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Theses of the Doctoral (PhD) Dissertation

The current tools of rural and urban development in the light of EU support policies in Hungary

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I. The actuality and reason of the research

Rural and urban development is an increasingly valued process today. Its theory and practice are constantly evolving, thanks to the new challenges facing the field. The emerging challenges are attracting the interest of many disciplines. The following sciences are dealing with the phenomenon of rural and urban development: the Law, the political science, the public administration, the geography, the economics, the urban studies and the demography.

One of Hungary's biggest problems is the existence of territorial disparities, which can go hand in hand with poverty and underdevelopment. These territorial disparities need to be addressed by appropriate means. The Government of Hungary has recognised that greater attention should be paid to reducing the territorial disparities that have existed for decades. The proof of this is the Ministry of Public Administration and Regional Development which was created in 2024. The Ministry is responsible for promoting territorial development and receiving EU funds. At the same time, a new territorial policy is needed that pays particular attention to economic and infrastructural disparities.

The challenges of the territorial development have opened up a dialogue between the theoreticians and practitioners of rural and urban development. The gap that existed between the two professions seems to be narrowing in the 2021-2027 budget period. The thematic conferences on territorial development provide an opportunity for researchers and policy-makers to share their experiences, exchange views and discuss spatial policy challenges.

The cooperation between the two segments is perhaps most urgent now, as more rural and urban development tools are/was revised and restructured for example the the National Development and Territorial Development Concept and the Spatial Development Act. The spatial policy of Hungary is currently taking shape, so the evaluation and review of the current tools for rural and urban development is the most up-to-date today.

II. Definition of the research problem and aim of the dissertation

Clarification of the definition in the case of rural and urban development instruments is important before examination. However, the lack of a precise definition of the scope of rural and urban development instruments makes the analysis difficult. The problem is not solved by the available domestic or foreign literature. The concept of rural and urban development instruments often takes on different meanings in vernacular and sometimes also in legal and professional language. One definition says that all the tools of the different levels of government can be considered as tools of rural and urban development, which influences spontaneous the processes of territorial development. The definition is further complicated by the fact that the direct rural and urban development tools are often mixed with other sectoral policy tools.

In several cases, the tools which have other purposes can greater impact to territorial development as the operating environment of local government which is laid down by law. In this sense, the concept of tools of rural and urban development is often "broadened" and many authors include in this category those tools which have an impact on rural and urban development but serve other sectoral policy objectives.

The analysis of tools is further complicated by the fact that the development of underdeveloped regions is no longer confined to the level of nation states, but has also become increasingly important in the practice of the European Union, in line with the widening and deepening of European integration.

Accordingly, the elements of the EU's tools framework, such as the supports made available to Hungary, are included in the country's instruments for achieving rural and urban development. In parallel, the domestic financial instruments, the legislation and the development documents support a dual objective. On the one hand, they focus on European catching-up process and on the other, they try to reduce territorial disparities.

The aim of this dissertation is, on the one hand, to solve the classification problems that are widespread among the tools of rural and urban development, and on the other hand, to review the most important rural and urban development tools in Hungary, to evaluate them and, if it necessary, to propose possible solutions.

III. Research questions and hypothesis

The range of rural and urban development tools which are used by a country can differ. The different top-down and bottom-up approaches to the use of rural and urban development tools and their relative weight in relation to each other are determined by the current spatial policy guidelines. On this basis, I have identified the following hypothesis and research questions:

My hypothesis: if there are more top-down than bottom-up elements in the characteristics of Hungary's main rural and urban development tools, the current development policy of the country is moving towards centralisation. The following research questions aim the justification or the confirmation to the hypothesis:

K1: Which are the most important rural and urban development tools? Do they serve direct or indirect rural and urban development objectives?

K2: What kind of impact does the EU's territorial planning system have on the territorial planning system of Hungary? Does it mean meaningful planning in Hungary?

K3: Do the legal regulatory instruments of the rural and urban development tools support the decentralisation and the principles of regionalism?

K4: Is it necessary to have a strong territorial intermediate level? What kind of territorial intermediate level should be used in Hungary?

K5: How is the share of EU and national development funds between the main financial tools of rural and urban development?

K6: Which is more typical approach in the case of the main financial instruments of rural and urban development? The top-down or the bottom-up approach?

IV. Methodology of the dissertation

My doctoral thesis was based on a review of the fundamental literature on the subject, both in Hungary and abroad. With the help of the relevant literature, I gained knowledge about the theoretical and empirical results of the field, the controversial frameworks and conflicting views of the research topic, the working of the research groups in the field, and the limitations of the researchability of the topic.

In addition to the review of books and studies, the research included the analysis of relevant documents of the European Union and major documents of domestic planning, the

interpretation of EU and domestic legislation and the processing of strategic documents and press releases.

I used a quantitative research method to test the theoretical framework of the thesis in practice, which included an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire gave me the opportunity to find out the knowledge, opinions and experiences of the professionals who work in the field of rural and urban development. The aim of the research was double. Firstly, to assess the relevance of rural and urban development tools, which are identified in the literature. On the other hand, to identify the current characteristics of the tools and to draw conclusions in those areas where the collected information allowed this.

It was not an easy task to appoint the population for the survey, as there are many theoreticians and practitioners in the field of rural and urban development. As it was not possible to reach the full population, therefore the sampling was based on quota allocation. I have identified three groups of respondents in the questionnaire. The first group consisted of theoreticians, researchers and academics. I thought that the involvement of the segment is important, because they are who has theoretical knowledge and deal with putting the theory into practice, identifying practical problems, and proposing solutions. The second group consisted of practical experts who work in the field of rural and urban development. They face to the practical side of the subject and the practical problems every day. The third group is made up of municipalities, as they are the ones most affected by the application of rural and urban development tools at local level. I wanted to give the three groups a 50-50-50 chance to fill the test, but the territoriality aspect made it necessary to increase the quotas, whereas the third group consists of municipalities, which are to be selected equally from 19 counties. The quota of groups had to be increased to 57-57-57 in order to ensure that the same number of municipalities from each county were included in the survey.

The survey sought to achieve variability in knowledge and competences related to rural and urban development through different target groups.

A total of 72 questionnaires were completed in the survey. The available data will be presented in the thesis, as the responses were from all segments of the target population and the information constructed are suitable for examining different contexts for the topic.

V. The structure and presentation of the dissertation

At the beginning of the research, I defined the Hungarian tool system as follows:

- Spatial planning, programming
- Legal regulatory instruments (general regulations, which defining the general framework for rural and urban development)
- Financial instruments (subsidies, and EU funds, other benefits)
- Other (urban marketing, education, active involvement of the public sector)

The focus of this dissertation is on three tools, which were the most commonly cited in the literature and confirmed them the respondents too in the questionnaire. These are the territorial planning and programming, the legal regulatory tools and the financial tools. The other instruments are not examined in this dissertation due to the fact that the other category includes numerous smaller tools of rural and urban development, which would make the dissertation too fragmented.

The dissertation is divided into the following main chapters:

In the chapter which I named *"Tools of rural and urban development"*, I point out that the tools of rural and urban development may differ from country to country. This is due to the different economic, social and political environments. This chapter compares the classification of rural and urban development tools by some national and foreign authors. On this basis, it can be concluded which rural and urban development tools are applicable in Hungary and which ones are typically applicable only abroad. The chapter helps to answer the first research question.

After the definition of Hungary's current rural and urban development tools, the following chapters will focus on specific instruments.

The chapter which I named *"Spatial planning and programming"* is divided into two major sections. One deals with the European Union planning system and the other deals with the national planning system. In the case of the EU the planning activities and programming periods are much more focused on financial planning. The chapter explores the EU's planning process through the planning of the Multiannual Financial Framework and separate sub-chapters covers the updates for the 2021-2027 budget period, such as the difficulties in setting up the budgetary framework, the innovative Next Generation EU Instrument and the possibility of suspending EU funding. As Hungary is also involved in withholding aid, it is essential that the situation is investigated. I consider that the examine of the EU's territorial planning system is significant, because the financial framework envisaged may have an impact not only on territorial planning system of Hungary, because of the importance of the funds may influence the whole development policy system in Hungary. The reasons of influence is that Hungary is a beneficiary of EU funds, and the main source of the hungarian rural and urban development is EU funds.

The chapter examines also the national planning documents and aims to identify the planning theories characteristics of these documents. The dissertation examines three different levels of documents. At the highest level examines the National Spatial Development Concept then analyze the system of operational programmes at the medium level, after that search the municipal plans at the local level.

I will also focus on the impact of the European Union's spatial planning system which have an impact on national planning documents. Does its influence increase the use of a bottom-up approach or does it exert a completely different type of influence. The EU may not be directly involved in the direct governance of the planning process, but it can have an indirect influence. This chapter relates to the second research question.

The chapter which I named *"Legal regulatory instruments"* deals with the general legislation that provides the framework of rural and urban development. In this chapter the indirect legal tools are presented, not just the direct tools. The chapter focuses on spatial development acts and local government acts, as I think that these are two regulations that shape mostly the environment of rural and urban development in Hungary. This chapter will help to answer the third and fourth research questions.

The chapter which I named *"Financial instruments of rural and urban development"* focuses on the main financial tools that are still in operation today and serve a direct rural and urban development purpose. In addition the criteria for the selection of financial tool were "permanence" and relative predictability. In this light, the dissertation does not touch upon ad hoc government decisions and various benefits in the area of rural and urban development.

The chapter will first address the opportunities of rural and urban development that are essentially EU-funded, through the Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus, the Catching-up Settlements component of the RRF and the LEADER programme. After then I analysed the Hungarian Villages Programme, which receives national

support. The processing of this chapter supports to the answers the fifth and the sixth research questions

The dissertation closes with the answering the research questions and proving the hypothesis.

VI. The summary of the scientific results of the research. Research findings and conclusions

My conclusions and research findings are presented in the dissertation through the answers to the research questions, as follows:

- a, Rural and urban development tools can be any tools that can have a direct or indirect territorial impact. With regard to rural and urban development instruments, it is not a necessary criterion that they are designated as rural and urban development tool by legislation.

The first result of this dissertation is the definition of the tools of rural and urban development. The definition of the concept was necessary because the use of rural and urban development tools varies from country to country. This is due to the diversity of countries' social, economic, political and administration systems. In essence, it is universally acknowledged that rural and urban development tools can guarantee the development, but there is no consensus on the scope of the tools. As the thesis deals with the major rural and urban development tools, it was essential to explore these in more detail.

There is one common characteristic of rural and urban development tools that is accepted by all, it is the territorial impact. However, this effect can be both direct and indirect.

In several cases, the tools which have other purposes can have greater impact to territorial development as the operating environment of local government which is laid down by law. In this sense, the concept of tools of rural and urban development is often "broadened" and many authors include in this category those tools which have an impact on rural and urban development but serve other sectoral policy objectives. In my opinion, this is fine, but it is necessary to clearly delineate how the impact of a tool is distributed between sectoral and territorial interventions. Of course, this is not easy, as it is not a measurable impact. This is also the case with the Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme Plus. I think that it has little territorial impact, but it has a much greater economic impact. Consequently, it can be concluded that Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme Plus can also be considered as a rural and urban development tool, despite of the fact that its economic impact is predominant.

The questionnaire for the doctoral thesis showed that it is not a necessary condition that a rural and urban development tool is defined by legislation. In my view, this condition is not considered meaningful because the national legislation is very vague on the scope of rural and urban development tools.

The literature has shown that the three most frequently cited tools are the spatial planning, the legal regulation and the financial tools. In addition to reviewing the literature, I also examined these tools in the questionnaire which I made for the doctoral dissertation, in order to assess whether they are indeed the tools that are considered most relevant today. The research has confirmed that theoreticians and practitioners generally classify these three tools in the group of rural and urban development tools. In addition to these, there were some responders who also highlighted other instruments such as education, municipal marketing or cross-border cooperation programmes, but the greatest emphasis tools were these three.

b, In the terms of territorial planning, there is no meaningful planning in Hungary. There is some strategic planning element, but this is counterbalanced by the typically one-sided resource-oriented planning.

Resource-based planning has increased since Hungary joined to the EU in 2004. After that Hungary should use EU programming periods in order to use EU funds.

This adaptation is not a problem for the country in two regards. On the one hand, because Hungary is a net beneficiary of the common budget so it receives back much more money through various forms of aid than it pays in. On the other hand, the EU budget for the 2021-2027 budget period is much more high. The multiannual financial framework amounts to €1074.3 billion, but the EU institutions have supplemented this amount with the €750 billion Next Generation EU Instrument. This instrument assists tot he countries after the COVID-19 post-pandemic.

Therefore Hungary it benefits from EU membership because gets a significant share of the EU budget, wiich is typically finance the two most important policies. As opposed to this abundance of support there are less national development tools are available in Hungary, thus this phenomenon has led to a dependence of EU aid in the field of rural and urban development. I think that the European Union can influence the national planning system throught the importance of EU funding and the dependence.

When I examined the national planning documents I focused on whether this potential EU impact either localises the application of the bottom-up approach expected by the EU or exerts a completely different type of influence. The planning documents pointed out that bottom-up planning and development had taken a back seat and the dependence on EU funds has emerged through resource-oriented planning.

The National Develoment and Territorial Development Concept tries to achieve the strategic planning, but its planning term is too long and its objectives are therefore often general. The Concept essentially covers three programming periods thanks to long-term planning. It has already moved beyond the 2014-2020 programming period and it works coherent with the 2021-2027 programming period, but the timeframe set by the Concept will also cover the 2028-2034 programming period. As the Concept needs to adapt to the EU programming framework, its review will become more and more topical. This review may be necessary irrespective of the EU cycle, but is particularly relevant when EU programming periods change, as adaptation to them is a priority due to the importance of EU funding.

So we can draw conclusion that National Develoment and Territorial Development Concept is partly a strategic document, as it outlines a plausible scenario, and consistently plans for the longer term, nevertheless the framework of the Concept is typically resource-oriented through its almost unilateral adaptation to EU programming periods and the application of EU guidelines.

In the case of plans at the municipal level, it can be seen that they are created within a legal framework. The current urban development plans typically had not a monitoring system, so missed that measurement of results, the identification of problems and the corrective measures. As a result ot it the plans lost the their essence.

If they are not achieve their objectives and no changes are made to remedy this, the objectives set out in the urban development plan will remain meaningless. The content of the urban

development plans is partly strategic, but perhaps the EU requirements and legislation is which result the pressure to produce documents. As a result of the dependence on EU funding, the planning activities of local authorities have become strongly resource-oriented, in addition to strategic planning. The primary objective is to obtain resources rather than to achieve the objective which set out in the document.

c, At present, the legal regulatory of the tools of rural and urban development is not foster the principles of decentralisation and regionalism.

The dissertation focuses on the spatial development acts and the local government acts among the legal regulatory tools, which clearly play a significant role in the overall framework for rural and urban development.

The Spatial Development Act (1996) underwent suffered from many amendments during its period of application. The number of amendments was a chatty because after 2010 amends made almost every year. The most significant amendments occurred in 2011. In terms of scope, the act has expanded significantly thanks to the change in the regulatory model. The framework law, which originally set out the framework and principles has been eclipsed. A new text was created which contained detailed provisions and allowed for ad hoc regulation at government level. The text of the act become not only longer, but also more detailed. It is closer to the sectoral logic. Short time after it has lost its original mission of promoting the idea of regionalism. The amendments not just adaped to the new challenges of development policy and remedy malfunctions, but removed the soul of the act. The law promised principles such as regionalism, decentralisation and partnership before the EU accession but the move towards greater freedom of movement and autonomy has not materialised.

In the past years the act has mainly defined the tasks and scope of the institutions, which involved in the implementation. It was strongly institution-centred, essentially returning to the purpose of "normal" sectoral laws. The act intended to adapt regional policy, with a number of EU principles, but later these gradually began to take a back seat.

In the cace Spatial Development Act (2023) is still difficult to make a consistent judgement. Due to the nature of the framework law, many aspects of it are only just beginning to take shape, and many of its sub-areas will will take the form throught regulations. As a result, I focused mainly on the interpretation of the provisions of the Act.

In the list of the tasks and competences of central state bodies in the field of spatial development and spatial planning, the act named the Parliament, the Government and the Minister responsible for spatial development and one new actor, who is the Territorial Development Service. Due to the nature of the framework law, the Act does not provide for specifics on the Territorial Development Service, so its assessment cannot be well founded yet.

In my view, the Territorial Development Service should also be equipped with bottom-up elements in order to could operate in a decentralised way and to take into account local needs. My proposal is to set up an agency-type organisation, which can operat in a similar principle like the previous regional development agencies. This is the only way that can ensure a territorial approach.

The Local Government Act has a significant indirect impact on the rural and urban development environment in addition to the spatial development laws. The Local Government Act (1990) was similar to the Spatial Development Act (1996). The ideal of joining the European Union

has influenced both Acts. In my opinion, the European Union has promoted national decentralisation. The Local Government Act has achieved its main objective like the Spatial Development Act, namely to establish a domestic system of self-government, to give local governments broad responsibility and autonomy, to protect the rights of communities to self-government and to promote the democratic decentralisation of public power.

The Local Government Act (2011) introduced significant changes to both the territorial actors and the environment of the territorial development. The tasks of the county governments were limited to rural development, spatial planning and coordination. Compared to the previous autonomy, they have completely lost their public service functions, their situation has worsened, and they have gone from being "floating counties" to "empty counties".

At the same time, the number of tasks and competences of local governments has been significantly reduced. In the case of the large care systems the state has taken on a much bigger role than before like the education or the social sector. This has led to a clear trend towards strong state centralisation.

The background of the centralisation was that the municipalities inherited a significant debt from the previous system. The state took over the debt, but it had a cost to the municipalities, as it resulted in the limitation of their economic autonomy.

Overall, it can be concluded that the previous Spatial Development Act and the previous Local Government Act were still favourable to decentralisation or offered the possibility of decentralisation, but after the amendment of the Acts the need for decentralisation will no longer be reflected.

d, Hungary would have a strong territorial middle level. The role of a strong middle level would be to promote decentralisation, to provide a framework for territorial policy in terms of appropriate institutions, partners and tools.

It is true that there is a territorial middle level currently in Hungary in terms of counties, but these cannot be considered as a real, strong middle level.

The results of the research have shown that our accession to the European Union has led to the emergence of the regions as competitors of the traditional counties. Parallell with the requirements of the EU, Hungary has also established the necessary regions, which have been strengthened by the current Spatial Development Act. The creation of regions gave hope for the introduction of municipal regionalism, which was attempted but never materialised due to the lack of a supportive political environment.

The creation of the region, the scope and role of its tasks have been the subject of debate in the Hungarian spatial development community since the idea of our accession to the European Union. The creation of the Hungarian regions avoided any real restructuring of the state. Despite of this, it initially looked like as if the region was going to be a very serious competitor for the county. This was implied by the Spatial Development Act (1996), which named the regional development councils, rather than the county, as the primary recipient of the region's planning and development functions. Moreover the programme of first Orbán government focused on regions, not on the counties.

The initial prosperity of the region did not last long, as the 2011 amendment to the Spatial Development Act (1996) abolished the regional development councils and their successor became the county self-governments.

Although the new golden age has not arrived for the counties, the fact that under Act CLXXXIX of 2011 on Local Governments in Hungary and Act CXCVIII of 2011 amending the 1996 Act on Spatial Development, the county governments have become the recipients of spatial development activities was a clear step forward.

After 2011 the Hungarian planning and statistical regions remained without regional institutions. The region became essentially empty, and remained only its planning and statistical role. Decentralisation usually proceeded thanks to pressure from the regions, but in Hungary the regions did not have a tradition in the past. So they could not promote the decentralisation.

The county, as a traditional administrative unit outlasted the region. Thus it is clear what kind of territorial middle level has in Hungary. However, the county self-government has only a coordinating and planning role in the field of territorial development, so there is no real strong middle level. The mid-level county self-governments are located between the local and central levels of government where they should bridge the gap between the two levels. However, they could not gain strength, despite the fact that EU regional policy tries to involve them as partners in central government decision-making with its substantial financial resources and the regulation of planning and resource allocation.

e, As regards the financial instruments of rural and urban development it can be concluded that the EU funds predominate over national development subsidies. This explains the dependence on EU support.

The main financial instruments which are examined in this dissertation are Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus, the Catching-up Settlements component of the RRF, the LEADER programme and the Hungarian Village Programme.

The selection criterion was in the area of financial instruments that the tools are still in operation today and serve a direct rural and urban development purpose. Consequently, the tools which have indirectly influence for the rural and urban development, such as Economic Development and Innovation Operational Programme Plus, which is primarily aimed at economic development, or the Modern Cities Programme, which serves a territorial objective but is no longer operational, were not examined. In addition the criteria for the selection of financial tool were "permanence" and relative predictability. In this light, the dissertation does not touch upon ad hoc government decisions and various benefits in the area of rural and urban development.

The first rural and urban development tool, which I examined was the Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus. Its system of allocation shows stability in that it builds on the experience of Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme and essentially continues the established pattern of Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme. The amount of the support predictable due to the fact that Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus plans for seven years and the available budget is predetermined. The budget of the Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus has increased compared to the budget of the Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme. The Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programme Plus will use HUF 1962.5 billion which includes national co-financing too in the 2021-2027 budget period. In terms of volume the Programme is the most prominent of the financial instruments for rural and local development.

In the first years working period of the Catching-up Settlements Programme was still pursuing its objectives with national development funds, which was gradually supplemented by the EU-funded Human Resources Development Operational Programme. From 2022, the programme

will be funded by the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF), after this from 2024 it will be funded by the Human Resources Development Operational Programme Plus.

Among the component which would like to develop the RRF, only one component deals with the development of catching-up settlements with HUF 89 billion. The budget of the Human Resources Development Operational Programme Plus, which can assist to territorial development is HUF 80.27 billion.

These two development funds will try together to guarantee the development of the participant municipalities in Catching-up Settlements Programme in the 2021-2027 programming period, but it should be noted that the amount available cannot cover the combined and balanced development of the 300 municipalities planned.

The LEADER approach has been present in Cohesion Policy in the 2014-2020 programming period through Community-Led Local Development (CLLD). It has more than 30 years of history. It has subsequently become an optional instrument for territorial development in the 2021-2027 budget period. A innovation of the 2021-2027 programming period is that territorial development through cohesion policy can only achieve with integrated instruments. The financial background for the implementation of the integrated development method is provided by the ERDF, and its 8% must be used on method. At the same time, in EAFRD the criteria is 5%, which is the mandatory minimum for LEADER. The smaller share of EAFRD development funds is concentrated in less developed rural areas, while the larger share of ERDF funds remains concentrated in urban areas. The local level initiatives within cohesion policy like the CLLD in the 2014-2020 budget period was not further developed in the period 2021-2027, due to the lack of a supportive policy environment. They were discontinued. Thus, LEADER, which is based on pioneering principles, has a small amount of resources that cannot adequately meet the needs of rural areas.

Like the LEADER programme, the Hungarian Village Programme focuses too on improving the living conditions of people in rural areas. The programme was launched in 2019 and initially provided HUF 150 billion in support to help the catch-up of rural areas. Its support reached HUF 200 billion in 2020 and exceeded HUF 250 billion in 2021. Its resources continue to grow year on year. The Hungarian Village Programme does not plan for seven years, like the EU-funded Settlement Development Operational Programm Plus, it has an annual budget. The long-term planning is lagging behind, but if we take into account the changes in previous years, the data suggest that the annual budget will increase by around HUF 50 billion. This is not a large amount if we compared it with other EU funds, but it must be said that it is very high by national standards, thanks to the lack of national "competitors".

Therefore, the main financial instruments of rural and urban development are still typically funded by EU grants. There were some nationally funded initiatives, such as the Modern Cities Programme or the Catching-up Settlements Programme, which was initially domestically funded, but these have either been discontinued or have been replaced by EU funding. The national development funds are only available in a limited range, as exemplified by the Hungarian Village Programme. In the light of this, there is also no question why the domestic planning is strongly present a resource-oriented planning, which is not only resource-oriented, but specifically oriented towards EU funds. It would be necessary to increase the amount of national funds in order to finish the dependence on EU funds. This could be solution fot it the Territorial Development Fund which is currently taking shape.

f, The top-down approach is more prevalent in the current financial tools of rural and urban development. They contain bottom-up elements too, but these are present in a smaller proportion of financial instruments.

The first rural and urban development tool, which I examined was the Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programm Plus. The name of the Operational Programme suggests that it should have territorial features, but practice shows that it has both bottom-up and top-down planning and development features. A clear positive aspect of the territorial operational programme, which points towards a bottom-up approach to development, is that the focus of the themes covered by the programme's support is adapted to the development needs of the county. In other words, the topics are not given equal weight according to a standard method, but the weight of development topics may vary depending on the needs of each county. So the operational programme tries to base on real problems.

Stakeholders had opportunities to express their views during the planning period of the programme, which can be seen as a rudimentary feature of the bottom-up approach to development, but it should also be noted that the involvement of stakeholders may be based on EU regulations.

Looking at the institutional system of Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Programm Plus, it can be concluded that the tasks of the Managing Authority are performed by a ministry, while the tasks of contributor belong to the Hungarian State Treasury, so the institutional system is centralised.

The county self-government give their opinion on the draft call for proposals, which are published under the territorial selection procedure, so they have the opportunity to involve in the preparation process. However, their involvement is limited in the implementation. The Catching-up Settlements Programme was designed taking into account the available data. The programme use an indicators system, which allowed for a targeted selection of settlements.

The programme tries to establish a rural diagnosis. The most important operational and decision-making features is the system of local groups, which essentially works as a professional governing body. The NGO-s which take part in the „Presence programme” becomes a part of the daily life of the community and tries to understand the community's aspirations, its mobilisable energies and its network of contacts. From the moment of arrival, it can take several months or even years to establish a local diagnosis. Accordingly, the logic of „presence” essentially generates bottom-up development ideas, in which the basis for catching up is provided by the internal resources.

The professional management and coordination of the programme is carried out by the Hungarian Maltese Relief Service, which indicates that the professional coordination is no longer carried out by an institution, which is a part of the state. So there has been a shift towards decentralisation.

The LEADER/CLLD seeks to promote rural development through a bottom-up development and territorial approach involving local communities like the Catching-up Settlements Programme. However, the adaptation of LEADER did not take place in the right way from the beginning in Hungary, due to the strong role of the Managing Authority and the regulation. The LEADER/ CLLD could be a real bottom-up form through its principles and its specific approach, but it cannot flourish in the absence of a supportive policy climate.

The Hungarian Village Programme was based on extensive consultation, but the initial signs of decentralisation faded later. As the programme is not funded by the EU, there is no requirement to have a sound planning document, and in this context the programme has neither a planning document nor a long-term programme.

The characteristics of the financial instruments of rural and urban development showed that there are bottom-up planning and development features in the financial instruments. The best examples of it are the Catching-up Settlements Programme and LEADER/CLLD.

However, in the case of the most tool not realized a true bottom-up approach, because they mix bottom-up and top-down features or there is a lack of the supportive policy environment. In many financial tools have top-down elements, of which is not a problem if they are not the main focus. But too many top-down elements can distort the success of interventions. As these financial tools should be territorial, I think that bottom-up elements should predominate in all the financial instruments.

Overall, in my view a combined rural and urban development tool would be the most ideal, which has a funding volume like in the case of Territorial and Settlement Development Operational Program Plus and putting the principles of LEADER/CLLD into practice. Accordingly, the instrument would implement real bottom-up planning and development at the local level in the spirit of a decentralisation and achieve more substantial results.

VII. Major publications of the candidate

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