and economic actors. On the other hand it may be necessary to organize meetings initiated by nonprofit organizations where the parties can freely talk and during this they can know each other's opinion and what's more they can learn the communication. One condition of this is that people should understand the importance of communal communication.

All in all I think that every actor should participate in local development – besides national and local actors – who are involved by developments so that the country could be democratic both in social and economic sense. Thus more effective decisions can be made and the communal integration of people can develop as well.

## **8. Research trends for the future**

In my dissertation I analyzed a small part of local development and participating democracy that is the operation of settlement developing nonprofit organizations and their participation in local development based on broadly studied literature. During my research some ideas and research themes for the future arose in me with which the information about the practice of national and foreign local development can be improved.

The potential future research themes can be the followings:

- The conduction of a national representative research among settlement developing nonprofit organizations (in favour of regional comparability) about the practice of participation in local development and its conditions, and the future recommendations.
- A representative survey in the nonprofit sector of West-Transdanubian Region about whether those nonprofit organizations participate in local development whose main reason for foundation is not to develop, and if yes, in which form. The survey can be spread to other regions, so a regional comparison can be accomplished.
- The conduction of deep interviews among mayors and deputies about the local fulfillment of participating democracy and the accomplishment of its local conditions.
- A representative survey about the local activity of inhabitants.
- The practical analysis of the positive and negative effects of social participation among local actors.

- The improvement of indices of locality index introduced in the 5.9. chapter and the definition of the index based on the local development practice of concrete settlements.
- The survey of foreign local development practices.

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## **Scholarships**

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2. 2004/2005 Humán erőforrás fejlesztése a civil szektorban – az Alapítvány a Magyar Felsőoktatásért és Kutatásért ösztöndíja (Scholarship of the Alapítvány a Magyar Felsőoktatásért és Kutatásért)
3. 2007/2008 Humán erőforrás fejlesztése a civil szektorban Ösztöndíjpályázat, Magyar Zoltán Felsőoktatási Közalapítvány támogatása (Scholarship of Magyar Zoltán Felsőoktatási Közalapítvány)