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# ASPECTS OF DEVELOPING A LOCAL AGENDA IN A SMALL REGION OF HUNGARY

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# Introduction

- Environmental-polluting and energy-wasting lifestyle of mankind: leads to the derogation of natural resources and to an ecological catastrophe -> more emphatic role of sustainability and environmental-friendliness
  - Local Agenda 21: local communities play an important role in the implementation of sustainability.  
consultation with the community to reach a consensus
  - Eastern European countries – little progress
  - Sustainability is still not a well-known phenomenon in Hungary
    - 2006 survey
    - The small number of research
    - The Aalborg Charter
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# Methods and material

## Material

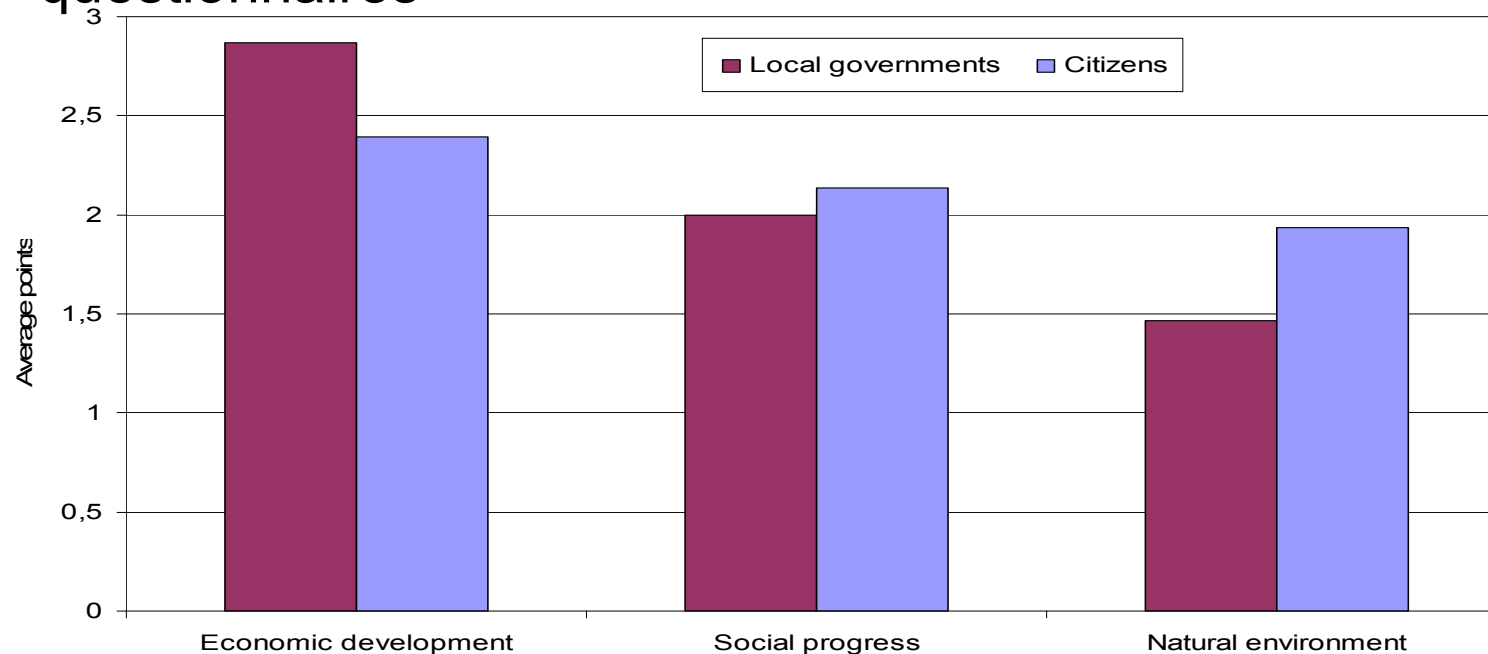
- Intent: examining the chances of local sustainability
- Place: the small region of Gyöngyös
- Topics:
  - The weight of economic, social and environmental factors in the life of the municipalities, the ranking of problems connected with these factors.
  - Existing documents which could serve as a basis of local sustainability strategies.
  - Mobilizability of the population, local citizens' role in the life of the municipality, the extent of co-operation between the local government and the population, the methods used to involve the community into decision-making and implementation.
  - Initiatives related to sustainability, the chances of preparing local sustainability strategies, positive changes resulting from conscious planning, inhibitive factors.
- two forms of the questionnaire, for local citizens (184), and for local governments (25)

## Methods

- the practical delineation of data
  - the main component analysis
  - the Kendall coefficient of concordance
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# The identification of problems

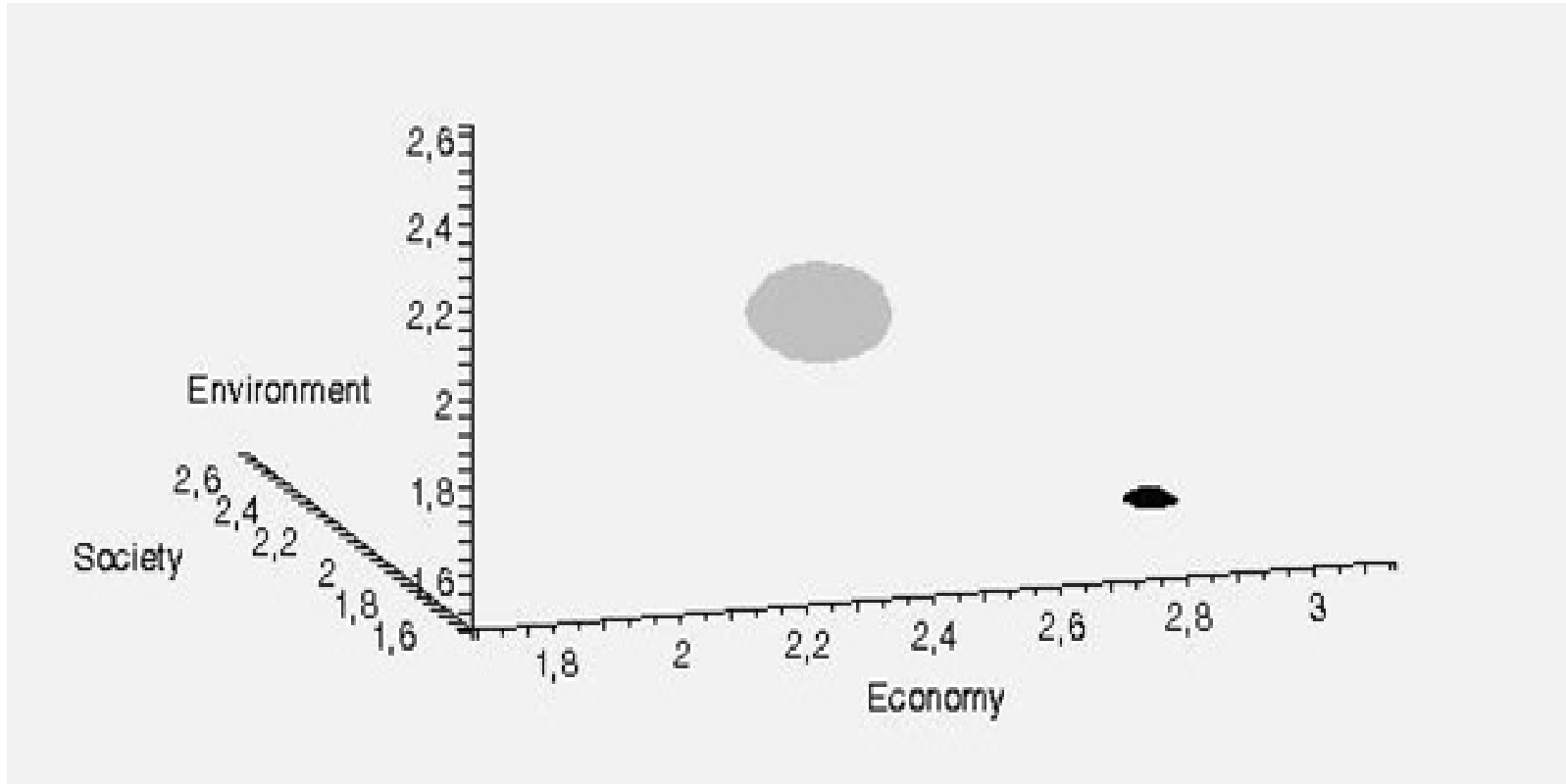
- Ranking of the three pillars of sustainability
  - weak sustainability – the three pillars must be treated equally
  - strong sustainability – environmental problems should overtake economic and social issues
- the differences are much smaller examining citizens' questionnaires



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# The identification of problems

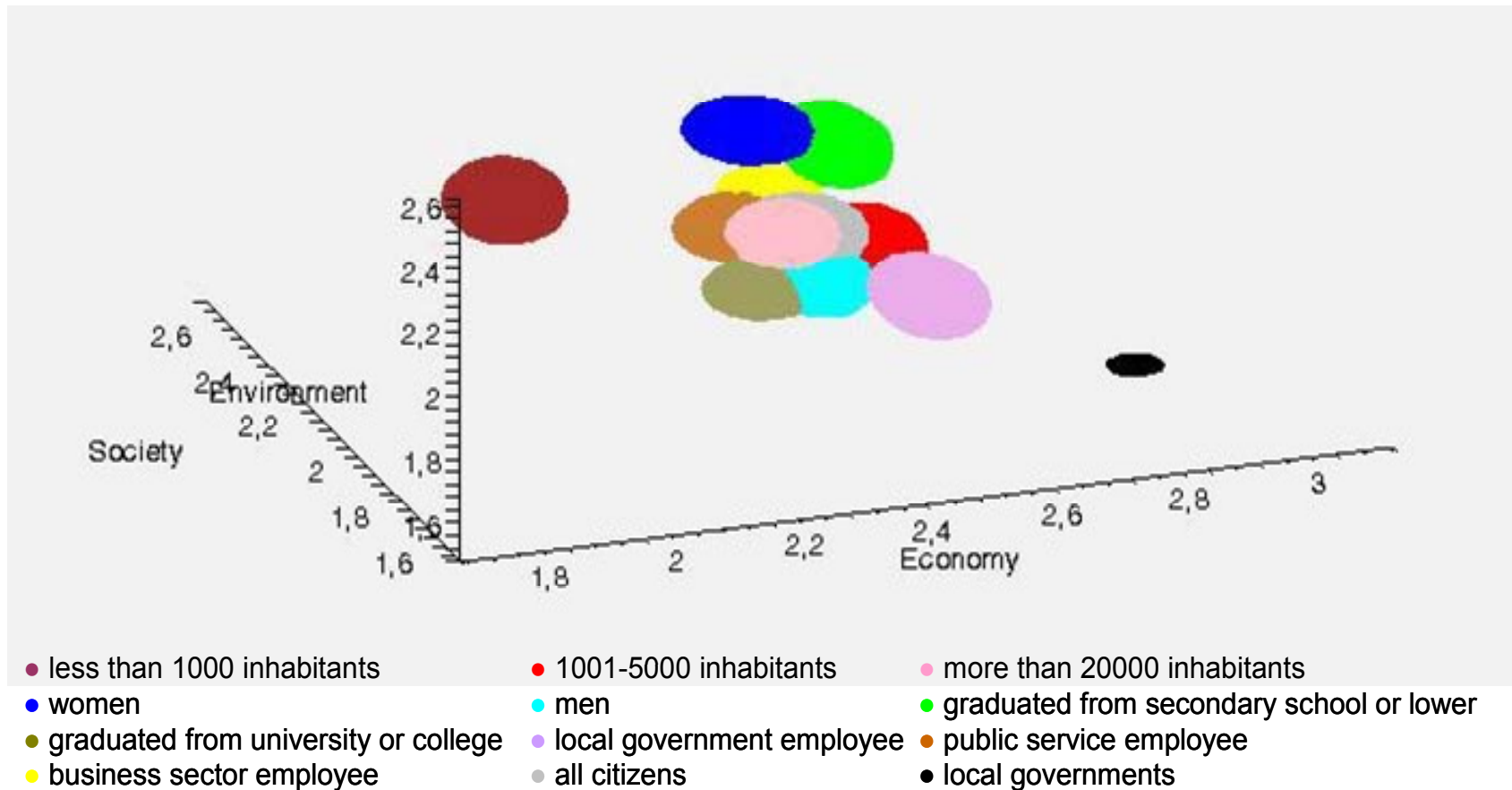
## -local governments and citizens



● all citizens ● local governments

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# The identification of problems – different social groups (3 pillars)

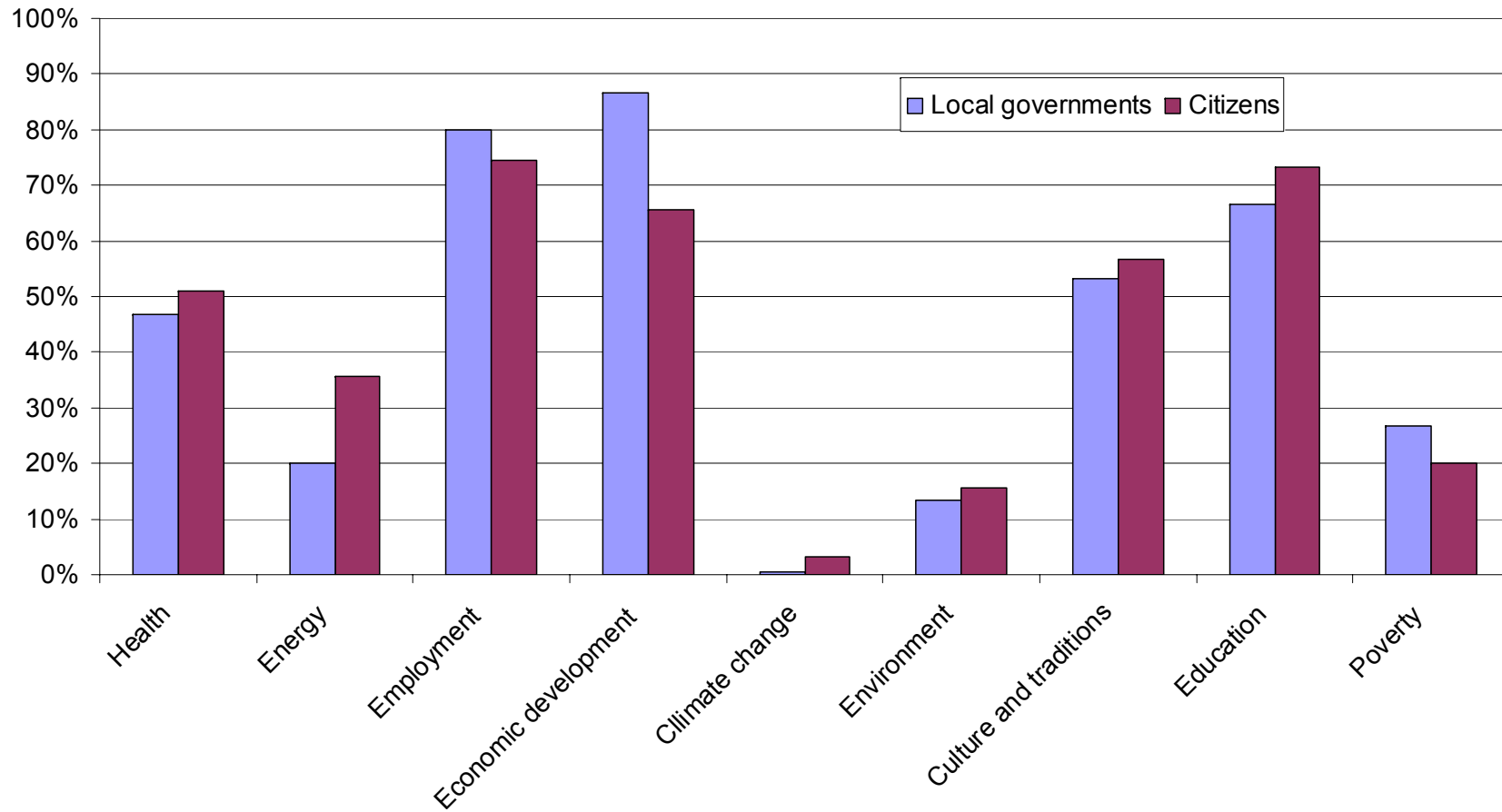


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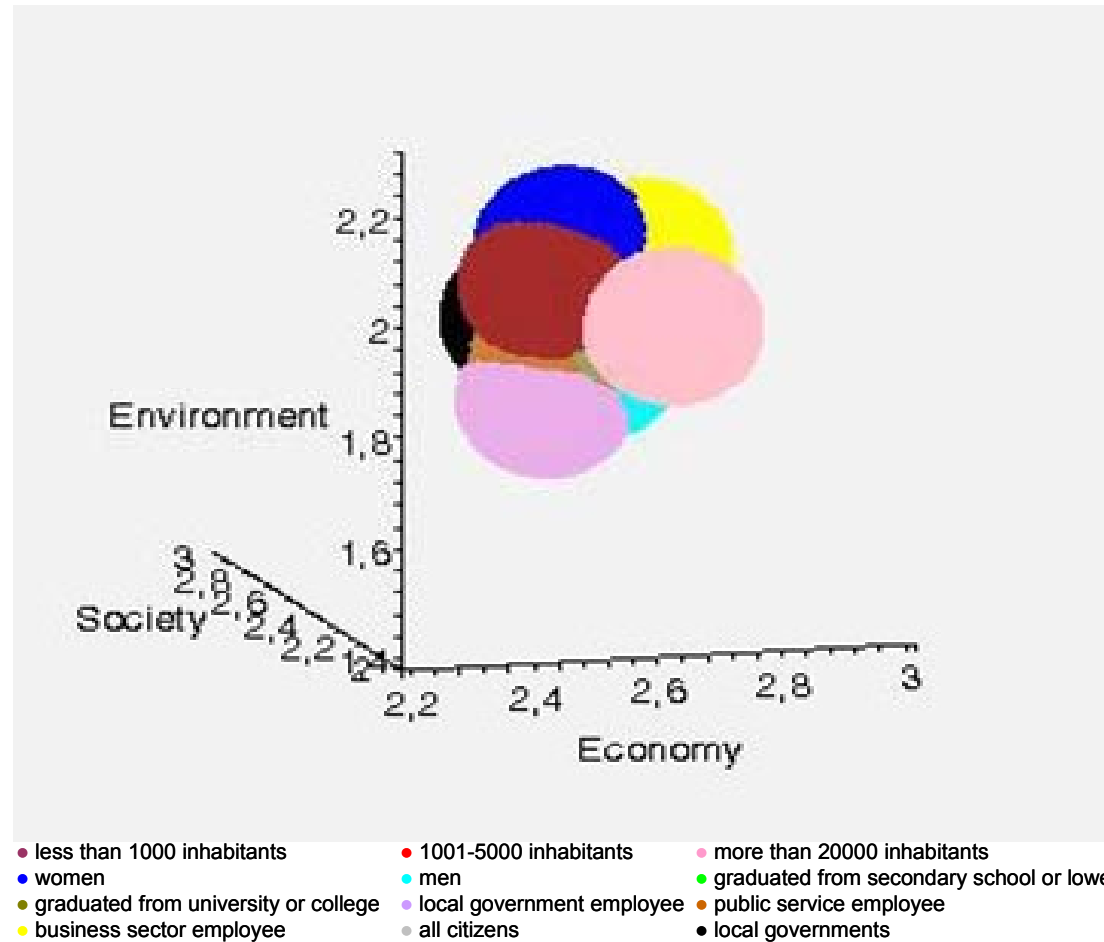
# The identification of problems

- The most important areas in the life of the municipalities.  
23 topics – 9 of them delineated
  - Priorities of local governments and citizens are more or less the same. The ranks are strongly related (Spearman rank correlation coefficient 0.71) Economic and social factors are ranked high, while environmental factors low.
  - The public is aware of the importance of environmental problems the duties and opportunities are not clear
  - They think that environmental issues should be handled on a higher level by environmental experts
  - The national government should provide special guides about the duties and opportunities
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# The identification of problems

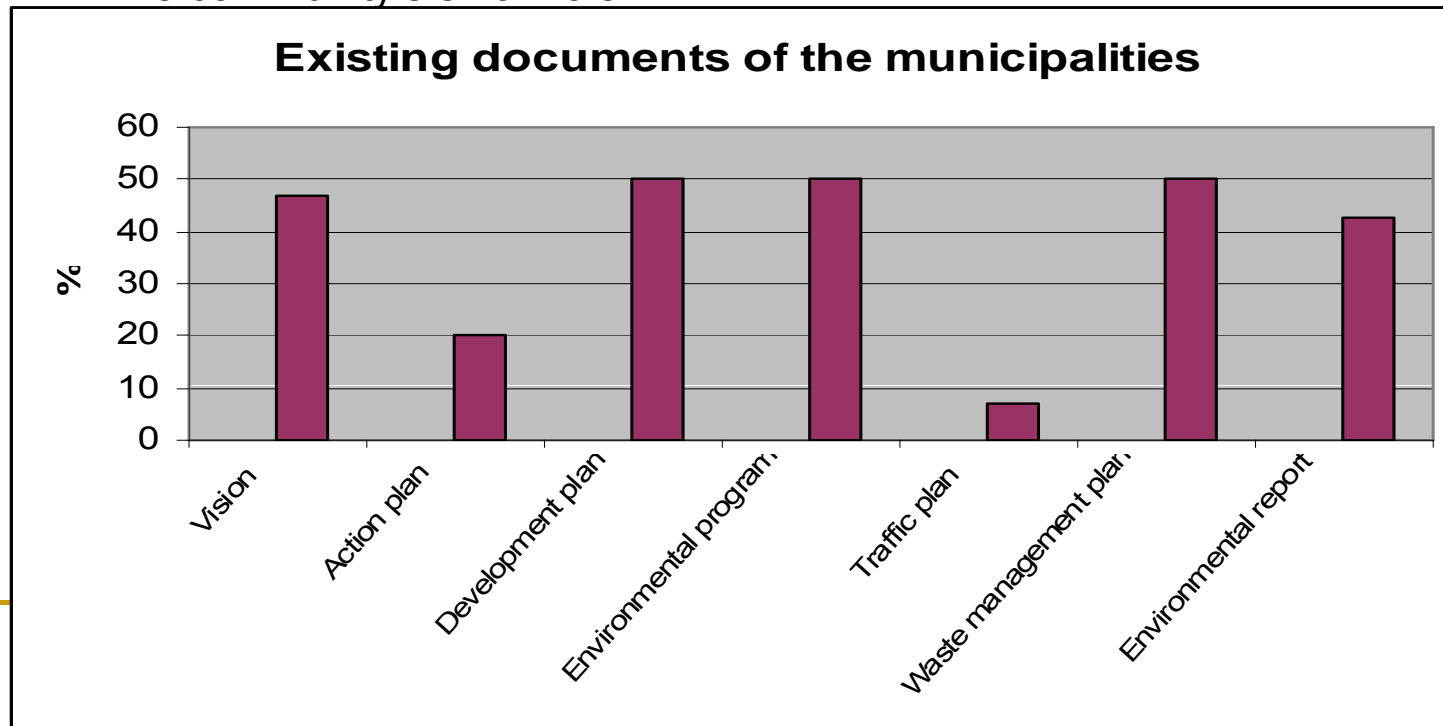


# The identification of problems – different social groups (23 topics)



# Existing documents related to sustainability

- Lafferty and Coenen: existing environmental protection and development plans can serve as a basis of bottom-up initiatives related to sustainable development.
- Inferences:
  - Most of the vision type documents are made for a short term
  - No indicators.
  - The community's small role



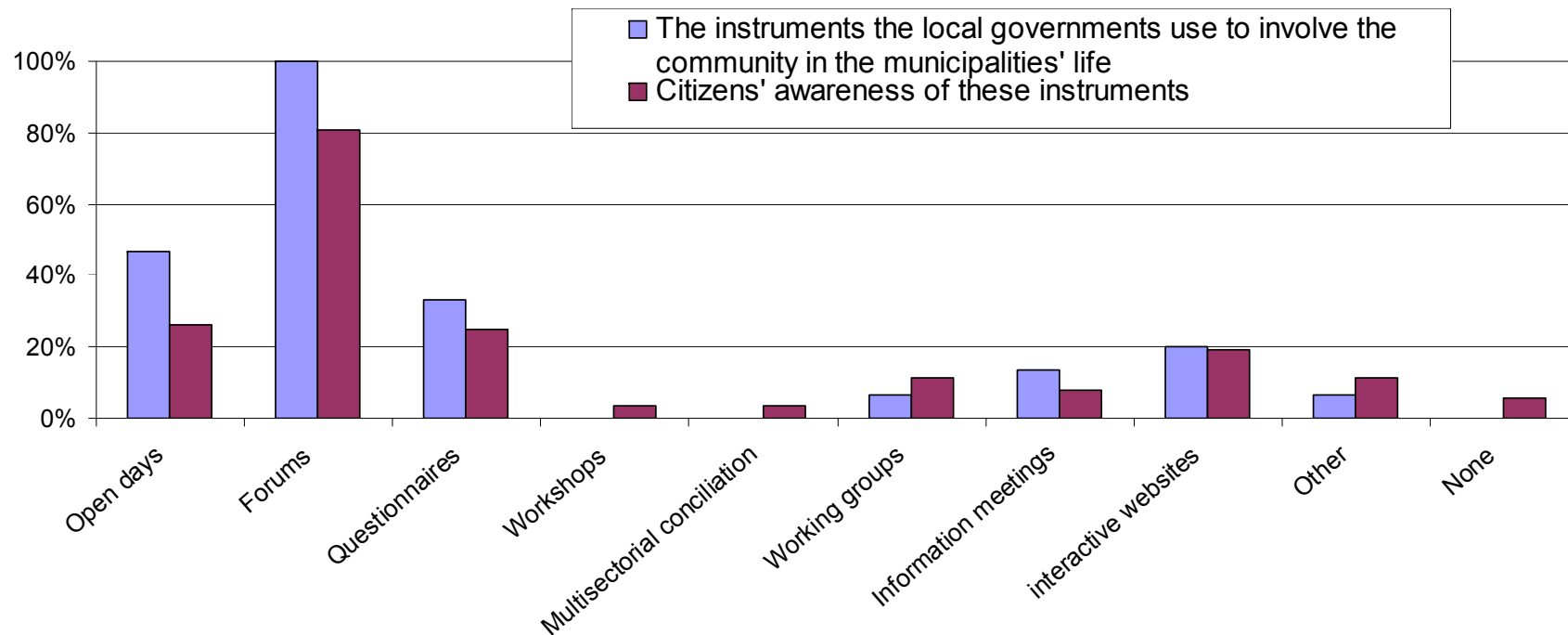
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# Mobilizability of the community

- Lafferty and Coenen: the active and politically mobilizable community, the interested and motivated civil servants and politicians committed to environmental issues are important factors in the movement towards local sustainability
  - The local governments' and the citizens' role at the examined municipalities
    - every aspect is concentrated in the local governments' hands: decision-making and implementation, and also financial control.
    - the communities' role: providing information, participation in decision-making and in the implementation of decisions.
    - there are some social groups that local governments did not manage to involve.
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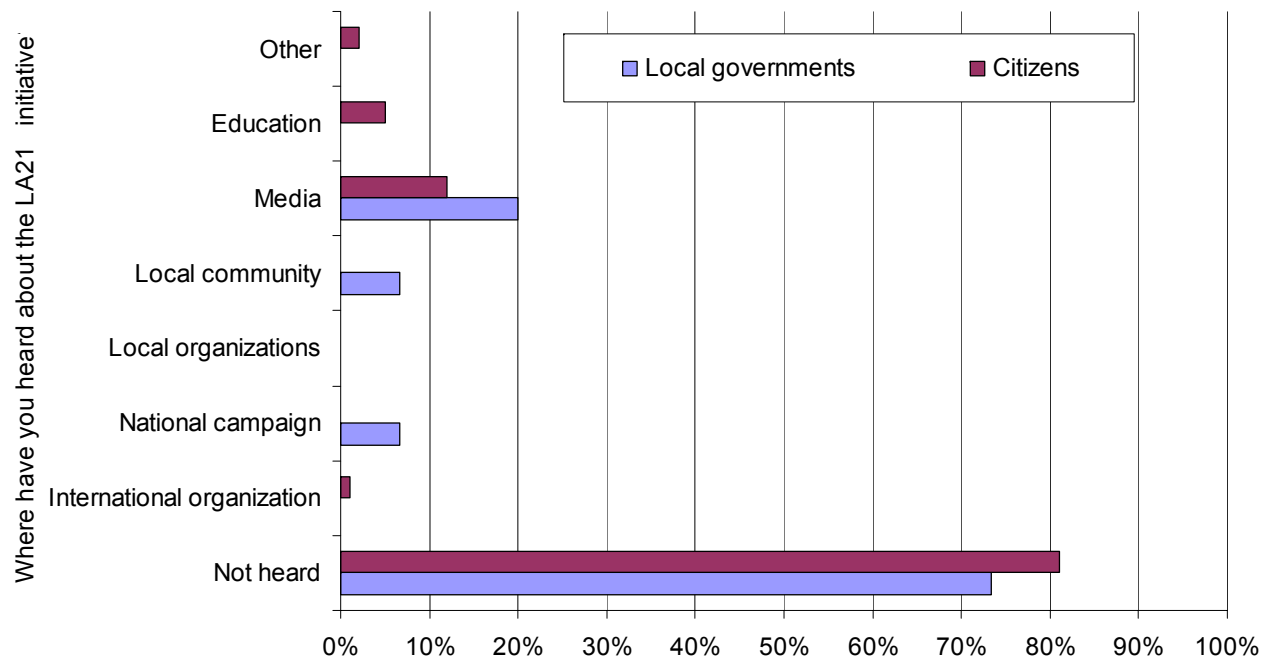
# Mobilizability of the community

- The means of communication local governments use to involve citizens, and citizens' awareness of these instruments
- There are some social groups that local governments did not manage to involve.
- The most important means: forums



# The chances of creating local agendas

- The knowledge of the initiatives related to the local aspect of sustainability.
- Most people get their information about sustainability from the media, the role of the other sources of information is minimal.
- Higher education: curriculum changes are expected



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# The chances of creating local agendas

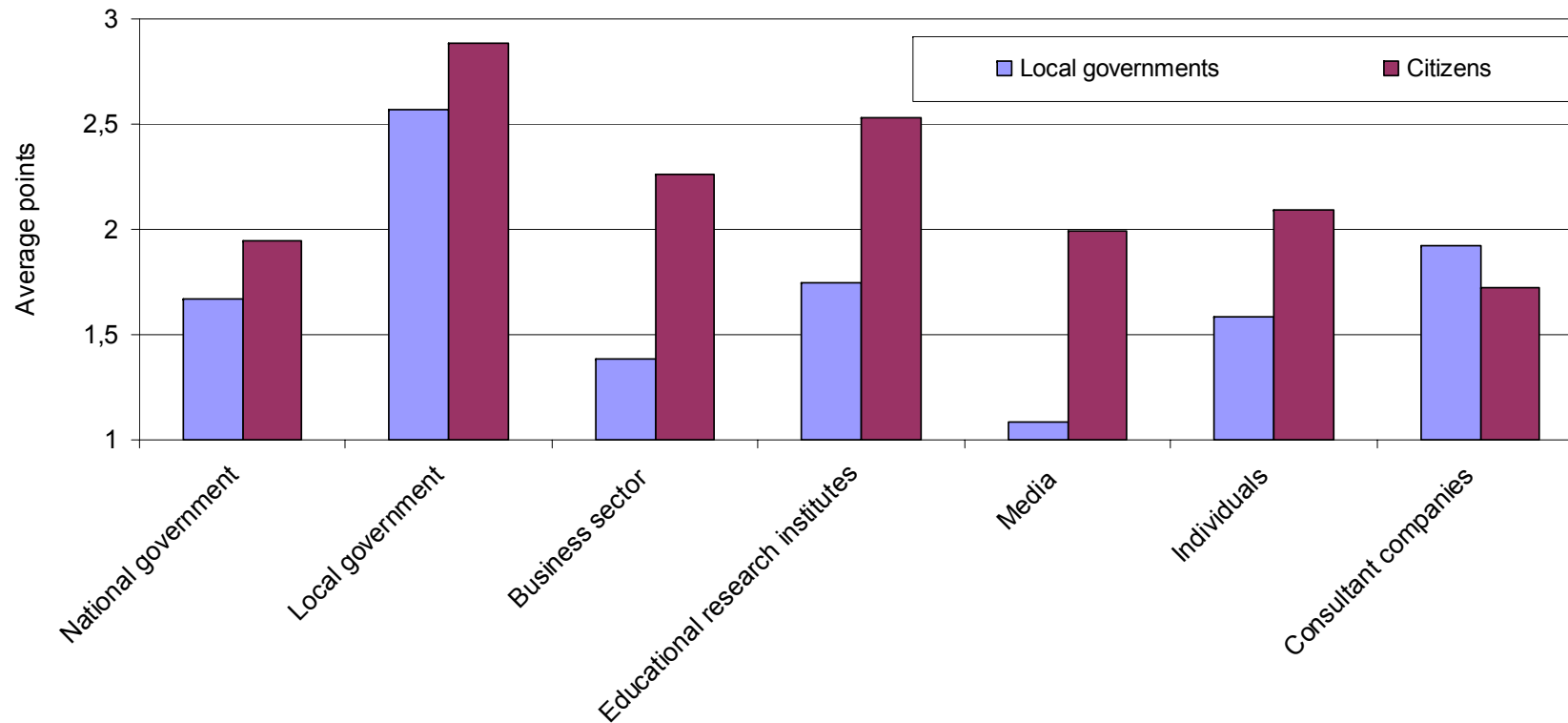
- 46% of the municipalities have initiatives related to sustainability
- 42% of community respondents know about these initiatives
- Most of them: waste collection and management
  
- None of the examined municipalities take part in the work of sustainability related international networks or initiatives.

Causes: the lack of information, membership fee

- Hungarian municipalities which are members of such networks either had a special aim (mostly expected financial support), or there are some leaders or prestigious people who are committed to sustainability
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# The chances of creating local agendas

- Local governments can rely on different groups of stakeholders only to a small extent
- Local citizens: as many stakeholders should be involved in the process as it is possible



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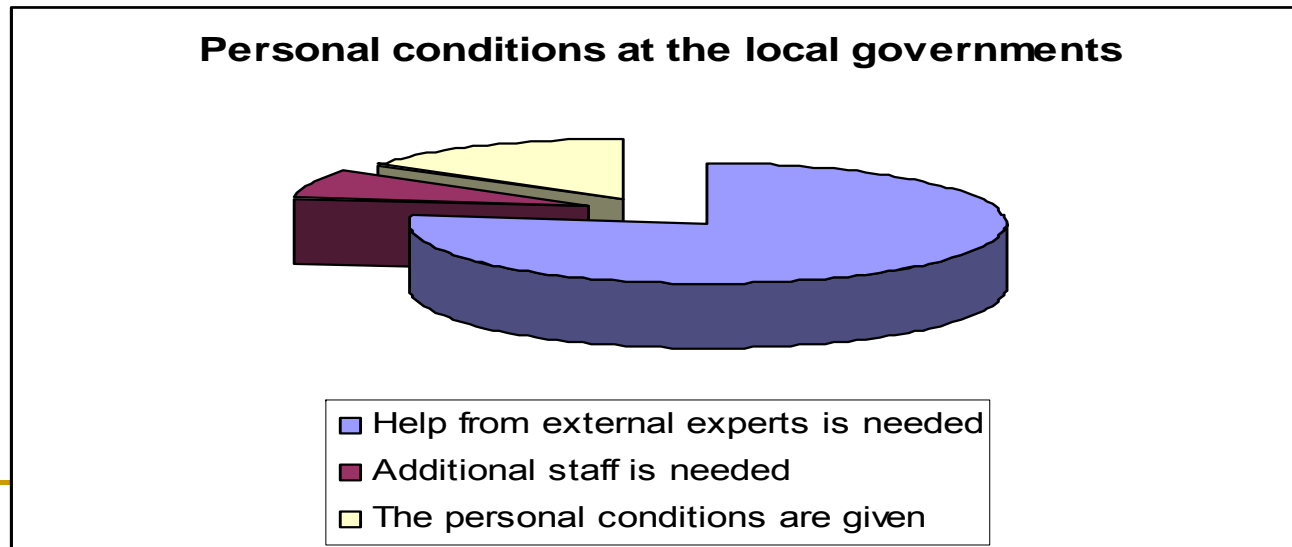
# The chances of creating local agendas

## Assumptions:

- Consultant companies: help from outside  $\Leftrightarrow$  do not reflect the community's real priorities
  - The national government should make some contribution to the preparation of local agendas, but bottom-up approaches are equally important
  - An effective method should be found to involve the business sector in important decisions about the community's life
  - The media is only interested in sensational or scandalous events
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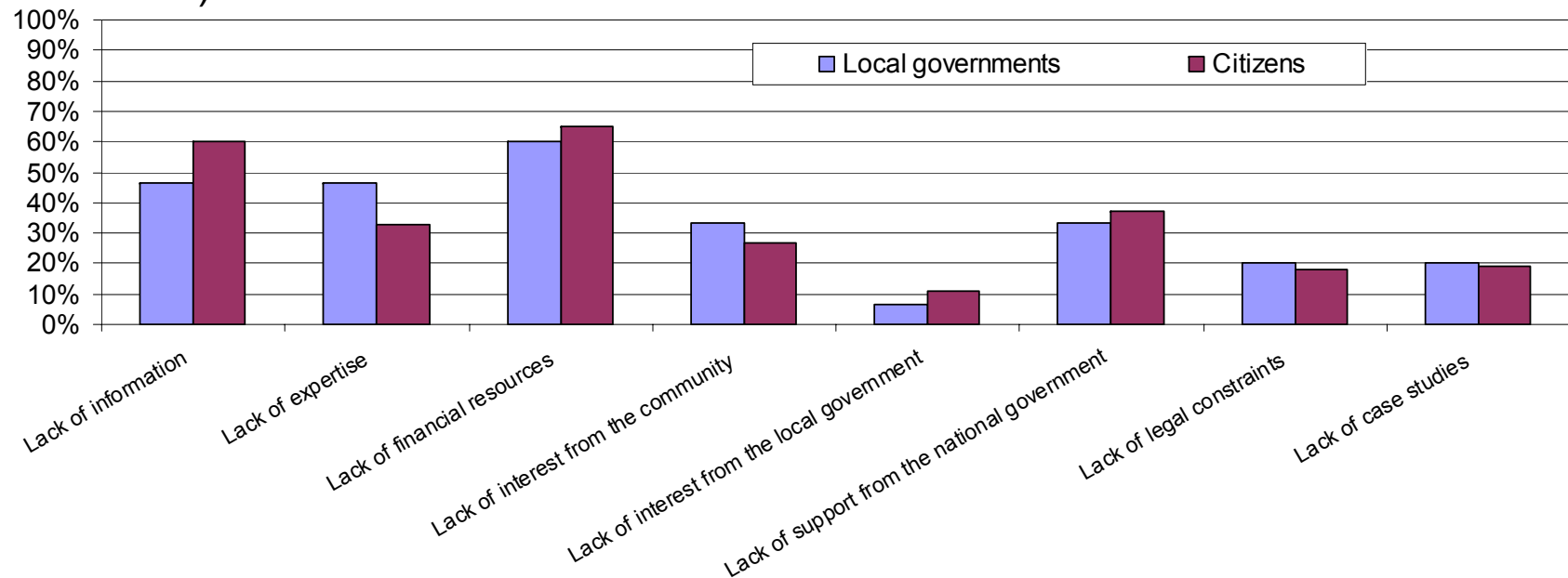
# The chances of creating local agendas

- At 85% of the examined municipalities no progress can be expected in the near future.
- **Tasks:**
  - **For local communities: systemization of existing documents and initiatives, creation of a framework.**
  - **For the national government: awards and subsidies to support the practice of preparing local agendas.**
- The rate of local governments which possess the personal conditions to prepare their own sustainable development strategy is only 14%.



# The chances of creating local agendas

- The most important determinants of the low number of sustainable development strategies
  - the lack of financial resources, the lack of motivation from the national government, the lack of information, the lack of expertise.
  - the lack of legal constraints, the lack of interest from local authorities and local communities are not major problematic area,
- Consequence: municipalities and their local governments are unable to act on their own, the first step should be taken by the national government (acquiring financial resources)

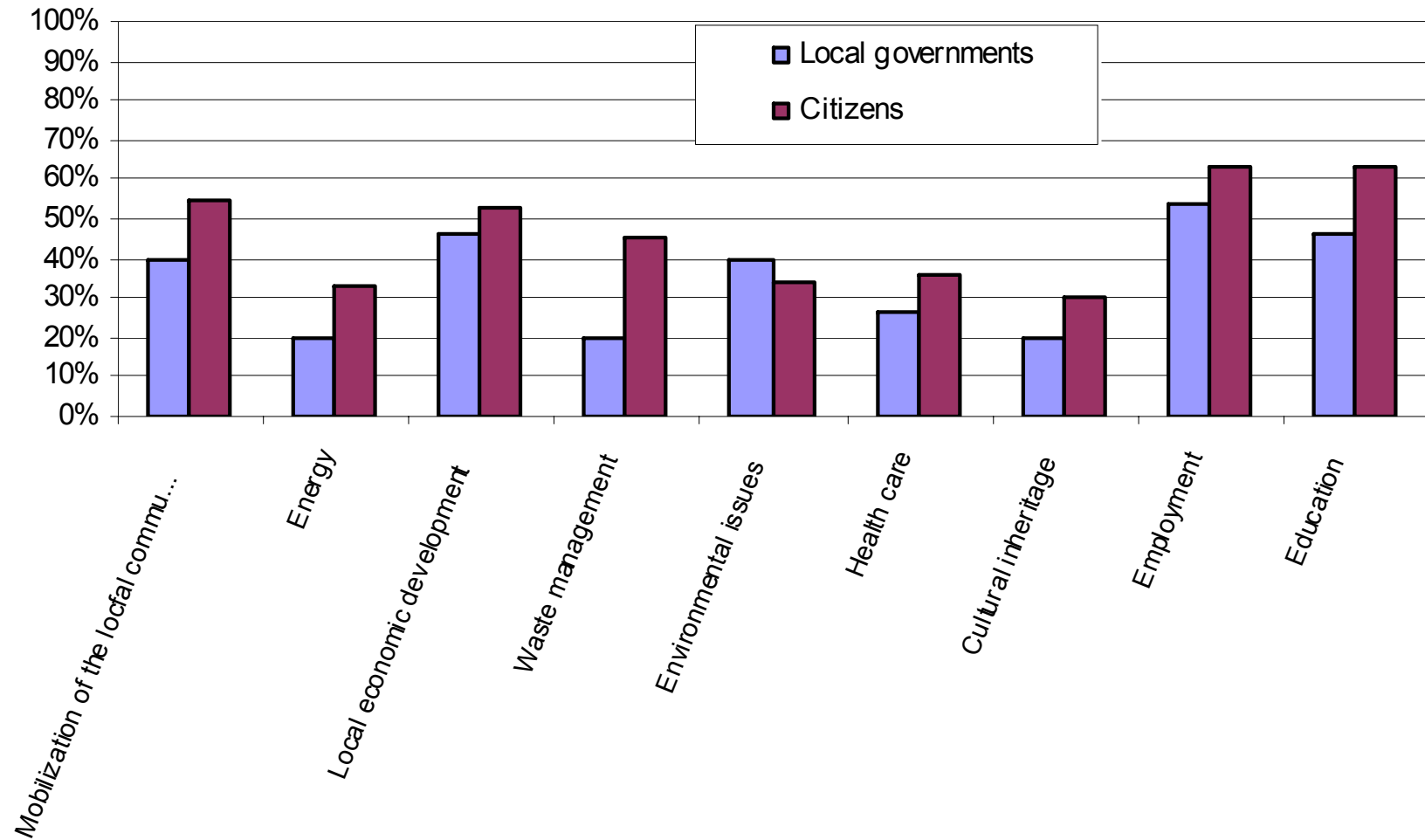


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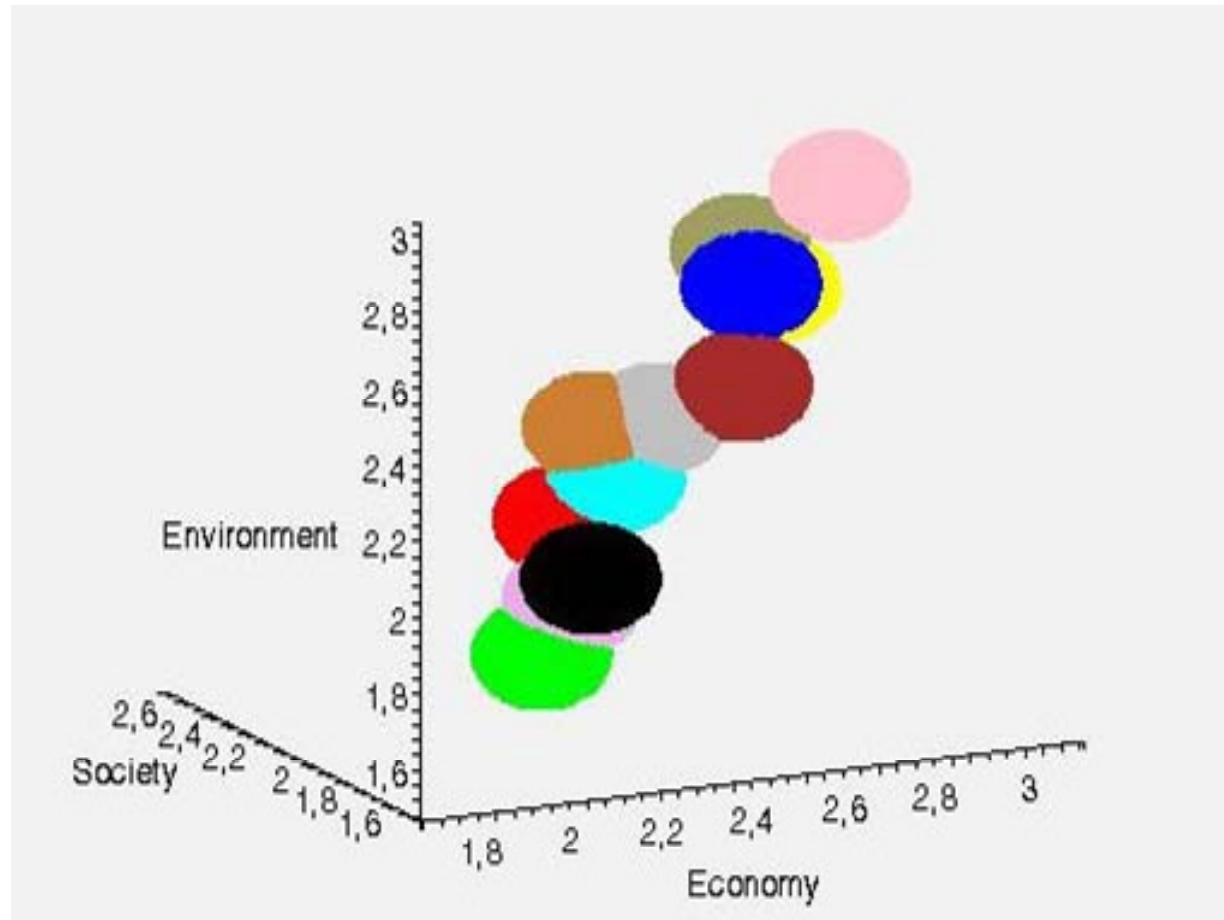
# The chances of creating local agendas

- The topics which local governments and citizens think should appear in local sustainable development strategies are similar to the problems of the municipalities.
  - Environmental issues are more emphatic.
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# The chances of creating local agendas

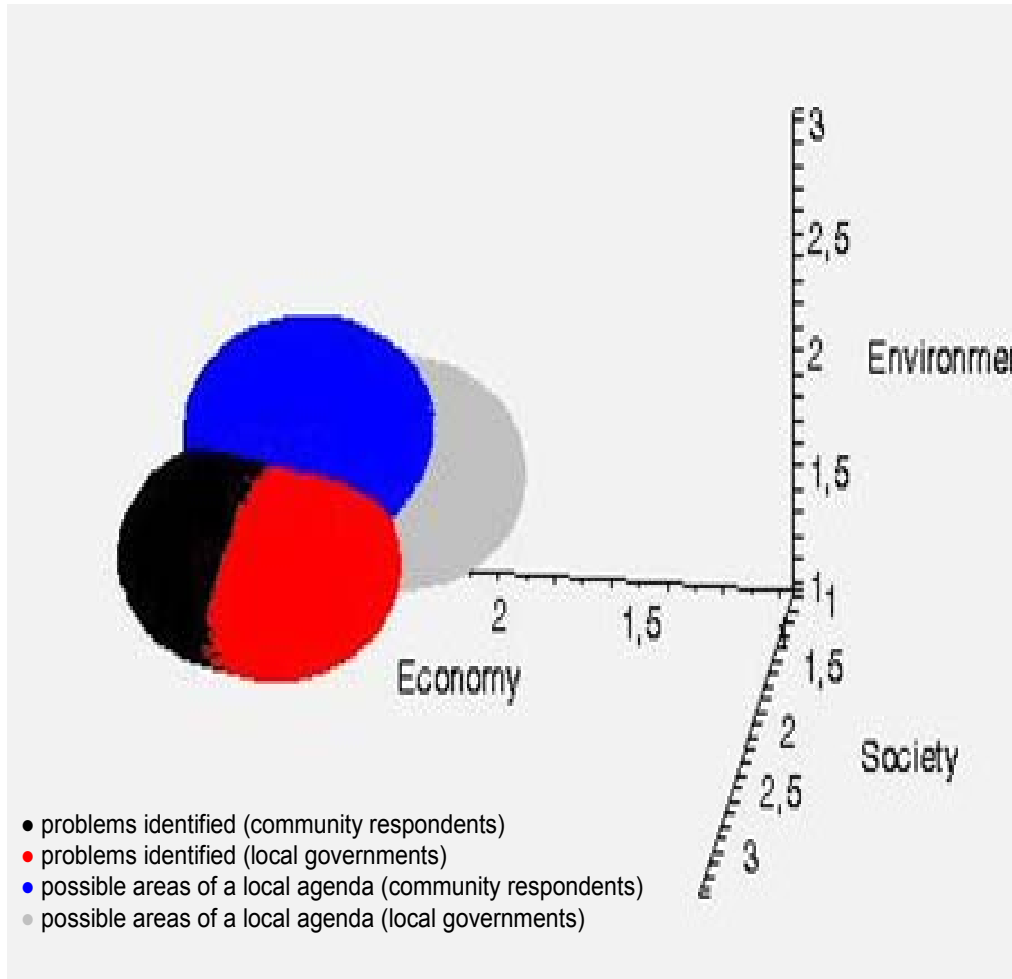


# The chances of creating local agendas



- less than 1000 inhabitants
- 1001-5000 inhabitants
- more than 20000 inhabitants
- women
- men
- graduated from secondary school or lower
- graduated from university or college
- local government employee
- public service employee
- business sector employee
- all citizens
- local governments

# The chances of creating local agendas



- The situation should be avoided when the aims identified and contained by the local agenda are not really sustainable: they are against global aims of sustainability.

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# Consequences

- There are problems related to sustainability at every municipality.
  - Every local government has to tackle with the lack of financial resources, the lack of information and the lack of expertise. No legal constraints to prepare local agendas, no prizes or awards to support it.
  - Municipalities' documents could form the basis of a local sustainable development strategy. There are also different initiatives related to sustainability. For most local governments it would be necessary to rely on external help. Guides and case studies are also essential.
  - Democratic traditions are also weak in Hungary. People are hard to mobilize. Environmental groups are weak groups. Environmental interests usually fall behind economic ones
  - Only a few local governments are committed to this difficult, but from the point of view of the future decisive task.
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Thank you very much  
for your attention !