Abstract

Today we can hear a lot about companies’ social responsibility with regard to both theory and practice, however, the responsibility of other actors is rarely put in the centre. The purpose of the study is to show based on theoretical and empirical research how the individual social responsibility can be interpreted. To be able to take responsibility for social affairs, first we must trust in ourselves, others and in our institutions; so the study draws the attention for its importance. In the second part of the study I introduce a national questionnaire survey (carried out with Márta Nárai Phd) conducted among citizens to find out in which forms social responsibility manifests itself in everyday life, and how people see this question. I introduce this along two dimensions: on the one hand I analyse how aware the respondents are regarding environment, and on the other hand to what extent the local government involve them in local decision-making.

Keywords: individual social responsibility, trust, environmental awareness, community development

JEL Code: O21

Absztrakt

Napjaikban sokat hallani mind elméleti, mind gyakorlati vonatkozásban a vállalatok társadalmi felelősségéről, más szereplők felelőssége viszont kevésbé került eddig középpontba. A tanulmány célja, hogy bemutassa egyrészt elméleti, másrészt empirikus kutatásra alapozva, hogyan lehet értelmezni az állampolgárok társadalmi felelősségvállalását. Ahhoz, hogy képesek legyünk felelősséget vállalni társadalmi ügyekért, elsősorban bíznunk kell magunkban, egymásban és intézményeinkben, a tanulmány ennek fontosságára is felhívja a figyelmet. A cikk második felében egy, az állampolgárok körében folytatott országos kérdőíves kutatásban (a kutatást Dr. Nárai Máltával készítettem) arra kerestem a választ, hogy a társadalmi felelősségvállalás milyen formában nyilvánul meg a mindennapokban, az emberek hogyan vélekednek erről a kérdésről. Ezt két dimenzió mentén mutatom be: egyrészt vizsgálok, hogy a megkérdezettek mennyire tudatosan környezeti ügyekben, másrészt hogy az önkormányzat milyen mértékben vona be őket a helyi döntéshozatalba.

Kulcsszavak: egyéni társadalmi felelősségvállalás, bizalom, környezettudatosság, közösségi tervezés
Introduction: about responsibility

Responsibility means that a given person or social, economic actor consciously takes the consequences of its behaviour and/or decision. Although responsibility as a term appeared in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century (BROWN 2009; FÖLDI 1998 – cited by ZOVÁNYI 2012), the meaning behind the term is equal to the appearance of humanity (ZOVÁNYI 2012). “Responsibility […] is considered a moral, emotion-driven, conscious activity, which people manifest in connection with our or others’ activities.” (GASKÓ 2010, 13)

One must question who takes the responsibility and for what, so in which context responsibility can be interpreted. The person who takes the responsibility can be an individual (citizen), an organisation or the state. Both the citizens and the different organisations (e.g. companies, civil/non-profit organisations, public institutions) can be responsible for their own life and activity on the one hand, and on the other for the events in their narrower or wider environment, so for social and economic processes. The responsibility of the state can cover these latter. So based on this, the so-called individual responsibility and social/economic responsibility exist; the present study focuses on the social aspect of the latter. In case of individual responsibility, individual interests and aspects matter, while in case of social responsibility actors leave the individual and organisational scope and common aims and interests appear as well.

I consider it is important to emphasise that corporate social responsibility (CSR) is only one part of the topic. I also highlight that while CSR is a voluntary activity of companies, in case of people it is a phenomenon deriving from being a citizen, which can take place to different extents in practice depending on the individual.

The purpose of the study is to introduce partly in theoretical and partly in practical terms that there is ‘life’ over CSR, thus social responsibility has other dimensions as well. My opinion is that citizens and the non-profit organisations have also responsibility for the society but in a different way than the firms. It follows that introducing CSR is not a topic of my study; I will show how the citizens can take responsibility for the society. In the theoretical part I will review the context of the individual social responsibility (ISR), after it based on a research I show some empirical results.

Literature review: The responsibility of citizens

Individual personal responsibility

Personal responsibility means that citizens are responsible for their own lives: they meet their physiologic and higher, intellectual needs, tidy their own environment, and they can manage their life in an appropriate way. Individual responsibility significantly affects economic environment as well, since the ‘good’ quality of environment is also an important factor in the capital absorption ability of an area (BORZÁN et al., 2009).

I think learning the ability of individual responsibility begins in early childhood, since the child imbibes the basic rules of responsible behaviour by observing his/her parents and the surroundings. If parental sample is appropriate, the individual learns that he/she is the person

\footnote{As the study of Pintér from 2010 points it out, institutional factors play a role in membership admittance of international organizations.}
who is responsible for himself/herself and not others (either the parents or the surrounds). In spite of this, corporate environmentalism and residential environmental awareness had become a part of the ‘canon’ earlier than environmental education in nursery schools and schools (TÓTH 2001; 2004). But education’s positive external effect on changes in environmental conditions is proved by more examinations (SZIGETI 2004; 2005). The quality and the results of pre-school and school environmental education in many cases has been affected by the economic situation of local governments recently, which took place in a negative direction in many cases (CSISZÁRIK-KOCSIR 2008a; 2008b).23

Of course the learning of responsibility does not end in childhood as it accompanies the whole life. Based on this it can be stated that at the beginning of the learning of responsibility parents are decisive, while in later life the world outside the family will be determinant.

**Individual social responsibility (ISR)**

If the individual leaves the personal zone, one becomes responsible for the events of its narrower or wider environment as well; in this case we can talk about individual social responsibility (ISR). The majority of domestic and international literature links the definition of responsibility to companies and it is hard to find literature in which individual social responsibility (also) appears (e.g. BÉNABOU – TIROLE 2010; BROWN 2009; BARÁT 2012). Managers’ responsibility for the region can be linked to the transition between corporate and individual responsibility, which strengthens the regional embeddedness of companies (KONCZOSNÉ 2013; 2014).

I am on the opinion that the road to a successful society is that if citizens realise that they are responsible for their own lives on the one hand, and on the other if they actively participate in the formation of their environment in diverse ways and they solve the arising problems together.

In my opinion citizens can take responsibility for the following cases and actors:

1) helping for other people: helping indigents, supporting charitable affairs, donation in case of disasters, volunteering inside and outside corporate/institutional frameworks;
2) local public affairs;24
3) the development of the settlement/area: participation in the planning process and implementation;
4) environment: environmentally aware lifestyle;
5) society and/or organisations through civil/non-profit organisations or informal communities in the following ways:
   - setting up civil/non-profit organisations,
   - membership in civil/non-profit organisations,
   - donation,
   - offering 1% of personal income tax,
   - as employees,
   - volunteering.

23 It is also worth mentioning that in most cases the sustainability of tourism developments with educational aims doesn’t appear unequivocally in the plans of the field in question (SZABÓ 2014).
24 ‘Local public affairs are basically linked to the supply of inhabitants with public services and the initiation of personal and financial conditions of local governance and cooperation with inhabitants.’ (2011 year, number CLXXXIX. Act about Hungary’s local governments 4. §)
With the above activities individuals can take the responsibility for a wide layer of society either by helping within organisational frameworks (setting up, managing civil/non-profit organisations; membership in these organisations; donation, volunteering within civil organisational frameworks) or by helping those living in their environment and having a say in the processes happening around them partly or totally in an individual way.

The individual and social responsibility of individuals cannot be separated from each other. I think that they complement each other, and individual responsibility can be interpreted as the precondition of responsibility felt for society. Based on this it can be stated that one of the most important tasks of the road to a successful society is that citizens have to be taught how to be responsible for their own lives.

Tordai (n.y.) raises the question whether the individual can be responsible for social processes. If yes, to what extent? Is there a consequence if someone is not responsible? The answer is yes since today’s social and economic processes are so complex that every activity affects everything. Consequently I think that taking responsibility is a basic requirement for the effective operation of our lives. To define its extent is not an easy task. Another question is whether citizens can be responsible only at local level or at global level as well. In many cases people think that if I don’t do it, other people will do it, so responsibility doesn’t really worth much. I am on the opinion that at first people should concentrate on individual responsibility (e.g. in case of citizens the appropriate management of own life, the meeting of physiologic and mental needs, and the grooming of the narrow environment may belong to this), and if it works, they can move on to social level. The maturity of a society can be shown by what the extent of responsibility undertaken here is. It is the result of a learning process to understand that we are responsible for social processes as well; furthermore practical experiences are also decisive. If we see that our surroundings and the different organisations act responsibly in a given question and its positive effect can also be seen, it can be a motivating factor for raising the level of one’s own social responsibility. The self-exciter mechanism of the process causes that people’s willingness to take responsibility is getting higher; what’s more it can be seen and experienced in more fields. By using the words of Tordai (n.y., 123): ‘it must be seen: we are in a more direct, closer and more permanent subjective relationship with human world by our acts than ever: [...] Either we like it or not: this is the general circumstance of our lives.’

**Taking responsibility and trust**

One of the basic conditions of taking responsibility and at the same time its increment as well is trust. The trust of state, market and social actors toward each other and the processes taking place in the country forms the basis for the functioning of democracy. Trust means that if we trust in someone or something, then during our activities we don’t have to deal with what happens if the other party doesn’t do what he/she promised. What makes a country or society successful? In the centre of the reply is trust, while in the background of trust we can find the people’s ability to act together for a given purpose. The primary imponder of a country’s advancement is the mistrust among people.

In another sense trust is the recognition of another person regarding that this person is reliable and trustworthy with whom it is worth working and being together. According to this trust is a

---

25 Tordai (n.y.) believes that at first the laws of nature are able to convince people that they are responsible (e.g. floods or other natural disaster raise the wish in people to help each other, thus these events – I think – can be instructive, although it sounds strange).

---

136
positive recognition that is one of the greatest wishes of the individual. During our lives we have a desire for material goods, financial security, but we also need recognition for our full lives (FUKUYAMA 1997). The higher the society’s trust level is, the more likely that both desires come true.

Based on the above mentioned I think that without trust there is neither community action nor responsibility taking, thus to be able to solve problems together, we must trust in each other. It can only work if everyone believes in this and doesn’t wait for the others to do so. Pointing fingers at each other and waiting for the solution from others is always easier that thinking about processes, however, it doesn’t forward us. Of course the question can be raised why we shouldn’t let e.g. local governments solve problems. Due to the complexity of today’s social and economic processes, local governments won’t be able to solve everything alone, since they can’t know every small detail, process, thus faulty decisions can be also made, which can later qualify local actors for protest. Protest itself is not a problem, however, if people find themselves in similar situations in more times, they lose the already existing trust and then they will have no mind and energy to take steps, finally to protest; and this way every responsibility vests in the local authority, which is not a solution either in the short run or the long run. In order that a settlement could avoid this stage, people must find those tools that may be able to handle local problems or at least to discuss them.

In connection with this Russel Hardin (2003 – cited by BRYCE 2007, 76) raises an interesting idea, according to which participation is not stimulated by trust, but by mistrust; so people want to participate in the formation of settlements because they don’t trust in governing bodies and with their participation they want to contribute to the successful process. However, to be able to collaborate, they must trust at least in each other, the way I see.

All in all, I think that the road to the successful society is that if citizens recognise that they are responsible for their own lives on the one hand, and on the other if they actively participate in the formation of their environment in diverse ways²⁶, and solve the arising problems together.

**Individual social responsibility – empirical research**

**Material and method**

I carried out a national questionnaire survey (with my colleague Márta Nárai Phd) among citizens between 2012 and 2013 to get information about what individuals think about social responsibility and through what activities this is manifested every day.

1 071 people filled in the questionnaire (65% women, 35% men²⁷), but the respondents don’t represent the Hungarian citizens, therefore we formulate our findings only with regard to the respondents in the following two dimensions:

- Age: we compare the findings referring to people under 30 (between 18 and 29) and those older than 30, this way we can get a picture about whether the social responsibility of the younger generation differs from that of the older generation.

²⁶ The extent of it depends on to what they have opportunity and knowledge; however, the process must start somewhere.

²⁷ Based on the data of census of 2011 the rate of women is 52.52%.
Approximately 50-50% is the rate of those under 30 and that of those over 30. In this latter category the lowest rate belongs to those older than 65.\textsuperscript{28}

- Territoriality: we compared the activity of citizens living in Northern-Transdanubia (which contains Vas County, Győr-Moson-Sopron County, Komárom-Esztergom County, Fejér County, Veszprém County) with the activity of citizens living in other parts of the country to get information about whether active participation is more typical in the so-called economically most developed area of the country. 1 044 respondents mentioned their residence so we could only make the analysis regarding them in this dimension. 77,2% of the sample that is 806 people live in Northern-Transdanubia.

In this study I introduce the individual social responsibility along two dimensions:
- environmental awareness,
- community development, within this I analyse to what extent and in which forms individuals are involved in decision-making by local governments, furthermore to what extent people feel that they have a word in the development of their settlement.

**Findings**

**Environmental awareness**

Environmental awareness means that people habitually pay attention to protect their environment during their everyday activities (MIKHÁZI 2006 – cited by MAJOR 2012). ‘Environmental awareness is a scientifically-based thinking and a form of behaviour based on that, which purposefully combines those long-term environmental interests that are the most appropriate for the society and its members and the practical aim of which is to create the harmony of ‘person – environment relation”(KOVÁCS 2007). It is important to emphasise that only the recognition of the problems is not enough, conscious activity is also needed.

I think that every actor must behave in an environmentally conscious way at every territorial level so that environmental protection could become a part of their everyday lives (SCHÄFFERNÉ 2008):
- Every country has to recognise global problems (e.g. overpopulation, climate change) and give individual replies to them.
- Public sector has the following tasks in connection with inter alia, environmental protection: the elaboration of legislation, performing state administration tasks regarding environmental protection, the creation of economic and financial basis for environmental protection.
- At organisational level primarily the role of companies (BÁNDY 2010), civil/non-profit organisations and other institutions is determinant.
- The environmentally aware behaviour of consumers can be decisive regarding the sustainable development of a given area. The more people protect their environment and the more they put their thinking to do so forward, the more clean, beautiful and sustainable the environment in which they live can be. The pieces of research of recent years show that people are becoming more and more aware of the environment, and they refuse environmentally damaging companies (MENON –

\textsuperscript{28} According to the data of the census of 2011, approx. 17–18% is the rate of those citizens who are aged between 18 and 29; therefore this age group is overrepresented in our sample.
MENON 1997 – cited by SCHÄFFERNÉ 2008; LUKÁCS 2006; VALKÓ 2003). In Hungary it is also typical that although environmental awareness increasingly appears in the thinking, the willingness to act regarding this is still low (DEÁK 2003).

During the research I analysed the environmental awareness of citizens with the help of a 5-point scale along the following factors:

- selective litter collection, the collection of advertising newspapers,
- buying habits,
- the use of paper,
- water and electricity usage.

Figure 1 shows the ratio of the scores given to each factor. It can be stated that based on the analysed factors almost half of the respondents is considered partly or totally aware of environment, thus they collect litter selectively, don’t use the lights or water unnecessarily (in case of water the ratio is even higher, almost 75%). The only exception is the collection of advertising newspapers because only one third of the respondents collect them selectively.

Source: Own compilation based on questionnaire survey.

Figure 1. The factors of environmental awareness, 1: absolutely not typical, 5 absolutely typical, %

Selective litter collection is mainly a characteristic of those respondents who are older than 30, live in a city and in a marriage/relationship. Conscious buying is also typical for the elder people (I found significant relation, but the intensity of it is law), furthermore marital status; the number of children and income are also decisive factors. In case of the latter it can be said that conscious buying is rather a characteristic of those people having higher income. We analysed the conscious usage of water by asking whether the respondents flow the water
continuously during teeth-brushing or not. From this viewpoint, women, the respondents under 30 and those living in villages are proved to be more environmentally aware. Regarding the usage of electricity respondents over 30 are more aware; furthermore the less wasting usage of computers (so it is not turned on continuously) is rather a characteristic of women in their everyday life. In case of paper usage those older than 30 are more aware to be more environmentally friendly.

Community development

Definition

The essence of traditional development (SAIN 2010) is that local/county governments or planning companies entrusted by them make the development documents of a settlement or area basically with the help of the elaboration of secondary data. The plans made are discussed and later finalised. In this case the involvement of the community takes place during the discussion of the prepared plans; so the thoughts of the stakeholders appear during the planning in only a few cases (e.g. by professional institutions, some chosen civil/non-profit organisations).

In contrast, the community model of development is based on local values, human capital and local initiating ability. In this model citizens and civil/non-profit (REISINGER 2012) organisations also appear as active participants (the actors of social participation\textsuperscript{29}); their services are used by more and more people. The materialisation of the plans ensures effective development in the long-run as well, because development is not only a top-down process but it also reflects the ideas and interest of local actors. During community development a great emphasis is put on planning, the collection of information is based on primary data collection, so mainly the ideas and thoughts of stakeholders provided the basis of future plans, therefore such plans can be elaborated which are based and accepted by the majority.

Regarding the importance of the participation of local actors, CANZANELLI (2001) mentioned the following arguments:

- local actors know local resources and they know how to use them effectively,
- local actors know what needs the given territory has and what is needed to meet these needs,
- local actors know the ways of distributing resources,
- local actors know the local possibilities to gain resources.

If citizens and other players take responsibility for society, it means that they participate in the everyday life of a settlement or in the development of a territorial unit. If we speak only about the participation of citizens and civil/non-profit organisations, it is called ‘social participation’.\textsuperscript{30} Social participation means (REISINGER 2015) that citizens and civil/non-profit organisations have the opportunity to communicate their ideas and opinions about what is going on in their settlement, region or country. This is the form of appearance of social responsibility. If these players assume responsibility for their environment, they will

\textsuperscript{29} I interpret social participation as the opportunity of citizens (either individually or in a community manner) and civil/non-profit organisations to take responsibility for the processes happening in their narrower-wider environment, or in other words if they are involved in the formation of diverse social, economic affairs.

\textsuperscript{30} In the international literature it is often mentioned as ‘public participation’ or ‘citizen/community participation’.
participate in those forums, etc. where they can express their willingness to care for other people.

All these things can only come true if the (local) government gives the people the opportunity to express their opinions about their lives and their settlement. To do this, the (local) governments, too, have to change their way of thinking about managing a settlement and its development. The tasks of the local governments in this case are to ensure not only local services, but also opportunities for the local players to participate. This kind of approach is the new way of operation of local governments (SHAH 2006). The new way is called local governance, where the citizens and the civil/non-profit organisations play the main role in a settlement. The local decision-makers provide only the framework for social participation, and if needed they co-ordinate the process.

Participation requires from people to be able to and be willing to leave the ordinary schemas and frameworks and to have a desire for discovering something new through their participation since during co-thinking there is an opportunity to know people who they won’t meet otherwise. Practically participation means a common thinking of the participants, which creates new knowledge in the community. Upon this knowledge further ideas can be built during later participation as well.

Literature divides the means and techniques of community development into two main groups (PLOŠTAJNER – MENDEŠ 2005):

- **Traditional techniques**: the relatively widely applied means belong to this group, which are mainly related to the operation of local governments, and traditional ways of political participation like municipal elections and referenda are also put here.

- **New/modern techniques**: today’s social, economic complexity requires that citizens and civil/non-profit organisations should have more opportunities during participation. There must be such community platforms that are appropriate so that local actors could implement development aims based on a strong cooperation. Techniques put in this group can be applied as the means of active democracy (REISINGER 2009); without completeness: forums, Citizen’s Council, World Café, study circles, debater opinion poll, citizen’s parliament, mapping method, etc.

From traditional tools I analyse in my study whether local governments ask for the opinion of the local inhabitants regarding the development of the settlement and in which way they do so.

**The participation of citizens in the decision-preparation of local governments**

I was wondering to what extent local governments asked citizens about what they think about the development questions and the processes happening in the settlement (Table 1).
Table 1. The participation of citizens in the decision-preparation of local governments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nomination</th>
<th>The whole sample</th>
<th>Territoriality</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|            |                  | Northern-
|            |                  | Transdanubia | Other parts of the country | Under 30 | 30 or older |
| Did the local government ask for your opinion? | Yes | 28.2% | 28.2% | 28.4% | 17.9% | 38.5% |
| If yes, in which way? | Questionnaire | 54.7% | 55.8% | 56.1% | 59.6% | 53.7% |
| | Telephone | 15.5% | 15.2% | 1.5% | 19.1% | 0.5% |
| | Personal visit | 21.3% | 22.3% | 19.7% | 14.9% | 24.9% |
| | Interview | 2.0% | 0.9% | 6.1% | 1.1% | 2.5% |
| | Public forum | 39.2% | 37.5% | 45.5% | 24.5% | 46.3% |
| | Round table | 8.8% | 10.3% | 19.7% | 6.4% | 10.4% |
| Did you tell your opinion? | Yes | 82.3% | 82.5% | 79.1% | 77.9% | 83.5% |
| | Refused | 5.4% | 5.4% | 6.0% | 9.5% | 4.0% |
| | Was uninterested | 12.2% | 12.1% | 14.9% | 12.6% | 12.5% |

Forrás: Source: Own compilation based on questionnaire survey.

28.2% of the respondent citizens stated that they were at least once asked by the local government. This ratio was affected by age (but not by territorial dimension), since respondents under 30 answered yes in a more than 10 percentage-point lower rate, while those over 30 answered yes in a more than 10 percentage-point higher rate. This difference is understandable as the older age group has already lived more years so the likelihood of being asked by the local government is higher. In case of the whole sample we can say that typically the respondents with higher qualifications and higher income were asked by the local government. In addition we found significant relation in case of settlement type; local governments are more likely to ask respondents living in villages than those living in cities. The reason for this can be that in smaller settlements there may be a stronger relation between the local government and the social actors, thus people can be more open to reply to questions, consequently the local government can be more initiative in this field. We found similar relations with demographic indicators in case of territorial and age dimension, the only exception is the age-group of those under 30, where we didn’t find any significant relations.

The most often used asking method of the local government are the questionnaire (54.7% of the respondents said that they had been asked this way by the local government) and the organisation of public forum (39.2%). Besides theses, the personal visits (21.3%) and the asking through telephone (15.5%) were mentioned most times. Regarding methods there are differences based on territorial and age dimensions. The method of public forum was mentioned in a significantly lower rate by respondents under 30, in addition asking through telephone is almost not typical among respondents over 30 and those living in the Northern-Transdanubian part of the country, while the interview was mentioned in a higher rate in this part of the country than in the country as a whole, and the same is true for round tables.
Besides the type of the methods it is also an important factor whether the inhabitants asked by
the local government told his/her opinion or were passive with this opportunity. 82.3% of the
asked citizens said that they had grabbed the opportunity and told their opinion. The highest
rate was measured in case of the methods of round tables and personal visits. In case of the
respondents living in Northern-Transdanubia and those over 30 it can be stated that those
living in villages are more likely to tell their opinion; besides these in Northern-Transdanubia
qualification and marital status were also determinant factors.

I definitely think it positive that such a high rate of respondents told their opinion, since it
makes us conclude inter alia that if people are asked, they are very likely to tell their opinion.
This may be an important message for local governments, so they must try to ask the highest
rate of inhabitants in the most diverse ways since if they are open and initiative, people will
be braver to tell their opinion than if they had to do so alone without an initiative party.

During the research we asked the citizens to what extent they can contribute to the processes
and developments happening in their settlements. Since a little more than a quarter of the
respondents said that they had the opportunity to tell their opinion to the local government, I
thought that the majority of the respondents only slightly feel that they can affect the
processes. The anticipative assumption is proved to be true, as 84.2% of the respondents said
that they contribute to the processes of the settlement to a medium or lower extent (Figure 2);
the average value was 3,63 in a 10-point scale, which can be considered extremely low. The
rate of those who said that they do not have any effect on the processes exceeds 50%. Similar
results were found in a representative public research conducted in Győr (REISINGER 2014).

\[\begin{align*}
\text{Figure 2. Contribution to the processes happening in the settlement, 1 absolutely not, 10} \\
\text{absolutely yes, in the percent of the respondents}
\end{align*}\]

\text{Forrás: Own compilation based on questionnaire research.}

I considered important to analyse what factors affect what value is indicated by the
respondents in the scale. From demographic factors age and the type of the settlement are
proved to be significant. Mostly respondents between 30 and 45 and the least respondents
over 65 felt that they could affect the processes of the settlement, in addition the average of
those living in villages and in Budapest was higher than that of those living in cities. It has
something to do with that those living in villages are more likely to be asked by the local government during decision-preparation. It can also be stated that the average attitude value of the respondents is higher than that of those who weren’t asked by the local government; in their case a higher than medium extent contribution is higher with 10 percentage-points than in the whole sample. The average value is similarly higher in case of those who told their opinion than in case of those who didn’t grab this opportunity. By analysing other factors we stated that those who know more participating methods or those who had already participated in community initiative or had already volunteered (or want to) feel in a significantly higher extent that they can contribute to the processes happening in the settlement. The conclusion can be drawn that active social participation advances the feeling that the citizen has a greater impact on the surrounding processes, so the citizen feels that the activities done by him/her have an effect on the settlement, community to some extent.

Conclusions

The purpose of the study was to introduce partly in theoretical and partly in practical terms that there is ‘life’ over CSR, thus social responsibility has other dimensions as well. I would have liked to draw the attention to that social responsibility is not only the task of companies, but citizens have to take the responsibility for their own lives on the one hand, and for each other, so for other social actors on the other hand. Taking responsibility can level at own operation and at social/economic processes. Thus we can talk about individual personal and individual social responsibility (ISR).

In the study I introduced a few findings of a national questionnaire research conducted between 2012 and 2013 regarding environmental awareness and community development. I stated that half of the respondents is considered partly or totally environmentally aware, and that environmental awareness is rather a characteristic of older people (those over 30) and of people with higher income. I think that the higher invocation of youngsters in this topic would be necessary and that people’s attention must be drawn to the fact that being environmentally aware is not a question of money (of course there are cases when this statement is not true), what’s more money can be spared with an everyday attention.

It is not a new thing that local communities may have the opportunity to have a say in the processes surrounding them, since there were attempts to do so even in the ancient times. A bilateral recognition is needed so that this could be realised in practice. On the one hand decision-makers must be open to listen to opinions and ideas, while on the other hand citizens and other local actors must recognise that they have the opportunity to have a say in the processes surrounding them, so they are responsible for the development of their settlement, direct environment. Almost 30% of the respondent citizens said that they had already been asked by the local government in some way to tell their opinion regarding a given topic; the most used methods were questionnaire and public forum. It is an important aspect that more than 80% of the respondent inhabitants said that if they had the opportunity to tell their opinion, they did so, which is unequivocally a positive thing and can be an important message for local governments.

I think it is an important research question to analyse the responsibility of citizens due to two reasons: firstly, the responsible individual is a more conscious participant of these social and economic processes, secondly by this the individual is a more conscious member of a community which wants to and is able to affect its environment in one of the ways mentioned in this study. These and similar pieces of research are good as they provide a picture about
what the current situation is regarding social participation and they can help find the path which enables a higher level of involvement of the population.

The question is what the future will be. By agreeing with Fukuyama (2005) it can be stated that there are no models and patterns that could be perfectly used for every area and settlement. The reason for this is that every territorial unit carries the imprint of its historical past, and that is why every area is unique, so every territorial unit is – by using the words of Fukuyama (2005, 63) – ‘context-specific’. This refers on the one hand to the whole country and on the other hand to every territorial unit and settlement of the county. Stiglitz (1998) says that those countries have become successful in development so far that found out what to do to develop successfully and didn’t use the methods which were successful in other states. The way should be crushed, but it takes longer time, even decades, since people have to learn that they do have the right to tell their ideas and they have to learn how to apply it in practise. For this the most important is, I think, that trust should be further strengthened and people have to be informed that they have the right to have a say in the processes of the settlement and that it is practical to grab this opportunity should be conveyed through more sources so that we could live in a settlement which provides appropriate opportunities for all of us both in professional and in private life.

Bibliography

2011. évi CLXXXIX. törvény Magyarország helyi önkormányzatairól


Author:

Adrienn Reisinger PhD
assistant professor
Széchenyi István University, Győr
Kautz Gyula Faculty of Economics
Department of Economics Analyses
radrienn@sze.hu