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# Triangulation and Results Restitution in Social Service Needs Assessment

Călina Ana BUTIU<sup>1</sup>, Mihai PASCARU<sup>2</sup>

## Abstract

The current paper attempts to develop a possible method for improvement of social service needs assessment process. The method combines triangulation with results restitution technique. The model presented and tested in a complex research project by us includes several methods: the sociological inquiry, the personal interview and the group interview (focus group). They amount to what the specialists in the field call triangulation method. We introduced an additional instrument that is results restitution to the community leaders. These leaders become involved in decisions regarding social services to be deployed, the chances of success thus being improved. The picture of the social domain also becomes clearer for both the decision makers and potential investors alike. Methodologically, the combination of triangulation and results restitution has the potential to overcome the limits of some other widely used methods like Participatory Rural Appraisal and Rapid Rural Appraisal.

*Keywords:* triangulation, results restitution, social needs, vulnerable groups, rural leaders, social services.

## Introduction

In a series of preceding works (Pascaru, 2007; Pascaru, 2013) we mentioned that the debate in social science methodology spans several decades. During this time, representatives of both the quantitative and qualitative perspectives brought empirical and theoretical contributions (Kelle, 2001: 1). According to some authors, most of the combination models of quantitative and qualitative methods centre on the concept of *triangulation*. Fielding & Schreier mention that “There are different postures towards the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods, only one of which is triangulation.” (Fielding & Schreier, 2001: 29).

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Kelle suggests three meanings of triangulation in social science context: (1) triangulation as mutual validation of results obtained through different methods (*the validity model*), (2) triangulation as means of getting a more complete picture of a phenomenon (*the complementary model*) and (3) triangulation in its classic trigonometric sense, that of a method for capturing a phenomenon through a combination of methods (*the trigonometric model*) (Kelle, 2001: 8-11).

The application of triangulation according to Kelle may result in several situations: “(1) qualitative and quantitative results may converge: in this case these results lead to the same conclusions, (2) qualitative and quantitative results may relate to different objects or phenomena, but may be complementary to each other and thus can be used to supplement each other, (3) qualitative and quantitative results may be divergent or contradictory.” (Kelle, 2001: 15). Jakob also mentioned, based on other authors, several types of triangulation: (1) Multiple methods of data collection (*research data triangulation*), (2) Multiple investigators (*research triangulation*), (3) several theoretical frameworks (*theoretical triangulation*) and (4) several methodological perspectives (*methodological triangulation*) (Jakob, 2001: 2).

We consistently employed triangulation in our research (2003) of a mining project impact in Apuseni Mountains of Romania (Pascaru & Bezerita, 2004; Pascaru, 2007; Pascaru, 2013). Our 2003 study debuted with a series of *exploratory interviews*, followed by a *questionnaire-based survey* and a second series of *depth interviews* through the results restitution process. Exploratory interviews revealed that profound changes brought by the mining project were perceived through interpersonal relationship gaps which exposed a certain fracture at the community level. Such findings were accounted for in the construction of the questionnaire used in the survey that followed. The questionnaire became thus not just a lab instrument, but also a deep probing tool of the local realities. A sociological inquiry followed, together with a quantitative data analysis phase. During the third phase, which closed the triangle, the results were presented and discussed with the subjects. This was accomplished through what we call *depth interviews*, interviews which were also *results restitution* channels, some of the initial conclusions being contradicted by the newly emerged information and some of them being confirmed by the very subjects themselves.

We applied results restitution to many of our last decade's projects, particularly in connection with community development (Pascaru & Buțiu, 2007) and participative research-action (Pascaru, 2011). Some aspects are to be remembered. The more data collection advice and instruments are offered by methodological guides, the less attention is being paid to the beneficiary-sociologist relationship and to its impact on the researcher - Bergier remarked (Bergier, 2000: 5). The receiver of the restitution results is the field partner of the researcher. Bergier proposes the following definition of the restitution: “that act or dynamic through which the researcher shares with the field partners, for ethical and/or heuristic

purposes, the preliminary and/or final results of the processing of the data collected for analysis” (Bergier, 2000: 8). Bergier also mentions several types of restitution: (1) the savant restitution (*fr.*, *savante*), (2) the elucidative restitution (*fr.*, *éluclidante*) and (3) the militant restitution (*fr.*, *militante*).

In both the elucidative and militant restitution, a transformational effect is expected. The intervening actor brings in a change and becomes an integral part of the change. The restitution plays not just a transmission function, it becomes formative by elucidating the origins of the problems and appropriative by developing collective modes of action. In both cases, Bergier highlighted, the restitution stops being closed and dominated by the customer’s norms; it becomes open and centred on the subject of research and on the processes under scrutiny (Bergier, 2000: 59-60). Taken these into account we believe that the restitution can have two major functions in the need assessment and social service identification process: (1) a methodological function by being integral part of the triangulation methodology - which helps refining certain results from field research and (2) a practical one by having the potential to catalyse the collective conceptualisation of the needs, their importance and their prioritising criteria and ultimately by helping synthesize the most adequate solutions.

### **Needs assessment. The main methods**

Social needs assessment is typically associated with applied social science in general or with intervention as a fundamental dimension of the applicability of a science. People, Steele and Price commented, create social systems in order to fill the gap between what *is* and *what is necessary* or *will be necessary* in the future - thus the necessity to assess the needs. The needs evaluation can be made either with quantitative or qualitative methods, or as in most cases, with a combination of both - Steele and Price assert. Although one normally aims at obtaining objective results, the authors notice, needs assessment always rests on value judgements (Steele & Price, 2007: 22).

For Sullivan, an author of applied sociology work, the needs assessment research is concentrated on the collection of data in view of determining how many people in a certain community need a specific product or service in a certain amount of time. A need assessment survey may identify not just the scope of the need, but also to what extent the resource demand can be covered by the community’s existing supply. It is thus a resource analysis (Sullivan, 1992: 147). The process of designing and implementing an intervention requires four main phases according to Lodzinsky, Motomura & Schneider (2005): (1) problem identification, (2) solution design, (3) purpose establishment and intervention planning and (4) intervention implementation. The problem identification phase is alternatively mentioned by the authors as the needs identification phase in which

decision are taken on the suitability of an intervention. According to the same authors, the needs assessment process may be informal, when based on personal experiences or on informal discussions, and formal, when it rests on systematic data collection and research procedures. The problems can be identified using a variety of instruments like interviews with beneficiary group leaders or sociological surveys (Lodzinsky, Motomura & Schneider, 2005: 57). The concept of social need is tightly linked to that of social service. The whole history of social services is based on social needs assessment and the design of intervention as a response to address those needs. "Needs assessment refers to the process in which agency managers evaluate their clients' service requirements so that they may refocus service delivery to address target group priorities. In this regard, surveys play a vital role for gathering information on client requirement." (Drtina & Moran, 1983: 344).

A rich collection of theoretical and practical works look at the needs assessment methodologies and their adequacy in specific and local contexts. Most stress the importance of a tight collaboration between researchers and the community when the research strategy is being designed (Koné *et al.*, 2000). If initially the debate was centred on the merits of quantitative v. qualitative methods of evaluation, subsequently many evaluators adopted a mixed method style (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989). „Critical Systems Thinking” a systemic methodology based on a participative approach started to develop during the 1980's. It included among other themes the “methodological pluralism” paradigm that implies the utilisation of a variety of theoretically coherent methods which address a diversity of problems (Boyd *et al.*, 2007).

The needs assessment process of rural communities has largely been studied by Robert Chambers. He is being assessed as a true guru of Participatory Rural Appraisal and Rapid Rural Appraisal by some authors (Ngunjiri, 1998). Rapid Rural Appraisal and Participatory Rural Appraisal, Leurs wrote, “located on a mainly methodological continuum, are seen and used as an alternative or supplement to conventional survey and other methods of social research (such as participant observation) by consultants and other development professionals, as well as academics” (Leurs, 1997: 290). The pragmatic direction of Chambers' works - which look at Participatory Rural Appraisal - is considered by Kapoor (2002) as being excessively in the centre of public attention, because in his opinion is poorly founded both on theoretical and political grounds. The main criticism brought to Chambers is “the absence of legitimating procedures and adjudicative/critical mechanisms, the problem of denying difference in the pursuit of consensus, and the inadequate conceptualisation of power will all tend to have a bearing on practice.” (Kapoor, 2002: 114-115). On the same line of thought Ngunjiri (1998) calls the participative methodologies “double-edged swords” that can be utilized for both the construction and destruction of the capacities of those for whom they are intended. Asking people to express their problems through

diverse participatory methodologies is equivalent to eliciting an admission on how useless, weak and valueless they are - which may be in order, says Ngunjiri, for those who just want to qualify for a certain type of social service (Ngunjiri, 1998: 468).

So we see that the employment of triangulation has been used rather extensively in social need assessment, even if not explicitly named as such. Expressions like “mixed-method evaluations” and “methodological pluralism” denotes in fact more general forms of triangulation; Chambers’ methodology also presumes the combination of methods, albeit in a specific form. Our approach to surpass the limits of Chambers’ participative methodological dimension is to try to improve triangulation with additional methods like results restitution. The next section describes a rural Romanian social service needs assessment project’ milestones and acquisitions, and the approaches we took in trying to overcome these limits.

### **Triangulation and results restitution. A social service needs assessment project**

Before delving into the subject of social needs-based service implementation (as a form of social intervention) some preliminary remarks are in order. Firstly, one should remember that human needs are not value-free, since they are defined by both the systematic ideology of the social policies and of the social professions of the respective locality and by the diffuse ideologies<sup>3</sup> of those who manifest these needs - albeit more or less explicitly expressed. Secondly, one should retain that while the application of a set of standards and criteria does simplify the need identification algorithm, it does not solve the problem entirely. It leaves some unanswered questions. Who decides what the standards or criteria are? What is the prioritizing criterion in the (nearly always present) context of limited resources? Once priorities established, what is the best suited service for the prioritized need?

In order to approach some of these questions we tested our methodology on three rural communities in the Alba County which we will abbreviate as BG, CB and CN. The research has been undertaken in the summer of 2013, being financed by “Caritas Mitropolitan Greco-Catholic Blaj”, a well-known social service NGO (Non-Governmental Organization) provider from the area<sup>4</sup>. For vulnerable group social needs identification and definition purposes a questionnaire-based survey was undertaken. The questionnaire was applied to the following groups: (1) unemployed able-to-work persons; (2) older persons; (3) young adults with entre-

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<sup>3</sup> For a more detailed look at the systematic and diffuse ideologies see Sandu, 2005.

<sup>4</sup> The research was part of a larger project called “Alba Province Rural Social Service Network” of the above mentioned “Caritas” NGO.

preneurial initiatives who lacked the opportunities to capitalise on them; (4) members of Roma ethnic group; (5) persons with disabilities (or their families); (6) persons with alcohol dependency; (7) single-parent families with small incomes; (8) social welfare recipients; and (9) families with children at risk of school abandonment<sup>5</sup>. The sampling has been done using the *snowball method*. The placement inside groups has been either made through self-identification or hetero-identification.

The questionnaire was made with simplicity in mind and has been applied to the head of the household or to the person that was most aware of the household needs. The first set of questions was intended to identify members of the household belonging to one or more of the vulnerable groups and to establish more specific needs of such persons. The second set of questions aimed at identifying the best social service in response to each particular need. In the first part the respondent was asked to formulate what type of support he/she expects. In the second part a list of possible services was presented, the respondent being asked to select and prioritize from available services, ranking them both in terms of (a) his/her family needs and (b) his/her personal assessment of the other families in the community (community needs).

The qualitative assessment was based on *interviews* taken to community *leaders* - that is those persons assessed as being able to provide the most relevant and detailed information on the social challenges of the community. An additional rationale was that they will likely be the main decision makers in the implementation phase of the services we would identify. Five such leaders have been interviewed in each of the three communities, being either social workers, public administrators, educators, priests, local entrepreneurs, medical personnel and Roma community leaders<sup>6</sup>. The interviews have been taken in parallel to the survey and have been designed to identify additional information and to deepen the understanding of the issues.

The triangulation of methods employed during this phase was subsequently augmented by *restitution* of results phase in which the findings have been fed back into the community through the use of *focus groups*. Participants were the local leaders and providers of relevant information selected in groups specific to the type of the issue under scrutiny. The majority of them were selected from the set of interviewees that participated in the survey. The temporal distance between the original interviews and the focus sessions shifted the participants from an individual to a group communication framework and from being *assessors* to being *commentators* of the outcome - and maybe more importantly - becoming

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<sup>5</sup> No unique register of vulnerable groups exists in Romania. The list was drafted during the survey design phase in collaboration with the beneficiaries of the study and with the local community leaders.

<sup>6</sup> They play an interface role between the Roma community and local authorities.

*subjects of the results restitution process.* The aggregate findings of the research have been also returned to the financier and potential provider of social services (Caritas) who then proceeded to implement the feasible social service for each community.

**Survey Results**

The social inquiry intended to capture the view of community members of the *most important social needs* at both household and community levels. The relationship between the needs and the social services that would best respond to them was also under consideration. The majority of the survey respondents were women, which we don't consider bringing a risk of bias since in the Romanian rural space women are not just the most present member around the household during the day, but are also the main providers of support for the household members with special needs. In addition women are typically more in tune with the needs of other families in the community. Table 1 presents the vulnerable groups and their associated social needs in each community ranked in the order of respondents' assessment of priority.

Table 1: *The first three vulnerable groups and their social needs as ranked by respondents' perceived priority.*

Vulnerable group and its specific needs	Community					
	BG		CN		CB	
	%	Rank	%	Rank	%	Rank
Older persons	22.0	I	24.7	I	30.0	I
Persons in search of employment	19.0	II	9.5	II	13.0	III
Social aid recipients	16.0	III	7.1	III	18.3	II

One notices that in all three cases the prominent challenge is that of older persons in a community affected by an ageing demographic. As such, the respondents attribute importance to the needs of the category of older persons. The second group as priority of needs was considered that of community members in search of employment. The recipient of social aid group was ranked third. If we account for the fact that most recipients of aid were also persons unable to find employment (according to the answers in the survey) then the problem of unemployment then takes an even more sombre look.

In CB one notices a reversal of priorities between the second and the third place whereby the social aid recipients climb to second position. This is explainable by the fact that CB is the community with the largest number of aid recipients. Starting from this initial assessment we then proceeded at asking the respondents to come up with suggested social services that would answer these needs. In BG when looking at the immediate family needs, the most frequent service desired was that of support for persons in search of employment at 42.7%.



Such service may include counselling, information, mediation services etc. Next as importance was direct material aid at 39.6%, which were perceived as immediate needs arising from food and shelter and some basic cost for children's education. The third category was that of services for the elderly at 31.3%.

In CN most services desired were those for the elderly at 21.7%, followed by those for persons in search of employment at 17.4% and direct social aid at 15.9%. In CB the priorities were direct social aid at 40.1%, followed by services for the elderly at 32.9% and support for persons in search of work at 28.4%. The assessment of the same needs for other families in the community showed systematically higher frequencies and some changed priorities: first came services for the elderly at 83.8% followed by those for persons in search of employment at 81.8% and services for families with children at risk of school abandonment at 82.0%. The wide gap between the frequencies pertaining to own families and those pertaining to other families in the community appeared not just in CB, but in all three communities. This is no surprise since respondents know a lot more precisely the needs of their own families and make a lot fuzzier guesses when assessing the needs of the community in general.

Discrepancies also appeared between the needs assessed by respondents and the services expected to address those needs. While the needs of the elderly ranked first in all three communities, the services for the elderly ranked first only in CN. We hypothesise that families have informal networks of support for the elderly and do not consider external services that vital on one hand and estimate other services (e.g. unemployment support) to be more likely provided by external entities on the other. The reason why in CN services for the elderly remained highest may have to do with being the demographically greyest of the three communities. The community leaders' interviews that followed had the merit of clarifying and explaining some of the above discrepancies.

### ***Interview Results***

The first piece of information emerging from the interviews with local leaders was that the BG community is not a poor one as a whole. Rather, due to its natural and human resources is a well-to-do one when compared with neighbours and has a good developing potential. With the exception of few point cases, the social problems were not grave. To quote one of the interviewees: "*... Major problems in our community are not, first of all because is not an aged village... There is potential, human resources, land, possibilities... Major problems are not at the local level... Neither social, nor with the elderly, because the young generation did not leave and abandoned [them] ... There are just a few isolated cases that one can count on the fingers.*" The statement contradicts however the vulnerable group priority of the elderly emerging out of the survey.

There was a consensus between BG leaders in regard to the lack of employment. When asked ourselves who were the persons in search of a work place, we found that according to the interviews they were mainly young people, recent high-school graduates who have been working overseas and now returned into the community. They were also some recipients of social aid who were able and willing to work. The problem of unemployment while important in the opinions of the leaders, was compensated - they though - by the availability of the land and of the seasonal work offered by farming. Many families thus had a subsistence existence based on in-house growing and animal keeping and occasional work on larger farms. This is an aspect that the survey by itself failed to identify and where our proposed triangulation had merit: a better insight of the communal context in which the social needs are generated and sometimes solved through important intra-community resources.

Worth mentioning is also the *discrepancy between survey respondents' and interviewees' diagnoses* when building the hierarchy of needs. The implications of these discrepancies are theoretical, methodological and practical alike. Some questions are thus facing us: (1) Did our research have a sound theoretical foundation? (2) Was the instrument (questionnaire) properly designed? (3) Which of the assessment of needs is to take priority when constructing services, that of the survey respondents (potential beneficiaries) or that of the interviewees (community leaders)?

Most of the answers from the CN interviews highlighted the problems tied to the ageing of the population like loneliness, health problems, domestic organizing difficulties, tidy-up, etc. A relevant comment: “... *I don't know the families by age, but most are made up of elderly that stayed, one or two persons... Children left the household and I would think they are in need of moral and financial support [because] the majority have [low] farm working pensions*”<sup>7</sup>.

The explanation of community leaders to the demographic ageing phenomenon consists primarily in the lack of employment opportunities, which pushed young people to migrate towards urban centres, both nearby and abroad<sup>8</sup>. As to the solutions of elders' problems, traditional networks of support are mentioned first (like family, neighbours, the Church) and, as these become unable to cope, the need for help external to the community<sup>9</sup>. The leaders from CN expressed their concern that the strength of these traditional mechanism will wither as more and more young people move out. This is where we would highlight another important aspect revealed by employing triangulation in our research: *the massive migration*

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<sup>7</sup> Around 70 euro.

<sup>8</sup> For more on the magnitude of demographic changes and migration in Romanian rural space see Popa (2010: 72-73).

<sup>9</sup> For more on demographic ageing and its long-term consequences see Pleșa (2012: 51-54).

*of young people out of the Romanian rural space in association with the dwindling of the traditional networks of support existing at the intra-community level.*

CB's leaders' main worry was tied up to economic concerns (which in turn, were generating social problems). Finding employment and starting a business were considered as main challenges. In this context they thought the solution would come from attracting investment and starting of businesses. A particularity of CB was the large number of Roma inhabitants which came along with the problem of social integration. The problem of school-attending motivation was also mentioned, being especially acute in Roma families. The probable cause - interviewees appreciated - was the *lack of positive valorisation of the school institution* found among Roma parents. Triangulation thus revealed the important contribution of culture, of the value sets, and of mentality specific to each group to the identification of particular needs.

### ***Focus Group Results***

During the focus group sessions the findings of the inquiry were presented and discussed with contributors and with decision makers, in the hope of enhancing triangulation with the added value of results restitution technique. One of the first items shared with the contributors was the hierarchy of needs exemplified in Table 1. The participants were asked to opinion: (1) if the frequencies of the first three groups were consistent to what they thought about their community? And (2) what would the most appropriate social service be, based on the needs as identified?

During the BG focus group session a different priority has been agreed where the needs of the persons in search of employment displaced those of the elderly from the first position. In response to this need a list of services has been drafted: counselling, labour conflict mediation, qualification training, and educational programs for those that didn't finish their studies and support programs for farming entrepreneurs who have good chances of hiring many locals. In the matter of unemployment certain personal barriers have emerged during discussion, comments such this being relevant: "*... it is also the mentality, many feel ashamed to do certain types of work...*"

During CN focus group session the needs of the elderly have been confirmed as being most pressing, them being the most vulnerable group in the community. Proposed services to address this problem were a senior daycentre for socialization and a home service for helping them with household maintenance, clean-up and basic health care. Acute financial needs of the elderly have also been mentioned, some of them failing not just to pay their basic utility bills, but even regressing into a poor diet due to poverty. "*In our village the majority are old... We should provide food through a social canteen because many cannot make it on their own.*" - commented one of the participants.

During CB focus group the persons in search of unemployment were also agreed to be the most vulnerable group. The problem has been analyzed in the context of several social integration projects that had been previously attempted in the Roma community, but which did not return the expected results<sup>10</sup>. For this group counselling and professional development services have been suggested, but even their own leaders remained sceptical they would be motivated enough to use them: “...I doubt there would be anyone willing to work. They went abroad [e.g. France] and got used to other ways...” Within the same context was also discussed the problem of children who start school late: “... They are 9-10 years old and haven't started school yet... If school starts and they are away [abroad], their age gets ahead of them and they can't be schooled anymore, it is not allowed<sup>11</sup>. We do have problems, even if they don't admit it: they don't want to come to school, they're not interested in learning, or if they learn reading and writing in two years loose interest... They settle for that and stop going to school...”

The novelty brought by the combination of triangulation with the use of focus groups was in the case of CB the emergence of a European dimension of a social need of the Romanian rural space and not only. Another observation that came out of the survey data analysis was that although a number of social needs have been identified, many were formulated as financial needs (social benefits according to Romanian Law 292/2011) and not as social services. The focus groups participants were asked to: (1) attempt explaining this issue, (2) to come up with suggestions on how to reduce the dependency on these funds and for which group can this be accomplished and (3) to suggest practical steps for the reduction of these social dues and the increase in social services instead.

In BG the need was expressed both in financial and service terms, according to a local leader comments: “They don't refuse the services, but their priority is money... Why?... progress lead to modernisation ... We too have telephones, running water, cable, internet, all services... And they all are made with money... People can't keep up with costs and [that is why] the main demand is for cash, to be able to live from one day to the other... Because they can't keep up... It is normal that we, in the rural area have the facilities of urban world, but all these represent an additional financial effort, which people fail to cope with.”

In CN however an institutional obstacle to aid dependency curing has been identified as being the law. “We can't reduce [dependency] as long as the law is in place, because those who do not want to work settle for social aid and for the

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<sup>10</sup> The case of CB Roma is notorious in Europe. Most Roma families from CB belonged to the Paris suburb lot which has repeatedly been repatriated, some of them being offered modern housing built in the hart of their village by a French foundation.

<sup>11</sup> For this group there are special programs like “Second Chance” which are typically more difficult to access from rural locations.

*child benefit*<sup>12</sup>.” The same idea emerged from the CB focus group: “The law should be changed: to get social assistance benefits and during this time to be looking for work.” In CB also structural factors were invoked, economic variables that cannot be neglected in the social equation: “If the economy does not develop, there isn’t much we can do for them.” In these cases too the combination of triangulation with focus groups has revealed the problem of social legislation which is too tolerant and has detrimental effects on work motivation, even if it tries to address some stringent social needs. The dependency of local development to the regional and national development is also brought to attention.

## Conclusions

We will attempt to review some of the elements of added value in triangulation combined with the results restitution techniques which have been employed in the above research project. As we anticipated, by taking a bird’s eye view of the community, the interviews with local leaders had the merit of overcoming the differences that came up from community members’ own assessment of own families and other families social needs. At the same time, for some of the communities, a series of opportunities that would not have been identified by the needs-centred survey have been brought to light. Thus we recall that although the lack of employment in BG affected a large part of the population, it was considered by the community leaders to be offset by subsistence agriculture and by seasonal work opportunities on larger farms.

Another important aspect that was revealed by the use of triangulation was the massive migration of young people out of the rural space, phenomenon which contributes to the degradation of the traditional support networks of these communities. Triangulation also confirmed the significant contribution of culture, set of values and specific mentality to the formation of needs in particular sub-communities like that of Roma. A novelty which our methodology brought in was the ability to reveal the European dimension of social needs that appeared specific to the Romanian rural space, especially for pronounced migratory behaviour communities like that of Roma people. Worth noticing is also the discrepancy between the value hierarchy of the inhabitants’ assessment of needs and that and their leaders. This discrepancy may have been overlooked had it not been for triangulating with several methods and may have not been that clearly explained had it

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<sup>12</sup> Social aid and child benefits are minimal, survival-type social benefits calculated based on the Social Reference Index. The algorithm includes the number of household members for the social aid and the child’s age and the possible handicap situation for the child benefit. For a zero income two-parent, two-child family for instance, where one child is under and the other is over two years old and also has a handicap, the total (social aid and child benefit) amount it can receive at 2014 year level is approximately 95 euro.

not been for the added value of the focus groups and of the results restitution technique.

The implications of this discrepancy are theoretical, methodological and practical and demand raising some questions: (1) Had our research a sound theoretical foundation? (2) Was the survey instrument adequately designed? (3) Which assessment of needs should be taken into account in the implementation of services, that of the community members, or that of their leaders?

The augmentation of triangulation also brought into the light some deficiencies of the social legislation in Romania, which although drafted in the good faith of responding to stringent needs, generates perverse effects of de-motivating beneficiaries from overcoming their condition. The dependency of local development on the regional and national one has also been highlighted. As seen through out our project, the triangulation in combination with the results restitution methods can beneficially round off the image of the *social domain* (Sullivan 1992), domain which is marked by the extension and the intensity of certain social needs. As a more general observation one should keep in mind that the interviews with the community leaders brought to light an array of needs more diverse than the one captured by the survey and contributed with richer explanations and interpretations which will help the social service intervention. The focus groups also revealed points of view closer to reality and to the elusive intersection between wishes, aspirations and needs from one road and possibilities, solutions and available resources from the other.

Generally speaking two fundamental ideologies emerge in need assessment sphere: (1) *the ideology of social policies* which are closer to the systematic ideologies at one point in time and (2) *the ideology centred on the person*, the diffuse ideology which is reflected in the wishes, the needs and the expectations expressed by the persons facing these needs. The triangulation combined with the results restitution method which we employed in this undertaking may bring forth an additional argument to the view that a reasonable implementation of social services may be optimally positioned at the intersection between these two fundamental ideologies.

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