



**Community-based Research
for Sustainability Association (CRS)**
Akciókutatók a Fenntarthatóságért Egyesület (AKUT)

Turning it upside down...

Participation as a tool for exclusion in Hungarian city planning

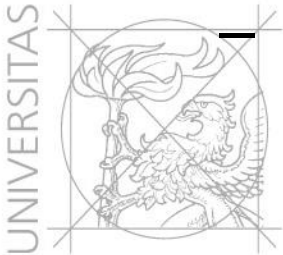
ZOLTÁN BAJMÓCY –JUDIT GÉBERT – **GYÖRGY MÁLOVICS** –
ZOLTÁN ELEKES –JUDIT DOMBI

University of Szeged
Faculty of Economics
Research Centre



Structure of the presentation

- **Background** – The foundation of local economic development on the basis of the capability approach
- **Analyzing "Freedom for agency" in Hungarian city development plans**
 - Theoretical background
 - Methodology
 - Results



Background: OTKA K-109425

The foundation of local economic development on the basis of the capability approach

If we take the human development and capability approach (of Amartya Sen) as a basis:

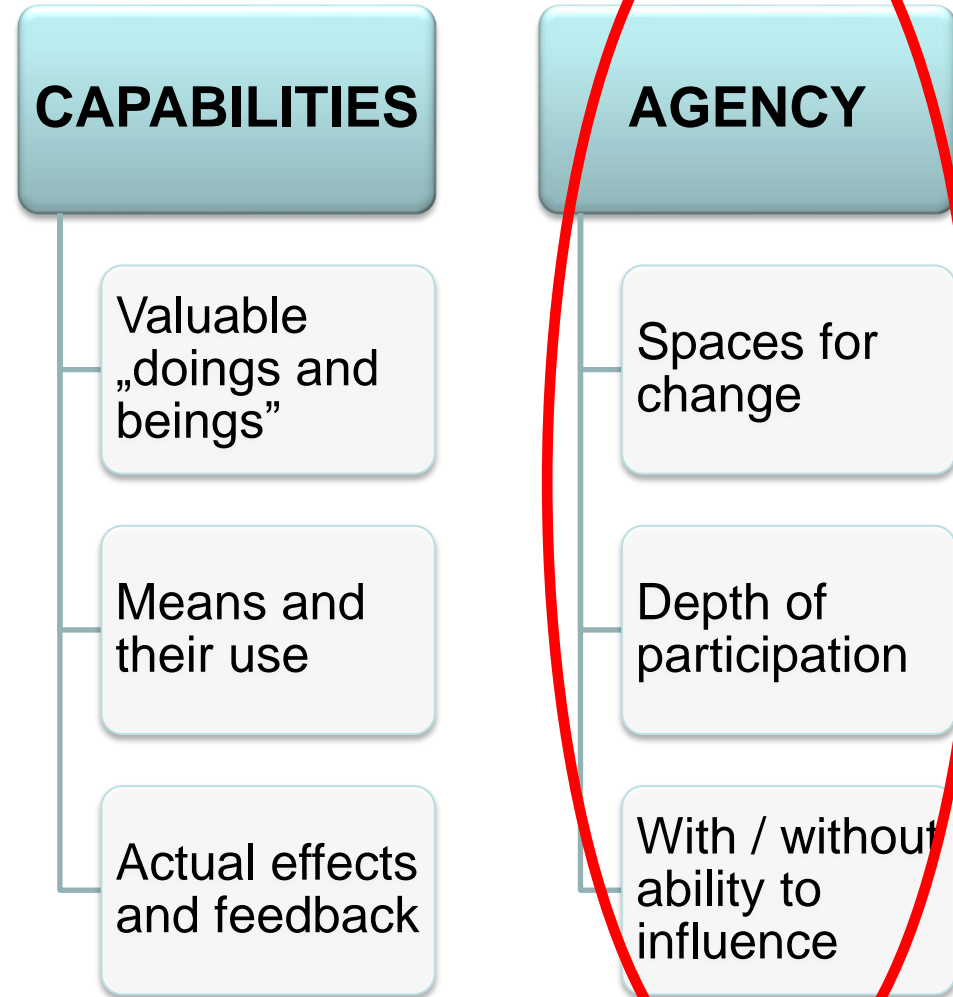
- **Research question (1):** How can the objective of local economic development be defined?
- **Research question (2):** What sort of informational basis seems to be desirable for local economic development?
- **Research question (3):** What are the outlines of the desirable **decision making processes** of local economic development?



Empirical research tasks within the research project

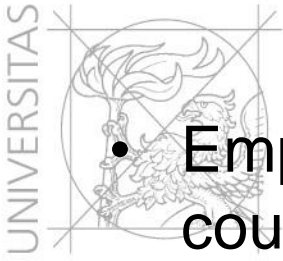
FRAMEWORK

- 23 Hungarian cities with county rights
- Qualitative methods
 - Development strategies
 - Qualitative text analysis
 - Stakeholder interviews in 3 cities
- Work in progress
(2 year have passed out of the 3)



Freedom for agency

- **The aim of the presentation:** to evaluate stakeholder participation (freedom for agency) in urban planning on the basis of the capability approach
- Fits into an emerging stream of literature:
 - Approximates local development & capability approach
 - *Crocker 2007, Biggeri & Ferranini 2014, Bajmócy & Gébert 2014*
- Empirical evidence from a relatively high income county



Theoretical background

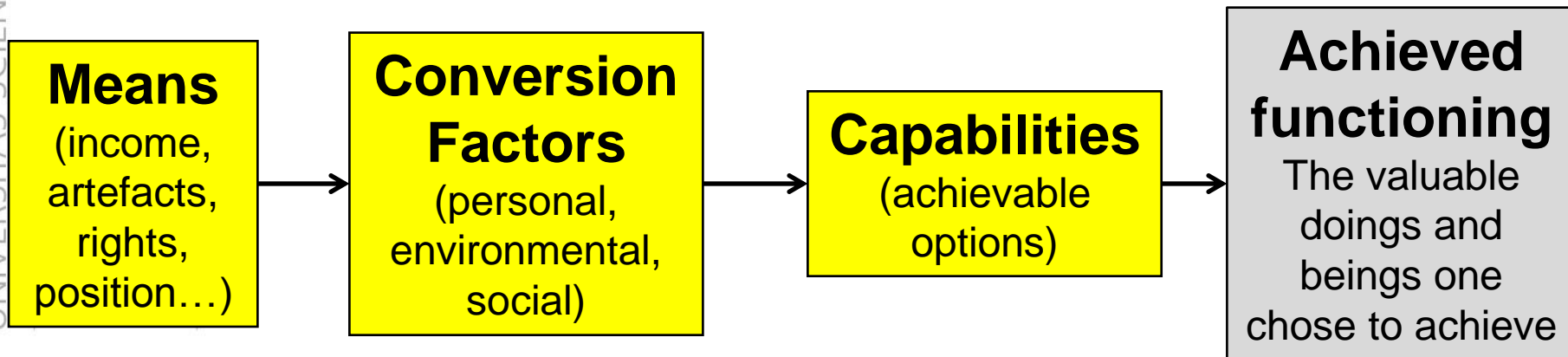
The human development and capability approach

Well-being (capabilities):

- Doings and beings that one has a reason to value (subject to public deliberation)
- Freedom to achieve



- The freedom to **lead** a life one has a good reason to value



Theoretical background

Framework for analysis

- **Human development and capability approach**

(Sen 1979, 1999)

- Importance of **decision making processes**
- Agency has **intrinsic** value (regardless of its **instrumental** value)
- Not simply the lack of restriction (**freedom from**), but the real opportunity (**freedom to**)
- **Deliberation**: value debates & knowledge production

„Participation as freedom is not only the right to participate effectively in a given space, but the **right to define and to shape that space**”

(Gaventa 2006)



Methodology

- Analysis of local development strategies
- 23 cities with county rights (Budapest excluded)
- **Analyzed documents** (cca. 7700 pages):
 - (SRP): Stakeholder Reconciliation Plans of the 23 cities (passed in 2013)
 - (UDC): Urban development concepts (passed in 2014)
 - (IUD): Integrated urban development strategies (passed in 2014)
 - Proposals, decisions and minutes of city councils
- **Methods:**
 - Qualitative content analysis
 - Restructuring the text into categories
 - Framework of analysis based on the capability approach
 - *E.g. spaces and forms of participation*
 - Narrative analysis
 - Texts have surface and (a hidden) deep structure
 - The deep structure is a coherent story told by the text
 - *E.g. what is participation according to these documents*

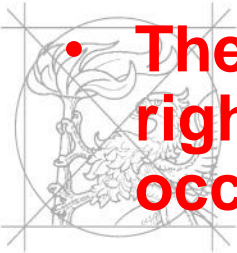


Results 1.

- **Defining the space for participation**
 - Lack of
 - systematic stakeholder analysis (survival of former routines, interests) and
 - open public debates before passing the SRPs
 - The range of partners is fixed (cannot be broadened or the possibility is restricted, no „claims for participation” are possible)

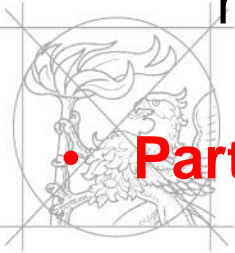


- **The freedom to participate does not embrace the right to define or shape the space. Participation occurs in a pre-defined space.**



Results 2.

- **The participation of the nominated partners**
 - Wide range of partners (organizations) are nominated in the SRPs, but do not reappear in the UDCs & IUDSs
 - Informing & consultation without deliberation and guarantees (tokenism)
 - Unidirectional communication (both directions)
 - Special possibilities for the most influential (e.g. regular meetings; the use of hidden space)



- **Participation contributes to sustaining status quo**

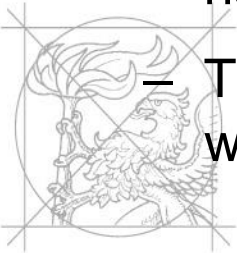
Results 3.

- **Citizen participation**
 - The main task is considered to be informing (persuasion, education)
 - Express opinions (BUT: their knowledge is irrelevant)
 - Application of specific techniques (low level of participation, unidirectional communication, lack of deliberation)
 - Lack of participation in the early phases of planning & the plans are shadowy about their role during the implementation
 - Citizens must take efforts to be able to express their views → empowerment is not mentioned: the „voiceless” will apparently be unable to participate

- **Participation provides means (?) for those in power not for those without power**

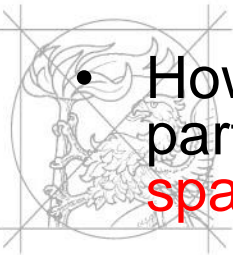
The story told...

- Urban planning is the „business” of a **pre-defined set of actors** dominated by the local government and its invited or hidden partners
- For these actors public participation is a way to **sustain the existing power relations**. For this purpose:
 - It is important to **talk** about participation (must look presentable)
 - They definitely **do not** want participation to distribute power and to have **transformative potential**
 - They provide **pre-defined spaces**: to persuade / to collect ideas with no risk



Summerizing thoughts

- Top-down public participation in city development planning in Hungary
 - Is a **top-down necessity** for local self-governments
 - From nonparticipation to **tokenism**
 - Participation as **"greenwash"** –serving the maintenance of the status quo.
- The concept of participation is turned **upside-down** (for ... reasons)
 - However, the necessity of including the principle of participation in planning documents might also **open-up spaces** for **enforced bottom-up participation**.



**Thank you for your kind
attention!**

E-mail:

malovics.gyorgy@eco.u-szeged.hu

For further information:

<http://www.eco.u-szeged.hu/>

