

# Civic engagement

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**FRA LERI Project - Regional PAR workshop  
23-24 April 2015, Budapest**

I. Understanding civic engagement

II. Activism against spatial segregation and  
ghettoization, Cluj Napoca, Romania

Questions for debate

III. Civic engagement and the participatory ACTION  
research in LERI

Questions for debate

# **I. Understanding civic engagement**

Political action for social justice, which: **E**

- politicizes social marginalization and exclusion
- creates new, transformative subjects

- 1) identifies the systemic causes of marginalization (for example by exposing how urban development and housing policies after the 1990s served the interests of capitalist class and were a major factor of post-socialist transformations, and pushed to the city peripheries those who “do not deserve living in the city” or “are not competitive on the housing market”)
- 2) transforms a neglected and publicly invisible issue (for example housing precariousness and insecurity, housing segregation, forced evictions) into a political/public subject

S 3) community building geared towards increasing social justice = instrument for achieving social justice = political struggle for social rights, amongst which decent housing

4) learning process, knowledge produced through actions, while creating new political subjects with a transformative potential on:

- housing-exclusion-related institutional structures and mechanisms, and lived experiences;
- organizing civic actions and mobilizing solidarity;
- actions of human rights and of developmental international organizations;
- supporting grassroots organizing against social injustice

E “All struggles against oppression begin by redefining what has previously been considered ‘private,’ non-public and non-political issues as matters of public concern, as issues of justice, as sites of power which need discursive legitimation” (Benhabib: *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*, 1996)

## **S Bobi:**

Complaining about not being granted the social support and explaining her “lack of trust” in the City Hall – illustrates the stories we frequently hear from people: ranging from being undignified at meetings with local functionaries/politicians to the generalized and taken-for-granted stigma of the “socially assisted”

## **II. Activism against spatial segregation and ghettoization, Cluj Napoca, Romania**



# Cluj-Napoca examples

- E** 1. From protesting against evictions (Working Group of Civil Society Organizations) to a fight for housing rights for all (Foundation Desire and Common Front for Housing Rights / petitions, street protests and performances, community support, cultural events: sample of [street protests](#) and [8<sup>th</sup> of April album](#) ([8<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 album](#)))
  
- S** 2. Houses, not humiliation (Common Front for Housing Rights - Stephenson)/ [slides and 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2014 Album](#), <http://www.desire-ro.eu/?p=856>

# **Questions for debate**

Understanding civic engagement  
as struggle for the right to the city

# Sharing experiences across localities and countries

1. Examples of manifestation of housing exclusion in different localities/countries
2. Examples of manifestation of civic engagement in different localities/countries
3. What about understanding civic engagement as fight for the *right to the city* of the marginalized

### **III. Civic engagement and the participatory ACTION research in LERI**

**PAR E**

=

**Production of knowledge through action**

+

**Action based on knowledge produced in a  
participatory manner**

+

**Self-reflexive action and participation**

**ACTION = CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

# LERI in Romania –

## as civic engagement for housing justice **S**

- Strengthening the local engagement for Roma inclusion in the cities within the frame of the mainstream social inclusion policies to be assumed by the municipalities for the next strategic development period (2014-2020)
- Explicitly focusing on marginalized Roma groups living in the cities (Pata Rat and Stephenson in Cluj-Napoca; Bufa, Poligon and Bethlen Gabor in Aiud)
- Putting into practice mechanisms and procedures of local authorities that facilitate the elaboration, implementation and monitoring of action plans for housing inclusion (with the contribution and suggestions of community members)
- Elaborating plans of concrete measures for housing inclusion for the period 2016-2020 with a focus on the marginalized areas targeted by the LERI project
- Assuring that marginalized Roma groups' participation in the preparation of new projects is secured and that they are going to benefit from the next round of EU funds dedicated to marginalized urban communities

# PAR in Cluj-Napoca and Aiud (1) E

The **ACTION** component of the Participatory Action Research is conceived as a form of civic engagement

- 1) Production of knowledge on housing-exclusion-related issues by the means of actions targeting housing justice:
  - filling in the social housing request files
  - documenting informal housing situations
  - documenting situations of risk of forced evictions
- 2) Production of knowledge on housing-exclusion-related issues by the means of actions targeting participation on decision-making in what regards the development plans of the residential areas inhabited by marginalized (Roma) persons and families

# PAR in Cluj-Napoca and Aiud (2) S

The **PARTICIPATION** component of the Participatory Action Research assures people's participation on the actions conceived as a form of civic engagement

Production of knowledge on housing-exclusion-related issues by assuring participation:

- Composition of teams – include community co-researchers
- (as an aim) -> the Local Action Group for Housing Inclusion, or the Local Group of Community Initiative
- Meetings between delegates of families/groups faced with different forms of housing exclusion (lack of access to social housing, risk of forced eviction, insecurity of informal housing) and representatives of public administration
- Supporting initiatives of self-organization and joint community actions



# **Questions for discussion**

What is the ACTION component about in the LERI project from different countries?

What is the PARTICIPATION component about in the LERI project from different countries?

How is the LERI project from different countries combining the approach of community development and civic engagement? What is the stakeholder's understanding of the two approaches?

Dilemmas of “participation” and “action” in civic engagement and in PAR.