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Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială

Review of research and social intervention

ISSN: 1583-3410 (print), ISSN: 1584-5397 (electronic)

Selected by coverage in Social Sciences Citation Index, ISI databases

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Revista de cercetare și intervenție socială, 2009, vol. 24, pp. 73-86

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Published by:

Lumen Publishing House

On behalf of:

„Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University,

Department of Sociology and Social Work

and

Holt Romania Foundation

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Representations of the local resources as a factor of Community Development in Romania and Republica Moldova

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Abstract

This article is one of the first approaches of a scientifically type studying the present tendencies and directions in theorizing and the research of the community development. A stage objective of the investigation is represented by the local resources of development classification and the identification of the place they occupy within the representation of the actors interested by cross border cooperation as part of the development strategies on the Eastern European Union Border.

Starting with these theoretical intentions it has been delivered a sociological study on an area of 5 localities of urban type from Romania (Iași and Botoșani) and from Republic of Moldova (Cahul, Hîncești and Ungheni).

Keywords: *sustainable development, local resources of development, community facilitator, local economies, local development agent, cross border cooperation.*

Introduction

Generally speaking about the present directions and tendencies regarding the preoccupations and the researches on the vast domain of the social development, we could notice a perceptible change at the paradigm level: if a few years ago the certitude was installed that globalisation is the „path” and the „engine” of human associations, communities and nations, more recently this type of models and epistemological landmarks seemed to „crack”. The general terms discussions

about social change and community development¹ that involved and manifest on all organization forms in a very large space-geographical areas became seldom. Yet, it is true that a serial of generalising collocations have been kept and clarified, like that of „sustainable development”. It has been launched and initially defined by The Development and Environmental World Commission (Mureșan, Hosu, Săvulescu, 2002) as „meeting the present human needs without compromising futures generations possibility of meeting theirs”. But it has been substantially reformulated by further content specifications: the reality of the concept can be reached by the simultaneous resolution of three fundamental dimensions: economic welfare, systems stability (including the social systems as well), and environment protection. But it is just as true that development cannot be discussed from punctual terms, using only one type of action or strategic resource – we must accept resources diversity, frontiers multitude and the strategies mix while approaching and solving some communities’ issues of growth. But we cannot also transgress this type of analyses on globalizing investigations. But the planning of change/development and the organization of actors/agencies is accomplished more and more by different landmarks, placed even more often on the sphere of qualitative: a. the pro-change attitude of citizens is preponderantly referred to the economic development component correlated to the inclusive social strategies (even though the governmental/administrative factors of community’s establishment do not poses the adequate competences); b. the resources and the means of the local economies though deficient and little supported by authorities are more and more mobilised; local public authorities, focused up to now on carrying out dispositions and circular reproduction, have the tendency to get flexible and be connect to functionality and social innovation.

From the effort of giving valid alternatives to a process considered way too complex and costing – globalization, which could not offer satisfactory answers to many social dilemmas – showed up the necessity of promoting some new approach methods and theoretical validation of the concept and practice correlated to development. Some of these are not quite new, but carry on initiatives of the ‘90s. Yet what it meters is that the development actors do not get lost in pseudo-solutions and ideological languages.

First of all we would like to remind about the *community facilitator* model, as one promoted but not sufficiently developed through programs, like those developed in some arias of Romanian rural environment. We cannot speak about a new model (Cojocaru, 2005). It is a thematically remake referring to the fact that the process of change and development is no longer the privilege of local public government, but it is an action that comes from outside (professionals) towards the community. Mainly it consists and basis on assisting and supervising a comm-

¹ „Community development can be defined as a process intended to create the conditions for economic and social progress for the entire community, with its active participation and with a total possible trust in communities initiative”, United Nations, 1955.

unity so it can take the optimal decisions, adopt appreciative positions of issues solving, build participative processes. So, development is a process that sets the local community on the first place, and is based on the appreciative valorisation of the needs coming exclusively from the citizens. Certainly it allows the affirmation of the individual performances and of the certain forms of group work, in order to solve same class of needs and exigencies. At the same time, it builds the necessary environment/frame for the affirmation of some structures that represent civil society's interests in its relationship with local public authorities, and even to suggest ways of reforming the local public administration services, including the remake of some of its roles. The purpose of the initiatives of this type is to support the development process. It must be emphasised that in regard to this model, the *community facilitator* is not an employer of a city hall, Local County or other forms of public authorities of central or local rank. It is a representative of the civil society and acts with the help of specialised mechanisms of communication and lobby. Its objective is the life quality growth within the facilitated communities and the establishment of a way of life that should not endanger any of the social actors. So the definition given to *community facilitator* almost a decade ago is just as actual, as well as applicable within the context of the establishment of the Romanian Social Development Fund: „the facilitator is a selected physical or juridical person who takes the responsibility to help a community established as eligible that might derive from urban as well as rural communities to get organized, to identify its needs, prioritize them, elaborate a project and surpass organizational and communicational problems showed during project development, and participate at the sustainable community development as well as after the financing is finished” (Legea nr.129/1998).

Secondly, it can be reminded a model which reunites elements from many perspectives: *the model of the local development agent*. Its avatars are diverse, most of them starting from 2004. By principle there are established stages, specific tasks, and the objectives correlated to development: 1. identifying and mobilizing the resources from the given community; 2. building a formal framework for the internal initiatives of the community regarding the development and the strategic planning; 3. determining most important activities; 4. identifying the leaders and forming local initiative groups; 5. evaluating the real community's issues and mediating the solutions; 6. creating the mechanisms of local cooperation between neighbourhood communities too, including cross border neighbours type; 7. information campaigns regarding the resources, opportunities, risks; 8. institutional support for the local actors, including the local and regional marketing; 9. focusing on resources; 10. disseminating the results and best practices.

Mainly, this variant that exclusively addresses to local public administration, it is actually about one person or a specialised small group, who can play the role of moderator and at the same time a participant on the process of development of

those communities. The *local development agent* might be even a juridical personality structure, respectively an association or a specialised service within the city hall or a liberal profession. The advantages can be found in the concrete action forms: flexibility, adaptability, representatives. But the major inconvenient refers to the decisional limitation and to the institutional competences competition between services.

The list of new models regarding mechanisms and resources of social/community/local development can continue. But more importantly is that a point of departure remains. On this particular logic, the departure point is represented by the empirical observation validated by the multiple scientifically approaches: if we are to analyse the report between the origin of production resources and the purchased goods' origin – scientifically evaluated (Lazar, 2006) - we may find out that our daily actions are contradictory and costly. Though the local resources for goods production weight 70% (being imported only 5%) – meaning that the necessary goods can be produced with the raw materials from our very proximity – we purchase goods that are produced with only 5% local raw material, (while an 85% is from other countries). An embarrassing simple conclusion is that we have to rethink the action models of development and enforce the change on the communities' level. The main source of change and development must be re-brought at the local communities' level, even the cross border ones. Because of different interests, it has been transferred to different horizons and then blurred with the help of different social „invisibility” techniques mainly conducted by the mass media. Certainly, the social projections and the „new ethics” represent another challenge (Cojocaru, 2005).

Otherwise, the study accomplished and presented further for its technical elements spots out and supports the effects of this crooked logic: the main agents of the social development on the community level – the organizations and companies – have confuse, inadequate and inefficient representations about the local potential resources. The methodology of this investigation named the local, visible and accessible resources with the specific terms of „cross border cooperation”.

Accordingly, it seems quite normal that Romanian society, on its local expression level, to pass from the experimentation stage of certain changes and innovation techniques (which were conducted by the World Bank, European Union or international NGOs) to the stage of development based on local resources, regional partnerships, civic mobilization and involvement (Sandu, 2005). The surpass of the very actual stringent issues, from the Romanian Eastern Region – generated by local underdevelopment, political exclusion from the main social welfare routes, poverty produced with the help of controlled resources waste – stays on the most easier, faster and cheaper approach: a proper use of the local resources.

General Technical Data²

A. RESEARCH DOMAIN:

The Study investigated the indicators measuring Iasi Region development potential as part of a cross border social-economic development network established between Romanian cities Iasi and Botosani and the Republic of Moldova's Towns Ungheni, Hînceşti and Cahul.

B. DOCUMENTARY RESEARCH

Research directions and the investigated indicators

1. Locality's Historic Elements

- datable and other documentation elements
- significant historical landmarks
- historical evolution

2. Data and demographic tendencies

- volumes
- structures
- dynamics

3. Human Resources, labour force

- unemployment, active and inactive population, labour force degree of occupation
- fluxes and refluxes of labour force internal and external migration
- the professionals /education degree of the local labour forces
- occupational categories largely involved in the economic and non-economic activities

4. Education and professional formation

- a description of the pre-university and university education system
- local educational offer
- the quantum of population's stages of formation
- the external migration (immigration and emigration) of the population found in different stages of (medium and high level) education
- development degree of the continuous formation;
- European, national and local support education programs and institutions

5. Professions and occupations, including local and traditional

- specificities and local dominants on dissemination levels
- occupations' depth on (production, commerce, services) sectors

² The Study has been financed and elaborated during the implementation of the Phare CBC - LGU Wealth Network RO 2004/016-941.01.01.11 Project.

- traditional occupations visibility
- 6. Environmental elements, geographic climacterically characteristics
 - natural resources
 - landscape and neighbourhoods
 - the degree of environmental conservation
 - disturbing factors and environmental pollution
 - climate conditions
- 7. Labour environment and economic activities
 - developed and definitely local economic branches
 - labour conditions, labour accidents incidence
 - arbitrage institutions for the economic activity
 - business centres and incubators
 - economic agents' degree of fiscal pressure (local taxes)
- 8. Technical infrastructure and material capital
 - (fluvial) air and terrestrial ruling infrastructure
 - utilities and equipments destined to the community use
 - latent or productive economical stages of the important industrial sites
- 9. Business environment
 - business environment regularisation organisms
 - developed or undeveloped (sub-) domains
 - local business relations nature
 - performing *know-how* implementation, transfer and support modalities
 - LGU (local public administration)'s involvement within business environment reunion
 - professional association's existence and involvement within the local business environment
- 10. Tourism infrastructure
 - natural and artificial tourism objectives
 - de local tourism types (cultural, religious, commercial etc.)
 - receiving units – accommodations
 - tourism information offices
- 11. Standards and life quality
 - living levels conditions
 - public and private health system
 - *loisir* (free time)
 - social living levels
 - life expectancy
- 12. Local Development Strategies
 - living and temporal milestones (years of reference)

- major strategic directions
 - accommodation degree to national and regional
 - compatibilities (common strategic directions)
 - open level towards horizontal and vertical relating
13. Strategic Investors
- present or prospective actors
 - investors types (size, type of economic activity developed etc.)
 - types and levels of contribution to the local development
 - local investments level
14. Local Government Unit (LGU – Public Local Administration) and Budgets
- administrative structure
 - budgetary sources and resources
 - budgeted financial volumes
 - strategic investments of budgetary earmarks
 - administrative preoccupation for the civic and economic activities support
 - local community development politics
15. NGO Sector
- types of statutory activities (the most frequent encountered)
 - notable performances within the current activity
 - evaluation of the differences between the scriptural and factice activity
 - relation with the local community
 - relation with the local public administration
16. Community Protection and Security
- public and private institutions involved
 - rates and types of assisted population
 - programs and basic activities developed
 - public – private partnerships (PPP)
 - adjustment to European Community’s assistance policies
17. Legislation and local regulations
- LGU’s legal opportunities of relating within a cross border cooperation network
 - inhibiting and reuniting factors (elements)
 - Local Governments/Councils’ legislation and projects of local legislation regarding the implementation of networking models
 - recent evolution of RO – MD diplomatic relationships
18. Banking Services
- identifying and classifying (commerce, national, international etc.) banking institutions
 - types of services offered

- request degree of saturation / coverage
- bureaucratic aspects
- the weight of services oriented towards juridical and physic persons

19. Communications and mass-media (fix and mobile telephony, services of cable, relays, antennas, mail / post and courier, internet, audio media, video media, publicity systems with street exposure)

- public and private suppliers
- types of services offered
- degree of market saturation
- consume behaviours

C. FIELD SOCIOLOGIC INVESTIGATION

1. *Space of the field research - demographic and geographic areal:*

Economic Agents from the City of Iași, Romania.

2. *Research nature:*

- a. *Research typology: sociologic investigation* (method), based on *the investigation of the public opinion* (technique), developed by applying *sociologic questionnaire – poll* (instrument) delivered by a classic system of gathering data.
- b. *Research instrument building*: build to be applied in printed format, *sociologic ordered, 95% standardized* (with closed questions – predefined response variants).
- c. *Data gathering*: polls were applied by auto administration method.
- d. *Centralisation and data analyses*: forms applied on field were registered in a digital *data base*. *Data base management* envisaged the verification of the research instrument *consistence*, statistic data *validity*, *descriptive* report of the harvested data.
- e. *Data report*: graphic representation, quantity analyses and quality data structure.

3. *Sampling:*

Sampling criteria: volume (number of participating subjects), structure, representativeness (the probabilistic certification of research results extrapolation possibility).

Volume:

– contact sample: 500 companies (economic agents) contacted by the field operator + 130 companies contacted by post = 630 companies

– registered response sample: 113 companies contacted previously by an operator + 0 post recipients companies (15 days – time for waiting the response) = 113

Structure: see the companies and respondents profiles detailed in data quantitative analyses.

Representativeness (results extrapolation capacity to the totality delimited by the research space): the calculus of the estimative statistic error (E); calculus statistic conditions: probabilistic trust level: $P = 95\%$

Signification doorstep: $\infty = 0.05$ (5%)

t note afferent to P and ∞ : 1,96

Answers diffusing level (homogeneity): $30 \times 70 = 2100$

Sample's volume: $n = 113$

estimated statistic value of the error resulted:

$E = 8,4\%$

Under these circumstances results may be generalised with a *relative statistic certificate*, since the sample fulfils the scientific condition of representativeness on error margins limits.

4. *Data gathering period: June – July 2008.*

Data quality structure on research directions

1. Humain ressources – labour force direction

Positive Aspects:

1. Local economic domains that register a labour force surplus are: Food industry, banking and financial services, leather and textile confections Industry, real estate and construction building, wood/furniture Industry, metallurgic Industry.
2. Circumscribed foreign trade sectors where local economic agents benefit of a trained personnel: International banking operations and systems, International Marketing.

Negative Aspects:

1. Economic: a local labour force deficit is registered: Real estate Services and construction building, wastes recycling, research and development Services, Electro-technical Industry, ITC Services.
2. Economic agents' opinion over local labour force situation: Qualified labour force is needed; there are economic domains suffering from a deficit of qualified labour force; the broad majority of the labour force emigrated abroad.
3. Foreign trade circumscribed domains where local economic agents do not benefit of qualified personnel: Foreign trade theory, International investments.

2. Education and professional training

Positive Aspects:

1. Respondent companies develop on planned basis security, health and labour medicine specific activities: Training/formation of internal specialists in labour management, and certification in security and labour health.

3. Labour environment and economic activities

Positive Aspects:

1. The most developed economic systems, from the economic agents' point of view: Banking and Financial Services, Real estate Services and construction building, Alcoholic and non-alcoholic drinks Industry, ITC Services, Glass and building materials Industry, Food industry
2. Respondents companies give a great attention to labour protection and security elements: acquiring the minimum requirements security and health conditions for the work space, in regard with the present legislation and the specific of the work place
3. Wage alternative forms of stimulating the employees, respondent economic agents use predominantly: food tickets, gifts on special occasions (legal holidays, birthdays etc.), service phone, and financial bonuses given on project / commission/contract/merit basis

Negative Aspects:

1. Economic agents are significantly affected by the following difficulties faced in their current activity.
2. The main difficulties faced by the respondent companies in their specific domain/sector are: the lack of qualified personnel, the lack or the underdevelopment of the display market, legislation issues, the relationship with the banks, the relationship with the governmental institutions.

3. From the point of view of the economic agents the most underdeveloped economic sectors are: wastes recycling, chemical Industry, electro-technical Industry, metallurgic Industry, machines and equipments Industry, Research-development Services.

4. Touristic infrastructure

Positive Aspects:

1. The strengths are represented by Iasi's cultural and historical edifices, like:
Churches and monasteries, historical monuments, museums.
2. The strength identified by the respondents regarding Iasi's current tourism activity is the attraction represented by cultural, religious and historical edifices / objectives.
3. The main advantages of the foreign tourism offers in comparison with the inland ones are: The quality of accommodations and meals; Hosting training and quality; Price level.
4. Respondents suggested that most effective ways of enhancing inland tourism services are: Decrease tourism services tariffs; Services diversification; Training for the managerial and administrative staff ; Training for the auxiliary personnel.

Negative Aspects:

1. Weaknesses are represented by Iasi's cultural and historical edifices, like:
Houses of culture and theatres.
2. Iasi's tourism potential is known, but the standards concerning the certificate of tourism reception structures classification are unknown.
3. Respondents identified as Ia^oi's tourism activity weakness the human resources' training and quality.
4. The main disadvantages of the FOREIGN TOURISM OFFERS in comparison with the INLAND ones presented in a descendant hierarchy: Transportation costs; Price level; The lack of fast transportation.

5. Standards and life quality

Positive Aspects:

1. Respondents gratification regarding some elements referring to public health services (seen as less unsatisfying): Medical personnel's professionalism / training from hospitals and clinics; The endowment with means of intervention in case of emergency – ambulance, qualified personnel, medical instrumentation (these are rather unsatisfactory)

2. Absolute growth indicator of auto perceived living level, extracted from the report between the: Prosperity rate / Regress rate is equal to + 4, 86; while Stagnation rate is 37, 2%
3. Perceptual hope absolute indicator of the personal life quality growth, extracted from the report between: Optimism rate / Pessimism Rate is equal to + 6, 53; while Projective Stagnation rate is 15, 9%
4. Increase absolute indicator (globally declared, and non-cipher) of wages in respondent companies, for the last year, extracted from the report between: Growth rate / Stagnation rate, is equal to + 4, 05; while stagnation rate is 14, 2%
5. Local educational system presents low or inexistent gravity issues, especially the university educational sector.

Negative Aspects:

1. The worst elements the public health system is facing with: Sanitary/ health units work capacity; The physic and hygienic state of (hospitals, clinics, sanatoriums) buildings; Prevention and fighting programs of epidemic diseases
2. Preferential nomination of the private services' offer in spite of the public ones regarding the domains of public utility
3. Local educational system presents serious issues at the level of preschool education (kindergartens) and with a lower gravity degree at the level of gymnasium education (5th to 8th grades).
4. From the citizen's safety perspective, as respondents answered, the most safety environment is the circulation on streets (and on sidewalks), and the most insecure environments are public transportation, schools and high schools and the (homes and domestic goods) domestic one.
5. Respondents indicated the most frequented locations during 2007 taking into account the density, as: one time: national; 2 to 3 times: national; 4 to 5 times: national; never: within European countries or to other destinations

6. Local strategies of development

Positive Aspects:

1. General directions of strategic economic orientation agreed and perceived as most important for Iasi: Local government support for investors and / or European Financial Funding; Quality enhancement of the local services and products.
2. Concrete directions of Iasi's strategic (desirable) actionable orientation are: Human resources qualification; Research and development services; Cultural activities; Tourism activities; Iasi's enhancement position as European border city; ITC services.

3. The finished local projects, respondents evaluated as having a positive impact over strategic and durable development of Iasi are: Roads and sidewalks rehabilitation; Palas project; Iasi – Roman – Bucharest fast driveway modernisation; The opening of large commercial centres.

4. As economic agents suggested, Iasi's development 10 most useful (thematic) projects are: City cleanliness; The enhancement of the public health services; Construction building; Historic centre rehabilitation; Public order and safety; Rehabilitation of the water, canalisation, gas, electricity services; Patrimony Buildings consolidation; Poverty decreasing; Environmental conditions improvement; Important economic investments.

Negative Aspects:

1. Concrete directions of Iasi's strategic (non-desirable) avoidable orientation – are ordered descendant are: Border commerce engaged with the Republic of Moldova; Heavy industry production.

7. Legislation and local regulations

Positive Aspects:

1. Elements regarding EU common commercial politics that economic agents know best: European free market and unique products taxation; Abide World Trade Organization (WTO)'s engagements.

2. Elements regarding the trade (import-export type) that are most familiar for the economic agents: Paths /roots, methods and import trade techniques.

3. Legislation aspects and connected ones regarding economic agents' updating indicated as high level necessity: European legislative aspects regulating international trade; National legislative aspects regulating international trade; Procedures allowing companies to benefit from the governmental programs of promoting international trade.

4. Elements regarding international trade relationships, especially ones with the Republic of Moldova, best known by the economic agents are: Types of necessary notices, authorisations, and licences for the foreign trade business; Custom documents and taxes needed for the foreign trade of goods.

Negative Aspects:

1. Elements regarding EU common commercial politics that economic agents know less, – ordered descendant are: Abiding UE's generalised preferences scheme; Apply commercial defence measures; Abide Cooperation and commercial preferential Agreements closed with third parties countries.

2. Legislation aspects and connected ones regarding economic agents' updating indicated as small level necessity are: Taxes perceived by the customs

authority for the goods trade; Procedures in accessing foreign markets; Provisos and quality standards to be fulfilled in order to gain a free access on the foreign markets.

3. Elements regarding international trade relationships, especially ones with the Republic of Moldova, less unknown by the economic agents are: Economic Agreements signed by Romania and Republic of Moldova; Potential business relationship partners' identity from Republic of Moldova; Facilities given by the government to the economic agents that develop a foreign trade business

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