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### **ENABLING COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS TO BECOME ENGINES OF AN INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

**– THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL SUPPORT AND NGO  
INVOLVEMENT FOR READJUSTING AND LEVELING THE  
BALANCE OF POWERS IN THE ROMANIAN SOCIETY,  
PARTICULARLY BY STIMULATING THE PROCESS OF CBO  
EMERGENCE IN BUCHAREST –**

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## Preface

I have chosen to consider as the motto of this paper the following statement given by James D. Wolfensohn, the President of The World Bank:

*Whether they live on the plains or in the valleys, whether they live in slums or isolated villages, whether they speak Hindi, Swahili, or Uzbek, people have one thing in common: They do not want charity. They want a chance. They do not want solutions imposed from without. They want the opportunity to build from within. They do not want my culture or yours. They want their own. They want a future enriched by the inheritance of their past.*

As the World Bank so pointedly states, meeting the global challenge of the Millennium Development Goals requires immediate action, regarding accountability, cohesion, transparency, inclusion, and opportunity.

The commitment of the World Bank to the underlying principles of Social Development represents a platform that is to contribute to sustainable poverty reduction. It is a call for action based on the evidence that when there is hope for a better life, when citizens in poor and middle-income countries are empowered to make their dreams a reality, development efforts are more sustainable and have better impacts.

The key lesson, based on three decades of development experience, now appears to be promoting change in both its social and economic aspects, and this becomes an essential part of the World Bank's approach to fighting poverty.

One of the driving forces that led to writing this paper was an innovative idea found in an article belonging to Rolando Franco - *The Need for a Social Authority* (Franco, 2005). That is because the idea of the article – namely, the ‘need for a social authority’, applies very well to most developing countries, and particularly to the case of Romania.

Social policies should indeed “be integrated into other dimensions of development policy” because practice has shown that “the role of social policy often is not well articulated and is characterized by institutional fragmentation” (Franco, 2005). This means that there is an obvious lack of coordination, duplication of efforts and thus a futile waste of resources.

At central government level, similar functions are performed by units in several different ministries, and it so happens that programs of a particular administrative unit duplicate services provided to a single population group, while at the same time neglecting other groups, which are equally in need. Further more, the actions of the sub national public entities (municipalities in particular) and the specialized entities (foundations, corporations, institutes, local associations/councils etc.) are not bound by reporting requirements or lines of authority to ministries, “despite being recipients of public resources” (Franco, 2005).

“There is a need to create consensus on objectives – an act that requires sharing ideas broadly, within a pluralistic setting that will facilitate prioritization” (Franco, 2005). This actually means “having to choose between equally important and urgently required objectives which, because they are not located on the same plane, are not easily compared” (Franco, 2005).

Only once consensus is reached, it can be proceeded to program design and implementation, guided by certain principles which include defining the target population, achieving the stated objective (impact) and an appropriate use of means (efficiency). However, “the current process of social institutionalization can impede these steps” and they could be overcome by “modifications to the organization chart and the creation of a social authority” (Franco, 2005).

The roles of such a social authority should be prioritizing sectors, programs and geographic areas, ranking target groups, assigning resources (based on appropriate information), monitoring and evaluating, while focusing on impact and its relation to the resources involved.

A successful program is one that produces real positive changes in the quality of life of the target population. A successful program is thus effective and is also an efficient one, meaning that there are prior evaluations that compare the various alternatives, then choosing the one that can achieve the set objectives at the lowest possible costs. The “after” evaluations are required in order to provide learning from the experience and rationally decide which programs are to be continued based on their success and which are to be stopped.

The attempts to create higher coordinating mechanisms – such as planning entities, coordinating ministries, multi-sector ministries or social cabinets – have failed because of

an unclear understanding of the social authority objectives and because they were low on resources.

Still, the idea of a social authority in Romania is yet 'much too innovative', and in the meanwhile, other solutions need to be found, among already existing resources and opportunities. Perhaps looking at the 'smaller' actors would be a more viable approach, in the context of Romanian society. Maybe grassroots organizations should be regarded as the main stakeholders and initiators in the development process, instead of regarding the community solely as beneficiary.

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## Summary

Present contrasts and inequalities that define the capital of Romania, Bucharest, are a reflection of past political, economic and social practices, as well as the result of more recent policies.

Less than ten years ago, the idea of social community work appeared, with the scope of community development. This though requires a proper institutional environment that should start building up from community-based organizations (CBOs). Resources, information and training, building capacity and empowering people to speak and act for themselves, are also a necessity. CBOs should be enabled through NGOs and/or in collaboration with local governments, in order to attain a sustainable, participatory community development.

Unfortunately, this comes at a time when liberties and rights are neither well understood nor known by the Romanian citizens. This is partly due to people's misinterpretation of them, and partly because the authorities have not yet expressed any real wish to 'teach' the people. This practice continues today, partly for fear of losing the election base and power, partly because of a lack of interest from the authorities' side.

Community organizations have difficulties in forming and functioning, and even more in uniting for a common cause, while the local level of authority holds the power of decision, but has low or almost no interaction and communication with the local community. Responsibility for this goes either way.

Most cases of public involvement stem from NGOs and international organizations, and not from local initiative. Since citizens do not seem to be prepared to cope with the problems of the communities by themselves, it might be better for NGOs to appear as intermediators between governance and community level. However, the situation of the NGOs is not yet clear, and, unless politically backed, they appear to hold no real power.

The present paper strives to examine the actual degree of NGO involvement and take a closer look at their role and approach in shaping up the community development process and the problems they encounter. The research will attempt to show which enabling factors and obstacles are determining for the effectiveness of the policies of the studied NGOs and municipalities, from which sustainable development should arise. This takes into account the political position and political support for the NGOs, CBOs and community development projects, the citizens' awareness and the relations between them.

The general objective is to assess the power balance between the local governments, NGOs and community (organizations), in the context of Bucharest, Romania. The specific objective is to build a viable model of participation, empowerment and support that could enable genuine social development, while checking to see whether the unbalance of power between the factors involved has a negative effect over the whole process.

The paper introduces the main actors on the social scene when it comes to the process of community development (CBOs, NGOs and local governance, shortly mentioning the main international donors as well) and continues to explore the relations between them.

One of the issues that the present research is attempting to assess is the efficiency and effectiveness of the parties involved, and approaching them implicitly means the need to understand more about culture and organizational culture.

Grassroots organizations are increasingly recognized as being critical to the successful realization of development. Since the CBOs are a recent addition to the vocabulary of the Romanian civil society, the paper attempts to explain the main differences between them and NGOs, as well as understand the challenges these young voluntary organizations encounter and the impact they generate at the local level. While the present research focuses on NGOs directly dealing with community organizations in Bucharest, the paper will look at the Romanian NGOs' understanding of the term. Through their activities, community organizations should contribute to solving or ameliorating community problems, and serve as a link between the community and the local administrations. Persistence and the community being united around an organization that helps develop awareness and serves as the main driving force could change social ill-being into well-being in the end.

NGOs operate at the grassroots level and take on an important role in building capacity and guiding the community organizations in pursuing their goals. Sometimes though, this guide posture the NGOs assume can lead them away from their purpose. Although their

proposals and actions should be enabling and responding to the demands coming from the grass roots, NGOs sometimes take direct charge, and in extreme cases force community organizations into submitting to their demands and control.

In today's world, it is increasingly difficult for NGOs to remain completely independent and close to the communities that they are helping, and if sustainable development is to be achieved, it is critical that either them or the governments, or both, provide stable support to the people. Participation is achieved through stable relations between government and NGOs, on the one hand, and the community, on the other. In order for development to actually occur, change is necessary at many levels, though change is not always perceived by the factors involved as good. In addition, local governments need to understand that CBO existence as self-sustaining organizations does not represent a threat of diminishing their authority, but quite the opposite if they are offered sufficient and proper political support. The research goes on to analyze the role that the local government plays in relation to the three factors involved: CBOs, NGOs and the community of people.

The paper next examines the concepts of participation and citizenship in the context of the rights-based approach to development. It considers the differences and problems that occur when participation patterns are taken from developed to developing countries and analyzes the typology of community participation in both cases. Creating the understanding that awarded government support is one of the key factors for participation, the paper then explores the reasons for low participation levels or non-participation. It turns out that usually the beneficiary populations participate relatively little in taking development decisions that affect them. Explaining the main reasons for this, a further analysis of NGO policies and approaches is required vis-à-vis participatory practices and empowerment relative to the community.

Power is difficult to conceptualize, but it creates a natural balance or imbalance within a society. There are three models of power currently used to analyze the different aspects of participation and empowerment. Participation involves shifts in power, and power is about organizing people, which brings up the issue of leadership and ultimately shows that power is a critical dimension of the latter. As power and politics are closely related, participation is essential for the stability and legitimacy of a local government.

Community development is the process by which the efforts of the people are united with those of the government in order to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities. We see that community development is somewhat controversial, as it is prone to criticism on the grounds of administrative effectiveness, social equality, politics and power.

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# **Chapter 1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Understanding the actual cultural and political context in Bucharest**

The main objective of this research is to assess the power balance between local governments (district municipalities), NGOs and CBOs in the context of Bucharest, Romania, in order to attain a second objective, that is to build a model of participation, empowerment and support applicable to the Romanian context, to enable a genuine process of inclusive, sustainable community development.

The research is based on the hypothesis that a power unbalance between the local governments, NGOs and CBOs may have a negative effect over the process of attaining inclusive, sustainable community development.

### **1.1.1 The communist policy of isolation and non-cooperation**

Although Romania is participating in ongoing negotiations to fulfill the accession conditions to the European Union in the year 2007, some aspects regarding policy reforms are still highly neglected or postponed, a situation that could seriously jeopardize not necessarily the chances to adhere to the EU, but Romania's very chances of narrowing the actual gap (between citizens and institutions, between the rich and the poor).

Just to set an example, the housing policy, and respectively the social housing sector is one of the most neglected sectors by both private market and investors, and most important, by central and local governments. The actual crisis in the housing market in Romania draws its roots from the housing conditions during the communist period.

The reason why the subject of the Romanian housing policy in the communist era is being discussed here, in this introductory chapter, is that this policy has probably and seemingly been one of the most powerful 'weapons' of the Communist Party, constituting an area in which the Party acted in its times 'with an iron fist' and managed to affect people's lives in such a tremendous measure, that it changed them for generations to come. This discussion particularly aims at the consequences that the Communist regime policies have had over the mentality of the Romanian citizens, and the easiest to approach and one of the most obvious ones perhaps is the housing policy. This presentation is meant to draw attention upon the cultural heritage of Romanian people, particularly upon the 'follow up' mentality and psychology of Romanian citizens.

The communist regime solved a great part of the housing shortage after the second World War by implementing a massive social program of building up mainly cheap dwellings, at low quality. Most of those dwellings were built especially in urban areas as blocks of flats, of roughly 40 flats per block. The dwellings were equipped with the main installations and facilities, but of a low quality, which further led to major problems, especially because of the centralized system of heating, gas and running water provision.

The Communist Party advanced an overcrowding policy in terms of dwelling density (massively moving people from individual forms of housing to collective housing – the blocks of flats). This so-called 'overcrowding policy' was actually two-sided. On the one hand, the state managed to accommodate this way, as easily and as cheaply as possible, the large and increasing numbers of people migrating from the rural areas to the city (mainly the big cities, such as Bucharest – the capital), in order to be engaged in intense and large scale industrial activities. This was a way of encouraging migration, for the state to gain easy and cheap labor force.

In the same context, going hand in hand with this 'overcrowding policy', there was the 'innovative' project of building huge canteens (state subsidized 'restaurants') providing food for the 'working class', as a measure of making things easier for the state – namely because the blocks of flats were to be built on a large scale, but without kitchens, so that the working class would only spend the night there, like in a very cheap and low quality hotel, having the 'required' meals at the canteen. These huge canteens were commonly known as "the circuses of hunger". The buildings in which the canteens had been placed can still be seen in Bucharest nowadays, only they have been given other functions. For example, the famous Bucharest Mall – the first one that was built, but also the more recently built Mall, had both been such 'circuses of hunger' before the Revolution of 1989. Examples of such buildings can be found all around Bucharest.

On the other hand, the overcrowding policy was beneficial for the state in another, much more subtle way. People became isolated, non-communicative, and at the same time, this 'erased' any trace of individualistic action, because people lived at any time in suspicion and fear of denunciation if anyone would at least raise his/her voice against the Party. This policy was meant to destroy any trace or idea of such things called 'private space' or 'intimacy feeling'.

This communist overcrowding policy may as well be regarded as a very subtle non-residential segregation policy, which meant a residential mixture of social classes, specifically aimed at the hidden purpose of promoting isolation, non-cooperation and non-associative behaviors. That is because the Party saw any kind of innovation as a threat – the idea was that individual innovation, economic innovation can become social and even more dangerously – political innovation, which was the utmost threat for the regime of the time.

Workers that were initially brought from rural areas had always regarded intellectuals as their best, with respect and possibly envy. When placed by the Party doctrine on the same footing (or even higher), long suppressed frustration suffused the worker and was taken out (and even encouraged by the Party to do so, since it constituted a pressure releasing valve for the regime) on the intellectuals. The communist regime indoctrinated the workers with a general feeling of enmity towards what was left of the intelligentsia, as a means of control over the intellectuals who represented a real threat to mutiny. The public regarded the students and intellectuals in general in light of the view formed by the communist ruling, and perceived them as jeopardizing the current state of affairs that favored the worker.

This state of facts once achieved, combined with the population's tremendous struggle for the everyday life, which was very common under the communist dominance, created the possibility for the ruling party to exercise an unimaginable control over the entire Romanian population, or at least over the greatest majority of it.

### **1.1.2 Nowadays' visible effects of the communist non-association policy**

Obviously, all these measures have left deep and, up to some point, very well hidden traces on the 'face' of the Romanian society. In fact, most of the very negative consequences have become visible particularly after the fall of communism, if we only look at the situation in terms of community development programs and more likely the lack of initiative and/or interest in taking any kind of action (such as preserving the condominiums).

Progressively, the state retrenched from financing the construction of social housing, while the public funds coming from the state budget allocated to the construction of houses also decreased dramatically. Housing policy theoreticians underline the state's withdrawal from housing policies as a common feature of ex-socialist countries, particularly taking the shape of housing privatization and home-ownership stimulation.

A particular trait of Romania's housing context is that of the existence of inhabitants' associations. Soon after the Revolution in 1989, the owners' associations appeared. Still, particularly in Bucharest's case, the inhabitants' associations are only representative for their particular block of flats, and it seldom happens that several inhabitants' associations form a larger organizational structure represent the people living on a particular street or in a particular neighborhood.

On the other hand, an important shift regarding the residential areas has taken place, the building process being lately oriented towards the rural parts. This has mainly happened because of the rise of housing costs in the urban areas (the price of urban land, housing prices, the level of rent and the prices of services and utilities), along with the dramatic decrease of the population's purchasing power.

In the year 1990, the newly elected government deepened the housing crisis by taking the moral, yet pragmatic decision to sell out the social housing stock to the tenants (according to the Law Decree no. 61/1990). The selling prices were mainly symbolic, thus most of the tenants could afford to buy the flats, this situation leading to a significant shift in the structure of tenure, with a tremendous increase in owner occupation. In such a situation, the social housing stock decreased. The positive side of this policy was that the low-income people became owners of their dwellings and thus gained an asset of a high importance and high market value. The negative side was that, while getting rid of a huge burden, the public authorities – both local and central - transferred to the population hard manageable low-quality housing. Local authorities thus very easily passed on the problem of the upkeep

and maintenance of the crumbling physical housing stock to the new owners of the condominiums.

Even repairing the owned flats has become a problem for a significant part of population. In this case, maintaining the condominiums is a very residual issue (objectively, a lack of interest coming from the owners as well), which, in many cases, has led to a state of disrepair for many blocks of flats. In the last years, some measures have been adopted to support the owners' associations, by facilitating access to subsidized loans. Unfortunately, even this access is burdened by the deep state of poverty of households located in such houses, people's lack of trust in the local authorities and in the banking system, and last, but not least - the culture of 'what belongs to all belongs to no-one'.

Romania is presently undergoing a full reform process. Only reforms, no matter how desirable, are almost certain to determine both "winners" and "losers". Despite the fall of Communism, Romania's economic and social condition is quite poor. A number of the reforms that are needed in Romania would result in people "losing". If some reforms are implemented, the existing political beneficiaries will lose. What makes it even worse is that many governmental decisions are based on political patronage and corruption. The phenomena of political patronage and corruption are presently at high tide in Romania, as citizens themselves assert (see, for example, OSF, 2000). In its pursuit of EU accession, Romania is trying to cope with its difficult and entangled economic and social problems, while being internationally rated among the top corrupted countries. Romania's political environment is presently unwelcoming for real and sustainable development. Political clienteles cause implementation problems within the ongoing reform process. Still, in the context of EU accession, Romania is supposedly pursuing the international development goals, mainly tackling with issues related to economic growth and poverty alleviation, thus social development.

All the issues studied in this paper revolve around the notion of 'power' – who holds it, who gets it and how. The current balance of powers in Romania, Bucharest creates incredible social inequalities, marginalization and social exclusion and segregation, to a certain degree.

## **1.2. The emergence of community development in Romania and its spreading implications throughout the Romanian society**

The reform process in Romania, as in almost all other Eastern European countries, has been long and hard for the larger part of the population. Yet the public authorities have done nothing much themselves to alleviate this suffering.

Immediately after revolution, when some people became poorer and others got richer, the poor accused the rich of theft, treachery and perfidy. Why did this happen, that people were not equal any more?

Social assistance in Romania was 'forbidden' for a long time, during the communist era. Of course, there were underground structures that went on existing, but the policy of the communist party *decided* that Romania had no poor or suffering people. The party marched on hiding these aspects both to the population and to the outside world, although all the parties involved knew or at least suspected what was really happening. Still, it was like a pact of 'no seeing, no hearing, no talking', where everybody knew something, but all pretended not to. It could not even be called wishful thinking, because the reality was obvious to everyone.

The field of social assistance re-emerged almost immediately after the Revolution, and started training professionals since the year 1990, within a formal framework. The area of community development appeared in Romania even later, and has advanced at a slow pace, impeded mostly by the old structures of the state and as well by opportunistic entities, whether they were various institutions or NGOs. However, citizens have never since hesitated or stopped asking for social assistance from the state and NGOs, aware that it is something they can and should receive. Thus, this domain has gathered more and more beneficiaries over the last 15 years. More and more people become unemployed and request social assistance.

If we are to look at The World Bank President's statement, given as a motto of this paper, we read that people "want a future enriched by the inheritance of their past". In the case of Romania, most people, especially the newer generations, tend to run away from the past. There is a deeply rooted dread and appall regarding the "patriotic labor" that everyone was obliged to perform during the communist years, that stands at the basis of people's individualism and disinterest in associating. Besides, the communist subliminal policies also stressed upon those tactics that were to tear people apart from groups or any form of association, for fear of those who would undermine the power of the communist party.

The communist party drove a centralized policy in each area of people's lives. The state needed to appear as the entity that would take care of everything and everyone, under the condition that all people obeyed the patriotic demands. Thus, all people would be equal in front of the state and the law (since the state *was* the law, actually). They would all have a roof above their heads, a place to work, being paid equally with all the others. People have systematically learned that almost everything in their lives needs to come from the state and this was a fact they could (and eventually would) do nothing about.

This twisted psychology induced by the communist party became so enrooted in the Romanian people's mentality, that even now, after 15 years have passed since the Revolution that has turned Romania from a communist state to a democratic one, you may meet so many old people or even elder adults on the street to tell you how good everything was in "the old days when everyone had everything and they could get by every day without the problems they need to face these days" and that "the state should do this and that for us, citizens".

In a context where the larger part of the population in Bucharest is poor, there appeared some less than ten years ago the idea of social community work with the scope of community development, which would eventually take on. Yet, in order to enable a real process of community development, an entire institutional environment needs to be set to work properly.

This framework should start building from community organizations (generically known as 'grassroots organizations', 'community-based organizations' or 'people's organizations'). For this to happen, there should be some back-up mechanisms set to stand for the community and hold for it, or even help creating such organizations, by providing the necessary resources, information and training, so basically building capacity and empowering people to voice their needs and act in their own interest. The paper here states that community-based organizations should be enabled through non-governmental organizations and/or in collaboration with local governments, in order to attain a sustainable, inclusive (participatory) community development.

This is because the actual balance of power in Bucharest, Romania, strongly needs 'rehabilitation'. The 'voices of the poor' are not necessarily unheard, but mostly ignored, as if they do not even weigh significantly enough to be taken into consideration. The historical and cultural context of Romania clearly reveal a people which has not had the time or the chance to voice its needs. Moreover, the political class that took the lead of the Romanian people immediately after the revolution was part of the second layer of the Communist Party and thus still did not 'teach' the people about their rights and kept a somewhat old vision over things. Democracy in Romania has been misunderstood by the large majority of the population as the right to do whatever people want to do, even if this implies disrespecting other people's rights. Now, in the context of EU accession, Romania has been attempting to achieve, among numerous others, the goal – set as a condition as well by the EU – of good governance. Accountability, responsiveness, efficiency, legitimacy are only a few of the elements that good governance requires. All these go hand in hand with people's participation, as a means of empowerment. Still, the Romanian government tends to avoid participatory processes and techniques, based on the fear of undermining its own election base. In addition, people in Romania, but particularly in Bucharest are reluctant to participation either because they do not know their own rights, or because they feel that the state is the one entitled and obliged to ensure them the fulfillment of their rights.

On the other hand, one must remember that reform means change – sometimes fundamental change, and people are most of the time afraid of change and unprepared even to receive it, not to mention to take action for undergoing change. "Despite the enthusiasm of development agencies and other professionals for civil society, many grassroots organizations are more concerned with poverty alleviation than with poverty reduction;

with maintaining existing social relationships rather than with securing ones that are more equitable” (Mitlin, 2001).

Networking or federating (such as in the case of Colombo, Sri Lanka, described by Russell and Vidler, 2000) have been seen by community organizations as alternative, more democratic and accountable forms of organization. “It is isolation that seems to make it particularly easy for relations of patronage and clientelism to thrive. Groups that network and/or federate appear to be able to negotiate better with the state and support each other to be more responsive to the needs of members” (Mitlin, 2001). Still, community organizations in Bucharest encounter difficulties with being formed, not to mention uniting themselves in a larger type of organization.

Public authorities represent other institutions within this framework – mainly the local government, which supposedly should be the public structure closest to the people. The local level should be the most representative for the participatory democracy system – namely the local government and the local community, as there should be a continuous interaction and communication between the civil society and the state. That is why the research will be performed within one of Bucharest’s districts. In Romania, there is still no proper community participation, and most of the cases of public involvement do not emerge from local initiatives, but rather appear as a result of the commitment of NGOs or international organizations. Bringing up the subject of public institutions and thus public issues, the political environment is most important, as the true possible enabler for ongoing processes of social development.

There are also intermediary institutions such as NGOs that should be mentioned as possible mediators, a possible liaison or bridge between the communities and the public authorities representing their interests, especially when the community itself does not have the knowledge, resources or experience/capacity to express its own interests and needs.

The former communist attempt of a so-called “welfare state” failed, and after the revolution in 1989 Romania started its long and sinuous reform process, initially without any clear priorities. So far, the reform movement has been creating far too many so-called “have-nots” (most of them among poorer communities) and it still shows only mere signs of really getting “on track”. Other solutions need to be found. Thus, since the citizens do not seem prepared yet to cope with their community’s problems by themselves, perhaps NGOs should appear now as inter-mediators between governance and community levels.

In the early ‘90s, the NGOs in Romania still did not have clearly stated roles, and up to now, NGOs do not seem to have any real power within the society, except if they benefit from political support, which does not come that easy, unless certain interests can be ‘tackled’ as far as the political powers are concerned. At the same time, the long-lasting lack of clear regulation regarding NGOs’ functioning resulted in large irregularities performed by NGOs – a situation that is currently on the process of being corrected, although at a quite slow pace. Some NGOs manage to stand up to the challenges of social development, while others do very little to empower and encourage the urban poor themselves to be more active in their own interest.

What is the actual degree of NGO involvement in the development process, and what roles do NGOs undertake within this framework of power (creating awareness, providing knowledge, training and guidance, building capacity, monitoring, evaluating, even lobbying or enabling it for CBOs). How should NGOs be looked at - as facilitators, coordinators, entry points, providers of expertise in community development process, dispute/conflict resolution, post-project sustainability? These are all questions being addressed further in the paper, throughout the literature review, always keeping in mind the major issue – that is, how community organizations can be supported more and better in order to eventually address even the needs of their poorest members.

Having little experience of alternative development models, NGOs may attempt to guide and influence community organizations to adopt professional solutions to their problems, regardless of the local views. In addition, by often taking over decision-making and negotiating roles, they may pre-empt capacity building at community level. This normally leads to even fewer opportunities left open to community organizations that may wish to try to do things differently.

As will be seen later on, “the institutions of civil society reflect the society and social processes in which they are embedded and, in this context, grassroots organizations are rarely able to play a transforming role” (Mitlin, 2001).

Along with the grassroots organizations, other institutions may as well be found to be involved and working within this framework – such as schools, hospitals, the police etc.

Last, but not least, there are the international donors, mostly taking up the roles of funding and monitoring. Sometimes, NGOs may be constrained by difficulties of managing donor finance, which focuses nowadays on enabling short-term project funds, emphasizing on tangible outputs and financial accountability.

Moreover, it appears that the larger part of the Romanian population does not know the rights and obligations they have as citizens in a democratic society. Democracy, by definition, comes with public involvement. People should have the opportunity, as well as the initiative and responsibility to participate in the process of decision making for collective/public concerns. The awareness of citizens regarding the studied issues needs to be assessed as well.

Political willingness and, generally, a sound, open and transparent, accountable political environment would definitely help NGOs intermediate the relations between the government and the communities, as a way to empower people (particularly the socially unfavored) to “speak their own voice”.

The research will attempt to show what are the “traps” encountered by the studied stakeholders, namely – which factors are determinant for the effectiveness of the policies of the studied NGOs and municipality and what factors create obstacles (in terms of political and organizational culture, engagement and participation on the part of the citizens) for the proper functioning of the social system and the efficient implementation of the projects and strategies, and where would be the common meeting point in order to achieve efficiency, thus sustainable development. The research thus needs to uncover the enabling factors and obstacles for the activity of the studied actors, to assess the political position and the received (or not) political support of the studied NGOs, CBOs and community development projects and the awareness of citizens (regarding citizenship, rights, and participatory mechanisms and processes).

It is most important to know which is the relationship between the local government, community organizations and NGOs – is it an “alliance”, are there contradictions, or are there any “community contracts” in place, partnerships or taking on some responsibilities? Can local governments actually be talked into genuinely empowering the communities, since this is being viewed as giving up power? And are relations between the local government and CBOs really being regarded as conflictual?

The government could measure the activities of NGOs by giving people the opportunity, knowledge and power to monitor NGOs’ activities in their own communities and express their opinion on how the work is being done (by surveys, for example). In addition, this enablement could work the other way around, meaning that the people could be empowered to assess and monitor the actions of the local governments directly representing them. The research will attempt to evaluate the situation from this point of view also, to show if and how these measures exist or not.

Cities in developing countries have grown and some are still rapidly growing, while both the public and private sectors have been unable to sustain this growth by providing adequate housing and infrastructure to the whole population. Even more, the centrally driven model of provision has systematically excluded those people unable to pay for the services, which makes the situation of the urban poor particularly acute. What indeed has the process of decentralization coming along with the complex package of reforms actually done for the communities?

As a solution to this problem, housing conditions and infrastructure could be progressively improved by involving the community. If only we look at the progresses presented by the World Development Reports, the focus on participation is becoming stronger as the time goes by. Moreover, the involvement of NGOs in this process of empowering people has been increasing as well.

The present paper is thus directly dealing with the institutional environment in Bucharest, Romania, regarding the process of social development, and particularly community development issues. In order to be as objective as possible, the research regards the main stakeholders involved in the community development process, namely the community, the local government and the other category of ‘external helpers’ – the possible intermediaries – the NGOs.

Roughly, the research turns to community-based organizations, and more specifically to the creation, enablement and empowerment of such organizations through non-governmental organizations in collaboration with local governments, in order to attain a sustainable, inclusive (participatory) community development.

Reinstating the objectives and hypothesis of this thesis paper:

**General objective:** assess the power balance between the local governments (the district municipalities), NGOs and community (organizations) in the context of Bucharest, Romania;

**Specific objective:** build a model of participation, empowerment and support applicable to the Romanian context, to enable a genuine process of inclusive, sustainable community development.

**Hypothesis:** a power unbalance between the local governments (district municipalities), NGOs and community (organizations) may have a negative effect over the process of attaining inclusive, sustainable community development.

## Chapter 2 Theoretical background

### 2.1 About organizations and culture– the institutional framework

#### Box 2.1.a

**Organization:** social arrangement for achieving controlled performance in pursuit of collective goals (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001)

We may state that an organization has its own practices and values, which support the internal integration and the external adaptation of the respective organization, while it also possesses its own power means to reach its own goals. CBOs are not isolated organizations; they are active not only within their community area, but in a larger organizational framework as well, having to work in relation with these other actors.

Organizations may be **formal or informal**. Community organizations may take shape initially as informal organizations, to be later on formalized, or they may as well remain informal, or start their activities as formal organizations.

#### Box 2.1.b

**Formal organization:** a collection of work groups that have been consciously designed by senior management to maximize efficiency and achieve organizational goals

**Informal organization:** a network of relationships that spontaneously establish themselves between members of an organization on the basis of their common interests and friendships (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001)

One of the issues that the present research is attempting to assess is the efficiency and effectiveness of the parties involved – the three types of organizations which are to be described further. That is because effectiveness and efficiency are the two main elements upon which these organizations are or at least should be evaluated – NGOs and CBOs in order to be eligible for external funding and support, and local governments in order to be re-elected and keep their district's citizens' support. The term **organizational effectiveness** is yet controversial, though, mainly because the various and numerous stakeholders of an organization, as well as the other actors involved in the referred process generally give their own different definitions of what 'effectiveness' should mean. As established organizations, CBOs should be effective, not only in order to keep the community's support, but also to be able to attain their goals, to make a statement and finally contribute to their community's development.

#### Box 2.1.c

The **effectiveness of a team** can be **measured using two main criteria** (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001):

- **Team performance:** the acceptability of the team's output to the customers within or outside the organization who receive its products, services, information, decisions or performance events [...]; it is externally focused and concerns meeting the needs and expectations of outsiders [...] (n.b. the other actors – the community, the local government and other organizations, such as NGOs or even other CBOs);
- **Team viability** (the social dimension): the team members' satisfaction, participation and continued willingness to work together (the group's capability to perform effectively in the future – degree of group cohesion, shared purpose and level of member commitment)

Approaching organizations implicitly means the need to understand the **organizational culture** – also a term which is not universally accepted and which remains controversial.

Hoecklin (1995) defines culture as to what it is and what it is not. It is indeed not easy to define culture, as one of its very own characteristics is relativity (it can only be considered relative to other cultures). Culture is a shared system of meanings, it is learned (derived from the person's social environment) and it is a collective phenomenon. Therefore, we can easily deduce what culture is not: it cannot be right or wrong, it is not inherited (not from a person's genetic make-up), and it is not about individual behavior, but about groups, as stated before.

Culture has proven to be a difficult concept to measure and to discuss, as it involves shared ways of perceiving the world that members of a group take for granted. There are many descriptions and definitions of culture given by various scholars, but a basic definition, summarizing the main characteristics, is given in **Box 2.1.d**.

#### Box 2.1.d

**Culture:** a pattern of values and practices transferred to members of a group and characteristic for that group  
**Organization (organizational) culture:** the collection of relatively uniform and enduring values, beliefs,



customs, traditions and practices that are shared by an organization's members, learned by new recruits and transmitted from one generation of employees to the next (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001); a pattern of values and practices transferred to members and characteristic for an organization

Culture exists at national level, as well as at organizational level, but also at the level of occupations, social-economic classes and generations.

Hoecklin (1995) writes about different levels of 'cultural programming' (most applicable to the Romanian context, particularly visible after the fall of the communism): "national culture gives people their basic assumptions and values, that is, their ways of viewing the world. Other levels of programming are more about practices or ways of doing things. Because these are learned at such an early age and remain unquestioned, however, often throughout life, national cultural values are more difficult to change than other levels of culture."

One other very important issue that is yet to be taken into consideration here is the so-called **organizational dilemma**. This basically refers to the question of finding ways to reconcile the (potential) inconsistency between the individual needs and aspirations (of the members and/or employees) on the one hand, and the collective purpose that an organization is supposed to have, on the other hand (based on Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001).

To conclude, we must continually keep in mind that all organizations should be firstly regarded as interest groups (or stakeholders – to be further discussed), each having its own characteristic means of power. Thus, for example, governments focus on political support, and their means of power is the distribution of wealth; NGOs aim at external support, and for this they make use of their political power; CBOs pursue community support, which is in fact their very own basis and means of power, as well; last, but not least, the communities in general, looking at household level, are focusing on livelihood, for which they use their assets. The assets of the people in the community, referring to the poor in particular, are basically labor, human capital (health, education), the productive assets (their housing), social capital and the household relations. All these may not always concur, but people are trying to cope with whatever they may use.

### **2.1.1 Grassroots organizations**

"Grassroots organizations [n.b. otherwise known as resident's Associations, community organizations, self-help groups, etc.] are regarded as a new panacea for people-centered, pro-poor development" and are "increasingly recognized as being critical to the successful realization of development" (Mitlin, 2001).

Low income communities are subject to division as a result of unequal access to power (and prestige), capital and income. If the issues of participation and empowerment are to be addressed, we need to raise and understand the meaning of some capital questions, quoted from Mitlin (2001): "Do such organizations really support their poorest members to increase and achieve development options? How do NGOs truly support participatory processes? Do their staff use their professional skills and expertise to enable the poor to control development programs, or does decision-making remain in the hands of a few? Do grassroots organizations and NGOs reduce poverty, or is their role to reinforce dependency, powerlessness and exclusion? And how does the state intervene to influence [n.b. if at all] these organizations and the way in which they are developing?". These are basically the main questions that this research is attempting to answer, applied to the specific Romanian context, and particularly to the case of Bucharest.

Questions have been raised about the motivations of leaders within a community and the actual extent of membership participation. Similar concerns have been expressed regarding the fact that community leaders dominate the organizations that they belong to, reinforcing resident's belief that they have too little or at times even no control and/or influence over their lives and their local organizations.

Participation within the community organizations is another related issue, to realize who the ones who actually participate are. Therefore, "we need to recognize that the impact of grassroots organizations on poverty may not always be positive. Grassroots organizations do not necessarily assist in the reduction of urban poverty and vulnerability" (Mitlin, 2001). Going one step back, "the nature of relationships inside the grassroots organizations together with the low levels of participation suggest that they may be limited in their

capacity to reduce the symptoms of urban poverty (such as exclusion from access to basic services) as well as to address some of the more structural causes that result in a lack of empowerment and powerlessness” (Mitlin, 2001). Moreover, “relations within grassroots organizations are not predetermined, but reflect a number of factors, including external pressures on the local leadership and the difficulties of self-organizations” (Mitlin, 2001).

## Community-based organizations (CBOs)

Since the present research focuses on NGOs directly dealing with community organizations in Bucharest, we will look at the Romanian NGOs’ understanding of the term, particularly considering the perspective of the Romanian Association for Community Development (RACD).

The term ‘community organization’ has only recently appeared in the language of practitioners in the area of the Romanian civil society. It has been particularly introduced by community development organizations, especially those working in the disadvantaged areas or communities (most of the times rural areas) in Romania. This term has also begun to be used more and more within the agencies and programs for international development – as ‘community-based organizations’, ‘grassroots organizations’ or ‘people’s organizations’. These concepts are being used alternatively to describe structures or forms of organization which are most of the time resembling or even similar (taken after RACD, 2005).

### Box 2.1.1.a

**Community Organizations:** a registered non-profit organization or an informal group comprising the members of a community, which associate (n.b. become united) among themselves to initiate activities in response to the needs locally identified by the members of the community and promote the welfare of their community (according to RACD, 2005); any type of organization, formal or informal, which is based on a group of people living or working together and who associate to pursue common interests – they are characterized by being local in focus, and being directly accountable to their constituents (Davidson & Peltenburg, 1993)

RACD (2005) describes community organizations as having some **main and determining characteristics**, as these also result from the very definition given above. Firstly, they are made up of the members of a community (formal or informal community leaders, people who take the initiative and wish to contribute to the wellbeing of the community) and represent the interests of that community. They can be both constituted non-profit organizations and informal groups, without juridical personality. Generally, they are very little formalized organizations, with only a minimal internal hierarchy. They are established in both the rural and the urban environment, inside the communities that they represent. They have a participative and consultative approach in the planning and the development of their activities and they are involved in service delivery or advocacy activities for their communities.

Community organizations differ from NGOs in structure and functions. NGOs are most often constituted as service provision agencies for a certain target group, most of the times having a large area of action, whilst CBOs serve the interests of the members of a community, acting in a well defined geographical area (according to RACD, 2005). Even the financing organizations make a distinction between NGOs and CBOs, relating differently to each of them. As an example, the World Bank contracts NGOs to deliver services, to plan projects or to do research. In the case of projects promoting participative development, community organizations make available the institutional space necessary for the beneficiaries’ participation. Community organizations can represent the interests of the beneficiaries and they can implement community projects or subcomponents of NGOs’ projects. RACD (2005) underlines that, in Romania, community organizations describe informal citizen organizations or non-profit organizations registered according to Ordinance no. 26/2000 or to other special laws (such as Law decree no.129/1998), but in Romania there is no distinct legal framework for CBOs, as compared to NGOs.

There are mainly two objectives that a community organizations should have, as suggested by Guaraldo Choguill (1996), that is – “not just to build for themselves the improvements to their community that they need to lead healthy and productive lives, but also to claim their rights in the political arena”. Using mutual help to build or upgrade physical and/or social infrastructure and/or houses in their neighborhood and to influence decisions in the political arena would most probably result in more essential and lasting changes in the status-quo. Following a study of effective community participation,

Guaraldo Choguill (1996) also identifies “the required external support, be it from government or NGOs, which can facilitate the outcome of the community effort”.

Mostly informal organizations, CBOs are made up from members offering their work on a voluntary basis. From this point of view, perhaps, elements like group cohesion, communication, and solving the organizational dilemma – are all very important to attain, for people to want to get involved. People are anyhow taking from their own time, probably having to give up other necessary activities, just to participate in their CBO’s activities.

### ■ Social ill-being

Social ill-being is one of the multiple dimensions of deprivation and disadvantages that the poor face at community and household level. It can be experienced individually, as well as collectively. It is an alienation that seems to manifest itself as a lack of access to resources, information, opportunities, power and mobility. It usually overlaps with economic deprivation and sometimes is determined by socio-cultural factors, such as traditional social hierarchy, religion, ethnicity, gender etc.

#### Box 2.1.1.b

**Social ill-being:** the experience and feeling of being isolated, left out, looked down upon, alienated, pushed aside and ignored by the mainstream socio-cultural and political processes (Narayan, 2000)

**Three main dimensions of social ill-being** have been identified by the poor themselves: the process of alienation and isolation (social exclusion), strained social relations and diminishing social cohesion, and unequal gender relations at community level

Poor people understand their exclusion on a number of levels, cited as alienation from community events, from decision-making, from opportunity and from access to resources or to information. Certain forms of exclusion are based on social hierarchy and differentiation (the case of indigenous populations and ethnic groups out of the mainstream socio-political domain, such as the Roma Gypsies in Romania). The socially excluded may be individuals, households, groups within communities or even entire communities.

### ► From Social Ill-being to Social Wellbeing, through Social Cohesion

An important aspect of social wellbeing is social cohesion, determined by unity within a community – exhibited by shared understanding, mutual support and reciprocity in relationships.

#### Box 2.1.1.c

**Social cohesion** (as described by poor people themselves): the unity within a community where there is shared understanding, mutual support and reciprocity in relationships. It is also often described in terms of coming together in informal and formal groups, often to solve community problems (Narayan, 2000)

Economic stress and hardship seem to affect communities in two nearly opposite ways. As individuals and households struggle to make ends meet, they have little time for friends and neighbors, or for community activities and concerns, and cohesion is declining. Typically, poor people’s ‘institutions’ are strictly local, either rooted in tradition or involving relatively small groups in face-to-face relationships. Where social relations are under stress, local organizations often suffer. Levels of community bonds and action are declining, and people associate this trend with rising economic hardship. Many poor people mention that economic stress and poverty frequently make people more self-centered and individualistic as they try to cope with their survival. “The difficult political and economic transitions in Eastern Europe [...] have resulted in significant declines in social cohesion”. “Poverty of time, political indifference and lack of unity present further obstacles to organizing at the local level” (Narayan, 2000). At the other end of the spectrum, however, and sometimes even within the same communities, a seemingly contradictory pattern of change is reported: hardship also catalyzes social ties and drives people and their communities closer together in their struggle for survival. Social cohesion sometimes exists among people performing the same type of work. Strained social relations thus often lead to reduced collective action, whereas at other times, various stresses may set off community action.

“Often, poor people’s support systems go unrecognized”. Informal local institutions bring people together and have contributed a great deal to bring about social cohesion among the

people in the community. The informality and diversity of these support systems “makes them both easy and tempting for public officials and NGOs to disregard. Although local actors and groups provide vital resources in the daily lives of poor people, on their own these networks are unlikely to propel people out of poverty”. “When stressed, these vital bonds can break down”, leaving poor people even more isolated and vulnerable. As Narayan (2000) attempts to underline, “poor people’s networks are fragile. The biggest challenge for development is to build on these.”

Perhaps even more that in any other type of organization, in a community organization there should be openness and transparency, as a means of stimulating community involvement and offering motivation. It is a proven fact that an open climate promotes collaborative working, which is discouraged by a closed **communication climate**.

### ■ Challenges and difficulties of CBOs in Romania, as viewed by RACD (2005)

The difficulties that community organizations come against in the process of identifying the community needs and of developing activities can be of internal and of external nature.

#### Box 2.1.1.d

**Internal difficulties:** refer to the informal, unstructured character of CBOs, the lack of organizational experience and of hired personnel, which make it difficult to mobilize and administer the resources necessary for the development of the projected activities.

**External difficulties:** refer to the environment in which CBOs are active, which are most of the times poor communities with multiple needs and minimal resources and have limited experience in Association and community initiative. (RACD, 2005)

Very few community organizations have hired personnel; the great majority of them mostly base their activity on the voluntary work of community members, accompanied by their dedication and enthusiasm.

Many of these members, though, are employed and/or engaged in activities such as subsistence agriculture, which makes it quite difficult to undertake other activities in certain moments. Sometimes, voluntary participation in community projects impoverishes even more the community members, who anyhow work very much for their own subsistence.

Since most of the CBOs are young organizations, with limited organizational experience, many of the programs that imply working with CBOs set as a goal to contribute to building or improving CBOs’ abilities of organizational management. CBOs encounter difficulties in formulating their mission and priorities, in delimiting their target group and activities, as well as in mobilizing and administering resources. Most of the times, CBOs are tempted to address as many needs in the community as possible and finally end up acting in very different fields, such as social, infrastructure, educational or environmental protection.

Community organizations encounter difficulties also in representing the interests of all community members. In many cases, CBOs are made up of community elites, people with high education which are or at least had been hired in the public institutions of the community (teachers, engineers, accountants, priests). Thus, the community organization tends to take on some of the relation mechanisms of the elites with the community members and supposedly acts in their interest, without an initial consulting process, though. On the other hand, community members tend to adopt a passive attitude, of unconditional recognition of the community organization as an expert in solving problems.

Once established, CBOs seek to access and mobilise various resources, thus entering in relations with different organisms outside the community – developing agencies or financing institutions. In order to be able to satisfy the requests and standards imposed by these external organizations, CBOs are professionalizing and formalizing themselves more and more, investing very much in accountability mechanisms towards the financers. At this point, the community organization is risking moving its loyalty object from the community to outside institutions.

Experience has shown that CBOs are particularly established in more developed communities, where more human, material, financial or informational resources are available. In the poorest communities people do not have enough resources to initiate community activities, and the efforts to ensure subsistence are so great that they make difficult any voluntary action or community involvement. Also, in the most disadvantaged communities there is very little experience in voluntary community activity. Since there are no models of implication, people find it very difficult to initiate and conduct such activities.

And for those members who do not understand the value of implication it is very hard as well to understand the motivation of community leaders and especially to accept that it might be other than their own interest.

Many of the CBOs represent communities where there is no developed communication infrastructure, and for this reason the access to information is quite limited. In some cases there is a very big difference between the educational and intellectual capital of the community members and the means of communication and of accessing the information. By this, RACD (2005) particularly refers to the difficulty of the members of some rural communities to have access to Internet services, which constitute the main information and communication source for identifying and accessing development funds.

Through the process of initiation and development of community activities, CBO members gain very good leadership abilities; they become known and acknowledged within the community and implicitly gain image capital, along with political capital. By this, there is the risk that the community organization may become a threat to the local public administration, which may perceive the respective CBO as a rival and competitor.

#### ■ The impact of community organizations at local level, as described by RACD

Through the activities that it undertakes, the community organization contributes to solving or ameliorating community problems and to the creation of goods and/or services in the interest of the respective community. CBOs are able to mobilize internal resources and to attract external resources, thus directly contributing to the development of their own communities. This way, these communities move on from the status of passive project beneficiaries to that of project initiators and implementers for the development of their own community.

The collaboration of community members in view of a project's initiation and development and their enterprise of common interest actions also contribute to the development of a feeling of confidence among the community members and in their own forces to act and to actually change something in the life of their own community. Throughout community projects, community members learn to relate to different public and private institutions, to represent the interests of their community in front of these institutions and they come to the understanding that together they are stronger and able to negotiate with these institutions and to determine them to take into account the development needs and priorities of their community.

By actively getting involved in the development of a project and in the process of obtaining a 'product' for their community, the community members become the owners of that product. As its owners, they will get involved in the product's ulterior maintenance and sustenance, which will actually ensure the long term sustainability of the project.

As new development agencies within the communities, community organizations (in short, CBOs) may represent good partners for local administrations, being able to provide them with analyses and solutions based on a profound knowledge of community needs. Moreover, CBO members often possess abilities and knowledge that public servants do not have.

## 2.1.2 The civil society

### Non-governmental organizations

#### Box 2.1.2.a

**Non-governmental organization (NGO):** an umbrella term, "covering a wide range of organizations from household names [...] to small peasant organizations" (Nelson & Wright, 1995); NGOs can be international or indigenous, locally originated; the term "offers such a broad umbrella for a kaleidoscopic collection of organizations that attempts at simple definitions are quickly rendered meaningless" (Cernea, 1988)

"Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, development professionals began to acknowledge the contribution of NGOs, with particular emphasis on the ability of NGOs to work directly with the poor and with grassroots organizations" (Gorman, 1984; Korten, 1990; Clark, 1991). "NGOs were seen as being more participatory, people-led and responsive to local needs than more formal official development assistance agencies" (Mitlin, 2001). The 1980s have been termed 'the decade of NGOs', since their role increased significantly in

Third World relief and development work. Following “a general dissatisfaction with official aid policies [...] both governments and public alike” have been prompted “to view NGOs as alternative development channels.” Moreover, a paradigm shift in development thinking was “stressing the active participation of local people in the development process, an approach traditionally characteristic of NGOs.” It is also argued that “NGOs might be better at participatory development in practice” (Nelson & Wright, 1995) than inter-governmental organizations.

Still, if we look at the dominant economic and social policies models throughout history, we note that, in the 70s, the welfare state model involved almost no role for the civil society, the system being centralized and focusing on building a nation state, where social integration was to take place through redistribution (Townsend, 2004).

After 1982, following the Washington Consensus (neo-liberal model), the poor still had no say with regard to service provision and any project/program design and implementation, so they were not involved in decision-making that affected their lives, although this period marked the beginning of decentralization and privatization processes and the focus was set on poverty alleviation, basically through safety-net programs (Gore, 2000). Participation was only regarded then as a new opportunity for cost recovery. Characteristic for the neo-liberal model were the structural adjustment programs, which actually widened even more the already existing gap between the haves and the have-nots, through their sudden and brutal measures. Huge unemployment rates had been only one of the many negative consequences of putting this model into practice. In this context, the poor themselves were becoming increasingly aware of the need for greater participation from their own part in development projects, “in order to achieve greater local ownership” (Hyden, 1998). Actually, along the 1980s and 1990s, the role of the state diminished in virtually every area, because the new ideological trend was inclining towards the private sector taking over state functions, wherever possible, marking the shift from the centrally-driven (state allocation) system to a market-based economy. At the same time, the scale of NGO activities increased. Only towards the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s there was a shift in the focus on NGOs, “with increasing emphasis being placed on the term *civil society* than *non-government organization*” (Mitlin, 2001).

For the past five to ten years (post Washington Consensus model), the role of the state is set to be more pronounced in terms of regulations and instating the processes of decentralization, democracy and good governance. There is an accent on institutions and mainly on institutional capacity. Finally, the civil society gains its own ‘rightful rights’, through citizenship, that is, the processes of democracy, participation and empowerment are now, at least theoretically, set in place. Nowadays the main targets are social integration and poverty reduction, along with equitable growth (Gore, 2000) and there is now a pronounced involvement of NGOs, as an increasingly significant group within the civil society and the development process.

Nelson and Wright (1995) have identified several reasons why NGOs might be considered as being better able to put participation into practice: NGOs claim to be innovative, flexible, not weighed down by bureaucracy; they are able to rely on voluntary and committed staff, which may allow them successfully to follow risky and non-conventional policies, as compared to the more constrained and restrained governments and official aid agencies. They are independent and autonomous, which enables them to remain free from political pressure and “to by-pass inefficient and corrupt government structures and local elites”. This independence, though, may be challenged by the increase in their official funding. NGOs operate at the grassroots level (close to the poorest of the poor), based on their ethical position and on their nature “as small resource constrained organizations, dependent on uncertain funding. Resource contributions from recipients are therefore often required and greater responsibility is more likely to be delegated by necessity than would be the case in official agencies” (Brodhead, 1988). NGOs may be put in a position to offer financial and ‘moral’ assistance to CBOs, while central government agencies offer technical support to the community. This would also be applicable to Romania, especially in the case of such a large city as Bucharest is, because NGOs would become a relief agent for the local governments and particularly the central government, taking on the financial burden of the government.

### ■ Criticisms brought to NGOs – the thin line between reality and wishful thinking

Lehmann and Bebbington (1998) present a comprehensive description of the criticisms brought to NGOs in and by today's larger (civil) society.

NGOs are first of all socio-political actors bearing certain values that they disseminate throughout the society by means of "their distinct mode of operation and their insertion in a worldwide social movement."

Lately, though, many NGOs have started to take part in the development business as partners, consultants, sub-contractors etc., thus tightening their relations with the official development community, and therefore getting involved in project management and implicitly having to take on staff and build administrative capacity. This way, some NGOs become large-scale institutions that are self-sustainable, while other smaller and perhaps more specialized NGOs are most of the times depending on the funding they get from international NGOs, which makes them vulnerable to any changes in the priorities of the international development community, as they may be abandoned at any time. That is how it can be explained that the role of NGOs is continually changing in the development process, because while initially their proposals responded to the demands coming from the grass roots, presently they "must persuade their constituency that a particular project is suitable to them, uncomfortably aware that this may simply be because the trend in funding has changed."

As a consequence to the above presented state of facts, NGOs have also started to lose their 'oppositional' legitimacy, because their cooperation with the official development institutions makes it more difficult for them "to claim they are offering an alternative to the prevailing models."

Alongside, competition between each other (and the state) makes NGOs be even more vulnerable, especially since each is "selling a different cause or a different version of a similar cause [...]. They stand in relation to institutional politics in a similar way as informal economic activities to formal ones: The NGO sector, like the informal sector, is characterized by ease of entry but also by greater insecurity."

Another criticism brought to NGOs refers to "their much-praised efficiency", because it is difficult to measure NGO objectives, as they "are not the same as those of a government project – which looks to some sort of social benefit measured in 'cost-benefit' terms – or to those of private business: NGOs may legitimately defend their work on grounds of its experimental character in that they may be testing new approaches or methods in the hope that, if they prove effective, others, such as government agencies, may take them up. They may also legitimately claim to be charitable bodies whose job is precisely to give resources to worthwhile causes or institutions, not to lend on a commercial basis".

Also, most NGOs are not accountable, "and just because they are NGOs does not mean they are not subject to corruption. With increased access to donor resources in recent years, there is growing evidence of the wastage of funds and of [...] people's time" (Bebbington, 1991).

The way of life, and particularly the salaries of NGO staff are criticized as well, because – even if they do not earn as much as the similarly qualified multinational corporations' staff, their middle-class living standards make them better off as compared to the people in need that they are supposedly serving. "The real problem is not the income gap between the NGO intermediaries and their grass-roots clientele but rather its lateral effect, namely that it creates a social distance between beneficiaries and NGO personnel and, conversely, expresses an intimacy between the latter and representatives of international agencies in the eyes of potential beneficiaries." The above mentioned authors suggest that, since these are real power relations, the solution by which to overcome the situation can only be stimulating competition among NGOs, "which in turn would lead them to become more commercial and less altruistic". The present situation is explained by the fact that NGOs generally allocate their resources on a non-market basis, and as they are intermediaries, there is the danger and suspicion at the same time that "they may use their position to manipulate the choices of their clientele or to monopolize control over resources being made available by certain agencies or to certain constituencies or types of beneficiary." The authors see this as "an inevitable outcome: international agencies need to disburse funds, they need information and expertise, and they are evidently precluded from using a market mechanism to solve the problem; so discretion, expertise, and trust count for a great deal in this rather small and occasionally incestuous world". Moreover, "this element of trust can

also take on a political or ideological character, leading to charges of *ideological clientelism*.”

In addition, authors like Putman (1993) have shown that “both non-governmental and non-private sector institutions have an important role to play in economic and political development”, and yet Hulme and Edwards (1997) manifest “concerns about the legitimacy and effectiveness of some NGOs as agencies financed by external sources.”

Other criticisms brought by several authors to the NGOs nowadays are summarized by Mitlin (2001). For example, although for many years the general conception was that NGOs work effectively with local grassroots organizations to achieve participative development, empowerment of local communities is often set as prime objective by many NGOs working directly with low-income communities, but many take these skills for granted and do very little to actually build the capacity of the people they are working with. It is now admitted that the relations between NGOs and grassroots organizations often encounter difficulties. Another concern is that NGOs tend to impose their own agendas on the local self-help organizations they are working with, which leads us to the conclusion that those particular communities actually have too little control over the development process directly affecting them and also gain little useful experience during the development projects implementation. The ideal frame would thus be that NGO and CBO capacities develop at a same pace and to the same degree over time and with experience.

Arrossi et al. (1994) identify the followings amongst the general NGO activities: low-income housing, support for micro-enterprises, environmental preservation, popular education, health and health-related education, services for mothers, infants and children, research projects, training and information dissemination, and community development. Programs assisting low-income settlements to improve living conditions require specific strategies, such as technical assistance and community mobilization.

The roles adopted by different NGOs in the process of creating and supporting grassroots organizations may vary considerably. Some may choose as their goal to enable the forming of community organizations, while others may aim to support already existing ones. Community organizations initiated by or with the help of NGOs may be formed around a wide range of specific issues, such as services, infrastructure or credit for housing and income generation (Mitlin, 2001).

Another criticism, as underlined by Mitlin (2001), refers to the fact that NGOs may be sometimes insensitive to political and power struggles within the community they work with, thus failing to work effectively with the existing organizations or to turn them into more representative ones. Keeping the same line of ideas, many NGOs aiming to build membership organizations rather prefer to establish new organizations, choosing to ignore (and therefore undermining) the existing capacity within the primary stakeholders (Bebbington and Mitlin, 1996).

Another problematic issue brought up by Mitlin (2001) is related to NGOs sometimes being ‘over-active’ and undertaking most of the activities themselves, again not helping with developing the abilities and skills of and so necessary to grassroots organizations. Other comments suggest that NGOs may develop close personal relations with the staff of the local authorities, thus creating a form of dependency between NGOs and the grassroots organizations, similar with the clientelistic relations between politicians and the electorate. NGOs do not perform in this case any systematic transfer of knowledge to the grassroots organizations, to enable them to later deal autonomously with the state.

Mitlin (2001) concludes that all these concerns suggest that NGO staff may even be reluctant to delegate power and responsibility to the local people, thus failing to create and/or strengthen independent and capable agencies. On the other hand, there are concerns related to NGO ability to provide the necessary support in the community development process.

A positive assessment, this time, is given by Carroll (1992), in a study of civil society organizations in Latin America rural areas, arguing that despite their weaknesses, NGOs “are in fact slightly better at service delivery and at reaching the poorest than federations of grassroots organizations” (n.b. - an example of which is treated by Russell and Vidler, 2000). At the same time, other authors cited by Mitlin (2001) state that some NGOs have indeed sought to develop structures and working ways to better support grassroots organizations.

The truth is that no clear consensus has yet been attained regarding the necessary conditions for a positive interaction between NGOs and grassroots organizations, since



even among such organizations the levels of organization differ significantly. Mitlin (2001) underlines that “NGOs themselves may be defensive when criticized about their activities in this area”.

Even so, Guaraldo Choguill’s research (1996) raises some most relevant issues: “does a bottom-up initiative, a project that is only partially successful but involves entire community control, do more to develop the ‘morale’ and ‘psychology’ of the local community than a totally successful top-down initiative, a project under government control? How would this classify in a ladder of participation, for underdeveloped countries? At the top or at the bottom? Which term would be appropriate in this case? Self-management? If genuine empowerment is achieved, could it substitute for Arnstein’s citizen control? Are there actually two distinct aims within the development context, one concerned with development of community awareness through participation, that is, empowerment, while the second is oriented toward self-building community facilities, that is, self-management? Are the two compatible, or in conflict? At this point, what seems to really matter is the outside support provided to the community.”

### ■ Romanian NGOs’ working methodologies in relation with the CBOs

RACD (2005) shows that many national and international organizations have programs for the development of community organizations, canalizing resources or offering services and technical assistance. These NGOs are also known as support organizations and they act as intermediary organizations between community organizations and financing institutions or the government. The Romanian Association for Community Development is such an organization in Romania, alongside to the Rural Assistance Center ([www.rural-center.org](http://www.rural-center.org)), the Ethno-cultural Diversity Resource Center ([www.edrc.ro](http://www.edrc.ro)), the Resource Center for Roma Communities ([www.romacenter.ro](http://www.romacenter.ro)), or CREST Resource Center ([www.crest.ro](http://www.crest.ro)).

Each of these organizations uses different approaches and methodologies, but at the same time they all use a series of instruments, as described by RACD (2005): community facilitation, consultancy, financing, training, cultural methods and the so-called Tele-Center.

#### Box 2.1.2 b

**Community Facilitation:** the process of mobilizing the members of a community and of supporting them to organize in order to solve community problems; it is a long term process which implies identifying the active and responsible persons within a community (the community leaders), motivating them to assume an active role within the community and forming a community group to think strategically and creatively about solving the community problems

**Consultancy:** a punctual assistance offered to the community organization, most of the times within the community, on very diverse themes – project planning and management, fund raising, strategic planning etc.

**Financing:** refers to financing community projects (where budgets may vary between several hundreds or thousands of dollars) as an important instrument for the development of community organizations

**Training:** a process which may take place residentially or in the community, on a wide range of themes, such as civil society and non-profit organizations, participative planning, project planning and management, organizational management and development, public relations and fund raising, building up coalitions and networking

**Cultural methods:** define people as actors (they all act) and observers (they all observe), that is, *spect-actors*

**Forum theatre** (an example of cultural method): a means of understanding common problems and of trying to find the own solutions, instead of investigating the problems merely in relation to the characters in the play; it creates situations in which spectators may easily recognize each other, and the audience can stop the play at any moment and try to find viable solutions for real problems

**Tele-center** ([www.telecentru.ro](http://www.telecentru.ro)): a space with its own staff informing and helping the members of the community to solve their problems, by offering services in infrastructure, human resources, economics, tourism, community development, trans-national cooperation, culture, civil sector and environmental issues; they can support various local initiatives and become intermediaries between the community, information and opportunities

The participants in consultancy sessions are members and beneficiaries of the organization, partners and other interested actors/stakeholders.

Financing allows the organization to test and improve its management abilities; it contributes to increasing the visibility of the organization in the community, increasing the degree of confidence of community members in the members of the community group or to the recognition and valorisation of the community group by the local public administration or other local partners.

RACD considers training as a most needed and even an essential element for the development of community groups, given their lack of experience and reduced access to informational resources.

### 2.1.3 The state

#### Local governments

##### Box 2.1.3.a

<b>Local government:</b> elected or appointed city or district government; it is the level of government with direct contact with the population (Davidson & Peltenburg, 1993)
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It is essential to understand the political context of the country where the studied development programs or projects are to be implemented, in order to be able to identify the opportunities for community participation. Guaraldo Choguill (1996) shows that “even where no participation is required or requested in the political arena, some governments are extremely reluctant to allow it to happen. The organization of the people, so necessary to make participation a reality, and even more basic in the case of housing and infrastructure development projects or programs with community involvement, is also an opportunity to develop people’s consciousness about other aspects of their living conditions”. Thus, success with one aspect of their lives may lead to people’s demands for help in other issues that are of importance to them. “In short, the organization of the people could give way to demands that, to be met, would require the established relations with those in power to change. Not all governments are willing to negotiate this kind of innovation. If they did, however, true empowerment would be achieved.”

Whether the initiatives (where they exist) to improve the living conditions of low-income communities are bottom-up or top-down, depending on the attitude of the government towards the community, they may lead to very different results. Anyhow, Guaraldo Choguill (1996) concludes that “governmental attitude is essential in determining the potential results of the community effort.” However, governmental willingness to be supportive to the communities may be temporary, along leadership changes, and the other way around. Nevertheless, if sustainable development is to be achieved, it is critical that either governments or NGOs, or both, give stable support to the people, “at least to that level from which they can continue managing their projects by themselves. In other words, one-off development projects must evolve consistently into on-going programs and long-term links/alliances must be established for the provision of lasting support to the communities. Only in this way can genuine and sustainable community development be achieved.”

Many attempts of community mutual help have occurred along time, however not all of them being successful. Besides, the degree of community involvement has been found, in practice, “to vary widely from project to project” (Guaraldo Choguill, 1996). “Communities can, particularly with outside help (n.b. e.g. training, as far as technical inputs are involved), solve their own housing and infrastructure problems. Many projects and programs have some element of outside assistance associated with them. There are instances where communities have acted totally independently, but these appear to be the exception. In these cases, where the communities have generally formed neighborhood organizations, many projects have been carried out strictly by the community (n.b. providing self-funding and labor for the projects they undertake) with no outside help at all. In certain cases, the neighborhood organization has been designed to put pressure on public authorities and such authorities frequently have responded by providing the help requested”.

Several levels of (genuine) participation can be achieved by community organizations “depending upon the type of support they receive from outside sources, whether they are from government or beyond government” (Guaraldo Choguill, 1996). An emphasis should be set upon the relationships between government and NGOs, on the one hand, and the community, on the other, in order to achieve participation.

Guaraldo Choguill (1996) shows that, regarding community participation in development projects, “there appear to be far more constraints in the underdeveloped as against the developed world. These are not just political and financial, but also technical and

motivational, considering the nature of the service required and the time involved in the community mutual-help effort. [...] where there is no political restraint to community organization, the other constraints can, in most cases, be overcome.” Even so, “analysis reveals that just because a project or program reflects community control does not guarantee success. [...] Examples that represent the most successful of projects are those that fuse collaboration within the community to the backing and resources of government or NGO.”

A redefinition of the government role is now imperatively necessary. It should include low-income communities in the policy definitional processes, by first supporting people’s initiatives; also, it should open other opportunities for the people, to ensure the rise of their income at least up to a level where they should be able “to attain socially acceptable living standards” (Guaraldo Choguill, 1996), through their own efforts. Yet, the issue of such common standards is quite controversial, as standards are such relative concepts. There are enormous disparities among standards applicable to different social classes. This implies addressing the moral and humanistic aspects. If a certain standard is to be considered acceptable for a given social class, it should also be acceptable for all the others. That is why people’s participation in the political arena should be encouraged, and not only on the matter of infrastructure or housing, but also in a whole variety of issues as well (mainly economic ones – which affect their income) – to make it a part of the development process.

Local governments need to understand that CBO existence as self-sustaining organizations does not represent a threat of diminishing their authority or undermining the election base. On the contrary, stable and powerful CBOs can represent an even richer election base, if only they would have political support. NGOs may lobby for this issue, or at least enable CBOs to do so themselves. Each stakeholder is important and only if this is accepted will decision-making processes become fair. People need also to sometimes go beyond their individual, immediate interests, and act continuously towards a sustainable development process, aware of its implications.

Yet, “there is considerable debate over whether only NGOs can be successful at adaptive and participatory planning, or whether more collaborative partnerships between NGOs and the public sector are the best way forward” (Farrington & Bebbington, 1994; Farrington & al., 1993).

Usually, governments are avoided because they are seen as “weak, a trap for human capital, or simply repressive”, thus funds being channeled to NGOs, creating parallel structures, which is inefficient and short-termed. Alternatively, working with governments is what may help NGOs “identify how best they might support but not substitute for what exists” (Roche, 1991). “The principal objective must now be to foster change from within, not to threaten power but to put pressure on the system, and to support innovative individuals.”

In the actual context of decentralization and participatory planning, change can occur within governments, through innovative work. Otherwise, as Nelson & Wright (1995) see it, there is danger “of parallel structures evolving with the NGO sector being highly funded by donor aid, and at the same time being parasitic (for staff, technical support) on under-resourced government services”, when in fact large amounts of human capital and resources can be found in government institutions.

There is need for institutional partnerships (between technical, intermediate and local institutions, or at community level, subject to implicit government rules), and there are opportunities for “joint funding and training activities between the government and NGO sectors”. “Partnerships either open up information flows or define the need for dialogue. [...] These partnerships accept that in short, the aim is to change the state rather than simply criticize it” (Bebbington, 1991).

### ■ The Challenge to Change - Resistance to Change

According to Narayan (2000), development must be presently “defined as equitable wellbeing for all”, and there is a need “to put the bottom poor high on the agenda, to recognize power as a central issue, and to give voice and priority to poor people. [...] These basics underpin efforts to transform the conditions poor people experience, empowering them with freedom to choose and act”. Deprivation is multidimensional, thus demanding multiple interventions. Change is required for the passage “from material poverty to adequate assets and livelihoods, from isolation and poor infrastructure to access and

services, from illness and incapability to health, information and education, from unequal and troubled gender relations to equity and harmony, from fear and lack of protection to peace and security, from exclusion and impotence to inclusion, organization and empowerment, (and last, but not least) from corruption and abuse to honesty and fair treatment” (Narayan, 2000). “Three other transformations are indicated: professional reorientation to starting with poor people’s realities, institutional reorientation from dominating to facilitative behaviours, and personal commitment to bring about change in poor people’s lives.”

Organizational change should be applied to public authorities, namely local governments relating with communities, and to NGOs as well, but why not mention this, it should happen as well within the communities. Only, what could also occur is resistance to change, which may happen even more often in daily lives of people and most of all within public organizations.

#### **Box 2.1.3.b**

**Resistance to change:** an inability, or an unwillingness to discuss or to accept organizational changes that are perceived in some way damaging or threatening to the individual” (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001)

**Four common causes of resistance to change** (recognized by Bedeian, 1980, referring to organizations): parochial self-interest, misunderstanding and lack of trust, contradictory assessments and low tolerance for change

**Other thirteen possible sources of resistance** (introduced by Eccles, 1994): ▪ *ignorance* (a failure to understand the problem) ▪ *comparison* (the solution is disliked because an alternative is preferred) ▪ *disbelief* (a feeling that the proposed solution will not work) ▪ *loss* (the change has unacceptable personal costs) ▪ *inadequacy* (the rewards from change are not sufficient) ▪ *anxiety* (the fear of being unable to cope with the new situation) ▪ *demolition* (the change threatens to destroy existing social arrangements) ▪ *power cut* (sources of influence and control will be eroded) ▪ *contamination* (new values and practices are repellent) ▪ *inhibition* (low willingness to change) ▪ *mistrust* (management motives for change are considered suspicious) ▪ *alienation* (other interests are more highly valued than new proposals) ▪ *frustration* (the change will reduce power and career opportunities)

**Contemporary change barriers** (based on PWC and MORI, 1997): competing resources, functional boundaries, communication, employee opposition, HR issues (people, training), unrealistic timetables and initiative fatigue

**Contemporary success factors for change:** ensuring top sponsorship, treating people fairly, involving employees, giving quality communication, providing sufficient training, using clear performance measures (applicable both to NGOs and local governments), building teams after change, focusing on culture and skill change, rewarding success

**Readiness to change:** a predisposition, perhaps even impatience, to welcome and embrace change. Where readiness is high, change may be straightforward. But when readiness is low, some ‘groundwork’ may be required to increase readiness among those affected (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001)

For change to occur, there is need for a so-called ‘**change agent**’, which may be any member of a community or of an organization seeking “to promote, further, support, sponsor, initiate, implement or deliver change” (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001).

At times it is even the communities themselves that are not quite ready to change, and initiative fatigue is only one of the reasons for which this may happen. See, for example, the case of Community Development Councils enabled by the government in Colombo, Sri Lanka, where people began to come less and less after getting their own needs accomplished (based on Russell and Vidler, 2000).

### **■ Governance, Civil Society and Grassroots Organizations**

Conceptualizing citizenship came along with the emergence of the ‘good governance’ agenda, concerned with increasing responsiveness of governments to citizens’ voices (Goetz and Gaventa, 2001).

Looking at grassroots organizations (and supporting NGOs) in relation with the state – particularly the local governments, there is “a complex set of social relationships with community leaders working with both state officials and politicians to secure access to land, infrastructure and basic services. Such strategies and activities do not (for the most part) challenge the system or the rules by which it operates. Rather, they seek to ensure that the state offers more, rather than less, to the urban poor. And in return for the services they offer, both politicians and state officials commonly seek a variety of personal and political benefits.” This is the picture drawn by Mitlin (2001), to which she adds that “it appears that [...] politicians may try to establish patronage and clientelistic relations to further their own advantage with community leaders and, through them, with their organizations”. This

would indeed suggest that “relationships between civil society (primarily in the form of grassroots organizations) and the state (in the form of local politicians and state officials) both involve and reinforce patronage and dependency within grassroots organizations.”

Dependency appears to be the number one consequence of these ongoing processes, and it refers to “the belief among citizens that they are unable to address their problems themselves but have to rely on the intervention of a more powerful agency, often mediated by a leadership that is seen as somewhat distant from the residents themselves and which is recognized not to act in their interests” (Mitlin, 2001). Even so, Mitlin (2001) underlines, again, that “the relationships between communities and state officials are not predetermined”.

Although two distinct groupings, neither the state, nor the civil society is completely autonomous. “The way in which the state interacts with citizens influences the way in which civil society organizations operate and hence their capacity to represent themselves within engagements with the state. The behaviour of leaders is in part determined by the clientelistic nature of the state; which itself reflects the interests of both officials and politicians (as the stronger parties)” (Mitlin, 2001).

Mitlin (2001) suggests that for a better understanding of the interaction between community organizations and the state, it should be regarded “as being the means for the distribution of scarce state resources between, on the one hand, a state that is unable to provide comprehensive infrastructure and services and, on the other, urban citizens who seek neighbourhood improvements. Partial, poor quality provision enables improvements to take place but within a context and at a pace that is controlled by either the state or the politicians, to their mutual benefit.” This is a state of facts where grassroots organizations may be able to secure some degree of improvement to the neighbourhood, but can do much too little to fundamentally address extensive poverty, little state capacity and not to mention the relatively low aspiration level among the lower income groups. In this context, grassroots organizations can only bring little progress at individual household level, but they are in no position to represent the interests of the urban poor and to help them with addressing their various and most complex needs.

A fundamental aspect of governance in Romania in the present period is democratization, coming along with a whole political-administrative reform package. Among the elements of democracy there is the right of the people to citizenship, participation, and to claim and benefit from responsive, accountable, legitimate, efficient and effective public institutions. These are all included in the recently introduced concept of ‘good governance’.

#### **Box 2.1.3.c**

**Accountability:** an obligation placed on a subordinate to report back on their discharge of the responsibilities which they have undertaken” (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001)

Gaventa (2002) underlines that “with regard to accountability, there is little conceptualization of who is accountable to whom in what domains of life, or how a person might deal with their multiple and often conflicting individual and group obligations and rights”. Moreover, “to be meaningful, arguments for participation and institutional accountability must become grounded in a conception of rights which, in a development context, strengthens the status of citizens from that of beneficiaries of development to its rightful and legitimate claimants” (Cornwall, 2000).

As DFID (2000) states, “rights will become real only as citizens are engaged in the decisions and processes which affect their lives”. For this, three principles of a rights perspective have been stated: “inclusive rights for all people, the right to participation, and the ‘obligations to protect and promote the realization’ of rights by states and other duty bearers: a concept which links to accountability” (Gaventa, 2002). UNDP (2000) also argues that “the fulfillment of human rights requires democracy that is inclusive”.

The concepts of citizenship, participation and accountability must not be regarded separately, “as they come together in a broadly interlocking ‘governance wheel’, in which citizenship gives the right to hold others accountable and accountability is the process of engaging in participation” (Gaventa, 2002).

We “need to understand the state, civil society and market not as homogeneous groups of actors, but as heterogeneous in their interests, and [...] that the spaces alone do not guarantee voice” (Gaventa, 2002). Despite the Constitutional guarantee, “there is still the question of whether the most marginalized groups are able to articulate their voice in these

arenas, and a question of the alliances and institutional arrangements which help them to do so” (Gaventa, 2002). Downward accountability to community groups is necessary to be put in place for better institutional performance.

Rather than focusing simply on the role of the state in ensuring rights of citizenship, new models of accountability should emerge, with focus on the role of citizens themselves in monitoring the enforcement of rights, and in demanding public scrutiny and transparency.

Citizenship presumes responsive and accountable public institutions, only the question yet remains open whether strong citizenship does lead to responsive institutions or institutions should be responsive in order to create strong citizenship.

### ► **Transparency vs. corruption – from clientelism to citizenship**

The transition from corruption and abuse to honesty and fair treatment should figure primarily on the agenda for change, strongly related to accountability. “Poor people call for access to opportunities, decent wages, strong organizations of their own and a better and more active state. They call for systemic change. They want more government, not less – government on which they have influence and with which they can partner in different ways. They look to government to provide services fundamental to their wellbeing. Poor people’s problems cut across sectoral divides. They challenge us to think and plan beyond narrow disciplinary boundaries while still remaining responsive to local realities. This requires institutions that are more decentralized, facilitative and accountable to poor women and men” (Narayan, 2000).

The state has to provide legal aid and build awareness of rights. Poor people need legal assistance and legal education about the law and their rights. These should be made available at local level and on a long-term basis for poor people to have confidence in justice without fear of repercussions. Since poor people are often badly treated by officials, by service providers, particularly those of the state, another measure is to build institutional character.

Gaventa (2002) points out that “around the world, a growing crisis of legitimacy characterizes the relationship between citizens and the institutions that affect their lives”. There is “disillusionment with government, based on concerns about corruption, lack of responsiveness to the needs of the poor and the absence of a sense of connection with elected representatives and bureaucrats” (CWF & CIVICUS, 1999; Narayan, D. & al., 2000).

## **2.1.4 International donors**

Among the main international donors for both the NGO/CBO sector and for the governance sector in Romania, there are the World Bank, the EU, USAID, the Open Society Foundation (Soros Foundation) and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). “The foreign donors have an unusually high capacity to influence governance because of Romanian sensitivity to international options and pressures” (USAID/Romania, 2001).

“However, there is room for improved coordination within the DG sector among the donors in Romania. This represents an opportunity for better identification of concerns common to the donor community and to pool resources and influences to overcome obstacles that all may have identified as standing in the way to further development” (USAID/Romania, 2001).

## **2.2 The power of participation**

### **2.2.1 Rights and citizenship – citizen participation/community participation**

#### **Box 2.2.1**

**Citizen participation:** the redistribution of power that enables the have-not citizens, presently excluded from the political and economic processes, to be deliberately included in the future (Arnstein, 1969)

Guaraldo Choguill (1996) shows that “individual citizen participation in decision-making would bring little benefit for the community as a whole”. That is the reason why she suggests the term ‘community participation’ instead of ‘citizen participation’, “considering individuals as members and representatives of a fully organized community”.

One may as well state that citizen participation is in itself citizen power. This represents a change in the balance of power, which is redistributed to enable the so-called ‘have-nots’, to deliberately include them in the political and economic processes taking place in the society.

The concept of ‘citizenship’ arose in the debate area in the late 90s. “The focus on participatory development, long rooted in concern with participation at the project level (often apart from the state) began to turn towards political participation and increasing poor and marginalized people’s influence over the wider decision-making process which affect their lives” (Gaventa and Valderrama, 1999; Cornwall, 2000). “Much literature around citizen participation simply uses ‘citizenship’ to mean the act of any person taking part in public affairs. While increasingly ‘participation’ is promoted as a right, there is little conceptualization of what this in turn implies: individual rights, collective rights, rights to participate on the basis of particular identities or interests, rights to difference or dissent?” (Gaventa, 2002).

The idea of citizenship originates in liberal thinking (Marshall, 1950), holding focus on civil and political rights of the individual. In current development discourse, though, it refers to civil, political, social and economic rights of all citizens, be it individually or collective – as we speak of “community” or “civil society” – and it includes the right to participate.

Up to recently, in order to respond to this existing gap between citizens and institutions, the tendency has been to either strengthen participation processes or to strengthen the accountability and responsiveness of institutions and policies through changes in institutional design and by focusing on enabling structures for good governance. “Each perspective has often perceived the other as inadequate, with one warning that consultation without attention to power and politics will lead to ‘voice without influence’, and the other arguing that reform of political institutions without attention to inclusion will only reinforce the status quo”. Lately, though, both issues have increasingly begun to be regarded as the two sides of the coin and be equally taken into consideration. This new approach is presently known as the ‘rights-based approach to development’. Even so, “little is yet known of how rights and citizenship are understood by poor people themselves [...]” (Gaventa, 2002).

Citizenship has taken on new dimensions once the rights-based approach appeared. Participation, in its turn, became a fundamental human and citizenship right, and a prerequisite for making other rights claims (Ferguson, 1999). “Representing a level of convergence, these shifts have opened spaces for the participation and good governance agendas to meet under concepts of ‘citizenship participation’ or ‘participatory citizenship’” (Gaventa, 2002). The current aim is “to bridge the gap between citizen and state by recasting citizenship as practiced rather than as given” (Gaventa, 2002). Inclusive participation is presently emphasized as the very foundation of democratic practice, suggesting a more active notion of citizenship, that is, recognizing “the agency of citizens as ‘makers and shapers’ rather than as ‘users and choosers’ of interventions or services designed by others” (Cornwall and Gaventa, 2000).

These arguments “broaden the concepts of rights and citizenship as realized through non-state actors, rather than through the state alone”, offering “a more integrated view of the nature of rights themselves” (Gaventa, 2002). “Increasingly, the demands for social and economic rights are stretched yet further, to conceptualize rights which enable the realization of other rights, or as Isin and Wood (1999) suggest, the *right to have rights*” (Gaventa, 2002).

“Extending the notion of citizenship also implies that the right to participation itself should be seen as a fundamental citizenship right, which helps to protect and guarantee all others” (Gaventa, 2002).

The UN Declaration of the Right to Development, quoted by Gaventa (2002), calls for the right to participation, arguing that participation must be “active, free and meaningful.”

Even by extending the meanings and concepts of citizenship and rights, “entitling all citizens to the same rights does not necessarily promote equitable outcomes” (Cornwall, 2000; Ferguson, 1999). “Paradoxically, rather than addressing inequalities, universalism

can work to marginalize the already marginal and exacerbate social exclusion (Ellison, 1999) while simultaneously masking this under a veneer of formal equality” (Lister, 1997). The reasons why this happens are seen by Fraser (1995) and Kabeer (2000) to derive from differences in resources (material resources, but also including power and knowledge) and recognition (of personal identities – perceived by others and by themselves).

The “concepts of citizenship and rights are themselves mediated by relations of power, social hierarchy, and often competing identities, which serve simultaneously as a force for the inclusion of certain voices and identities and the exclusion of others” (Gaventa, 2002). Moreover, we must remember that “simply legalistic and state-based mechanisms for realizing rights will not be fulfilled without the agency of non-state actors themselves.” On the other hand “state-based and more universal declarations of rights, including the right to participation, have also served in certain cases to broaden the spaces through which citizens themselves may exercise their claims. But they do not always do so” (Gaventa, 2002).

The “rights-based approaches are not automatically pro-poor. They are likely to become so [...] only through understanding the perceptions of poor people themselves about their rights, and through creating spaces for citizen engagement that are relevant to and inclusive of poor people”. This would mean “linking concepts of rights to constructs of citizenship that emphasize the agency of poor people acting for themselves to claim their rights, and by holding others accountable for them” (Gaventa, p.10).

### **2.2.2 Participation – participatory development – community involvement**

Participation is a very broad concept, varying according to the context it is used in. In the construction and implementation stages of a project it involves the beneficiaries contributing resources. Being “equated with cooperation and incorporation into predetermined activities” this is only participation regarded in the development process, but there is also participation in decision making in implementation and maintenance, in benefits and in evaluation of successes and failures. “In a truly participatory approach, we might expect all those affected to have a role to play at all stages of the development process.” In addition, “it is important to make a distinction between voluntary and coercive participation”, which may not be so easy, “particularly when extensive material incentives are employed to insure cooperation” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

#### **Box 2.2.2.a**

**Participation:** the strategy by which the have-nots join in determining how information is shared, goals and policies are set, tax resources are allocated, programs are operated, and benefits like contracts and patronage are parceled out. In short, it is the means by which they can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society (Arnstein, 1969); a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives, decisions and resources which affect them (World Bank, 1994)

“Participation, like community, is a ‘warmly persuasively word’, which ‘seems never to be used unfavorably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term’ (Williams, 1976). Yet it can be attached to very different sets of relations often seemingly by its ‘warmness’ distracting close attention from the nature of those relations” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

Nelson and Wright (1995) show that there are three main ways in which ‘participation’ is used: “as a cosmetic label, to make whatever is proposed appear good” (by donor agencies and government requiring participatory approaches), “a co-opting practice, to mobilize local labor and reduce costs” (local people contribute their time and effort to self-help projects with some outside assistance) and “an empowering process which enables local people to do their own analysis, to take command, to gain in confidence, and to make their own decisions”. Also, “[...] different groups of NGOs mean very different things by participation, ranging from increased coverage of passive beneficiaries to functional involvement in project operation and finally to empowerment of the poor to challenge the factors which govern their lives.

Participation became more and more popular starting with the 1990s, because of several reasons, recognized by Nelson and Wright (1995) as follows: “recognition that many development failures originate in attempts to impose standard top-down programmes and projects on diverse local realities where they do not fit or meet needs; concern for cost-



effectiveness, recognizing that the more local people do less capital costs are likely to be; preoccupation with sustainability, and the insight that if local people themselves design and construct they are more likely to meet running costs and undertake maintenance; and ideologically for some development professionals, the belief that it is right that poor people should be empowered and should have more command over their lives”.

Following the policy history of participation in the Third World, further meanings of participation are revealed by Nelson and Wright (1995). “People were not economically and politically active before development came along. In this construction of people as objects of a national programme of development, their participation in projects often meant contributions in the form of labor, cash or kind.”

“In the 1970s international non-governmental organizations had also argued that development should generate more self-sufficiency, rather than depend on top-down state provision of services. [...] Participation had a corollary in self-sufficiency and self-help, in opposition to, or independence from, the state” (n.b. income generating projects).

The World Bank’s monetarist structural adjustment policies in the 1980s “moved functions from the state to the private and non-governmental sectors. [...] Soon the World Bank was arguing that the state should not be omnipresent and ‘clients’ should be involved in the production of their own services. Structural adjustment policies were accompanied by an emphasis on community and family [...] taking on welfare and service responsibilities formally ascribed to the state. The crucial difference between this notion of self-sufficiency and the earlier ideas of non-governmental organizations was that this work was unresourced.”

Evaluating the shortcomings of development at the end of the decade called for participatory development.

#### **Box 2.2.2.b**

**Participatory development:** strategies which combine effective economic policies, equitable access to basic social and economic services and broader popular participation in decision-making, on the orientation of government policies and programmes (OECD, 1991)

The term ‘participatory development’ is used in various ways by agencies and individuals. One of the most common distinctions made is that of participation as a means (to accomplish the aims of a project or policy more efficiently, effectively and cheaply), as opposed to participation as an end (the community sets up a process to control its own development). The extent of empowerment and involvement of the local community is more limited in the first approach (where participation is regarded as a favor) than in the second (which implies sharing power in decision-making, thus participation being regarded as a right in itself). Participation as a means is limited in scope, the agency retaining ultimate control while the very broad concept of participation lies in the view of participation as an end in itself, where “all control of the development process is devolved to those who are affected by it” (Nelson & Wright, 1995). The question still rises about what is actually the purpose of participation. “Is it ‘participation as an end’ (n.b. intrinsic merit, increasing self esteem, confidence and the individual sense of power), or ‘participation as a means’ (to improve project effectiveness using local information to correctly specify problems and needs, improve solutions, avoid misunderstandings and enable NGOs to reach more people)?”.

Four methods of participation have been identified by Samuel Paul (1987): information sharing, consultation, decision making and initiating action. The highest intensity of participation lies in initiating action. “Each level of participation is characterized by a different relationship between the implementing agency and the beneficiaries.” “Project efficiency may be increased if participation involves the beneficiaries’ contributing labor and other resources. Finally if participation develops a commitment to the project and local self reliance, this may promote sustainable development” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

A World Bank report introduced the idea of stakeholders as “parties who either affect or are affected by the bank’s actions and policies” (WB, 1994). “Defining the bank’s overwriting objective as poverty reduction, the primary stakeholders were unequivocally stated to be the poor and marginalized: those who lack information and power and are excluded from the development process. The government of borrowing countries were called ‘borrowing stakeholders’. Secondary stakeholders were NGOs, businesses and professional bodies who had technical expertise and linkages to primary stakeholders.” The poor are no longer simply involved as passive recipients, informants or laborers in a

development effort, as in the OECD report in 1991. “The non-bank participants’ addendum added that the goal of participation was to reach and engage primary stakeholders in ways that were transformational, not instrumental. Getting communities to decide on their own priorities was called transformative; getting people to buy into a donor’s project was instrumental.” The World Bank encouraged borrowing governments and implementing agencies to take greater control of its projects and to develop processes by which the poor could “initiate, influence and control development activities”. Therefore, the “two keywords in the World Bank’s participation strategy are ‘stakeholder’ and ‘transformative’”. Both of these derive from theories about how society is organized and how it can be changed, and are in that sense ideological.” According to Chambers (1994), “the questions are how to design procedures to bring the parties into contact, how to change the behaviors and attitudes of those who are used to dominating and how to give primary stakeholders more change of voicing their view of the world.”

“In the broadest sense, community participation may be thought of as an instrument of empowerment” (Samuel, 1986), as participation may be used to mean “empowering the weakest and poorest”, but institutional procedures may work out in other ways. One “fundamental concept of community participation is self-help, that is, community mutual help” (Guaraldo Choguill, 1996). Self-help efforts to improve services and infrastructure in low-income settlements, added to lobbying for services from the state, are recognized by both NGOs and grassroots organizations themselves as being of great importance. In fact, self-efforts often take place with the support and guidance of local politicians and officials providing small grants and facilitating contacts with state bureaucracies.

The present paper refers to community participation as community involvement (interchangeably), meaning the participation or involvement of “the community of households in both the mutual help effort in, and the formal decision-making process on, the formulation and implementation of projects and programs that affect them.” Community participation should not be “seen as being just a means to enable the people to get, through mutual help initiatives and possibly with outside help, the basic needs which, otherwise, would not be available to them, but also as a means to influence decisions in the political arena about issues that affect them” (Guaraldo Choguill, 1996).

### ► Types of participation

There are several types of participation, as well as non-participation, which have been gathered into an eight-level typology, also known as the Arnstein’s “ladder of participation”. These range from manipulation and ‘therapy’ (as non-participatory practices, standing as the bottom rungs of the ladder), through informing, consultation and placation (as so-called forms of ‘tokenism’) and up to partnership, delegated power and citizen control (as the real forms of citizen power). This is meant to show that “there is a critical difference between going through the empty ritual of participation and having the real power needed to affect the outcome of the process” (Arnstein, 1969).

There are of course limitations to the stated typology, even uncovered by the author herself – the ladder of participation is a simplistic abstraction juxtaposing the powerless with the powerful “in order to highlight the fundamental divisions between them”. One needs to keep in mind, though, that neither the powerless nor the power holders are homogenous groups, even if both sides have the tendency to regard each other as being such, “with little comprehension of the class and caste difference among them”. In fact, “each group encompasses a host of divergent points of view, significant cleavages, competing vested interests, and splintered subgroups” (Arnstein, 1969).

On the way of achieving genuine levels of participation, there are bottlenecks on the part of both the power holders (resistance to power distribution, paternalism) and the powerless (poor communities are characterized by inadequacies of political socioeconomic infrastructure and knowledge base and have difficulties in “organizing representative and accountable citizens’ group in the face of futility, alienation, and distrust” (Arnstein, 1969).

Guaraldo Choguill (1996) shows how Arnstein’s ladder of participation cannot be transferred/applied to the case of the developing countries. She explains that Arnstein (1969) identified processes by which the have nots “can induce significant social reform which enables them to share in the benefits of the affluent society”. Therefore, the rungs of Arnstein’s ladder are defined by “the extent of citizen’s power in determining the end product [of public policy]” (Arnstein, 1969). Whereas, according to Guaraldo Choguill

(1996), low-income citizens in developing countries “want more than power alone. They have dual objectives. They need empowerment to influence decisions which affect them. In addition, they want urban services and housing from a government which may not have the resources to provide them, or the will. For this second category of benefits, they may be willing to contribute their labor, time and money to get them, particularly in instances where they can see the benefit in doing so for themselves. Thus, if an underdeveloped country participation ladder were to be constructed, the terminology and descriptions used would have to be amended.” A key element of Guaraldo Choguill’s model is represented by the strategic input of outside assistance, coming either from the government or from non-governmental sources (n.b. or from both, in collaboration).

The ladder of participation described before thus applies more to developed countries, whereas an attempt to classify existing models of participation in developing countries is based on the degree in which external institutions get involved in the process of facilitating or even carrying out community mutual-help projects. Accordingly, the levels of involvement are ‘arranged’ in the form of a ladder of community participation for underdeveloped countries, comprising the following rungs: empowerment, partnership, conciliation, dissimulation, diplomacy, informing, conspiracy and self-management. Empowerment and self-management stand at the opposite extremes of the ladder, showing that “basic needs can be achieved with or without governmental support”. “However, at any level of the ladder, it is clear that people’s self-determination plays a significant role in the process of improving their own condition” (Guaraldo Choguill, 1996).

Empowerment, partnership and/or conciliation take place in case the government is supportive, depending on the degree of government’s willingness and/or confidence in the community’s abilities; in other words, depending on the community’s freedom to initiate activities or make alliances outside the boundaries of governmental control. There is a very high level of governmental control, legitimized by good technical performance.

#### **Box 2.2.2.c**

**Empowerment** (Guaraldo Choguill, 1996): the highest rung on the ladder of community participation proposed for underdeveloped countries. It may take the form of community members having a majority of seats as genuine specified powers on formal decision-making bodies over a particular project or program involving community participation, when municipal authorities are unable or unwilling to undertake improvements themselves. Community members are expected to initiate their own improvements, possibly with the assistance of outside organizations, such as NGOs or other allies, demonstrating actual control of the situation and ‘influence[ing] the process and outcomes of development’ (Samuel, 1986). These possibilities of actually controlling the situation and making allies, with governmental support, constitute the main characteristics of empowerment.

Self-management stands at the bottom of the ladder, taking place when the government does nothing to solve local problems, and thus the members of the community take action themselves, planning improvements for their neighborhood and actually controlling the projects, though not always successfully. In this situation, the community often allies with NGOs and take bottom-up initiatives (started either by the community or by NGOs); these alliances seem to affect positively the outcome of the community effort. Of course, the results vary according to the abilities within the community and/or the competence of the external support. According to Guaraldo Choguill (1996), “it seems apparent that projects involving the innate abilities of the community which succeed without external support are rare. However, even when self-management results in successful construction, communities do not succeed in achieving influence within the political arena, thus failing to meet one of the two objectives of community participation”. Guaraldo Choguill (1996) states as well that “in fact, NGOs themselves, through their extensive involvement, may well totally replace the need for government, with the exceptions of meeting the objective of changing the status quo in the political sphere. [...] Thus, in the ladder of community participation suggested, in contrast to empowerment, self-management implies situations that result from lack of governmental interest in or even opposition to the poor people’s demands”.

Mechanisms to promote more direct citizen engagement in the governance process range from creating decentralized institutions to a wide variety of participatory and consultative processes both in national and more recently even global policy deliberations. “Rhetorically at least, there has been increasing emphasis on using such mechanisms to support inclusion of the poorest social groups, those who do not usually have sufficient resources (economic, educational, political) to influence the outcomes of traditional policy processes” (Gaventa, 2002).

### ■ Gaps between theory and practice within institutions

There are always differences between institutional rhetoric and practice, as presented by Nelson and Wright (1995). For example, the term 'community' is continuously used "as if it covered a homogeneous, idyllic, unified population [...]. Too often homogeneity of interests is assumed, whereas an intervention, however 'participatory', will benefit some people while others lose out". Shifts in power occur even between community members engaged in participatory development processes. "Community is a concept often used by state and other organizations, rather than the people themselves, and it carries connotations of consensus and 'needs' determined within parameters set by outsiders"; it is often believed that development under local control can be easily facilitated and "there is a tendency to believe that within a community consensus can be reached". As the authors show, "a consensus on priorities for action is needed within categories and between them, in the community as a whole." That is because "living with difference is not the same as reaching consensus".

Such as the various unexamined concepts of 'community', vague definitions of 'participation' may be used. "Participatory methods may aim to transfer project costs from an agency to intended 'beneficiaries'". The government may "emphasize local control for reasons of economy". Cernea (1992) warned that "introducing bottom-up planning is not an operation free of incremental costs. It requires more staff time for the diagnosis phases than conventional top-down planning and costlier logistical means". Moreover, "while building a wider process of consultation under the guise of participation, vociferous or ambitious members of the community may also become clients of an agency", creating a new form of dependency.

"The rhetoric of participation may also mask continued centralization in the name of decentralization" (the development process may continue to be directed from the central authority, by controlling funds, instead of transferring resources of devolving power to NGOs, for example, as a way to promote empowerment). The paradox is that "aid agencies [...] exert top-down influence while at the same time desiring to create local capacity for participation and decision-making" (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

Another gap between theory and practice is revealed by "appeals [...] made to participation as an end, which implies a bottom-up process of empowerment", while the organization "may still revolve around projects, evaluated in terms of externally defined, countable, tangible 'products'". In addition, "organizational 'needs' of development agencies place constraints on participatory development." This may prove to be true especially "at the planning stage if funders require to know what the project's objectives will be, yet funding is needed first to find out what participants want. Then there is a need for concrete results to prove that a project is working". Even when benefits occur, "participatory development is too slow to fit into the normal funding cycle of most agencies. [...] there is often pressure in agencies to speed up implementation, which makes it difficult for them to consult adequately with project field staff, much less pursue participatory activities with beneficiaries. In addition, agencies must satisfy their donors and this creates a need to justify expenditure by showing tangible results relatively quickly. [...] this explains why agencies concentrate on programmes implementing technical changes". At the moment, "most of the participatory approaches used in development [...] are participation as means", where "participants' 'power to', their confidence in themselves, their personal and collective abilities to exercise power within existing structural and institutional constraints, can undoubtedly be enhanced".

It is most important that involvement in participatory projects is made keeping an eye on the future, so as "to create a long-lasting process which is difficult to undermine or reverse. All such approaches have to be backed up by institutions committed to participation in more than the print in their policy documents" (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

### ■ Reasons for low participation levels or non-participation

Four main reasons have been identified by Nelson & Wright (1995) from the development literature as to "why beneficiary or user populations participate relatively little in development decisions which affect them: economics, politics, professionalism and the nature of the product".

The economic reason for non-participation is explained by the fact that people need to see that the benefits of participation are greater than its costs. Actually, it is argued that “there is often a strong individually-based economic rationale for collective action, even in ‘small-scale’, culturally and economically homogeneous communities”.

“The political explanation for non-participation is that participation is going to be limited and/or the participators will be unrepresentative if the beneficiaries lack the power to organize and get themselves fairly represented”. Alternatively, “participation of all or some of the beneficiaries may not be in the political interests of other actors in the project”. Sachs (1987) states that ‘participation is more frustrating than it is advantageous for those who are powerless’. Social development specialists recognize the problem of high status interest groups monopolizing the participatory process.

Sometimes, “[...] the professional training and culture of some sector specialists mitigates against an emphasis on participation”. That is because traditional professionals tend “to take a more top-down, authoritarian [...] approach to their clients than have most other technical specialists”. Also, another reason “why beneficiaries might have little influence over project decisions is that professionals assume the role of identifying beneficiaries’ needs and of finding solutions”. “Lack of community participation in projects can therefore be the result of professionals’ assuming the role of knowledgeable specialists who do not take users’ views into account because users do not ‘know enough’ to make decisions. However sometimes users themselves hand over their participatory rights to professionals – thereby saving themselves time, energy and, in some instances, conflict”.

“It can be argued that the degree to which participation can be achieved will depend on the nature of the product (project output), and in particular whether its delivery brings people together in a way that they can, or must, develop common interests. This wholly depends on the type of project; if it is something which benefits individuals, as individuals, rather than as members of communities, then there will be less chance of collective participation. [...] the desire to participate is likely to depend on the ‘product’ offered as much as on the development of channels and structures to make participation a practical possibility”.

#### ■ NGO policy and vis-à-vis participatory practices and empowerment

Lately, NGOs have adopted as well the empowerment approach to development, prominent in their projects and policy statements “as a result of ideological commitment as well as in response to the perceived limitations of development NGOs” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

As shown by Nelson and Wright (1995), “the essential difference between the modernization and community development NGOs and the empowerment NGOs is the underlying view of the latter that development must be a process which is carried out from within. A fundamental prerequisite for this is a distribution of power which allows individuals to influence all decisions affecting their lives.” Thus, the aim of empowerment NGOs is “to facilitate meaningful participation of individuals and groups in all stages of the development process, including that of initiating action.” Only there are several internal and external constraints. “Neatly packaged projects which can produce quick results are the most effective way of raising funds, and also suit the bureaucratic structures of many of the larger NGOs. This implies that it will be difficult to adopt the risky open-ended funded development processes through local organizations, which is a crucial part of an empowerment approach.” Moreover, “even if the internal constraints can be overcome, there is still a major external constraint that empowerment is overtly political in the sense that it sets out to challenge existing power structures. This may result in attempts to control the activities of the NGO, both at local and international level, especially where a significant amount of official aid is involved” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

Coming out of a long history of international voluntary action, relief and welfare NGOs appear in response to specific crises, their most important goal being “immediate alleviation suffering” (Smith, 1984) and aiming “to meet immediate needs wherever they are visible, by the provision of goods and services.” Beneficiaries are seen “as an undifferentiated passive group with no control over their own lives.”

Development NGOs “aim to initiate long term change and increase the capacity of people to meet their own needs.” “For many of the technical assistance NGOs (n.b. modernization NGOs), participation meant participation in implementation of a project, amounting to the

acceptance and efficient use of transferred resources and new technology. Non-participation was seen to be due to backwardness, ignorance and laziness, and evidence of the need to educate people out of ignorance” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

Community development NGOs concentrate on “developing the capacities of the people to better meet their needs through self-reliant local action” (Korten, 1990). “Whereas to the technical assistance NGOs participation was simply a means to improve effectiveness and efficiency, to the community development NGOs it is a central concept.”

“The aim to meet basic needs obviously requires the participation of all in benefits. [...] participation in implementation improves efficiency through the mobilization of local resources. [...] the development of a community’s capacity to plan and implement change will require greater intensity and scope of participation as the project proceeds” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

Institution building NGOs “see the development of participatory local institutions as a necessary vehicle through which development can occur.” They appeared as a result of an “important theoretical development of the 1980s [...] the recognition of the fact that any development takes place within a particular structure of social organization” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

Nelson and Wright (1995) show that “to meet long term goals of self reliance and sustainability control and decision making power may gradually be released to the local organization.” But problems occur in practice very often, because of inadequate training and the organization possibly remaining dependant on outside support. “A viable alternative may be partnership with indigenous organizations.” “Even where well developed organizations do exist, this is no guarantee that they will be effective channels for active and full participation by their members. Local organizations are often open to influence and control by local elites who will then continue to make decisions in their own interests, under the cover of a participatory organizational structure.”

“As the development group (n.b. of NGOs) evolves, participation becomes increasingly central as a means of insuring efficiency, reducing costs and promoting sustainability. However where participation does exist, it seems to be tacked onto existing styles of operation: participation is a means to an end which is predetermined by the external agency” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

### 2.2.3 Power and power relations

The advantages an individual theoretically possesses in his/her quality of being a citizen may as well turn into obstacles set against him/her, when it comes to exercising citizenship, namely – awareness of rights, the capacity to claim his/her rights, level of recognition and respect. All these aspects are related to power.

#### Box 2.2.3.a

**Power distance:** the extent to which inequality (a pecking order or hierarchy) is seen as an irreducible fact of life (Hoecklin, 1995); the extent to which an unequal distribution of power is accepted by members of a society (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001)

In an organization, this conditions the extent to which employees accept that their boss has more power than them, and therefore the extent to which they accept that their boss’s opinions and decisions are right just because he/she is the boss. “A low power distance organizational setting is one where employees accept that their boss has more power and is right only when he/she knows the best way to do something and knows the correct answers” (Hoecklin, 1995). The picture can be easily extended to societal level.

As shown by Narayan (2000), “poor people lack voice and power. They do exercise agency but in very limited spheres of influence. [...] the voices that count most are those of the powerful and wealthy. It is they who make, influence and implement policy. To make a difference poor people must be able to make their voices heard in policy and have representation in decision making forums. This implies changes in power relations and behaviour. Organizations of the poor become very important means to changing power relations. Investing in poor people’s organizations requires shifts of mind-set and orientation among professionals and institutions. [...] Coalitions representing poor people’s organizations are needed to ensure that the voices of the poor are heard and reflected in decision-making at the local, national and global levels.”

A very interesting view over power relations is that found within the feminist framework of power (Wong, 2003), showing all the interdependencies possible between the four main types of power which can basically be described, namely the power-from-within, the power-to, the power with and the power over. The individual holds the power-from-within, it actually represents him, and it is about self-confidence, self-esteem and any other “personal assets” he might have. The power-to regards the capacity to take action in order to produce change – in a word, it is about participation. The power-with means people’s capacity to organize with others and perform collective actions; its meaning leads to the sense of belonging to social networks, of solidarity and strength – in other words, it is about social capital. Finally, the power-over refers to the power balance; it is the power over others. Objectively, the power-over can only be gained by first attaining the other three types of power: self awareness and self confidence, the capacity to make a stand and take action and, most importantly, not to do this alone, but in an organized manner, together with other collaborators.

### ■ Power – empowerment – citizen power

Power is difficult to conceptualize, as it is an abstract term. Therefore, there are various views regarding this term. One way of defining it is given in **Box 2.2.3.b**. It is a useful concept to “explain the social process of interpersonal influence”. This is the individual perspective, but power can be exerted also by groups or organizations, as well as nation level.

#### **Box 2.2.3.b**

**Power:** the capacity of individuals to overcome resistance on the part of others, to exert their will, and to produce results consistent with their interests and objectives (based on Benfari et. al., 1986); the ability ‘to produce intended effects’ in line with one’s perceived interests” (Pettigrew and McMulty, 1995); the ability of an individual to control or to influence others, to get someone else to do something that they would perhaps not otherwise do (Astley & Sachdeva, 1984; Pettigrew & McMulty, 1995)

**Empowerment:** organizational arrangements allowing employees more autonomy, discretion and unsupervised decision-making responsibility – n.b. of an organization (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001); where people seek to provide a service that is truly a common or public good, from which everyone will benefit and no one can be denied access, and to be successful they need to take or be given specific powers of enforcement (Curtis, 1991)

“Participation, if it is to be more than a palliative, involves shifts in power” (within communities, between people and the institutions holding resources and making policies, and within the structure of those organizations).

“The concept of power and the question of how to analyse it has been a central topic of debate in the social sciences since the 1960s. It was complicated further when, associated with participation, ‘empowerment’ was introduced, with the idea that some can act on others to give them power or enable them to realize their own potential.” Power is both experienced in face to face daily relations and as part of systems, thus systematic relations. “How people stand in relation to each other in these systems is described as power. Power is a description of a relation, not a *thing* which people *have*” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

There are 3 models of power currently being used to analyse the different aspects of participation and empowerment, regarding ‘what power is and how it works’.

‘Power to’ – a metaphor of human development, argues that “power can grow infinitely if you work at it, and ‘growth’ of one person does not necessarily negatively affect another”. This may dangerously suggest that power is a personal attribute. “It is a generative power, stimulating activity in each other to realize what capacities and knowledge can be developed in a collective way” (Nelson & Wright, 1995). Rowlands (1992) speaks of a 3-level process: developing confidence and abilities at personal level (undoing the effects of internalized oppression); developing the ability to negotiate and influence close relationships and working collectively to achieve greater impact than each could have alone. And here this model overlaps with the model of ‘power over’, which involves gaining access to ‘political’ decision-making, often in public forums. In some situations, “control of resources has been institutionalized” within that locality or in more distant councils, so marginalizes people face the challenge “to gain treatment as equal partners in a process of development from people in such institutions, so that they have long-term access to resources and decision-making. The expansion of ‘power to’ to the point where they tackle ‘power over’ may be described as the second stage of empowerment”. According to the analyses of ‘power over’, power relations are viewed as “coercive, centered in

institutions of government, although spilling over into wider structures of society” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

Ferguson (1990) introduces the third, ‘decentered’ model of power, asserting that “power is not a substance possessed and exercised by any person or institution conceived of as a ‘powerful’ subject. Power is subjectless and is an apparatus consisting of discourse, institutions, actors and a flow of events”.

Using the ‘power over’ and ‘power to’ models, Rowlands (1992) wonders how empowerment can “be initiated by those who have ‘power over’ others when [...] any notion of empowerment being given by one group to another hides an attempt to keep control”. The author also argues that “this potentially bottom-up concept can be used to perpetuate and disguise continued top-down attitudes and approaches”.

The research dilemma regards “how external agencies can intervene in such a way as to engender ‘power to’ among those subordinated by their own ‘power over’” (Nelson & Wright, 1995). In practice, there has been little change in the top-down reality, because of the ‘normal professionalism’, the ‘normal bureaucracy’, the ‘normal (successful) careers’ (promotion separates power from field realities) and ‘normal teaching’ (transfer from teacher to ignorant pupil). These four elements “combine in top-down standardization and pressures for speedy action. Most importantly there is power. Participation as an empowering process implies loss of central control and proliferation of local diversity. The powerful are threatened with loss of power”, and *normally*, “if lowers participate, it is in activities determined by uppers” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

Four new main practices support the shift towards empowering participation. Local people can even better perform activities that outsiders were supposed to perform (appraisal, analysis, planning, experimenting, implementing, monitoring and evaluation). But this depends on outsiders’ support, by encouraging the community and building people’s confidence. A key element is constituted from the attitude and behavior of the uppers, as empowering the poor “requires reversals and changes of role”.

Interacting with the local elite may lead to leaving out the poor. There are many differences even between groups and categories of people. Facilitators (whether governments or NGOs) are always constrained by time and rushing, which “often means leaving out the peripheral and the poorest, being misled by the less poor, and failing to facilitate an on-going process”.

Power relations can lead to mutual deception by uppers and lowers. “Participation which truly empowers implies a process which is unpredictable. So the more that rigid rules and sequences are followed, the lower the level of participation is likely to be.”

“The greatest danger with participation is that the words will be used without the reality of changed behavior, approaches and methods. The key remains behavior.”

Empowerment “implies widespread changes in bureaucratic procedures and cultures, including participatory management.” Priorities should be determined much more “by and through the analysis and experience of local people, weighted to give voice to women, weak and poor people.” Approaches and methods in training and teaching should consist in “shared learning, peer instruction, problem solving and social settings in which the shy and retiring feel able to contribute, and in which all teaching and training includes experiential learning concerning upper-lower behaviors and attitudes.”

Therefore, the 21st century challenges more the rich and the powerful than the poor and the weak, as it requires reversals and giving things up (wealth, dominance).

### ■ Power, politics and leadership

Organizations are multidimensional entities – political, cultural, social, economic and even technical. “Power and politics are inextricably entwined, affecting human behavior in organizations. [...] political behavior is the practical domain of power in action [...] Some writers believe that much management failure can be attributed to political incompetence, political naïveté and the inability or unwillingness to perform effectively the required political tasks in an organization” (Kotter, 1985; Yates, 1985)

#### Box 2.2.3.c

**Politics:** is about overcoming the problem of resolving situations where different organization members bring different values to their work, and consequently do not share common goals or views yet have to continue to work with one another (Kakabadse, 1983); **in organizations:** refers to those activities undertaken within an organization to acquire, develop and use power and other resources to obtain one’s preferred outcomes in a



situation in which there is uncertainty or an absence of consensus about choices” (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001); the interaction between social actors using power to reach their aims, where the social actors may as well be organizations, not only persons (government, companies, NGOs, CBOs etc.); this interaction can often imply negotiations

“Many observers feel that political behavior plays a more significant role in organizational life than is commonly realized or admitted” (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001) and “most significant organizational decisions were the outcome of social and political forces and were only partly influenced by evidence and rational argument – shaped by the ‘pulling and hauling that is politics’ (Mangham, 1979).

Popular participation or political participation can be a political concern, meaning “only how a larger number of people could be persuaded to get involved in public decision making”. Participatory procedures can bring “newly formed tenants Associations, pressure groups and protest campaigns into contact with those making decisions about them but without them” (Nelson & Wright, 1995). These are not necessarily asked to share in making actual decisions, but they are consulted on policy proposals or asked to help implement them. Participation is essential for the legitimacy of a local government. Thus local councils determine the terms on which people participate whilst using participation to justify the claims to democratic status.

As Nelson & Wright (1995) show, “participation is always risky because it will challenge local power structures”. There is a risk of “creating a parallel structure to that of the state through what amounts to local NGOs. Because these may not be elected they would not be accountable; they can be subject to corruption and are unlikely to persist. [...] such localized participatory structures can rarely exercise any political clout beyond the local area.” Thus, the suggestion would be that “local-level organizations could join together in federations, ‘scaling up’ to carry greater political influence over state policy and draw on wider expertise that that available locally”. The aim “is to institutionalize processes whereby those with newly acquired ‘power to’ can negotiate with those with ‘power over’ in the community and in agencies in ways which are ‘unpickable’ and sustainable when the outsider researcher or development worker has left”.

Sometimes, officials speak of participation, but exhibit a hierarchical behavior. Local authorities tend to adopt a teacher-pupil relationship with the local communities, as opposed to the participatory dialogic relations. Instead of acting as equal partners supporting the people concerned, public institutions (the ‘professionals’) tend to try to retain a privileged position, not empowering the ‘receiver’ of services.

People have power if they are organized. And to become organized, they need a leader. Building capacity means also creating and enabling leadership. The general tendency is to “equate leadership with positions of power, influence and status”. Leadership “appears to be a critical determinant of organizational effectiveness”, from small organizations to multinationals (Huczynski and Buchanan, 2001). The nature of leadership remains yet controversial and full of paradoxes.

#### **Box 2.2.3.d**

**Leadership** - the process of influencing the activities of an organized group in its efforts toward goal setting and goal achievement; it is about influencing the behavior of others (Stogdill, 1950); **out of three perspectives:** an interpersonal process in which one individual seeks to shape and direct the behavior of others, leadership in a social context, in which the members of the group to be influenced are subordinates or ‘followers’ and establishing a criterion for effective leadership in goal achievement

“Power is a critical dimension of leadership, and the two terms are often used with the same or similar meanings: a leader is someone with power, powerful individuals are leaders.” That is why we can define power the same as leadership (see **Box 2.2.3.b**).

Mitlin’s analysis (2001) shows that “the problems of leadership and participation within grassroots organizations cannot be separated from the broader context of state officials’ and politicians’ relations of patronage with community leaders”. The conflicts between members and leaders and the lack of interest in participation can be understood better by highlighting that external groups and community leaders mutually maintain those structures that best serve their interests. This leaves little opportunity for the development of strong accountable relations between leaders and members.

## 2.3 Sustainable community development

Seemingly, the widespread failure of the state makes power move to the people in contemporary developing countries. “The usual claim is that community development is a total approach to development” (Nelson & Wright, 1995).

### Box 2.3.a

**Community development:** the process by which the efforts of the people themselves are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural conditions of communities, to integrate these communities into the life of a Nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress (Nelson & Wright, 1995, taken after a UN definition); BASIC NEEDS + PARTICIPATORY DEVELOPMENT = COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (Poulton & Harris, 1988)

“In practice, community development activity is often confined to a support programme for those communities that have been persuaded that they will get a new classroom, a clinic or whatever, if they make the bricks and carry the sand. In other words, ‘assisted self-help’ has become the essential formula around which the rhetoric of community development is aired” (Nelson & Wright).

In RACD’s view, community development may only take place in dynamic, active communities, which are characterized by a development culture, as RACD calls it. The members of these communities are active people, who take interest in the community’s wellbeing, make proposals and collaborate with the local public authorities and initiate activities for improving community life. Most importantly, these people have a strategic thinking, reacting constructively to their needs. Developed communities have a strong social life, where people meet and discuss what they can do for their community and collaborate in developing various activities.

According to RACD, a community’s development is ensured when people are interested in the welfare of to their community, being attached to it and thus having a strong local identity; when people have a vision of what might be; when people have the sense of responsibility regarding their community’s development, and do not consider only the local administration to be responsible for it, which turns them from passive to active citizens; when people have faith in themselves, being convinced that they can solve or change things in their community; and when people trust the other members of the community, which allows for their collaboration.

RACD considers these to be the elements of a *development culture*, allowing a community to search and give rise to development opportunities. They stand at the basis of responsible civic participation of the members of a community in identifying and solving their problems.

### ■ Criticism brought to community development

Nelson and Wright (1995) present a comprehensive list of criticisms addressed by various authors to the idea of community development, as it is used nowadays.

Administrative effectiveness, as a first argument, regards “the incompatibility of the activities that take place in the name of self-help with the need for rational planning of public expenditure and resource commitment” (Schaffer, 1969).

Social equality is the second argument referring to the fact that “self-help is often socially unjust. [...] when it comes to contributing to [...] development activities, the poor do the work, while the rich reap many of the benefits, particularly from activities such as road building. [...] charges fall more heavily upon the poor who have less of a voice. [...] This, [...] is not necessarily how the participants see it. For some less well off people, a commitment to paying the same as everybody else may be a statement of political equality” (Curtis, 1991).

Politics is a third argument, stating that “community development activity is very prone to ‘political influence’ [...] Self-help groups are ideal organizations for political capture. A group of people wanting something may be seen as a cluster of votes that can be recruited in exchange for a small favor. Public funds for support of self-help are often managed by politicians directly, without the intervention of the civil service, and become ready-made patronage.”

A fourth argument is related to power, showing that “community development ignores that facts of power, and will make no lasting impact until the people are empowered to act

on their own behalf.” NGOs see conscientization “as a process through which outsiders can interact with villagers to raise the consciousness of the people about their condition, leading to various kinds of action. In so far as this action solves problems, the people might be said to have been empowered. Sometimes this process leads people into direct confrontation with previous power holders.”

#### ■ What is to be sustained?

The concept of sustainable development initially appeared in relation to the environmental issues, whereas lately it “has become widely used to stress the need for the simultaneous achievement of development and environmental goals” (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2001). It refers to the commitment to ensuring that people’s needs are met on the long term. Sustainable development basically reaches so many different aspects of development or of human activities that have to be sustained, that is, economic growth or ‘human’ development or achieving social and political sustainability. Ever since the Earth Summit in 1992, we speak of ‘social sustainability’, ‘economic sustainability’, ‘community sustainability’, as part of sustainable development”.

Mitlin and Satterthwaite (2001) state that “[...] the achievement of most of the social, economic and political goals which are part of ‘sustainable development’ requires fundamental changes to social structures including changes to government institutions and, in many instances, to the distribution of assets and income”.

“A discussion of sustainable development might be discussing how to sustain a person’s livelihood, a development project, a policy, an institution (n.b - an organization), a business, a society or some subset of a society (for example a ‘community’), culture or economic growth (in general or for some specific country). It may also be focusing on sustaining a nation, a city or a region” (Mitlin and Satterthwaite, 2001).

#### **Box 2.3.b**

<b>Sustainable:</b> it should not depend on non-renewable resources (i.e. it should not require external resources over a long period say from an international agency, for its continued operation) (Davidson & Peltenburg, 1993)
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## Chapter 3 Justification of methods

This chapter is to present and provide a justification for the research methods used in order to reach the objectives of the present paper. Particularly, this part of the paper will refer to the choice of data sources, the way in which these have been accessed and the choice of the research strategy.

### 3.1 Meeting the objectives of the research

The present research has started building from the **hypothesis** that *a power imbalance between the local government (district municipality), NGOs and community (organizations/CBOs) may have a negative effect over the process of attaining inclusive, sustainable community development.*

To verify the validity of the hypothesis, there are two objectives – a general and a specific one. Attaining the second objective is conditioned by attaining the first one. That is because the specific objective builds on the data obtained after attaining the general objective.

Therefore:

- the **general objective** aims to *assess the power balance between the local government (the District municipality), NGOs and community (organizations/CBOs) in the actual context of Bucharest, Romania*

so as to allow attaining

- the **specific objective**, that is to *build a model of participation, empowerment and support applicable to the Romanian context, to enable a genuine process of inclusive, sustainable community development.*

Before any assessment can be made related to the present Romanian context, especially when it comes to Bucharest, which is the largest and busiest city in the country, it is very important to understand the historic context of this country. The communist regime has deeply influenced the psychology and mentality of the Romanian people, having so many repercussions over the culture and politics of the Romanian nation.

In order to achieve this understanding, secondary research has had to be used, thus approaching the historical, legislative, political and cultural aspects regarding Romania. To this purpose, there have been legislative measures and existing studies to review, while the approach has been based as well on people's reports, on personal experience and observations.

For an accurate assessment of the power balance inclination in Bucharest, as far as the community development process is concerned, all the main parties involved needed to be present in the situation analysis. Therefore, the research has equally focused on the local governments, on the NGOs, as well as on the community and, if there would have been the case, on community organizations or similar institutions found on the spot.

### 3.2 Research strategy

#### 3.2.1 Research methods

The method used for attaining the main goal of the research – that is, to assess the power balance between local government, NGOs and the community (organizations) is the case study. The case study was preferred here, as it covers specific contextual particularities that may prove to be determining factors in the community development process. Not only does the case study show local specific issues regarding institutional policy, politics and organizational culture, but it reveals as well aspects regarding people's mentality.

Educated people tend to have a more open view over things than less educated people, but still, people living in the same country, and especially in the same city, also tend to share certain common views regarding their general situation as a society. From this point of view, of 'acquired' mentality, one should not separate from the very beginning the common citizen from the staff member of an NGO or from the employee of the government/local government. For sure, though, those who hold the most power can afford to have the largest view, as the more power one holds, the more 'horizons' open to him.

Another reason for choosing the case study as the research method was the short time given to it. Bucharest, we may say, is *the* example of urban way of life in Romania, being

the largest city in the country, with a surface of 228 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 2.037.278, with the density of 8935.43 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> (site of Bucharest General Municipality, updated 1996).

However, we must regard both sides of the coin, and realize the shortcomings of this choice of method. As Guaraldo Choguill (1996) underlined, “much research has already been carried out on the general self-help process, usually taking the form of case-studies of specific local communities and actions they have taken. There is, however, a fundamental problem with the case-study approach and that involves the ability to generalize from the results obtained from a single location and a single set of events. The case-study approach has great strengths in its ability to probe in depth into underlying causes of success and failure, as well as assessing the environment within which a set of decisions and actions concerning self-help were taken. [...] Although the results of a single case study may have applicability within its immediate geographical region, it always remains somewhat of a mystery as to whether the conclusions reached are universal or whether they are merely limited observations at a specific location in time”.

### **3.2.2 Data collection techniques**

The data necessary for the case studies was collected in Bucharest.

In order to gather preliminary information regarding the community development process in Bucharest, the data basis of the Romanian Association for Community Development was consulted in search of existing or finalized community development projects, contacts for other NGOs related to this field, materials related to CBOs, including the understanding of meanings, working methodologies and existing legislation. It was also necessary to contact the staff of RACD, in order to request permission to quote some of their materials and to establish further collaboration for the interviews.

Observation would probably have been the most relevant for the case studies, but it would have taken a long time and it would have required special measures to be taken by the observed institutions – especially in the case of local governments (accession permits, some security/protection measures for paperwork taking place within the organization etc).

Therefore, the next best method to be used has been that of the interview, meant to provide the researcher with the particular views of each stakeholder over the tackled issues.

Observation was used as well, to the extent where situations allowed it. However, the absence of some relevant and conclusive observations constituted an inconvenience factor, since interviews can hardly investigate some institutions (especially public authorities) on the spot, considering that most departments lack accurate performance measurements (if any!).

The interviews were semi-structured and mostly based on open questionnaires, with an average duration of 90-100 minutes, depending on the responses given by the interviewees. The number of the interviews also depended on the number of leads and contacts given initially by RACD and afterwards by the other respondents. The construction of the interviews had been done so that it would apply to each different stakeholder (considering also the position of the respondent within the institution and thus in the decision-making process), while basically containing the same main types of questions, in order to achieve a comprehensive and realistic overview of the situation. The interviews were recorded or directly transcribed, depending on the respondent's preference. The data collected from the interviews has been re-organized, classified and then analyzed in correlation with each other and with the previously gathered secondary information, part of which can be found in the theoretical chapter.

Along with the interviews and observation, surveys were also used, based on a questionnaire containing specific questions. These short surveys were meant to verify the common citizens' availability, willingness and interest to offer their time and services on a voluntary basis to an organization/association, as well as the level of trust that regular citizens have with regard to politicians, NGOs and public authorities. The average duration of each of these questionnaires has been of 5 to 7, or maximum 10 minutes, depending on the types of responses received. The questionnaire had been constructed so that it would avoid non-answers, but would allow short, open answers. Taking again into consideration the short amount of time allocated and the large number of inhabitants in Bucharest, the questionnaires have been applied randomly, mainly in the areas where the interviews for the researched institutions took place. Depending on the number of interviews and their

locations, the questionnaires have been applied to 10 to 20 citizens per area, summing up around 100 respondents.

The general interview questions have been placed in ANNEX 1, showing the main issues that have been addressed and formulated into specific questions for each of the respondents. The questions from the citizen poll have been placed in ANNEX 2.

These three techniques provided the research with the primary data, while the secondary data was gathered through the consultation of a number of documents (i.e. local legislation and press, official websites, materials given by the interviewed organizations).

The data collected up to this stage has been further collated and interpreted so that it would meet the first objective of the research.

### **3.2.3 Sources of data - types of information**

Probably one of the most pertinent sources of information regarding the history of NGO development and involvement in social problems and particularly community development issues and, lately, participatory practices, can be found in the World Development Reports. The WDRs employed range from 1990 onwards (when the NGOs began to be mentioned as actors, more or less active in the society) and up to the present year – 2005.

The internet websites, web search findings and literature reviews are all rich sources for best practices of NGO involvement in social development issues and especially community development processes and the evolution of participatory practices for the citizens – possibly enabled by NGO involvement.

The official sources have offered the required and referred legislation, and accurate reports regarding the status of some issues of crucial importance for the studied subject.

The interview and questionnaire respondents are of great value because they offer aspects of the actual situation for the studied cases. Each of the views represents only “part of the truth”, as they are disparate pieces of a much more complex social, political and cultural reality. But attaching all these views to one another is meant to create a broader, more comprehensive and more accurate perspective over this reality, with its strong and weak points and its threats and opportunities for development as well.

### **3.2.4 Respondents**

The respondents constitute a most “valuable asset” of the research, representing a very rich source of information regarding the particular situation in the studied districts.

Mainly, the previewed respondents were leaders and/or staff/members of NGOs dealing with community development issues, directors/chiefs of service of the departments dealing with social/community development issues within the district municipalities and regular citizens found in the area where the interviews for these institutions were to take place. Preferably, the survey was to be applied on citizens directly/indirectly making use of the services provided by the regarded NGOs and district municipalities. In the case where, within the researched districts, some citizen or neighborhood associations/organizations were to be found, their leaders and/or members were to be interviewed as well.

## **3.3 Reviewing the large steps of the research**

The first step consisted in conducting a review of the literature on citizen participation and on community development and the stakeholders involved in general and on the Romanian context in particular. A critical approach of the studied issues has been an element of great importance in order to create a comprehensive overview of the situation and to make it as realistic as possible, under the given circumstances. Another element of high relevance has been the assimilation of the relevant theoretical currents and the particular Romanian features of the process. A literature review has been conducted as well for every other employed concept. Among the main concepts that have been looked at, defined and analyzed, there have been: inclusive and sustainable community development (herewith citizen participation and responsibility), CBOs, NGOs, governance/leadership, corruption vs. transparency, social and political accountability. Other materials, employed as secondary data, regard public management skills (i.e. participatory methods).

The reading materials consist not only in literature reviews (history of NGO involvement in community development processes, best practices and comprehensive theoretical background for all the subjects researched), but also in legislative papers and other official documents (concerning NGOs in Romania, transparency and anti-corruption, participatory democracy – access to information, freedom of expression and participation of citizens etc) and other findings resulting from web search.

The next step consisted in the analysis of the community development process in Bucharest. The starting point has been the main organization in Bucharest dealing with community development issues, that is – the Romanian Association for Community Development. The issues pursued there have been their practices, their place within the local decision making process, the way they are approached by both local representatives and citizens. The major problems, constraints and the enabling factors in the process have been highlighted as well.

The final step of the present research consists in drawing the conclusions and in giving some well-based recommendations, which actually reaches the specific objective of this research. The results of the case studies are indeed quite specific and not entirely extendable to a general level for the entire city of Bucharest. Even so, some main points may be highlighted as common traits and therefore, through extrapolation, the conclusions regarding the community development process in the studied districts of Bucharest may be generalized, to a certain extent, in order to allow building a ‘general’ model of citizen and community participation. Of course, it should be understandable that in such a large city as Bucharest, each district acts or at least should act as a smaller city, administrating its own issues and finances, thus finding itself the best participatory methods for its inhabitants, following the guidelines for participation.

## Chapter 4 Research outcome

### 4.1 Reviewing the research methodology

The present paper is making a statement, trying to show that political rigidity/inflexibility and unwillingness cause implementation and even development problems.

In order to achieve this, the initial idea was to focus on two community development projects, comparing two similar NGOs (and similar programs) and assessing the degree of political support for each of the studied NGOs and thus the level of power, influence and impact of these NGOs in the community development process, to determine whether this impact is due also (or perhaps mainly) to the political support they benefit from or not. Therefore, the research paper would have been based on two case studies: two community development projects of two similar NGOs in Bucharest and the regarded district municipalities.

Revolving around the issue of power, this paper attempts to assess the respective balance inclination between public authorities, NGOs and communities, in order to find eventually viable ways of leveling that balance to the benefit of all parties involved, by empowering the communities as well. One main idea that this paper brings is that the more organized people are, the more power they get to hold. From this point on, community-based organizations get to play their specific roles. In trying to reach such organizations or at least similar ones in such a large city as Bucharest, the research used as starting point the Romanian Association for Community Development (RACD).

Because the actual situation in Bucharest with regard to community development did not allow the initially previewed research conditions to materialize as such, eventually, instead of having two case studies, the research resulted in several such case studies, following the leads given initially by RACD and then by other actors involved.

The duration of each interview has depended on the type and length of responses given by the interviewees, ranging from 30/40 minutes to 60/70 minutes and even around 120 minutes (the longest, with the former executive director of RACD). Accordingly, the longest interview consisted in a maximum of 94 questions, while the shortest number of questions has been 60, and the respondents have not necessarily answered all of them, since the interviews have been adjusted according to the position of the respondent within the respective institution. There have been 10 interviews, out of which only three have been recorded, as the other respondents requested direct transcription, while one of the interviews was completed by email.

For the research to be objective, it needed to take into account all the main stakeholders and their views over the existing problems: NGOs, district municipalities and the community involved. The interviews have completed, for the large part, their projected missions.

The interviews within the district municipalities have shown the hardships encountered in working with the citizens and NGOs, the allocated capacity, their policies and strategy regarding community development and their expectations.

The interviews of the members and leaders of the NGOs and the other researched organizations have investigated their expectations and hardships in the process of dealing with the public authorities, the citizens and similar organizations, and what they perceive to be the participation and implication level as far as the decision making process is concerned.

The short questionnaire upon which the citizen poll was based has been elaborated in the attempt to assess the awareness and implication at community level. By this citizen survey the research has assessed the level of trust that people in Bucharest have in the politicians, public authorities and NGOs, and the reasons for their trust/lack of trust, as well as the degree of willingness and availability of regular citizens to become members of voluntary associations/organizations.

The interviews consisted in questions grouped into five categories.

There have been questions about the interviewee's personal background – to show the motivation of the respondent towards working within that particular organization.

Other questions have dealt with the researched organization, assessing the organization culture and politics and as many aspects related to the organizational arrangements.



Another set of questions has regarded the activities of the respective organization – its priorities, degree of direct work with the communities, projects or programs in development or achieved, and more technical aspects such as planning/design, implementation, coordination, monitoring, evaluation (of performance).

Other types of questions have focused on the relations of the studied organization with other actors, trying to show the determining factors for the specific nature of those relations, to bring out suggestions for improvement and check the awareness level regarding (even the existence of) other organizations.

Another category of questions was meant to show the actual community involvement – degree of awareness related to people's rights, specific problems the communities are facing and ways of assessing these problems, people's willingness to involve in change, ways of community involvement and strategies to involve people from the part of various organizations, measures taken or plans for improving the matter.

In the end, there are the closure questions, regarding the organization's strategies for the future, perception of own organization's influence over other actors and of other actors' influence as well, perceptions as to who are the power holders in the Romanian society, the real changes brought by decentralization and any other suggestions for improvement to the benefit of communities.

The next subchapters are meant to follow the line mentioned above and present in detail the results of the research, according to the answers of all the eleven respondents regarding each set of questions raised during the interviews. Where there will be the case, innovative projects are to be presented in a more detailed manner, as lessons (to be) learned.

Finally, there will be another subchapter presenting the results of the citizen poll comprising 105 completed questionnaires, in an attempt to assess common people's views regarding the main points presented in this paper.

## **4.2 The identity of the respondents and some background information**

The idea of raising this type of questions at the beginning of each of the interviews came on the one hand from a certain personal curiosity to know something about the respondent, the position occupied in the status of functions and his/her actual motivation to work in that particular organization/organizational department. On the other hand, setting these questions came along with the strong belief that the people working 'in service of' regular citizens – especially when it comes to disadvantaged, vulnerable people, groups or communities, should have a certain calling for their job, or at least be motivated to perform it, particularly when they are employees of a municipality or an NGO.

As explained before, the first interview took place at RACD's quarters, in the 1<sup>st</sup> district of Bucharest – an organization founded in the year 1999. The respondent's reason for working in this particular organization has stayed the same since its foundation, that is - closeness to the domain, which actually even determined him to be a founding member of the association as well. To be more explicit, the interviewee is a graduate of Bucharest University, Faculty of Sociology, who had gained a two-year work experience in a research institute before he had the opportunity to participate in the preparatory stage of a large project for community development in Romania. By identifying himself with his activity, the respondent considers this organization as a mechanism or an instrument for using applied sociology, thus contributing to a change for the better.

Since RACD suggested an interview within a community center in the 4<sup>th</sup> district, the next step of the research was to discuss first with the public authority in the respective district, where the interviewee was the head of the Inter-Ethnic and NGO Relations Service. The reason why the respondent had come to work there had been a personal and professional one as well, considering a connection between the nature of the department and his own educational background – presently a student in a master course for European integration. To the respondent, this department is a means for advancing in his career.

At the community center in the 4<sup>th</sup> district, the interviewed person was the coordinator of the center, a young graduate of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance (in 2004), who had been working in the center as a volunteer since 2002 (2<sup>nd</sup> year of study), presently being employed there as a well trained, professional social worker. The reason why the respondent initially volunteered there was that she wanted to learn what social work really meant, and realized that she was suited for the job and chose to stay. The center represents

almost a second home for the interviewee, who can actually do a work that she respects and likes by being there.

I was then recommended a second community center, in the 6<sup>th</sup> district. The interviewed social worker had only been working there for one month and had been a former social worker and coordinator of the previously interviewed community center. The decision to work in this community center had been related to the respondent's desire and will to experiment something new, the center thus representing a possibility to develop the activity of community assistance.

The next interview took place in another NGO situated in the 5<sup>th</sup> district – the Agency for Community Development “Impreuna” (n.b. ‘together’), a Roma ethnicity association. The interviewed person was a program coordinator who had been working there for 2 years, driven by the desire to work directly with people belonging to the Roma ethnicity. In this sense, the organization means freedom and flexibility.

Another recommendation drove the research towards two other interviews within the 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality. The first interview was taken from the head Community Programs Bureau, who came to work there attracted by the opportunity of working with projects. The second interview was taken from the head of Strategies, Programs and Projects Service, who had been determined to work there by the educational background – the Faculty of Socio-Psycho-Pedagogical Sciences, section of Social Assistance.

Another attempt to find any community organization in Bucharest took the research to the 3<sup>rd</sup> district municipality, where the person interviewed was an expert working in the Programs and Development Department.

Based on a recommendation of the previous respondent, the following interview took place within the Pensioners' Association in Bucharest, located within the 3<sup>rd</sup> district. The interviewee was the president of the association, licensed in administrative services, being also one of the founding members of the association. The president of the Pensioners' Association is also a member of the Committee for Social Dialogue within the Prefecture and a member of the Health Insurances' House of Bucharest. The respondent was the one to influence his wife as well to come join the association, performing secretarial and administrative activities. The association has a personal meaning for the respondent, in the sense that it is meant to help the citizens of the capital and particularly the marginalized pensioners and young people.

The final interview was taken from a professor who teaches in a high school situated within the 3<sup>rd</sup> district, and who is also a member of the Romanian Center for Economics Education, the Parents-Teachers Association and the Association for Civic Education. A series of factors have determined the respondent to become a member of these Associations. Among these: the reduced impact that schools have in changing the mentality; the significant influence of parents who pass on/send out, through education and behavioral models, dysfunctional attitudes and values within a democratic society; personal and professional development; willingness to get involved in the creation of communication structures between professional segments in Romania and in other countries with experience in the formation of young people and of the teachers who educate them; the idea and opportunity of implementing within schools educational standards with long term effects in changing the mentality; the idea of involving young people in projects to the benefit of the community and thus shape abilities and habits of cooperation, communication and action within the community. The respondent understands these associations as an action framework for using and developing personal and professional capacities in view of ameliorating the quality of the social environment.

### **4.3 About the researched organizations - some internal issues**

The main idea about this chapter is to show some ‘internal’ elements characterizing the studied organizations. These issues are not necessarily ‘un-public’, but they are related to the internal policy and thus could nevertheless bring a new light over some matters of real interest regarding the present paper. Among these issues we can enumerate the followings: nature of the organization, existence period (supposedly accumulated experience) and reasons for foundation, objectives, organizational structure, perception of representativeness and legitimacy, human resources related issues, motivation, individual vs. team work, leadership related issues, decision-making process, rights, responsibilities

and obligations of staff, financial and material resources, perception of the organization's role in the development context.

This chapter is to present not only the statements of the interviewed people within the studied institutions, but also to explore some provided official materials regarding the nature, scope and activity of the respective institutions.

■ To begin with RACD, it is a non-profit, non-governmental organization founded in January 1999 by a group of 28 people who had participated in a pilot program for community facilitation managed by the World Bank. Although in the beginning, for about 6-7 months, they did not have an actual place to work in, they were determined to make the association work, so they used their personal relations to get access to computers and other resources in order to perform their due activities, until finally project opportunities appeared and gave them the possibility to rent a space for their office. Their present office is the third one, and is situated in the 1<sup>st</sup> district of Bucharest.

RACD's declared mission is to contribute in the development of a strong Romanian and Eastern European civil society, working with poor and disadvantaged communities, in order to increase their capacity of active and responsible implication to influence events happening at local level; by supporting the formation and development of community groups and organizations, RACD aims to determine them to further develop and sustain themselves through their own strengths and achieve self-determination and community welfare. To fulfill its mission, RACD works directly with such communities (village communities, small town communities or neighborhood communities in larger cities), both in Romania and Eastern Europe and also support organizations and institutions that work with these communities.

In view of its mission, RACD has two major strategic orientations. The first is to work directly with poor and disadvantaged communities in Romania in order to promote civic spirit and to develop citizen's capacity to organize themselves and to bring their own responsible contribution to the development of their own community. Secondly, RACD aims to increase the interest and capacity of other organizations (NGOs, public institutions) in Romania and Eastern Europe to develop and implement community development programs oriented towards stimulating civic participation at community level.

The common creed of RACD is that a society can develop only when people gain trust in themselves and in their own kind and assume responsibility for the destiny of the communities within which they live. At the basis of RACD's community development activities stands the way RACD defines and understands community development. According to RACD's vision, „a developed community is first of all a pro-active community, with people prepared to act for the welfare of the community. A community where people's passivity, paternalism and indifference are replaced with collective actions for self and community interest. It is a community where people dare and succeed in controlling and improving their own lives, a community where people are a real and capable partner both for the local public administration and for other institutions which implement development programs”.

Presently, RACD has only 16 members out of the initial number of 28. The explanation for this is that initially RACD has been a plain membership-based organization, a network of community facilitators motivated and trained to do community development. It resembled a consultants' association, with a very high belonging and ownership level. They used almost exclusively internal human resources for project elaboration and implementation. This way, although they used to work very well with outside actors and partners, they had strong delimitations for 'outsiders' and were not interested or willing to attract new members. Lately, though, RACD has been going through a reformation process, involving not only internal and external changes and transformations, but also fears, suspicions, frustration, so that some of the members could no longer identify themselves with the association itself.

Apart from members, RACD has six full-time employees, two part-timers (i.e. the accountant) and a number of collaborators (up to over 20), depending on the project. In addition, RACD systematically attracts volunteers. The organizational structure of RACD consists in the general assembly, the board (4 + 1 president), the executive director working closely with the managerial team (programs' coordinators and financial director) and the collaborators (project teams – trainers, facilitators, consultants, depending on the project to be implemented). The former executive director of RACD clearly feels that the number of

employees is not enough for the work they need to do and which is overdemanding. To a certain extent, the number of employees would be enough for the projects running at present, but not in general. They are aware of the fact that, in order to be competitive on the NGO market, prices need to be kept at the lowest levels possible, so they can not afford to recruit more employees. Besides, the law imposes them to keep some special functions on the personnel scheme, such as a labor protection inspector. These imposed functions require special qualifications and need to be financed by the organization itself. Regarding the motivation of employees, as compared to that of the members, which has decreased to some degree, as shown before, it would seem that the employees are more motivated, drawing from the low labor force fluctuation within the organization.

The criteria for admission as a member of RACD consist in having an affinity towards the mission, principles and values promoted by RACD: participative approach, trust in the capacity of people to escape the dependency on public administration and to change the nature of their relations with the public authorities, thus to change from passive spectators into active controllers. In order to attract employees, the organization uses specific and strategic status charts, being particularly interested in attracting people already working in the NGO sector. For this, jobs are never publicized, appearing only on the discussions lists and forums within the NGO network. The law only imposes some specific authorized functions, such as an authorized accountant. For the rest, the positions within the firm are established by the market and by the organization's aspiration to performance.

The balance between individual and team work inclines towards team work, with a 70% to 30% dominance, but even when it comes to individual work, it is done after a pre-agreement with the other members of the team.

A leader within the organization (such as the president or a member of the board) is elected through vote by the general assembly. A leader of RACD should prove a good understanding and knowledge of the organization's philosophy and of the principles of management, organization and functioning of an NGO, and should have as well good connections with the NGO sector. Other than these, the person should have true leadership inclinations and qualities: vision, strategic thinking, more or less missionary, the ability to listen.

As far as the decision-making process is concerned, on the part of executive management decisions are built in-group and gain strength by being confirmed by the decision group. The decision-making processes do not necessarily involve all the three decisional levels. There are as well unilateral decisions taken by the board or the general assembly, but they are still not individual.

Regarding the rights, obligations and responsibilities of members and employees, they are different. Those of the employees are established through law, while those of the members are established through the organization's statute. Thus, as a member, one is entitled (but not obliged) to participate in meetings and in the organization's activities, to have access to information regarding the organization's activities, to use the right as a member of RACD in the sphere of other (even personal) relations, to elect and be elected in the leadership layers of the organization. As obligations, members need to respect the status of RACD, to pay their subscription to the organization. As an employee of the organization, one has the right to a salary, to undiscriminating treatment, to labor protection, to vacation and to a labor contract. The obligations are stated by law as well.

RACD's financing sources come almost 100% from project financing; they receive projects from other organizations or foundations. The only stable source of income consists in the subscriptions of the members. Apart from subscriptions, RACD has two other own sources of income, which are more or less incidental, thus unstable. On the one hand, RACD provides services on a contractual basis to other organizations or entities, at their request (helping a project, training, courses, consultancy). This is a direction that RACD is planning to develop, in order to make it a more certain and permanent income source. On the other hand, RACD receives donations and sponsorships from physical persons and firms. On the total, the revenues from subscriptions, service provision, sponsorships and donations gather up only 3 to 4% of the total budget of RACD.

The respondent feels that RACD is representative and legitimate in the sector of community development, being a point of reference in the field and a large and powerful organization.

When asked about his own perception of RACD's role in the context of Romanian social and particularly community development, the former executive director underlined the

followings: facilitator/enabler, awareness raisers, providers of knowledge, guidance, training - basically expertise in the domain of community development, capacity-builders. Apart from these, not only that they are already mediators in the relations between the communities they work with and the local public authorities, but they also set this as an objective, understanding mediation as offering support to community organizations to build partnership relations with as many other organizations that may have complementary objectives and roles. By this, they also insure, to a certain extent, post-project sustainability. RACD supports the formation of community groups or organizations and helps them get and stay in contact with other (local) powerful NGOs, which may give them assistance when needed. They do post-project monitoring, but in an un-systematic way, because they would need extra financial resources. Therefore, they only ensure monitoring during the implementation period and at the end of the project. Meanwhile, evaluation is performed by other entities, and lobbying is only an idea yet.

■ Moving on to the 4<sup>th</sup> district municipality, the Inter-Ethnic and NGO Relations Service belongs to the General Direction for Social Assistance and Childcare (GDSAC). It is only situated in the building of the Municipality, not being subordinated to it, but to the Local Council of the 4<sup>th</sup> district. Still, the department depends financially on the mayor of the 4<sup>th</sup> district, since it draws its funds from the budget. The department is a new one, as it came into being on January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2005, along with the formation of GDSAC.

The main objectives of the studied department are to establish relations with various NGOs active in the field of social assistance, childcare and inter-ethnic relations (social integration of children belonging to the Roma ethnicity or to other ethnicities).

The organizational structure for the employees is 4 + 1 head of service. The head of service, who was interviewed, considers that there are not enough employees to complete the tasks of their department, but declares that, anyhow, for the moment, working conditions are inappropriate even for the four of them: not enough computers, no appropriate internet connection. They are expecting to be moved to another office, in a new building, where they would have all the necessary resources. The head of service declared that the employees are not enough motivated, especially from the financial point of view, adding up to the present lack of appropriate working conditions and resources: “the employees will never be motivated as long as they receive money from the budget”. Since the department focuses more on research, what really matters is the individual – the ideas and their implementation. Of course, the respondent added, there is always need of information, and this involves the whole team.

When asked about the perception of the department’s role in the social and community development context, the interviewee declared that they are “only in the beginning, both as a direction and as a service”. On the future, they may be facilitators and plan/design programs.

■ The community center in the 4<sup>th</sup> district is a project of the Ratiu Foundation Romania, started in 2001 under the name Bucharest Community Center. Initially, the Ratiu Foundation (RFR) used to help children and adolescents sick of leukemia and cancer, in collaboration with two large hospitals in Bucharest – one situated in the same district, very close to where the center is now, the other in the 2<sup>nd</sup> district. In time, with the enlargement of the foundation, a diversification of its activities became most desirable, and thus, an evaluation of the situation in the area was made, with the help of the partner hospital in the 4<sup>th</sup> district. As a result, Bucharest community center was founded, addressing its activities to the disadvantaged groups in the city, and particularly to those in the 4<sup>th</sup> district.

RFR’s vision is to create a better life for all the members of a community so that they enjoy their lives and are able to decide upon their future. Its mission consists in building up a multicultural, non-discriminatory and open to equal opportunities community life structured around each member’s needs and aspirations. RFR aims at meeting the disadvantaged people’s specific needs in order to improve their quality of life within urban communities. To achieve these, RFR has turned to some strategic development directions. Among these: creating and implementing a culture favorable to community and family life; creating specific community care services to reduce the negative impact of socio-economic change on the disadvantaged people, identifying the financial, human and material resources for developing and expanding present services.

The community center is a project meant to implement a model of community development to help disadvantaged groups and vulnerable people in the area (within the community) to solve their problems and further orient themselves towards their future

needs. Thus, the project is an attempt to help people help themselves, by involving the community in local matters and people in community life. The general idea is to create a support network within the community to help people solve their different problems in an easier way. Among RFR's objectives we find as well some of the center's large objectives, among which: identifying and solving the problems of marginalized people living within a community, initiate and develop specific community care programs for disadvantaged people, create and provide community services and activities to meet specific community demand, educate, inform and train community members, staff and volunteers working for community care, develop initiatives for voluntarism within the community, create and develop partnership and cooperation between non-governmental organizations, local authorities and institutions.

The center is situated in a house owned by the Ratiu foundation. They own up-to-date equipment and materials (e.g. Pc net, multi-media and didactic materials) which enhance occupational therapy and development opportunities for both children and adults.

The center has now only one employee – the interviewed coordinator. The foundation plans to bring two more employees to the center in September 2005, since one person is by far not enough to deal with all the problems the center needs to take care of. The center coordinator declared herself to be enough motivated to work there, both as people she works with and activities she performs and as payment. She personally feels that the community center is representative and legitimate for the community with which it works.

As far as the decision-making process is concerned, the coordinator takes most of the decisions, but larger problems are often presented to the foundation.

The center's resources come for the most part from the foundation, but also from community resources and sponsorships. In the case of sponsorships, the center usually applies for them. Other than financial resources, the center also applies for sponsorships consisting in material resources to redistribute them within the community it works with, such as books and notebooks from printing houses to give to the children in schools or to those coming to the center. The coordinator of the center declared that some people ask for their help, but the center mostly assists those people who frequent the center. Other means used by the center to assess people's needs are social inquiries and direct discussions with people in the community.

About the perception of the center's role in the context of community development in the district where it is active, the coordinator of the center underlined the roles of facilitators/enablers, awareness raisers, entry points and providers of knowledge and guidance. The center also provides internship stages for students and specialists in the field of social assistance and community care.

■ The Ghencea Community Center in the 5<sup>th</sup> district came into existence in 2004, following a partnership between the Princess Margaret of Romania Foundation and the Saint Archdeacon Stephan Association, where the vicar is the president of the Association. The reason for the center's foundation was the idea of supporting disadvantaged people within the local community (in this case, the Ghencea Parc Parish). The work office of the center has been set at their disposal by the parish, on a contractual basis.

The declared mission of the Ghencea Community Center is to build inside the Ghencea Parc parish a strong and autonomous community, capable of finding solutions on its own to the problems it faces. The center addresses its activities to a number of 390 direct beneficiaries each month, providing a large series of services, among which: training for health education, training for civic and juridical education, juridical counseling, community and social assistance for the elderly.

The organizational structure consists in three employees working together with at least around 20 volunteers. The volunteers may be coming from the specialty faculty or they may be community workers (i.e. kook and kitchen workers, accountant). There is a center coordinator, a social worker, and there is a jurist from the part of the foundation. Still, the center coordinator considers that the employees are not enough, but they are sufficiently motivated. Team-work is dominant as compared to individual work, and the team is also the one to take the decisions. Since the center is viewed as a point of support for the local community, the center coordinator considers it representative and legitimate for the community in the parish.

The center's financer is the Princess Margaret of Romania Foundation, and it receives financial and material resources from sponsorships and donations as well. The center applies for these means of support, particularly based on partnerships within the

community. The respondent perceives the center's role in the context of community development within the parish to be that of entry point.

■ The "Together" Agency for Community Development is a non-governmental organization founded in 1999 by its present leader. There was a personal reason for its foundation, that is, the founder's independence. Their offices are situated in a house rented from a physical person.

The agency's stated mission is to keep and reinstate the Roma people's personality, in view of recognizing them as a people and as an ethnic and national minority, through activities of research, documentation and propagation, elaboration and implementation of social policies to the benefit of Roma people. The main objectives of the agency are as follows: develop Roma communities and processes of community development, in the context of civil, social, political and economical rights; identify studies, research projects and cooperate within projects for comprehensive development of Roma communities, ran by various Associations, research and educational institutes, governmental and non-governmental organizations in Romania and other countries; participate in the elaboration, implementation and evaluation of some specific programs for comprehensive community development, attained with the participation of Roma collectivities from different localities in Romania and other countries.

The agency has in total 24 employees and only 1 founding member. The organizational structure consists in: executive director, director council, public relations representative (Human Resources Department), project coordinators (programs department), accountant and expert accountant (finance department). There are also 18 collaborators, 4 consultants and 2 volunteers. The interviewee considers that the agency has a sufficient number of employees, all motivated by their work. Individual work prevails over team-work. She feels that the organization is definitely representative and legitimate for the communities they work with. The decisions within the agency are taken at all levels - individual, group and leadership.

The agency only receives financial resources, exclusively on project basis, from various embassies, the World Bank, the European Union (Phare Program). The respondent's perception of the agency's role in the context of Romanian social and community development is that of facilitators/enablers, coordinators, awareness raisers, entry points, providers of knowledge, guidance, training - basically expertise in the process of community development, capacity-builders, mediators, monitoring, evaluation and lobby.

■ The first studied department within the 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality is an office within the Direction of Consultancy in Project Management, directly subordinated to the mayor. It came into existence in the year 2000 (while the direction was established only in 2003), to deal with projects for non-refundable financing.

The main objectives of the department consist in activities promoting the image of the district municipality in view of attracting non-reimbursable financing and sponsorships from the local community and not from the European Union.

The structure of the department consists in five employees and one head of office. Among the employees there is one representative of the Roma community, who is actually a counselor for Roma people's problems. The head of office considers the number of employees is sufficient, but they are not enough motivated from the financial point of view. Team-work is dominant within the department.

The respondent perceives the role of the department in the context of social and community development to be that of facilitator, awareness raising factor, provider of information and guidance, mediator, lobby and post-project sustainability through monitoring.

■ The second researched department within the 2<sup>nd</sup> District municipality is the Strategies, Programs and Projects Service, established in December 2004 through a decision of the local council, to which it is directly subordinated. The service initially belonged to the municipality, being a service for social protection and handling only programs and relations with NGOs - that is until the year 2001, when it passed under the subordination of the local council. Presently, it is part of the General Direction for Social Assistance and Childcare. The respondent explained the origins of the GDSAC. At the time when the present service was still a service for social care, there was another direction especially created for childcare. This childcare direction functioned as well as an office for the relations with the NGOs. In January 2005 though, the childcare direction and the service for social care became united into the GDSAC of the second district.

Presently, the main objectives of the studied department consist in the elaboration of strategies, programs and projects in view of raising extra-budgetary financing and it also handles the relations with various NGOs in their area of activity.

According to the organization chart, the department is supposed to have eight employees and one head of service, while the actual number of employees working in the department at present is three, plus the head of service. This is also the reason why the respondent considers it an insufficient number of employees. About their motivation, the respondent considers it medium. Individual and team-work coexist in the department to approximately the same extent.

When asked about the perception of the department's role in the context of social and community development within their district of activity, the head of service identified the roles of coordinators, awareness raising factors, providers of information and training, mediators, lobbying and post-project sustainability through monitoring and evaluation.

■ The Programs and Development Department within the 3<sup>rd</sup> District municipality also subordinates to the local council of the district, and not to the municipality apparatus. It was established in 2001, following a decision of the National Government, in view of identifying financing opportunities, by attracting NGOs and other partners to develop common programs and projects to the benefit of the community in the district.

The department is supposed to have a number of nine employees plus one head of department. Presently, though, there is no head of department and the actual number of existent and working employees is seven. Still, the interviewed expert considers this to be a sufficient number of employees (they collaborate as well with the service for coordination of education), but that they are not enough motivated. For this, she suggests more courses and training opportunities, and a significant increase of salary. The department also offers internship stages for students from specialty faculties. The predominant type of work is team-work.

The respondent perceived the role of the department in the context of social and community development within the district to be that of: facilitator, coordinator, awareness raiser factor, entry point, provider of information, mediator, monitoring and evaluation.

■ The Pensioners' Association in Bucharest has its office in the 3<sup>rd</sup> district of Bucharest, having a filial in each district of Bucharest. It is located within a building comprising over 100 other institutions. The members pay their subscriptions and thus they gather the required amount of money to pay the rent and phone bill for the office. Twenty-four pensioners founded the Association in 1990. Presently, it counts up to 25 000 members and is lead by a president. The president is elected by the members for a period of 2 years, in a conference with over 100 members. The association also has a vice-president and three secretaries. They also benefit from 'outside' voluntaries. At the head of the organizational structure there is the association's conference, the association's committee (organized in committees specialized on different problems), the executive bureau and the censor's committee. Bucharest counts around 500 000 pensioners and over 50% of them are at the lower limit of survival.

The association has the status of a union (member of the Union of Syndicates in Bucharest) and is affiliated to the National Federation of Pensioners' Syndicates in Romania, but has its own functional statute. This statute is a factor that gives them the opportunity to have periodical meetings with the public authorities. The main objective of the association is to involve the large mass of pensioners into useful and meaningful activities to the benefit of all citizens, by improving their living conditions. For this, the respondent strongly believes that the association is representative and legitimate for the community in which it is active.

Any person can become a member of this association (according to the statute of the association) – pensioners from all systems of pensions (state, army, cooperative, private etc.) and other categories of citizens, no matter their nationality, gender, age, political and religious beliefs. In order to attract new members and keep its present members, the association collaborates with different entities, in order to provide them with various facilities. Another strategy used by the association in that sense is to attract sponsorships. Among their regular sponsors, there are some well-known banks in Romania, such as the Commercial Bank. The syndicate members offer themselves moderate sums of money and they receive material resources as well. Another example of help given is that of collaborating with the Direction for Social Insurances in Bucharest in order to make a



statistical study regarding the centenarians in the capital, in view of providing them with material help, and particularly nourishments.

Among the rights of the association's members, there are: the right to elect and be elected in leading positions within the association, to participate in the Association's meetings and activities and to be informed with regard to these matters, to address requests or proposals to the higher hierarchical members in order to defend his own rights, to benefit from the association's activities, aids and service provisions. Their main obligation as member is to unite their forces to determine the central public authorities ensure, by rule of law, an optimal level of pensions in relation to the salaries and the costs of life. They are obliged to know, respect and apply the principles, values and aims of the association, to promote its activities and regularly pay their subscription. The decision-making process takes place at group session level, and regularly in plenary sessions together with the House of Pensions and the House of Health.

The association raises its material and financial resources out of the monthly subscriptions of its members, from material and financial donations offered by members, and by other physical persons and juridical organizations, from resources coming from the local budgets or other legal sources such as sponsorships or business firms – offering material help, particularly confections and nourishments, especially during holiday periods. Any kind of financing from any political entity (whether it is party, association, alliance or else) is strictly forbidden. The association requests all these types of support itself.

The president of the association perceives its role in the context of social development in Romania to be that of facilitator, awareness raiser, entry point, provider of guidance and mediator.

■ The National Association for Civic Education is a young NGO, founded in 2005. The respondent considers that the members are far too few to deal with all the matters the association is up against.

When asked about the association's representativeness and legitimacy, the respondent stated that these are structures which mobilize human and financial resources and direct them to certain objectives that are common or complementary with those of the educational systems, of the organizations from the business environment. They particularly address their activities to young people, a fact which justifies their existence on a long term, through their disseminative effects.

As criteria of admission in the layers of the association, professional formation in the domain is a key issue taken into account, and so are the recommendations received from other members. Regarding the strategies used in order to attract new members, the Association establishes regional centers, promotes its identity, objectives and activities on the website ([www.cree.ro](http://www.cree.ro)), establishes and keeps direct contact with high school and school boards, as well as relations of collaboration with the structures of the inspectorates and of the Ministry of Education, organizes publicized contests for teachers and students, summer schools and internships.

The association is mainly based on voluntary work, but there is also payment for training, and therefore the members feel enough motivated, since the membership ensures them professional development, experience and opens so many learning and career opportunities.

The level of individual work within the association is of about 30%, so there is mostly team-work. The decisions are taken in group, or through convocations for decisions related to projects and programs in development, through organizing events or through recommendations.

The association generally works with grants received from the mother organization, that is the National Council on Economic Education (NCEE) in USA, or from the USA Embassy, the American Cultural Center and local economic agents for regional and national events. The Ministry of Education and Research brings its own contribution to the Association's projects. The resources received by the organization are financial, material (e.g. manuals) and work charts used by the mother organization, or the economic agents provide financial resources and services.

The respondent perceives the role of the association in the context of social development in Romania to be that of awareness raiser, guidance, training, post-project sustainability and provider of information.

Looking at the case studies, it becomes obvious that all the enumerated organizations and institutions' departments are relatively new. Apart from the Pensioners' Association, which

came into existence almost immediately after the Revolution, no other studied entity has had more than 7 years of existence. Even if the studied departments had functioned before under different structures, still their present objectives are relatively newer and more service and people oriented. An important stress is apparently laid upon team-work and group decision-making, and even more on attracting and stimulating voluntary work.

Leaving aside the self-explanatory given answers, it should be underlined that in all studied cases, the more or less directly declared objective is that of bringing community development 'to the stand', only the understanding of the concept is not always unitary, in some cases the differences being quite significant. Still, all researched entities have declared themselves representative and legitimate for the 'communities' they work with.

#### **4.4 About the projects and activities of the researched organizations**

The present chapter is meant to assess the degree of direct work with the community, to present the main programs, projects and activities included in the strategy of each of the studied organizations. There will be a more detailed approach of those projects and activities that are considered to constitute a particular interest for the present paper. Other than this, the chapter will reveal issues related of the technical parts of the projects, such as design, implementation, coordination, monitoring, evaluation, financing sources and also perceptions regarding the degree of meeting the needs of the community and means of assessing this certain degree.

■ RACD works directly with the community, most of the times. In this sense, RACD respects a set of principles and premises: in any community there is a group of people interested in assuming an active role to improve the life in their community; the development and prosperity of a community are determined first of all by the 'quality' of its members, by the degree to which they cooperate and actively involve in identifying and solving their problems; a durable change at community level is based on a certain type of 'mentality', which is why community development approaches need to concentrate on forming values and attitudes, on forming a participatory community culture; the community development process is a complex one, requiring and a medium and long term intervention along with various abilities from the people practicing it; no matter the problems that the members of a community center upon, the community development intervention needs to have in view first of all building capacities and abilities at the level of organizations and of persons involved.

Presently, RACD has three programs in development: community development program, training and consultancy program in the field of community development and program for promoting community development and influencing public decisions.

Regarding the community development program, its general aim is to develop at local level long-term programs in view of creating active and dynamic communities, capable to define their own priorities and working together to improve community life. RACD defines its central area of activity to be working at community level and supporting the formation and development of community groups and organizations capable to define their local development needs and to mobilize their internal and external resources in order to solve those needs. Within this program, there are five specific approaches: community facilitation, active community school, financing program for community groups and organizations and cultural facilitation.

Community facilitation is defined by RACD as a process of mobilizing the members of a community and supporting them to organize in view of solving community problems. It is thus a long-term process that implies finding active and responsible persons within a community, motivating them to assume an active role in the community, bringing them together and forming a community group that will strategically and creatively think about solving community problems.

Active community school is a project that aims at changing the schools' working style, by developing the schools' competences to form or shape, along with more technical competences (like writing, reading, calculating etc.), responsible civic attitude for both children and adults in the community environment they belong to. This process implies supporting schools in developing and implementing a community educational policy. Within this framework, RACD has developed an optional curricula called Community Development and has ensured its implementation in over 15 schools.

The financing program addressed to community groups and organizations is another instrument used by RACD (financing community projects) in view of helping the growth, consolidation and development of both formal and informal community organizations. According to RACD, such an instrument, carefully used, may contribute to the increase of internal cohesion of community groups, of community members' motivation to initiate other community programs as well and of the degree of trust that community members have in the members of the community group, and also to the recognition and valorization of the community group by the local public administration.

Cultural facilitation is an approach using art (especially theatre and visual arts such as painting and photography) as a means of support for community members to reflect over their community and thus better understand the needs they are confronted with. It is a means of making the community become (more) aware of the problems existing at local level.

The program for training and consultancy in the field of community development has a multiple goal. It aims at developing the capacities of community leaders from the communities RACD works with, at developing other NGO's capacities to work with and within communities, and at offering assistance to other organizations or institutions that wish to implement community development programs. Within this strategic orientation, RACD offers a wide range of training courses: participative strategic planning, programs for forming community facilitators, resource mobilization, fund raising, financing applications' elaboration, the formation and functioning of community organizations, management of community projects.

The aim of the program for the promotion of community development and influencing public decisions is to increase the number of persons and institutions that recognize the value of community development principles and that wish to develop programs in this direction. In addition, it aims at developing the capacities to work within communities for persons and organizations from the regions where RACD does not work directly.

The projects to be implemented are chosen and prioritized by RACD according to these strategic directions that the association has set for itself. Moreover, RACD's strategic levels of intervention are the local community, the regional or county level, the national level and the international level (Eastern Europe). In addition, RACD defines as its areas of intervention the community as a whole, community groups and organizations, community leaders, children and schools, and there are two new directions of intervention, which are local public administration and economic development. For these last two areas, RACD aims to develop a coherent methodology and to test it at the level of some pilot communities.

There are specialized people assigned for project design and planning. Still, project planning has already entered a certain standardized pattern, which almost anyone working on that respective project should be able to apply, of course by adapting it to the specific local needs. Project elaboration is initially discussed at team level, to check whether the project is in accordance with RACD's strategy. Moreover, RACD has elaborated a community facilitation manual which helps the team in the matter. The projects are implemented by the project team, and there are people who are part of more than one project team. Project coordination is made by the management team, which is active in Bucharest. Project monitoring lays in the duty of the coordinator as well. There is an evaluation process at organizational level; the executive director and the board draw an overall analysis of the entire organization at the end of each year and present the results to the entire team; this way, they know which projects are to be continued, which are to be stopped, where there is need for improvement.

An overview of the results that RACD has obtained by developing and implementing several projects within these strategic directions, shows: interventions in over 90 rural communities in Romania (community facilitation, technical assistance, training, micro financing, internship visits etc.) and supporting the formation, functioning and development of over 60 community groups and organizations presently capable to mobilize community resources to identify and solve local problems. Part of these community groups/organizations now continue their activity without the support of RACD and some of the community groups have transformed into NGOs. RACD has supported the formation and development of over 40 community organizations (NGOs) in the community where it has intervened. RACD has had interventions in communities in over 13 counties in Romania. The community groups supported by RACD have developed and implemented

over 160 projects for improving the communities they live in. They have realized these projects either with internal resources (mobilized at local level) or through external resources (financing coming from RACD or other financing institutions). Over 400 persons have participated in the training programs given by RACD, and the organization has organized over 130 training events (over 400 training hours) for community leaders and practicing professionals in the field of community development.

RACD has systematically contributed to promoting the field of community development in Romania and Eastern Europe, thus contributing to the formation and functioning of three organizational networks active in the field: RURALNET – the national network of organizations active in the field of community development in Romania, CEE-CDN – the Central and East-European Community Development Network, which brings together 16 organizations active in the field of community development in Central and Eastern Europe) and CEE CN – the Central and East-European Citizenship Network, reuniting over 30 organizations active in the field of promoting democratic citizenship in Central and Eastern Europe.

RACD has achieved the development of a new methodology regarding the promotion of civic competences throughout schools' curricula – by implementing the course of Community Development as an optional discipline developed by RACD within the Active Community School program. In order to promote this approach, RACD has built partnership relations with the Ministry of Education and with the County School Inspectorates.

Last, but not least, RACD's competences in the field of community development are known, recognized and appreciated at national and international level, by working in partnership with over 30 non-governmental organizations and institutions from Romania and Europe.

Until the year 2005, the greatest amount of financing that RACD received came from the United States (almost 40%), either directly from a foundation, or through a partner organization in Great Britain. Since the beginning of 2005, RACD has received financing for five projects in development from the European Union - Gruntvig, PHARE (over 37%). Other quoted financers of RACD are The Balkan Trust for Democracy, The Resource Center for Ethno-cultural Diversity, The Center for Rural Assistance, The Foundation for and Open Society, The World Bank, The Government of Romania, ALLAVIDA – UK, The Embassy of Canada. To these other financers add up to form the total amount of financial resources of RACD, along with donations and contributions, bank interests and members' subscriptions.

The organization does not offer material support, but instead stresses the idea of micro financing for community projects. RACD uses this as a financing line with a training role for inexperienced community organizations or groups. Through this instrument, these organizations learn how to apply for a financing opportunity, so that the application is good and corresponds to the financer's requests and objectives, and they learn as well how to report correctly to their financer.

RACD usually works with projects offered by other partner organizations. The community rarely applies for a project. Many of the projects are follow-ups, in the sense that RACD has already worked within those communities, with those groups or organizations. Therefore, these are projects for building and strengthening the capacity of those groups. An example given was that of financial management. Many of these groups have no financial experience, or not even an accountant, and thus they would not be able to deal with a possible financing opportunity. Usually, the Association would take a small group of such community organizations (not more than 30) that they have already worked with before and out of these, they would select 18. Afterwards, RACD would send each of these 18 organizations an invitation to participate in a project. Only then do those community organizations apply for participating.

The respondent is convinced that RACD corresponds to the interests and needs of the communities where it is active, although perhaps this fact is not so obvious from the very beginning, when it comes to a new community to work with. This happens because people do not understand very well what exactly is that RACD offers them, that is, community facilitation. It is a long-term process, and usually it takes around four months for this support to become obvious, along with a real awareness and understanding of their own needs by the community members themselves, who would finally get involved in the process.

For evaluating the needs of the people living in the communities it works with, RACD encourages the community itself to analyze its own needs. This implies the formation of strong civic groups or organizations; it is a participative process of strategic planning and analysis, and it is a course held by RACD with all its beneficiaries. RACD's mission is generally determined by a need which has been evaluated and confirmed for many times. It is the need for people to have a more intense associational life, which would make them get involved more actively and responsively in the process of changing something at the local community level. This is a general issue that cannot be contested, since it has been proven by a large number of studies, and it stands at the basis of all RACD's programs as a dominant element.

The priorities of the organization are established according to RACD's strategy, the central action area of which is to form and develop community development groups and organizations. For this, there are various approaches. Usually, financers request co-financing, and the projects that gain priority are generally those where there is still need for something more to make them complete. Probably one of the weakest points in this area in Romania is that influencing public policies weighs the least, both at public institution or different other organizations level, and at financers level.

■ The interviewed department within the 4<sup>th</sup> District municipality only works directly with the community when it organizes actions for 'the needy' of the district, which usually happens on Christmas or Easter, or other such occasions, when they try to attract sponsorships to create gift packages for those people. For the rest, they work with and through NGOs. In this sense, the department attempts to establish collaboration in the social field, such as closing a convention for institutionalized children, through which they may organize for example computer courses.

A staff member from the Programs Department presently works on a project in development, in collaboration with a foundation. They have obtained financing from the Ministry of Labor in order to build special, protected social houses for people with disabilities, in view of their social reintegration.

The head of service presented a detailed brochure of the Phare Civil Society 2001 Program showing the results obtained by the NGO sector with European support, to serve as an example and incentive for other NGOs and for local authorities to cooperate with them.

The brochure presents, among other successful projects or components of the program, the network working for the citizen, called Citizens' Advice Bureaus (CAB), meant to encourage citizen participation in community life, by first offering better access to information regarding their rights and duties, as well as advice for identifying ways to solve problems they are facing. The CABs function in both urban and rural areas and are spread all over the country. In Bucharest, there are CABs in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> districts, and there is a National Association of the Citizens' Advice Bureaus (NACAB).

Then, there is the component for Civic Education and Independent Professional Media. This is meant to strengthen the NGOs in the field of democracy, human rights and rule of law, through civic education projects with national or regional impact, targeted at children and youth, and projects strengthening and developing the independent and professional media.

There has also been an information campaign regarding fundamental human rights – the project called "Know Your Rights" ran by the Legal Resources Center (LRC). One of its aims has been raising the awareness of the youth regarding their fundamental rights in view of forming a civic attitude and democratic behaviors. The educational activities were carried out in the cities of Bucharest and Cluj-Napoca.

Regarding the projects' design/planning, there is a special service called the Programs Service, where they have one colleague who performs this role in collaboration with the organization with which they develop the program. For the project monitoring, there is a monitoring service assigned for this job, belonging to the programs direction. There is an individual evaluation for each employee at the end of each year, but with regard to project evaluation within the institution, the respondent answered that the department's work is "only at the beginning, for the moment", thus having only projects in development, but none accomplished.

The department searches financing sources for the projects, since "it is difficult to get these funds from the local budget". As financing sources, the interviewee mentioned Phare,

various ministries, richer NGOs. They would not know yet if the department would search for other sources as well, because for now they are “at the beginning”.

For offering its support, “being a social direction, the staff approximately knows what the needs of the citizens are and they are thus able to localize those people”, especially when they have any kind of sponsorship, even material resources (nourishments etc.).

Asked whether he considers that the department legitimately represents the needs of the citizens in the district, the head of service again underlined that they are only beginning their work, but that they should be representative. In addition, when asked what are the methods used by the department to assess people’s needs, such as surveys for example, the respondent stated that “the needs are very deep”, but they still do not use any such methods, since the department does not even have available resources for the matter.

Eventually, the respondent informed that the department sets its priorities based on “social criteria”, but that the directors are those making the decisions.

■ The Community Center in the 4<sup>th</sup> district belonging to the Ratiu Foundation Romania works directly with the community members. As a project of the foundation, the center presently has more programs in development. Among these programs, there are the program for children placed in maternal assistance, developed in collaboration with the Childcare direction of the 4<sup>th</sup> district; the program for preventing school abandon, developed in collaboration with two schools in the area; the adolescents’ club; the seniors’ club; game therapy; the club of the unemployed. Starting from September 2005, the community center will be developing a new program for preventing and assisting any kind of abuse for all categories of ages. In addition, the center collaborated with the Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance of Bucharest University, offering internship stages for students (approximately 10 students per semester, so about 20 per year), the great majority of which generally decide to stay as volunteers.

There are three categories of services and activities offered by the Ratiu Foundation Romania. There are current services for children, adolescents, adults and elderly. There are permanent ones, such a community care and social assistance, legal counseling, or psycho-pedagogical care for children and adolescents within the community center Bucharest. The foundation offers as well innovative services in the field of community care services: community care for the whole family, including families with disabled and special needs members. Through its programs, after 9 years of successful professional activity, the foundation has the knowledge to employ up-to-date international standards in social assistance and community care and has created a viably community care pattern for the three-generation family.

The foundation has adopted CSR and uses it successfully to the benefit of the community, which includes the beneficiaries of the community center.

According to a material belonging to the Ratiu Foundation Romania, companies may measure their performances not only in the economic, but also in the social area. This attitude promotes a culture of responsibility and transparency in the business world, proving that profit is not incompatible with promoting social justice and finding solutions for community problems. From this perspective, companies are Business to Business coalitions exploring matters of common interest such as: promoting opportunities for disadvantaged people and minorities; strengthening relations between schools and working places; improving managerial standards; limiting social exclusion; creating safe communities from the point of view of social cohabitation; offering support to new enterprises in the context of the increase of the social impact of industrial restructuring.

The development of the concept of Corporate Social Responsibility in Romania takes place through partnerships between the business world, local authorities and NGOs, in view of contributing to solving social problems within the community.

Lisbon summit on March 23<sup>rd</sup> 2000 launched an appeal regarding CSR, laying the foundation of national networks in all countries that are members of EU and in candidate countries. In 2001, the national networks decided to create a body at European level, The Business Network for CSR, which works in close relation with the Council of Europe. Its role is to counsel companies with regard to their responsibility towards the society and the problems that it is confronted with.

The Ratiu Foundation Romania has initiated the formation of B2B coalitions in Bucharest, Timisoara and Iasi. Among the partner companies that are promoted on the Foundation’s site, there are: Connex, Shell, Michelin, Indesit and others. Each large

company usually has a PR representative particularly appointed to handle the company's relations with partner NGOs.

Companies are interested to invest in the increase of the quality of life, in raising living conditions, of social cohesion, because these offer to the business environment opportunities for development and expansion.

A socially stable society supports companies' growth, ensures them with qualified personnel and higher profits possibilities.

As benefits for the companies participating in the B2B coalition, Ratiu Foundation enumerates: appreciation from the part of the society and employees, opportunity for information and learning as part of a group made up of representatives of companies, NGOs and public authorities, possibility to visit good practice examples of CSR, possibility to access more easily to European funds, opportunity to participate in workshops and motivating meetings, possibility to obtain information regarding the directions of CSR development in other countries, especially through the European network CSR Europe having its headquarters in Brussels.

Social partnerships are important because they attract local resources to find solutions to community problems, developing specific abilities and competences in a legitimate and transparent manner; they encourage a better understanding of the specific of each sector, contributing to the increase of the degree of social stability and integration; they eliminate stereotypical answers to community problems, promoting new approaches and opportunities accessible to all social groups; they contribute to the development of supportive inter-sectoral relations; they valorize the community spirit and replace conflict with cooperation.

As the Ratiu Foundation shows, Romania's integration in the EU is a process that implies promoting elements of progress, creating opportunities for all members of society, including the marginalized as a result of the effects of transition.

By contributing to the realization of an adequate structure promoting the concept of CSR, social partners experiment an essential characteristic of civil society: participating in the activities of a group, based on mutual trust, in view of promoting initiatives to improve various situations.

The responsibility for project coordination within the community center belongs to the center, which is at its turn coordinated by the foundation. The center coordinator evaluates the programs within the center, with the help and supervision of the project coordinator from the foundation. The performance evaluations are done by the center coordinator, together with the project coordinator from the foundation. In addition, the foundation has a good reputation in the Romanian NGO sector and has excellent evaluations done by individuals belonging to international organizations.

The center receives financial resource from the Foundation, which in turn gets its resources mainly from external sources. Mostly, resources for the Foundation come from the Netherlands and Great Britain, from companies of various sizes, which have adopted CSR since about the year 2003 and offer the Foundation financial and all sorts of material help for its beneficiaries.

The center coordinator considers that the center corresponds to the needs of the community with which it works, and the center evaluates these needs either through inquiries or through direct discussions with the beneficiaries. Accordingly, the center's priorities are established based on the existing needs within the community. Such is the new planned program for abuse prevention and assistance, that is to start in September this year, following large numbers of cases spotted within the community.

■ The Ghencea community center within the parish in the 5<sup>th</sup> district works directly with the parochial community. The center is a project developed as a result of a partnership between the Princess Margaret of Romania Foundation and the Saint Archdeacon Stefan Association situated within the Ghencea Parc Parish.

The programs are planned by the partners, the implementation is made by the center and the program coordination and monitoring are done by the center together with the partners developing the project. There is also a performance evaluation made by the financier.

The center's programs aim to support socially vulnerable persons and groups. Among these programs, the Ghencea Community Center offers: free juridical counseling, courses in civic and juridical education, individual counseling in view of finding jobs for adults and youth within the community, educational activities, information and professional orientation for children and young people, communitarian education activities. Moreover,

the center supervises internship stages for students from the Faculty of Sociology and Social Assistance of Bucharest University, along with forming volunteers within the training and formation program.

The center offers its support based in inquiries following people's requests. Basing her statement on statistic evaluations, the center coordinator is convinced that the center corresponds to the interests and needs of the people within the community. The center evaluates the needs of the citizens within the parish through social inquiries.

The criteria upon which the center's priorities are established are based on the aim of developing the center and its activities.

■ The "Together" Community Development Agency also works directly with their beneficiaries, the Roma community.

Among the programs implemented by the Agency, there are: the Local Development Program, financed by the Matra Program of the Ministry of External Affairs of the Netherlands; the establishment of two community centers outside Bucharest, financed by the Roma Participation Program in Budapest; a community development program financed by the EU through Phare Program; the "National Action Plan for the local development of Roma communities".

Among the other financers of the Agency, there are the Foundation for an Open Society – Bucharest, Cluj, the Open Society New York, Cordaid, Romanian Government – through the Ministry of Public Informations, Spolu International – the Netherlands, Cooperation Dutch Foundation, the Resource Center for Roma Communities and EU through the Access B7-300 Program.

The Agency provided relevant materials regarding their activities and mainly regarding the "National Action Plan for the Local Development of Roma Communities" (NAPLDRRC) project and the International Plan for Local Development of Roma communities (IPLDRRC).

NAPLDRRC is financed by the European Union through the Access B-300 Program, and has been developed in partnership with the National Office for Roma People within the former Ministry of Public Information. The aim of the project consists in stimulating the participation of central and local authorities' representatives, relevant in the Action Plan for Local Development of Roma Communities. The objectives of the project on a short, medium and long term are given in the brochure. On a short term, it aims at training 100 people of 10 localities in Romania in sectoral planning of prioritized intervention domains. On a medium term, it aims at including the elaborated projects in the work agenda of County Councils, in order to obtain the consensus on participation and including on the list of priorities for resource distribution. On a long term, the project aims at including the options/priorities of local communities (including Roma people) in the sphere of interest that is priority to the national programs of the Romanian Government. The brochure also presents the expected results.

IPLDRRC is implemented under the patronage of the European Council in Bulgaria, Czeckia, Romania, Slovakia and Hungary, in order to encourage the collaboration between governments and local authorities, to support the implementation of the community development plans by the Romanian Government, through resort central public authorities and to determine the signing of the cooperation agreement by Romania. Among its objectives, there are: convincing the authorities in Central and Eastern Europe with regard to the benefic effect of community development, as an instrument for stimulating Roma people's participation in the life of the democratic society; motivating donor institutions in view of supporting local development programs and monitoring the results of the actions performed by the governments in Central and Eastern Europe.

The agency has its means of performance evaluation, and thus the agency is indeed representative for the communities it works with. The agency evaluates the needs of the citizens through forming focus groups, initiative groups, meetings with community members and research through questionnaires. These are as well the conditions under which the agency offers its expertise. The agency's priorities are set based on priorities established by the communities and are also determined by the organization's financers.

■ The office for community programs within the 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality works directly with the community as well. The office develops social activities, activities regarding and involving Roma people, as well as activities in the fields of health, education, infrastructure (mainly schools) and cultural-artistic.

Project design is performed by the head of the consultancy direction for project management, while project planning takes place individually, based on ideas. Project



implementation is usually performed in collaboration with other specialized directions within the district municipality. The projects to be implemented are established according to the priorities set by the direction within the district municipality and by the financiers. Depending on the project in development, coordination and monitoring are responsibilities belonging to the direction or the project manager. The role to evaluate the performance is allocated to the project manager.

The department does not facilitate financing sources for the projects in development, but only searches and attempts to attract sponsorships from various local entities such as commercial societies, banks and from the local council, and from external sources as well. The department does offer material support and counseling.

Regarding the conditions under which the office offers its support, it is a two-way process. For the most part, people come to the District municipality and submit requests or petitions, and for the rest the staff goes to the community to make direct evaluations. An example in this respect is that of the meetings of the staff members and the members of the owners' associations. From this perspective, the interviewee considers that the department corresponds to the interests and needs of the communities they work with. The needs of the citizens are evaluated according to citizens' petitions or requests or through direct discussions.

The Consultancy Direction for Project Management is the one that establishes the priorities of the Office for Community Programs.

- The Service for Strategies, Programs and Projects within the 2<sup>nd</sup> District municipality does not work directly with the community. Among the programs and projects that the service now has in development, there are: the social ambulance project – a pilot project at national level designed to address to citizens without insurance and without shelter; abuse prevention; socio-professional (re)integration for youth with disabilities; developing family-like alternatives (Phare project) and family-like protection in view of school abandon prevention; recovery for children with disabilities; apartments for the youth; street children.

Project planning/design is performed by the specialized service and the programs service. Projects are implemented either by teams specially selected out of the staff members of the institution or in partnership with NGOs. The criteria for establishing which projects are to be implemented can be found in the strategy. There is a specialized service for project coordination and monitoring. With regard to performance evaluations, the Phare program is responsible for audit, while the technical assistance team of the auction winner firm monitors the final reports.

The department facilitates both internal (from the Local Council's budget) and external financing sources (from the EU – Phare Program, the World Bank, USAID), and attracts as well sponsorships, mostly from the business community and foundations. The office offers its support based on requests from direct beneficiaries or from people who report various situations. On this basis, the respondent considers that the department corresponds to the needs and interests of the people within the community. Citizens' needs are evaluated according to the received requests only.

- Theoretically, the department for programs and development within the 3<sup>rd</sup> District municipality does not work directly with the community, but still it does develop various actions within schools, or organizes and holds debates, seminaries or conferences.

The projects that the department has in development comprise the areas of education, eco-civics, business (collaboration with the center of assistance for small enterprisers), and environmental protection (although they do not have any specialist in the field, but only a young graduate of the Faculty of Geography handling this area).

A few former projects based on community initiative have been interrupted. One such project was based on voluntaries that offered to become legitimate and trained civil inspectors to watch over the observance of rights for the citizens under the arrest of the police section in the area. This project was started in Iasi, another large city of Romania, supported by the Embassy of Great Britain, and was developed between the years 2003-2004. The project was stopped when the mayor's mandate ended, as the new mayor did not wish to continue it. Another project regarded the formation of citizens' committees (made up of groups of volunteers within the community) to work in partnership with an NGO in order to submit to the attention of the municipality some projects of decisions to be further analyzed and possibly approved.

There has been another program named “Civic Spirit”, developed in collaboration with Pensioners’ Association from the 3<sup>rd</sup> district. By implementing the project, the pensioners wished to become a support instrument for community police (former public guardians), by bringing to their knowledge the problems encountered in the district, in order to keep the public quiet and order.

One successful project has been that of Information and Counseling Bureaus for Citizens, and another one is yet in the accreditation phase and is called “Scientific and Technological Park”, developed in collaboration with the Polytechnic Faculty. The Park is meant to become a business incubator (research projects including university bodies and young people with aptitudes and potential for scientific research). The project outcomes would be promoted at the level of small and medium enterprises and then implemented. It would attract economic agents, being a nucleus of modern technology, training courses, and job market.

A very interesting project, which has though not been implemented in Bucharest, at least not in its original shape, is the one called the One-Stop-Shop Network of the third District. The organizational chart designed within the project shows that the district municipality would have had in its subordination two collaborating entities: the Local Center of Voluntary Work and the One-Stop-Shop Network, which would have had in its turn a number of one-stop-shops in subordination. The aim of the project was to increase the addressability of public services, and its objectives consisted in organizing and functioning one-stop-shops for the citizens and the Local Center for Voluntary Work. The justification of the project mainly referred to the harsh economic situation of the great majority of the population, which limits for most citizens the access to information, in general, and to legislative information in particular, both in urban and rural environments. These economic factors have been grouped into three main categories: the material situation of the citizens (limited resources to acquire various means to facilitate their means to information: radio, TV, computer, newspapers, specialized legislative library etc.); the inexistence of a well structured network for public information and counseling, to be permanently adapted to occurring changes; lack of necessary and proper training to understand the effectual legislation and use it accordingly in order to access the proper services.

The identification of informational and guidance needs of the citizens in the third district was made based on the analysis of the requests addressed by the citizens to the District municipality over the year 2002. According to the stipulation of an over 5000 requests increase over the year 2003, the project suggested a necessary of minimum four one-stop-shops within the district.

The project also suggested a change in the mentality of citizens regarding their way of life in the sense of improving the quality of life, and stated that this could be done only by involving them as voluntaries in projects and programs that would have as a result the restoration of community spirit. This assertion was based on an analysis of the potential regarding the social capital, revealing a series of disfunctionalities, such as: the improper image of NGOs in the local communities; the lack of voluntaries to concretely support, with quantified effects, the projects proposed by those NGOs; the reduced implication of the representatives of the local business environment in the projects initiated by NGOs to the benefit of the community; the lack of communication between the organizations belonging to the non-profit private sector on the one hand and between these and the central and local authorities, on the other hand.

The project would thus have added value to the double quality of citizens as providers of small community services and direct or indirect beneficiaries of these services. This would have ensured a significant contribution to the service offer of the local administration. The Local Center for Voluntary Work would have created the conditions to coordinate private services in view of the judicious use of the resources available to the community to the benefit of its members.

This participatory approach would have offered to all members of the civil society the opportunity to exercise their experience in various domains, to provide solutions for the punctual solving of certain dysfunctions, to exercise democratic rights by reconsidering the system of administrative, economic, cultural and social relations inside communities.

The project would have taken a load off the local authorities, allowing them to concentrate only on processing the documentation that fulfills the condition of administrative conformity in view of formulating the answers, notice/counsel or authorization emission etc.

The one-stop-shop would have been an electronic structure, capable to receive documentations submitted by citizens, transmit them electronically to the specialized compartments to be processed and subjected to approval according to the organic laws specific to each activity domain.

To organize and make the Local Center for Voluntary Work function, it would have been necessary that the third District municipality to ensure, together with a group of NGOs active in the range of the 3<sup>rd</sup> district, the identification of potential partners, the elaboration of a development and functioning strategy for the center, arranging full conditions for usable space, the implementation of the Local Center for Voluntary Work as a functional structure, the establishment of the criteria for recruiting and forming volunteers and the promotion of the Local Center for Voluntary Work within the community. The Center would have stimulated the development of small community services by involving the citizens in the regeneration of their own community and developing an innovative network to highlight and activate the latent resources of the local communities. This would have brought along the recognition, evaluation and motivation of any type of work that would have been performed within the voluntary network.

The one-stop-shop network would have ensured the exchange of information at local level by generating and updating a rich database regarding citizens' requests, performed activities, voluntary activities and others.

The one-stop-shop network project was implemented because the district municipality apparently could not find the necessary financial resources to ensure the material and human resources required for the proper implementation of the project.

In Bucharest, the present research has discovered, for a change, a number of Citizen Information Centers (CICs) instead, out of which two are located in the second district. The CICs are counseling, information and guidance centers, and in view of this project the district has been split into 21 zones. Still, the Municipality does not have enough personnel for the CICs, and so the assistance within these centers is ensured by rotation of staff.

Project planning or/and design is performed either by the staff of the researched department or by different colleagues from other specialized departments, or, depending on the project, by certain external institutions. The projects are implemented by the department itself and the projects to be implemented are established according to the strategy. Projects are coordinated by a specially designed project coordinator, either from inside the institution of from and NGO, and there may be at least one person assigned with this task, and maximum two. Regarding the performance evaluation, there is no official one as far as the projects are concerned. There is only an unwritten 'law' requiring the respect of deadlines, to keep oneself updated with the project stages, to keep close relations with the partners. The respondent explained that planning is usually theoretical when it comes to project management, meaning that the head of service cannot be objective. There is also an individual evaluation of each member of the staff, performed by the head of service, in accordance with the status of the civil officer, but still it is generally considered a subjective evaluation, even if eventually it passes through the structures of the human resources and personnel services.

The financing sources for the projects come from the local and state budgets, as well as from external financial sources and from the project partners. Usually, proposal projects come from NGOs in the shape of intention letters, that are further to be considered in view of establishing a collaboration protocol.

Since the department especially develops programs addressed to the youth, the respondent considers that the department may correspond to the needs and interests of this category of the population, but it is uncertain if it is generally representative. Still, the interviewee feels that its existence is very important and meaningful and should receive special attention, particularly in relation with the struggle of accession to EU. In this sense, the respondent's suggestion would be that the department to be integrated in the community development program.

Regarding the evaluation of citizens' needs, the top management decides upon the strategy, which is generally directed towards social protection. For the rest, there are evaluation studies performed by specialized firms, which are external to the institution, because the district municipality does not have specialized hired personnel to accomplish this task, except for some statistic data collected from the colleagues in the statistics department. There are though specialized services to observe and ascertain those feasibility studies. The department's priorities are set according to the strategy.

■ The Pensioners' Association in Bucharest develops activities in collaboration with the district municipalities regarding certain problems regarding city management and development. In this sense, the association's representatives have meetings with the representatives of the district municipalities twice a month or once every two weeks. On these occasions, they analyze proposals or solutions received from pensioners. The association also collaborates with the proximity police, who they inform about any detected acts regarding juvenile delinquency, drug abuse or neighborhood gangs. On the future, the association plans to invite the Roma party to join them in common civic projects. The respondent informed about the existence in Bucharest of seven 'mutual-help centers' for the pensioners, offering material help, loans or certain sums of money for paying treatment tickets and so on.

The members and the people in the community (mostly pensioners) are the authors and initiators of the association's ideas and activity projects. The president of the association considers the organization to be representative for the community in which it is active. The needs and interests of the beneficiary community are evaluated based on the members' reports and on surveys performed by specialized organizations in collaboration with the members of the association. One such survey was performed three years ago and made known to the Government, and was afterwards made public.

■ The National Association for Civic Education works directly with its beneficiaries. The association is piloting, on a national scale, the optional course of civic education for the 11th grade, aimed at forming students' abilities to make projects to the benefit of communities. Out of the students' achievements, there have been: installing a radio station within the Matei Basarab National College (located within the 3rd district), providing the medical cabinet of the same above mentioned National College with the necessary resources, arranging the history museum, the campaign against smoking, editing a journal with educational and professional orientation, the contest "Literature for all" and the project "The elderly need us". Another pilot project of national scale being implemented by the association regards the course of economic education for gymnasium level, and other projects regard the organization of training for teachers engaged in gymnasium and high school level education, the organization of the annual national contest for didactic projecting "The best economy lessons", and the organization of thematic summer schools centered on community services.

One very interesting project is the S Club, located within the Matei Basarab National College. The project is based on the premises that school needs to become a place where young people would feel good. School should not be only a compulsory and necessary activity, because the options for spending leisure time, as well as the forms of education and alternative information are now numerous, diverse, attractive and more and more accessible. The school and the community need to relate with each other on very diverse plans so that school may adapt to the requests of the community on a medium and long term, but also for it to benefit from the real and responsible support of the community.

Project planning/design is attained in partnership with the teachers and students and by consulting the institutional factors in the field of education, as well as with local authorities and with the respective didactic bodies. Projects are implemented by trainers formed in the country and abroad. The projects to be implemented are chosen depending on the human and financial resources, on the needs of the community and on the opportunities of collaboration with the local authorities and with the public education institutions. The projects are coordinated by the regional directors and by the coordinators of the activity of local centers. Project monitoring is performed by the decision factors within the national centers and/or the financing organizations from abroad. Regarding the performance evaluation process, the respondent gives as an example national scale piloting, which implies self-evaluation, filling-in a self-observation chart for the lesson by each professor involved in the project, centralizing them first at regional and then at national level (specifying the typical difficulties, the non-viable parts of the project, parents', students' and director's feed-back, proposals for change and extension), inter-assistance between the professors involved in the project and selective monitoring of local and central coordinators.

The Association facilitates and provides financing sources for its projects. These funds come from grants, when it comes to the Matei Basarab National College, or else from budgetary or extra-budgetary funds and sponsorships. The projects are publicized by the organization and the beneficiaries apply or directly negotiate with the organization.

The respondent considers that the association corresponds to the interests and needs of the beneficiary communities. This assertion is based on a thorough evaluation of the citizens' needs by participating in the life of the community, applying questionnaires and by establishing direct contact with the organizations with which the association wishes to collaborate.

The association sets its priorities depending on the financial and logistical support, on the factors interested in supporting the project and on the medium and long-term development needs of the organization.

It is most important to promote successful programs of projects in the area of community development, as well as their authors, in order to set as many examples as possible to stimulate new others to emerge.

#### **4.5 About the relations of the researched organizations with other actors**

This subchapter is meant to underline the researched entities' assertions regarding the awareness levels related to the existence of community organizations, the necessity of CBOs in the development process, the extent to which the respective entities work directly with such organizations and the nature of their relations, their possible suggestions for improvement, as well as the nature of relations with other actors involved and suggestions made for the citizens as individuals, in the sense of improving their own situation.

■ RACD's is only aware of the existence of community-based organizations in Bucharest to a small extent, since RACD's area of activity in the capital is not so large, based on the belief that the civil society sector is more developed in the largest city of Romania. Mainly, RACD calls those organizations 'neighborhood organizations', such like pensioners' associations, whose members report certain unfitted behaviors. Yet, the respondent considers this type of organizations to be certainly necessary in the social development process, especially in Bucharest, where there are so many various needs that are not approached neither by the public administration, nor by the economic sector. Thus, there is a stressful need for civic organizations, and in Bucharest there are quite a few organizations that facilitate a genuine community development process, according to RACD's understanding of the meaning – actually, there is no similar organization to RACD, but the existing organizations keep to the principles of community development, applying them in the attempt to support or to determine civic participation.

RACD does not work directly with such organizations in Bucharest. It is only starting with this year that RACD intends to extend its area of activity to the capital as well, more as a marketing strategy (visibility, access) than as a strategic priority, since RACD considers Bucharest to be one of the most developed regions in Romania with regard to civic organizations. Adjacently, RACD has worked on consultancy projects with two community development organizations in Bucharest. One has been a partner organization and RACD has managed to develop good collaboration relations with it, and the other held sub-contractual relations with the same third party as RACD. As positive factors considered to allow a partnership to develop in good or best conditions, there are mainly the professional competences and a certain ethics of partnership, as well as professional ethics and a common interest for the goal and objectives of the partnership. On the negative side, a non-successful partnership between RACD and another organization is seen to be one where the other organization's ethics and principles are not according to those of RACD.

Normally, partnerships are or at least should be 'extremely beneficial' for all parties involved, on the condition that the partners have been chosen correctly and the partnership has been correctly established. 'It is critical to establish partnerships with organizations having a better status than that of your own organization, so that the respective partnership may actually bring you something in return (e.g. access to resources, the possibility to sub-contract more easily or to be faster and more often invited to participate in a contract with a partner which knows your organization'. One main rule in partnerships is that if an organization is not known, it will not be invited to participate, and RACD follows this rule and only makes partnership proposals to already known organizations. Partnerships allow organizations to enrich the projects that are in development with new experiences that one organization has acquired while others have not. For RACD, such beneficial partnerships are those in the area of economic development, on the business part, where the organization

has no real expertise. Therefore, partnerships offer access to resources and to a higher status and the required prestige, if the partner is more powerful. In view of RACD, it is presently essential for Romania that organizations establish partnerships with at least 10-15 organizations in the European Union.

The suggestions offered with regard to fulfilling good partnership conditions or principles consist in the principle of complementarity (there should be a convenience, instead of competition), ethics in itself and professional ethics, and the principle of reciprocity. There are also one-way partnerships (although less encountered in the NGO sector), which are considered optimal in relation with, for example, neighborhood organizations, if your own organization has access to resources, to information etc. and may provide the smaller organization with these elements. As far as RACD is concerned, the organization is open to such partnership opportunities with smaller community-type organizations.

In Bucharest, RACD has only collaborated with the 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality (when the organization was located within that district), because it has been, according to the respondent's statement, the only one interested in knowing the NGOs in its district, to work together with them, to harmonize its strategy with theirs and to attract NGO support to enrich its strategy, while supporting in its turn different initiatives of NGOs. The 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality is considered a pro-active municipality, having in its structure a department directly responsible with the relations with the civil society and NGOs and with the activities performed in relation with NGOs. They collaborated in a partnership in view of a project, mutually informing each other with respect with all different matters, but the project was not finalized because it was not 100% compatible with the financing line of the municipality, which chose, on this basis, other priorities.

The seeming reasons why the relations of RACD with other district municipalities do not seem to work consist in a certain resistance and lack of interest from the part of the municipalities to accept relations with NGOs. There are large differences of attitudes between the 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality and the other district municipalities, where the others seem to perceive the relations with NGOs as a useless complication of their work or even as being competitive. Some public institutions' leaders recognize in NGOs important partners and support factors, which may offer them competences, access to resources and to information. Others regard NGOs as critical factors – a sort of 'watch dogs' always on guard and waiting for the public officials to make a wrong move in order to point out their mistakes. In those cases, NGOs are regarded as dangerous, rivals or both.

Although RACD does not have a real experience in Bucharest for the matter, basing his statement of the acquired experience through working with other local communities, the respondent strongly believes that government involvement is necessary/beneficial to the efforts of the association and of the NGOs in general. In the beginning of its activity, RACD used to have a different approach that in the present – the staff used to try to avoid local public administrations, based on their belief that community organizations would otherwise have become a sort of contractual parties to the power of local administrations. Nowadays, RACD's vision is changed, considering that community organizations should be a partner in line with local public administrations. Their present belief is that making local public administrations understand that they have active and responsible people working to the benefit of their communities, would make public officials offer in turn their understanding and support. Still, there were cases where local public administrations have critically regarded the community, as a new power pole.

As a suggestion offered by RACD to the local governments in view of improving this situation, the essential point would be for local administrations to understand that the distance between them and the citizens is most influential with regard to their institutional performances, because the larger this distance is, the weaker the performances become. When individuals have the capacity to associate and to get in contact with the local or regional administration, the institutional performance increases. In short, where there is no collaboration between the local public administration and the community there will be no feed-back from the community as well. On the other hand, RACD suggests that the local governments should adopt a more pro-active attitude, since it is difficult for people, after so many years of communist ruling, to associate by themselves and to get in contact, in an organized manner, with local public authorities. As an example, the department within the 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality responsible for the relations with the civil society is also responsible with getting in direct contact with the citizens, by taking the initiative, in order to diminish the distance between the public authority and the people, instead of passively

waiting behind of a desk for people to come themselves. That is because people do not know who to address to, perhaps not even how to do it, on the one hand, and on the other hand the district municipality may not know otherwise where and which the problems are. Communication would thus be beneficial for both parties, helping the public administration to react better to citizens' needs.

RACD's plans for improving the matter mainly consist in extending the community school program in three schools in Bucharest, in supporting the formation of a community development/civic action club at school level, based on the belief that children hold great capacities to influence adults into becoming more responsible.

With regard to RACD's suggestions for community members to improve their lives on their own, the respondent finds it hard to define communities in Bucharest and is skeptical about community development in Bucharest, since there is no sense of community in this large city; community development interventions can only be built in small ranges, such as schools, but those going to school may as well be from different neighborhoods and any sense of community identity would be diluted beyond the school's walls. Other alternatives would be block associations or simply block inhabitants, or the streets where there are only houses. 'In a block of flats, the inhabitant closes the door to his/her apartment and that is his/her universe and the limit to it'. Therefore, the respondent declares not to have an answer to this question yet. There is a certain stronger sense of belonging at owners' associations, though, while there are too few and unknown neighborhood/community associations in Bucharest.

■ The head of service from the Inter-Ethnic and NGO Relations Service of the 4<sup>th</sup> district municipality declared to have first heard of community organizations when I mentioned the Bucharest Community Center, located in the 4<sup>th</sup> district. The researched service is presently 'in the stage of collaboration and collection of information' in relation with an NGO for a program that they have in development. Still, the interviewee states that such organizations (n.b. NGOs and CBOs) are necessary in the development process and considers as determining factor for such a positive collaboration that 'business works when and where there is enough money, which also enables projects to be implemented and access to information'. Regarding the perceived benefits coming out of these successful relations for both parties, the respondent declared that they 'do not know if a collaboration between the local public administration and the civil society has happened until now, as it is a new field, in a trial stage, but up to now it has gone well'.

Asked whether he believes that government involvement is necessary/beneficial for the social and community development process, the respondent said 'yes...we are waiting for it to get involved'. Along with the services offered by the department, the head of service would suggest to the citizens to know the law, in order to be able to demand all kinds of rights, but also to know their civic duties, and thus improve their own situation.

■ The coordinator of the Bucharest Community Center within the 4<sup>th</sup> district was not aware of any community organizations in their area of activity, but still would consider them necessary in the social development process, as long as they would have programs in response to the real needs of the community.

The Center works in partnership with other NGOs, various institutions and companies, but at a minimum level ('as much as it is necessary') with the 4<sup>th</sup> district municipality, because, as the respondent asserts, 'they should build a team with more open-wide views and understand that there is room for everyone, that they are not rivals, but on the contrary, they may help each others'. The Center used to collaborate very well with the former mayor, developing and implementing common projects, whereas the present mayor merely accepts some form of limited, minimal collaboration that keeps them in good relations.

As a personal and professional suggestion offered to the citizens in the community in view of improving their own situation, the center coordinator states that 'the best for everyone would be that the members of the community learn how to help themselves, because they can only receive temporary help otherwise'.

■ The coordinator of the Ghencea Community Center in the 5<sup>th</sup> district is not aware of the existence of any community organizations within the parish, but would consider them necessary as development factors, if only daily centers would possibly exist in every neighborhood. To improve the situation, the respondent suggests initiative development, along with support from the public institutions.

The center works in partnership with the GDSAC and with the Saint Archdeacon Stephan Association, which is an NGO. The center has also established good relations of

collaboration and information exchange with the district municipality, due to the public officials' awareness that these relations are meant to bring welfare to all parties involved.

The respondent considers that government involvement is necessary/beneficial for the center's activities, offering logistic support and supporting service continuity within viable partnerships. As a suggestion of improvement addressed to the local government, the interviewee mentioned the program for the relations with the NGOs. From the part of the centre, one other suggestion and plan for improvement consists in developing punctual activities in partnership. As far as the citizens are concerned, the centre coordinator suggests to potentiate latent resources.

■ The "Together" Community Development Agency's representative stated that the community organizations they are aware of are or have been initiative groups in the beginning, to later become formalized. The agency considers these groups very important and necessary in the community and social development process. The agency works directly with such organizations, having generally good relations. First, it facilitates the formation of focus groups, out of which community leaders are then chosen to work with directly. Eventually, both parties will gain experience, so that the collaboration benefits everybody.

The agency works in partnership with local public authorities and they have generally observed that public officials are willing to get involved in such partnerships. They consider government involvement as necessary and beneficial for the work they perform in the Roma communities. As a suggestion addressed to the public authorities, an improvement for them would be to have a Roma representative in each of their institutions. To the community members, in order to improve their own situation, the respondent would suggest to be more active, more participative and more responsible in this process.

■ The Office for Community Programs within the 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality works in collaboration with different NGOs, but the respondent is relatively aware as well of the existence of community organizations within the district, and considers them most necessary, regarding the information they may offer about local needs. The interviewee considers that there is interest and benefit on both parties, as far as collaboration is concerned, and this common interest regards the community within the district. The head of the researched office considers that government involvement is necessary in the process of community development. Through its national programs, the government establishes the priorities, based on information received from local administrations, regarding financing projects without external funds, and it sets priorities for external financing as well. The respondent would suggest to the citizens to get as informed as possible, in order to be able to improve their own situation.

■ The Service for Strategies, Programs and Projects within the 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality is only aware of the existence of NGOs in their area of activity. The service collaborates with these NGOs and considers them necessary in the social development process, for as long as they directly intervene in the process. The factors that seem to enable good relations between the two parties are their experience and human resources. Both parties are considered to benefit from the collaboration, because it offers them credibility and financing conditions. According to the law, the local authorities verify the quality of NGO activities. Licensing NGO services is a possible suggestion from the part of the investigated service. The respondent considers that government involvement is necessary and beneficial for the community development process, and would suggest to the citizens, in view of improving their situation, to make use of informational services from the community.

■ The Department for Programs and Development within the 3<sup>rd</sup> district municipality works in partnership with NGOs, the Prefecture and the Chamber of Commerce, and considers that for a good collaboration to take place, it is necessary that the partner really wants to attain the set objectives as well. Partnerships are beneficial for all parties involved, in general. The municipality offers NGOs credibility and publicity. The respondent considers NGOs to be necessary in the social development process, as long as they truly work in a sustained rhythm, thus bringing supplementary service provision. As a suggestion for improvement, the respondent thinks of a deeper involvement of the community, so that its members would see the problems that the municipality is confronted with. This could be done by information campaigns to promote voluntary work. The respondent asserts that government involvement is necessary and beneficial to the community development process, but that there should be limitations to it, so that it does not impose anything inapplicable to the 3<sup>rd</sup> district and it allows bottom-up freedom of movement, thus not



repressing initiative and also allows for collaboration with the other sector and the General Municipality. To the citizens, in order to improve their situation, the suggestion would be to perform voluntary work, to respect it, to be responsible and to get involved, and to support the activities of the Municipality.

■ The Pensioners' Association works in partnership with the District Municipalities and the General Municipality, the Ministries (of Labor, Health, Finance) and the Pensioners' Federation. As a partner NGO, they have collaborated with the Pro-Democracy Association on performing a survey and publicizing it. The collaboration has been successful due to common interests, which have also made the relations beneficial for all parties involved.

The president of the association considers that NGOs are necessary for the community development, because they help educating people.

The relations of the association with the municipalities have been satisfactory, and whenever they have encountered indifference from the part of public officials, they would directly address to the mayor himself. This has happened sometimes because of conflicts between mandates, which determine the elected not to meet the members of the association. The president of the association considers that government implication as necessary and beneficial for the association's efforts, 'as long as attention is given to the members of the association and its objectives'. In order to improve the present situation, the respondent suggests facilitating meetings with the elected of the sector and of the capital.

■ Regarding the awareness related to the existence of community-based organizations in their area of activity, the member of the National Association for Civic Education indicated the Parents-Teachers' Association, Teachers' Professional Associations, Syndicates and Unions.

The relations of the National Association for Civic Education with these organizations are not very good. The explanation for this is that most of the times these organizations do not have a coherent plan for identifying their own needs and collaborating with other organizations and do not have the availability to involve in a common program and much less to financially support the project.

With regard to the association's plans for improving the general situation and particularly the relations with the respective organizations, the interviewee suggested the development of these organizations, which is a predictable, although long-term process, and identifying those ways and means to promote these projects adapted to the mentality of the above mentioned organizations.

The relations of the association with the 3<sup>rd</sup> district municipality are very good, and the collaboration in common projects, as well as the support of independent projects such as those of the association have continued, in spite of the changes following the elections. The respondent considers that the factors determining these good relations are the results obtained in anterior projects and the seriousness on the duration of the partnership.

The interviewee considers that governmental involvement is necessary/beneficial for the efforts of the association and for the community development process, because municipalities hold centralized information, have the necessary logistics and personnel with proper abilities in relation with the community. The respondent would suggest though to the local government, as improvements in the matter, a more correct evaluation of the possibilities of involvement and a more strict observance of financing terms or of the terms regarding the performance of activities related to the project.

The association's plans for improving the situation would be: attracting more members, extending on national scale and a greater flexibility in adapting to the needs of different communities. As a suggestion for the citizens, and a possible solution to improve their own situation, they should participate in as many activities of the NGOs as possible, thus receiving the influence of models of involvement in civic life that would change their mentality.

Unfortunately, the research has revealed, to a certain extent, that the understanding (if at all) of community organizations as a concept and a reality differ from one actor to another. Some respondents understand these associations as somewhat similar to Roma associations (ethnic minorities) or simply as people doing voluntary work. Community services are mainly regarded as citizen-oriented service provision, and there is no real in-depth understanding of the idea and process of community development, with a few exceptions only. Of course, as stated before, this research may not be generalized to a bigger scale that

perhaps that of the studied institutions themselves, and probably their immediate areas of activity.

#### **4.6 Respondent's perceptions regarding the community involvement**

The present subchapter is meant to assess the institutions' awareness regarding the problems that citizens in their area of activity are confronted with, their means of evaluating those needs, the degree of those institutions' visibility, along with suggestions for raising the awareness level. Other assessments regard their perceptions over the degree of citizen participation and the awareness of people as far as their own rights are concerned, as well as measures taken in this respect. People's willingness to involve in community life, the level of youth implication and the strategies to involve young people and to improve people's participation are some other addressed issues.

■ The problems detected by RACD within the communities it works with are very diverse: educational, sanitary, social, economical, infrastructure, housing. In RACD's vision, it is more important that the community members identify those problems as clearly as possible, than for RACD to get to know them. In order to evaluate the existence and nature of these problems, RACD facilitates the formation and organization of discussion groups among community members, to enable a participative analysis of those needs and establish, as a result, a series of strategic priorities. RACD also mediates partnership relations between the communities and other organizations that may further support them on those specific needs.

Community organizations have too little visibility in Bucharest and local people are not aware of their existence. It is very hard to make oneself visible in such a large city as Bucharest, as compared to smaller communities/localities. The starting point for such organizations should be a clearly defined target group, such as the parents within one neighborhood, whose children go to the same school, and a good promotion of the beneficiaries is needed.

People involve in community life much less than they should. To involve people in the processes of problem solving and development, RACD massively supports community leaders – people with such potential, which, by their nature, have the interest and availability and motivation to involve in community life in order to change something for the better, since they understand that they would also benefit from those community changes. Usually, out of a community with 1000 members, around 10-15 leaders are discovered. The method used for finding such community leaders is door-to-door visits or others' recommendations within communities with generally no more than 1-2000 members. These people are asked certain strategic questions, such as if they would like to get involved, if they would come to the group meetings, if they know anyone else, if they have done this before and so on.

People, for the large part, are aware of their rights, but that they do not trust their capacity to activate them or to fight for them. The tendency in Romania is to 'swallow' and accept anything, beyond any disorders. People do not take action and adopt an attitude of passivity and resignation. In this sense, RACD attempts to change the apathy and indifference by turning it into active and responsible involvement and perseverance.

People have a certain resistance to change. In the Romania society there is alienation, community estrangement and isolation, along with a strong repulsion for 'patriotic labor' (to the benefit of the community), thus it is difficult to change a systematically indoctrinated mentality. Change occurs to different extents for each individual. From this point of view, there are pioneers and passive supporters who only need an impulse, which is usually taken from the models and successes generated and promoted by pioneers.

The respondent sees a greater implication from the part of young people, as well as from adult mothers and old people. Mothers are usually more active, while the elderly are a more passive category at community level, but both groups exercise social control. The youth are more individualistic, but massively apply for voluntary work, especially in the NGO sector, viewing this as a chance to enrich their résumé and to develop competences that are to open more opportunities for them later, on the labor market. In order to improve further citizens' participation, RACD suggests raising the awareness of the communities, building models of success of civic implication and supporting and promoting those with certain leadership and civic inclinations within the communities.

■ The spotted problems of the citizens within the 4<sup>th</sup> district relate to housing, lack of jobs, and ‘generally the problems that the large majority of Romanian have to face’. The existence and nature of these problems is assessed by the researched department within the 4<sup>th</sup> district municipality in a punctual manner, depending on which are the cases that need solving. Asked whether they also base these evaluations on possibly already existing surveys performed by the district municipality, the head of service asserted that he cannot answer the question, because they ‘have no connection with the district municipality’.

The staff of the department ‘would not know whether the people living in the 4<sup>th</sup> district are aware of the existence of this service’. Although the department has is promoted on a website, they cannot know whether or how many people access it, and there is a special informatics service that may handle this situation.

The respondent’s opinion is that people are starting to get involved in community life, at least when a disaster occurs, such as the flooding of this year, in the whole country. On this occasion, the department has organized a few points for aid collection in the district and they have observed that people get involved. Still, the head of service declared that he is not the person able to answer to the question regarding the district municipality’s participatory approaches meant to involve the citizens in the processes of problem solving and development.

The head of service believes that people are not aware of their own rights and thus they should be informed, but he added, ‘we will probably think of something, but another time; until now, we haven’t came up with anything’. The respondent believes that the citizens are willing to participate in the change process. With regard to the so-perceived low participation of young people, the explanation would be that they spend much more time studying even at two faculties and thus do not have time enough, as they are too busy to ensure their future and work very hard to achieve what they want from life. “Probably when life will be ‘pinker’, they will get more involved”, he added.

Aside from informing the citizens with regard to their rights, the head of service would suggest as other improvements of their situation the creation of information centers in the 4<sup>th</sup> district. Such centers are missing due to lack of funds – ‘in the 2<sup>nd</sup> district somebody handled a project and they received Phare financing’. These centers ‘should exist in the 4<sup>th</sup> district as well, at least in the form of simple booths’; ‘they will probably appear in the 4<sup>th</sup> district on the future, unless the good people will leave for better salaries, which generally happens’.

■ The Bucharest Community Center evaluates the nature and existence of the community members’ problems through their programs, addressed to children from disorganized families, violence, abuse, school abandon, alcohol and drug abuse, the loneliness of the elderly, unemployment.

Around 2-300 people frequent the center every year, some systematically and others periodically. After four years of existence and gained experience, the center practically promotes itself in the community through its beneficiaries, as the satisfied beneficiaries further spread information about the existence of the center. Through its activities, it works in collaboration with the police, hospitals, schools and public authorities (GDSAC), which in their turn publicize the center’s activities and direct the beneficiaries to it. The center also appears on the website.

In the respondent’s opinion, it cannot be generalized whether people get involved in community life or not. One can only observe the large number of student voluntaries and community members that participate in the center’s activities. Among the voluntaries, the young are the largest group. Regarding community initiative, the interviewee only exemplifies it through block inhabitants, but not on people in general.

People seemingly do not know all their rights, and for this, when necessary, the center offers guiding services, juridical consultancy and orientation (either themselves or specialized juridical services). “A lot can be done for improving citizen participation: the citizens should be more united and function as genuine communities, helping each other in need. But people are still egotistic and refractory towards the idea of ‘patriotic labor’ (to the benefit of the community), and this is a question of mentality, which is the hardest to change”.

■ The problems that the community of the Ghencea Parc Parish in the 5<sup>th</sup> district confronts with, as assessed by the Ghencea Community Centre through its inquiries, are mainly health problems, unemployment, disorganized families and particularly education.

It seems that people do not generally know of the existence of the Center, and the explanation offered for this by the respondent is that people are either not used or unwilling to disseminate information, and that there is no spirit of social solidarity. In order to raise the awareness level, the center organizes or participates in campaigns, especially in those from the part of public authorities. They have tried using foldouts and direct approaches for discussions, but apparently, for one reason or another, these methods did not succeed.

In the respondent's opinion, only about 3-5% of the community members get involved in community life, out of lack of education and of solidarity spirit, because of the communist ruling and indoctrination. People seem to be unaware of their rights as well, and in this sense the center promotes them through various televised or publicized campaigns.

The interviewee believes in people's willingness to get involved in the change process, but they need to be motivated and determined to do so, through awareness raising factors and other specific methods. The general tendency is that the youth are getting involved in voluntary activities, but not necessarily in community life. To improve citizens' participation, the suggestion would be to develop activities and programs to stimulate the communitarian self- and mutual-help spirit.

- The Roma communities that the "Together" Agency for Community Development works with have various problems that are mainly related to education, housing, infrastructure and labor. The agency uses two types of methods to evaluate the existence and nature of these needs: conventional and participatory methods. Mostly, the needs are tested by project ideas. People within the communities seemingly know about the existence of the agency. Still, for raising the awareness level, the respondent suggests the media, and mainly local newspapers.

Generally, people's involvement in community life is moderate, as well as their willingness to involve in the change process, and citizens are not aware of their rights. The agency has no plans in this sense. It would also seem that there is no difference in the level of implication of young people, as compared to the rest of the population.

- The representative of the Community Programs Office within the 2<sup>nd</sup> District municipality informed about the problems that the members of the community are confronted with: the lack of places to work, lack of housing and weak infrastructure. The nature and existence of these problems are assessed based on citizens' requests and on direct discussions with community members during punctual visits within the community. The department does not use surveys.

As far as the awareness level is concerned, regarding the existence of the department, it is known by schools and libraries within the district, as well as by the Roma communities, who have a representative that participates in the management's audiences. Still, it is necessary to raise the awareness level, and this is being done through direct meetings within the community.

People are apparently not getting involved in community life. The office closes protocols with community leaders on each specific problem and field, and even the leaders sometimes cannot determine people to get involved. They are not quite interested to involve in change, but instead ask to be offered services. The citizens seem unaware of their own rights as well, out of lack of information and of the preoccupation to get informed. In this sense, the staff of the researched department establish frequent meetings with the people in the district, particularly encouraging the meetings between neighborhoods and with the police. Attempts to use foldouts or other such materials have failed.

Within the 5<sup>th</sup> district, there is a Local Council of Young People, made up of high school students who are lead by a young mayor. From this point of view, the youth, and especially high school students are much more eager to find out new things (i.e. related to European integration, drug abuse) and to get involved in decision making, problem solving and development processes. To improve citizen participation, the head of the researched office suggests having patience and trying as many alternatives as possible.

- The communities within the second district are confronted with a wide range of problems, such as health, socio-economic (housing, material resources), access to social assistance services, juvenile delinquency (alcohol and drug abuse). The Service for Strategies, Programs and Projects within the 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality verifies the existence and nature of these problems through social inquiries.

In order to make people aware of the existence of this service within the district, there are citizen information centers (CICs), centers for public relations, informational campaigns,

and there are five social assistance offices responsible for five different zones in which the district has been divided, offering information and monitoring social provisions.

People are getting involved in community life, but seem less eager to involve in the change process, and, depending on their educational level, they are more or less aware of their rights. Regarding youth involvement, the interviewee informs about the existence of a voluntary nucleus made up of high school students, within one of the programs of the NGO Direction. To stimulate citizen participation, the head of service suggests campaigns for citizen sensitization.

■ The communities of the 3<sup>rd</sup> district are confronted with a wide range of problems: unemployment (due to the closure of the largest economic agents), infrastructure, housing, social problems (it is the largest district of all six, comprising around 390.000 inhabitants), families with many children (schools are being extended, due to the lack of enough kindergartens). The Department for Programs and Development within the 3<sup>rd</sup> District municipality assesses the existence and nature of these problems based on schools' reports, or from Pensioners' Association's reports, or from written petitions, audiences or free calls to the district municipality's call centre. The district municipality has also collaborated with the University of Bucharest to perform a study of the socio-economic state of the population of the 3<sup>rd</sup> district. It is uncertain whether people are aware of the existence of this department within the district municipality. There is information about the department's activities on the internet. The department does not promote its own activities, but the district municipality and its partners.

The respondent does not consider that people get involved in community life. The municipality ensures a larger degree of comfort, while 'people are not civilized or educated and, although they are aware of their own rights, they do not seem to be or do not want to be aware of other people's rights'. Still, the interviewee agrees that people are willing to get involved in the change process, although 'they wait, or do not want, do not know or cannot' get more involved.

The researched department's representative has observed the elderly to be very active, and the youth to be active when they are motivated and given the freedom of expression. To improve citizen participation, the respondent suggested holding more public debates and attracting them into participating, because at such events the only ones present are students, pensioners (the organized bodies) and blocks' administrations, while the simple citizen is not co-interested.

■ The problems that the pensioners' community is confronted with are mainly related to poverty and health (the members are helping pensioners that can not be transported, by providing phone calls, nourishments, etc.).

Largely, people within the community are aware of the existence of the association. Citizen involvement cannot be generalized to the entire population. The association attempts to engage people (i.e. sensitization with regard to green parks). One suggestion for improvement is that of strengthening community police, and controlling them more, so that they really patrol the areas and make the neighborhoods safer.

The president believes that people are willing to accept and involve in change, because they have faith and hope with regard to the EU integration. Moreover, the respondent asserts that people generally know their rights, but 'they forget or disregard their duties'.

As the respondent has observed, young people have great potential of involvement. They usually respond to the association's contacts, coming from schools, high schools and even students from the music conservatory. To improve civic participation, the president of the association suggests the fulfillment of statutory obligations to the association, in order to get people's support, as well as having patience with people and motivation.

■ The problems detected in the communities that the National Association for Civic Education works with consist in the lack of trainers, limited access to information, methods and materials that are alternative to those offered by the public education system, weak interest in personal progress, because this is not correlated with significant professional and social changes.

The respondent considers that people are not aware of their rights, and for this, the association has as objectives: education, introducing certain optional courses to develop the necessary aptitudes and attitudes for a genuine involvement in the social life (such is Civic Education and Learning through Community Services).

At the same time, the interviewee feels that the members of the community are not willing to involve in the change process, with too few exceptions.

Regarding the level of implication among the youth, the respondent stated that “although apparently they have a rebel attitude towards the adults, amazingly they internalize prejudices and anachronic behaviors consisting in isolation, disinterest, lack of involvement, distrust in NGOs and political factors, in their capacity to solve problems of public interest. In the attempt to attract and involve young people, the association tries to correlate educational programs that are still distant from the needs and from the real interest of young people, the ex-cathedra mentality of some teachers or the superficiality of others, which is most of the times explained by the lack of material incentive, by introducing new participatory methods, and the introduction of courses with applicable practical vocation.

#### **4.7 Respondents’ opinions and perceptions over more general issues**

This last category of researched issues comprises the future strategies of the studied institutions with regard to community development, along with more general perceptions over the power holders in the Romanian society, the institutions’ power of influence over each other and suggestions for improvement. Other regarded matters are related to the organizational capacity to bring sustainable development into the community, the necessity to work with CBOs, NGOs and local governments, and perceptions over those who really mediate relations between institutions (including the community) and over the real impact of decentralization over the relations between citizens and public authorities.

■ As a future strategy, RACD intends to develop its orientation towards research and eventually become a resource center that will build and disseminate knowledge in the domain of community development. The research would be oriented towards Corporate Social Responsibility from the part of the firms, to support various civic educations. It would investigate the areas/regions, the type of activities, the domains of activity, the extent and the conditions. For the community school project, RACD already works in partnership with the Coca-Cola Company. Another strategic orientation is to create 10 to 15 community groups/organizations well established within the communities, having clear and strategic thinking regarding partnerships and a consistent pack of activities, as compared to present such organizations that function only from time to time. The basis will remain voluntary work. Other plans of RACD comprise a better documentation and promotion of the community school program, with regard to methodology (promoting it at national scale) and to the concepts that they have elaborated. In relation with the local public administration, RACD plans to prevent blocking, annihilation or capture of community organizations or civic groups in small communities where all people know each other. RACD intends to intervene on both parts, at this level, because a single-oriented intervention would not be enough.

Regarding people who presently hold the power in the Romanian society, the respondent considers that it belongs to the people in the governance area – the politicians, and the people holding economic power, mentioning that the two fields are closely related. In his opinion, both groups are much too strong to know who really controls the other.

The respondent considers that RACD’s influence over the decisions of the district municipality is quite limited, because it is difficult to change bureaucracy or to go around it, although it may also be functional and efficient, as long as there is at least one person willing to change its ways. Regarding RACD’s influence over other NGOs and community-based organizations, it is quite strong. As an example, the association has collaborated with two large organizations that have strongly changed along their approach and principles. The respondent feels that NGOs can and do influence the development process, although this presently happens to a lesser degree. RACD set the basis of community development in Romania 6 years ago, being the only such organization at the time. NGOs can influence CBO formation. In 2004, following RACD’s intervention, there appeared around 10 formal CBOs in Romania, besides the informal civic groups. The respondent also feels that the district municipalities are not influential enough to allow a genuine development process. That happens because public administrations lack the organizational and functional competences that are necessary in order to create and implement such a complex program; public administration can also stimulate dependency and turn civic participation in a merely civic consultation, due to the distance between the moment of agreement and that of implementation or at least of the problem approach, which would anyway suit the public authorities’ priorities.

The interviewee does not believe that RACD may lay the foundation of sustainable community development, because this is something that only governance people can do, by setting the basis of a sound sustainable development by establishing a favorable, suitable and adequate institutional and legal framework (increase the quality of services in education, health etc.). In this context, NGOs can only determine changes in the subsystems, which would contribute to a sustainable development. The respondent is skeptical that this process could ever start from NGOs, no matter how influential these may be.

RACD cannot perform community development without community organizations, unless community development is defined as contributions to at least slightly improve the quality of life in a community (i.e. through donations).

RACD's representative perceives the association as mediator between the local public authorities and the community (organizations), having a large experience in moderating public events. In this sense, the concrete actions performed by the association are advocacy, moderating public consultation processes, conflict mediation sometimes (because people go to the local public authorities out of disappointment), and they are thinking of lobbying consultancy for neighborhood organizations to perform in their areas of activity.

Decentralization has created the institutional framework to build the closeness between citizens and public authorities, but this closeness in itself is not a result of decentralization, but of the leadership or managerial style adopted by the higher representatives of the public institutions. This style may induce a part of the people, to determine a closeness to the citizens. The proper institutional framework may as well exist, while there is the same distant, even despicable or discrediting approach of the input that may come from the citizens.

■ Regarding the department's future strategies, on a short, medium and long term, the head of the researched service within the 4<sup>th</sup> District municipality declared that they 'are in the beginning', that they hope they 'will develop, unless other political events occur, because in local public administration one cannot do much on a long term, but only as long as the mayor's mandate lasts'.

The respondent considers that the power in today's Romanian society is held by 'the local barons, or the state, or at least this is how it should be'.

Since 'the department has no connection with the district municipality', having 'only relations of subordination', the institution may support their service, but it definitely has no influence over the district municipality's decisions. Projects first need approval from the local council and are then sent further to receive financing. With regard to NGOs, the department 'probably has some influence', and NGOs themselves might influence the development process, to the extent where they can strongly get involved and where the law gives them the power to do so. In the respondent's opinion, it is uncertain whether citizens know what exactly means an NGO or what it actually does, in order to be able to assess whether they trust them or not.

When asked whether he believes that the District municipality has enough influence to determine a genuine social development and set the foundations for sustainable community development, and what would help the local public authorities in this sense, the interviewee stated that, in his opinion, 'the municipality has other problems to solve – such as to create spaces for housing, clean the streets, and not to handle NGOs for the time being, because we are not there yet'.

The head of service declared that the department needs NGOs for performing their activities, since their service 'has no financing source, and even the employees' salaries are very low'.

Asked about his understanding of the concept 'community organizations', the respondent answered that he does not know whether such organizations presently exist in Romania. 'NGOs establish community centers from time to time, in collaboration' and these might be viewed as basic cells for social/community development. Asked whether he believes in the existence of community initiative in our country, without the involvement of the civil society, the respondent declared that he did not know, or did not believe so, because the civil society was the one to take the step further. The interviewee would perceive NGOs as mediators between the district municipality and the community, under the conditions where they could inform the citizens with regard to the object of the department's activities, or to the citizens' rights. Thus, they might be called mediators, but probably a more appropriate connotation would be that of 'collaborators'.

The head of the researched service considers that the process of decentralization has brought the local public authorities closer to the citizens, in the sense that it is easier for people to know that there is a direction for each specific category of problems. As an example, the social direction is no longer a service of the district municipality, it has a new location, a new juridical personality and more services. Still, citizens need to be kept informed about all these decentralized services. For this, the researched department's activities and objectives are publicized, especially in newspapers, and they have a website, which they find hard to access themselves, though.

■ The respondent representing the Bucharest Community Center considers that whoever holds the large companies, or the majority of stock holdings in the former large state enterprises, and is entangled in the business world, also holds the real power in the Romanian society of our days, being able to strongly influence the political world.

Presently, the center does not have too much influence over the 4<sup>th</sup> district municipality. The respondent remembers the various, successful common actions performed to the benefit of the elderly, in very good collaboration with the former mayor and as well with the Pensioners' Association. On the contrary, she added, the present mayor of the district is reticent to most partnership, projects or activities ideas, and does not really want to communicate, for unknown reasons to the interviewee, especially since the district municipality would only have to gain out of implementing these ideas.

Regarding the influence of the center over other NGOs, it indeed manages to attract other such organizations, being powerful enough to establish good collaboration with them. The respondent feels that NGOs do influence the development process, while the district municipality is not influent enough to allow a genuine development process. In this sense, the interviewee suggests to the local public authorities to prove more transparency, involvement and willingness to change things for the better for the people who have chosen them and gave them their trust. She also suggests less personal affairs.

The center attempts, for the least, to lay the foundations for a sustainable community development. Since the 4<sup>th</sup> district is quite problematic, comprising so many categories of disadvantaged and vulnerable persons, it would be best, though, for people to learn how to help themselves and each other, to develop in their community a support network that would further be able to support the community.

When asked whether the center would be able to lay this basis for development by itself, or it would need community organizations to work with, the center coordinator believes that very hard work would suffice for the center to succeed in this, but, if possible, collaboration with other NGOs would be most welcome and desirable, as they could do more and offer better, more specialized services.

Depending on the mandate, the center may be perceived as a mediator of the relations between the district municipality and the community (organizations). There has to be willingness on both sides. For the moment, the center collaborates very well with the Childcare Direction in this sense.

The respondent considers that the closeness that decentralization is supposed to bring is yet at theoretical level, and she would not know exactly how close the local public authorities really are to the citizens. It is desired to happen, but it is a long process.

■ The coordinator of the Ghencea Community Center in the 5<sup>th</sup> district believes that each person has power in him/herself.

The respondent stated that, generally, the Center has some influencing power over the district municipality's decisions and clearly has influence over the partner NGO. She considers that NGOs influence the development process, and an increase in the number of NGOs will lead to and is a sign of development. The interviewee also considers that the district municipality is influent within the community, because people trust this institution, and thus, if willingness is added, it may enable a genuine development process to occur. Believing that the center offers a development model, the respondent stated that it has the necessary capacity to set the basis of a sustainable community development. For this, the centre coordinator does not feel that the center needs community organizations to work with.

The center cannot be regarded yet as a mediator between the district municipality and the community, but it is a project to be considered. In addition, the centre coordinator definitely does not believe that the decentralization process has brought the local public authorities closer to the citizens.



■ The representative of the “Together” Agency for Community Development believes that the government is holding the decisional power in today’s Romanian society, whereas local governments hold the power given by their degree of willingness to get involved. The respondent considers that the agency has power of influence over the district municipality’s decisions, and over the NGOs. She also feels that NGOs are influencing other community organizations, through negotiations and explanations, and that they influence the development process as well. The interviewee believes that the district municipality is not influent enough, because people do not really trust it. From this point of view, the agency may be perceived as a mediator between the district municipality and the community. Due to the lack of professionalism of the local public authorities’ officials, it would seem that the development process has not brought the public institutions closer to the citizens.

■ As strategies for the future, the Community Programs Office within the 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality plans to orient towards social-economic development, infrastructure, social and human resources.

When asked who, in her personal opinion, holds power in today’s Romanian society, the head of the office answered that ‘absolutely not the citizens, but maybe the patrons, and not the governance representatives’.

The respondent feels that the department has influence over the decisions of the district municipality, but not over NGOs, because these have their own barometer for measuring citizens’ opinions and other working methods. With regard to NGOs themselves, they only have influence on a collaboration level, when they may come up with ideas. But generally people still trust more and address their problems to the municipalities, which only send them to the NGOs when higher funds are needed. From this perspective, the respondent feels that the district municipality is influent enough to enable a genuine social development process and to set the basis of a sustainable community development. With respect to this, what would effectively help the district municipality are the commercial societies from within the district and all kinds of investments. The interviewee does not believe that the department would be able to do these steps without the help of NGOs, because they are each specialized on target groups, and a municipality would never have enough departments for this, not to mention employees.

The head of office would regard community organizations as basic cells for social and community development, particularly since they form networks sometimes, or simply help each other. She would also consider NGOs as mediators between the district municipality and the community, and perceives that studied department as facilitator and coordinator in the community development process.

The respondent strongly agrees that the decentralization process has brought local public authorities closer to the citizens. She exemplifies this by the fact that at the local council level there are subordinated directions that no longer belong to the district municipality, thus having larger freedom of movement. Such is the GDSAC, which functions on its own budget. Another example stands in the area of public domain administration (streets, sidewalks etc.). This enables each department to have even more employees, each dealing with his/her own field – such an example is that of the proximity police.

■ The Service for Strategies, Programs and Projects within the 2<sup>nd</sup> district municipality plans to create shelters for adults, offering services for every category, and to adapt the national strategy to the specific needs of the 2<sup>nd</sup> district.

The respondent would assume that power in today’s Romanian society is split among different parties.

The department apparently has influence over the district municipality and sometimes over NGOs, to the extent where they need the public authorities’ collaboration. Regarding the NGOs, they are influent in the development process to a certain extent; even so, their influence is beneficial, especially since people’s trust is low and their credibility is low; by comparison, the municipality is a state institution and enjoys its authority.

The respondent definitely believes that the district municipality is influent enough to enable a genuine social development process and to lay the foundation for a sustainable community development. An important element that would help the municipality in this sense is a clearer and more comprehensive legislation. The interviewee considers that NGO involvement (as civil society) is necessary in the process and that the Service cannot handle it alone.

The head of service cannot regard community organizations as basic cells for community development since they are based on voluntary work, but what she does perceive as such

are the partnerships between the public and private sectors. While regarding NGOs as mediators in the relation between the district municipality and the community, the respondent also considers the district municipality a mediator between NGOs and the community.

The interviewee feels that the decentralization process has brought the local public authorities closer to the citizens, by offering greater accessibility to the services provided by local administration, while the funds are centered on citizens' needs.

■ The Department for Programs and Development within the 3<sup>rd</sup> District municipality has set as a future strategy to strengthen its collaboration with the NGOs, but the lack of funds and of space to offer makes it quite hard. Other strategic directions would be the promotion of voluntary work (from the NGO sector), education regarding environmental protection in schools, separate garbage collection.

The respondent considers that money is the true power holder in today's Romanian society. It is all about financial power, so the power holders may as well be the members of the Parliament, the business men.

The department may sustain and argument its point of views, although it may not actually influence the decisions of the District municipality. It does not have influence over NGOs neither, since it is NGOs that come to the municipality, and not the other way around. NGOs themselves are influence if they are active, but people do not trust NGOs, nor the municipality, where they only come when they are in need. A survey would be most necessary in the matter. As far as the district municipality is concerned, it may be influent enough to allow a genuine social development process and bring sustainable development to the community, but it all depends on the mandate and politics. In this sense, an improvement would need to regard the decisional level, focusing on consistency and support.

The interviewee considers that the department itself would not be able to do its work alone, and that they need NGOs and other partners to work with. The respondent may consider community organizations as basic cells for participatory, sustainable community development, but still, in Bucharest there has not been a true beginning. A first step should consist in a voluntary center, attracting people from the community and training them further. The interviewee would consider NGOs as mediators between the district municipality and the community, but also the municipality as a mediator between NGOs and the community, when regarding the NGOs as part of the community. Advantages are reciprocal and it is important to be able to negotiate and flexible. The respondent also perceives the department as facilitator and coordinator with regard to the projects. She feels that the process of decentralization has indeed brought local public authorities closer to the citizens, mainly by service externalization through contracts (public auctions – money from the local budget).

■ The president of the Pensioners' Association considers that money holds the power in today's Romanian society. The association has influence over the municipalities only partly, since the elected counselors are not really paying attention to the electorate.

The respondent's strong belief is that only the real NGOs may be influent in the community and the development process. He stated that only a few hundred NGOs are real, out of all NGOs in Bucharest. The rest just take money for personal purposes. The association has attempted to affiliate, but the respective NGOs 'pretended they did not have money'. With regard to the general and district municipalities, they may be influential for the most part towards NGOs and communities, under the condition that they get involved. The president of the association considers that the association has a medium capacity to bring development to the community. The decentralization process has brought more or less the local public authorities closer to the citizens, in the sense that decentralize services do not necessarily mean well done jobs (i.e. proximity police and community police do not perform their jobs correctly).

■ The short-term strategy of the National Association for Civic Education regards the development of the organization, attracting new members and multiplying already developed programs.

The respondent considers that power in today's Romanian society is held by the elements of the pre-revolutionary bureaucracy, transformed into elements of an emerging middle class in formation and development.

The interviewee is convinced that the association does not have influence power over the decisions of the district municipality, because of the still powerful centralization of

decisions at local level, as well as the politization of the administrative act. Yet, regarding the association's influence over other NGOs, the experience that the Matei Basarab National College has gained in project development stands as an example and model for other schools, and CREE and the National Association for Civic Education constantly cooperates in training, formation and educational activities.

The respondent believes that NGOs do not have too much influence in the development process because of their limited funds, the lack of specialized personnel, their unclear goals and their relatively small dimensions.

## **4.7 Analysis of the poll**

### **4.7.1 Analysis and tendencies**

1. Over 20 people out of a pool of 125 declined to answer, for various or personal reasons (that accounts for the 105 sets of answers)
2. 12/105 (11%) answered that they are members of an organization/Association. Out of these, 2 were members of Owners' Organizations, 3 of Student Organizations, 2 of Pensioners' Associations, 1 Blind Organization, 1 Religious Organization, 1 Youth Organization, 1 Charity Organization and 1 Political Organization
3. 20 (19%) answered clearly they were not interested in becoming members, while many more exhibited a strong tendency towards lack of interest
4. 60 (57%) answered more or less clearly that they don't want to become members, 12 (11%) gave a straight YES, 13 (12%) said they might, while 4 (4%) mentioned extra gain and said they would join only for material advantages. 10 (10%) expressed doubt or didn't know.
5. 4 answered that they would join organizations in their domains of interest, 5 didn't know, 4 expressed interest for political organizations, 3 for animal protection organizations, 4 for ecological or environmental organization, 3 for human rights in general (1 out of these 3 for children's rights)
6. 13 (12%) said or alluded they didn't have the time, 15 (14%) said they were not interested, 11 (10%) had a negative attitude towards organizations, 6 (6%) mentioned lack of gain
7. 41 (39%) answered that they would or might, or had a more positive attitude towards voluntary work, 59 (56%) would not, some also mentioned lack of gain, a few didn't know
8. 47 (45%) have little or no trust in the local authorities, 45 (43%) have great or full confidence, some don't know or are of two minds
9. 80 (76%) have little or no confidence in the politicians, 23 (22%) have more or full confidence
10. 52 (50%) showed at least some confidence in NGOs, 27 (26%) had little or no confidence, 24 (23%) don't know about NGOs and their object of activity or don't care

### **4.7.2 General traits**

Tendency to associate is very low (more than half wouldn't want to become members in any organization/Association).

Many people don't seem to care, or are seeking material gain, or are individualists

There is a lot of distrust with regard to politicians, some less distrust for local authorities, and 50% trust for NGOs. People are fed up with politics in general.

Quite many people don't know very much or at all about NGOs or their object or activity, so the awareness level is very low (23%)

Time seems to be an issue for quite a few people

## Chapter 5: Conclusions and Recommendations

The present research has started from the hypothesis that a power unbalance between the local governments (district municipalities), NGOs and community (organizations) may have a negative effect over the process of attaining inclusive, sustainable community development.

The main objective of the research has been to assess the power balance between the local government (the district municipality), NGOs and community (organizations) in the context of Bucharest, Romania, in order to attain the second objective, that has been to build a model of community participation, involvement, empowerment and support applicable to the Romanian context, to enable a genuine process of inclusive, sustainable community development.

### 5.1 Conclusions

So defined by the Romanian Association for Community Development, „the ultimate goal of community development, no matter the problem it is centered on, is the creation of local capacities and local organization so that the community may gain the strength and power to identify, analyze and solve its own problems. The development of a community is and must be the result of the action of people belonging to that community, the dynamics of a community’s development being determined by people’s capacity to use their own available resources, their capacity to work together so as to define and pursue their common interests”.

I have structured the conclusions of this research into three main categories of issues. For each category, both positive and less positive or even negative aspects of those issues are presented.

#### **I. Issues related to the information flow and communication:**

The main problem found as a result of the present research seems to be the lack of information, whether it is caused by a lack of communication or even miscommunication between the public authorities, NGOs, other institutions and citizens on the one hand, and between the public institutions, NGOs and other institutions on the other hand, or by the disinterest, ignorance or lack of willingness to get informed of the citizens themselves.

Bucharest is divided for administrative reasons into six large districts. The districts are competing with one another, which is generally a positive issue, because it stresses the need to improve and perform better. However, the districts do not seem to collaborate as well with each other, not to mention to unite their vision over the social wellbeing of Bucharest’s citizens. Although this cannot be generalized to the level of the entire local council or District municipality, the interviewed departments did not share information among themselves, thus not knowing of each other’s existence or activities, with very few exceptions. There are also divided opinions among the respondents representing the studied institutions regarding people’s awareness of their rights, their degree and willingness of involvement or of collaboration.

To take an example out of the citizen poll, the results show that half of the interviewed people distrust NGOs, while quite many people do not know very much or at all about NGOs or their object or activity, so the awareness level is very low. Therefore, it all comes back to the same problem stated above - lack of information, or even ignorance, causing groundless allegations.

A lack of accurate and publicized performance measures eventually results in such different opinions and perceptions over common issues. From this point of view, each case study is self-explanatory and allows no extrapolation.

#### **II. Old mentalities influencing present perceptions:**

When it comes to community development, it is hard to change people’s mentality and convince them that they are through themselves and through the power of their community a valuable resource, which they can successfully use to solve their own problems. People find it hard to accept the idea of being part of a community and having to work in its benefit, in order to attain their own goals and fulfill their own needs and interests. Even there seem to be organizations, institutions or departments within these, who declare themselves to be guardians of community welfare and help the process of community

development, when they do not seem to understand correctly the concept of community and community development.

Power distance is yet very large in Romania; people generally take everything they get and indulge themselves in almost any situation, although they complain about almost everything that goes wrong in the country, mostly blaming the state and politicians for it.

Some NGOs and local officials are still using words without the reality of changed behavior, approaches and methods, sometimes even exhibiting hierarchical behavior. There are still public authorities where officials sit behind their desks and waiting for people to come and demand their rights. Yet, changes occur and citizens are not always seen as solely beneficiaries, but also as partners.

As the Romanian Association for Community Development objectively assesses the present situation in the country, „Romania, like other countries in Eastern Europe, has a low level of social capital, as a result of the systematic destruction of the civil society and private property. Values and norms such as trust, transparency, reciprocity and participation have been continuously undermined. This state of facts is reflected in people’s passivity, in their incapacity to express their own options and to participate in activities of common interest”. Another study (USAID/Romania 2001) also states that “there is not much of a tradition in associative life (n.b. in Romania), as might be expected in a post communist state”.

If only we look at the results of the citizen poll, we see that there is a very low tendency to associate, as more than half of the questioned people would not want to become members in any organization/Association. This may be considered a significant result for the present research, although a number of 105 respondents are by far unrepresentative for a population of 2.037.278 that the city of Bucharest has.

These results confirm the fact the Romanians still find it hard to understand the true meaning and value of voluntarism within a certain community and that they generally cannot see beyond the limits of self-interest or ignorance. Thus, citizens do not understand that doing well for their community will somehow turn into their own wellbeing. Facing the every day symptoms of ill-being due to economic stress and hardship still does not seem to bring people closer together. Social relations are strained and there is low social cohesion. People do not shared mutual understandings of local needs, do not offer mutual support and reciprocity in relationships, and particularly do not generally feel the need to come together by themselves in informal/formal groups to solve common problems.

On a more positive side, this mainly happens because people do not understand what they should do together, how to do it and what may come out of it. Yet, on a more pessimistic interpretation, the reasons for this result of the poll may seem to be that many of the questioned citizens do not seem to care, or are seeking material gain, or are individualistic, while time seems to be an issue for quite a few people. Other reasons regard the issue of trust of the regular citizens in relation with the politicians, the local authorities and even the NGOs, which may as well be closely related to the flow of information in the society.

### **III. Issues related to the resources:**

Complaints and/or dissatisfaction regarding resources at their disposal have been found both at local government level and NGO level. All representatives of the researched departments within local governments declared low motivation related to low salaries and some complained about the low level of resources from the budget. Yet, some of them have established successful partnerships with NGOs and other institutions and have managed to raise more funds to achieve the outcomes of their projects. Still, there are unforgivable gaps between theory and practice down the line of decentralization – stated and written decisions that appear only on paper, and not in reality. There have also been complaints related to a certain lack of professionalism bringing along low levels of participation.

Presently, in Romania there is no legal differentiation between CBOs and small NGOs. If there are actual CBOs in Romania, they surely are not known as such, at least not by name, but perhaps as groups of citizens gathered together. They are mostly informal, unstructured, lacking organizational experience and hired personnel. It is thus difficult for them to mobilize and administer the resources necessary to develop projected activities, when their very environment of activity lacks important resources. Their environment makes things even harder. They are poor communities with multiple needs and minimal resources, limited experience in Association and community initiative. Under these conditions, it is perhaps useless to mention that they do not have access to internet or the ability to use it,

which would be so important for these organizations in order to be informed, to establish and maintain contacts with stronger organizations.

People in communities that have not worked yet with community facilitators do not know what it means and they may not be interested in the product. That is why community development is a long-term process, sometimes slowing down administrative effectiveness, or being prone to political influences. To be participative, people need to first understand what participation involves, and see the benefits of it. Otherwise, the harsh economic situation worries them too much for them to care about other things, especially since politics adds up to this as a disappointment.

In the meantime, NGOs do not usually risk taking up open-ended funded projects, but take up those with quick results, most effective for raising funds. NGOs are also challenged by existing power structures that are not collaborating for various reasons. It has been admirable to find NGOs offering relevant information, since this does not usually happen in the NGO sector, where there is no systematic evaluation of actual cases.

Public authorities fail to organize and create coordination between their institutions mostly because of lack of resources, and thus of personnel (especially well trained), and in part as well because of an unclear understanding of the social reality and of a more open-wide and overall view, an issue which brings us back to the old mentality.

In reality, all the three categories of issues mentioned above are closely related, influencing each other and allowing the institutions confronted with them to be trapped in a vicious circle.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The present research has been conducted exclusively in Bucharest, and on a very small range of relevant institutions. It would be most interesting to find perhaps other community approaches that have been successful in other large cities of Romania, such as Cluj, Iasi, Timisoara, Oradea etc.

Following the outcome of the research, the recommendations given below have been constructed into a three dimensional model of participation, involvement, empowerment and support, a so-called *model of the three Ps*. The three Ps stand for *perception*, *power* and *partnership*, and they will each be further detailed through a series of three categories of elements.

A very well funded research study referring to citizen participation in local governance in Romania belongs to Chetwind E. and F.J. Chetwind (2001). Although this study has been an inspirational source with regard to improvements necessary in the governance process in Bucharest, an already conducted study over people's participation in Romania is not meant to be reproduced here. This chapter of the paper means to bring new ideas of or reinstate already existing and successful approaches in the field of community development in Bucharest, with all its implications over participation, empowerment and support.

### 1. PERCEPTIONS

As opposed to mentalities, perceptions are much easier to change.

**a. Trust** can be brought back or rebuilt among citizens in relation with public authorities and NGOs. It is important that all the parties respect each other's activity and no longer regard each other as opponents or competitors with no resolution for collaboration. For this, a more open and transparent communication flow is yet needed.

To mobilize a passive population, building Citizen Information Centers (CICs) will not be enough. People should be informed about their rights in general, to be able to participate, since most people do not understand what they need to do or what they are entitled to do. Educating people in this sense stands at the basis of civil implication and participation in community life. Public authorities, NGOs or other institutions, as well as in collaboration with the media, should be able to enable a wider public access to information through brochures, newsletters, internet, radio, television.

Chetwind (2001) enumerates as tools of citizen participation the followings: public awareness campaigns (working with the media, speaking in public), creating, selecting and working with focus groups, public (citizen) surveys and follow-ups (making the results public and used by the local government), openness and transparency (public meetings, hearings and debates).

Positive examples of community involvement, community initiative, NGO and governmental support and impact need to be publicized, in order to encourage and stimulate further such actions.

**b.** Citizens need to be dragged out of their passivity. The aim is to create individual and community *responsabilization* and *involvement*.

Romanian citizens need to understand that citizenship within a democratic society not only means to be given a large series of rights, but that they also need to fulfill some roles. Quoting Chetwind (2001), the citizens of a participatory democratic society should “take notice of what the LGU is doing and why, be prepared to have input when government is planning to do something that affects his or her interests, approach responsible government officials with a positive attitude, be willing to work to understand issues, including constraints on what government can do, state their interests and ideas clearly and completely and, in appropriate situations, be willing to work constructively with local government officials to find and implement a mutually satisfactory solution”.

Moreover, as Chetwind adds, “because these ideas are new for many Romanian citizens, local government officials should be ready to encourage, lead, and educate citizens regarding these responsibilities. [...] After they receive citizen input, responsible LGU officials have an obligation to listen to what the citizen says, and to consider it. A citizen’s idea may be accepted or rejected. But if rejected, the official may also have an obligation to explain why the idea could not or should not be implemented. A citizen’s suggestion or complaint may be accepted or rejected, but it should not be ignored”.

**c.** A process that has already been started in Bucharest and is run with success is that of *civic and communitarian education* offered to children by schools from early stages.

This may be called a movement for the time being, but it would be most desirable for it to be turned into a regular element of the schools’ curricula, as is history or geography for the first grades. Once civic and communitarian behaviors and competences have been established from early ages, children should have a continuance of this education all along their years of school, at least as an optional course, until graduation. Unfortunately, the members of the movement, at present times, are too few. Thus, more and more professionals and school or high-school teachers should be invited and motivated to participate.

It is a long-time process, but when it should start showing the results, they should be most welcome and children may even be influencing their parents, relatives and friends. It would be another version of ‘paying it forward’.

## **2. POWER**

It is difficult for all parties involved to come to a common understanding of the notion of power. However, on the one hand citizens need to understand that they gain more power over the matters regarding their lives by being organized as a strong community. On the other hand, the other parties involved, especially local authorities, need to understand that empowering citizens and collaborating with NGOs or other institutions should not undermine or steal their own power, but improve their image and relieve their burden, to some extent.

**a.** *NGOs working with public authorities* is a very positive and optimistic perspective for the future of Bucharest. NGOs need to work together with public authorities and invite them into partnerships to achieve common project outcomes.

Social policies need to be even more people oriented, while eliminating the institutional fragmentation. In a city as large as Bucharest, where each dividing district is like a smaller town, it is indeed a huge task to unite visions among districts and to reach consensus at public policy level, particularly social policy. It is nevertheless necessary. This may appear as a contradictory statement against decentralization, but actually, it would help in the process, by easing up prioritization - allowing a better definition of target populations and a more efficient use of resources based on appropriate information. There should be prior evaluations to compare the various alternatives and NGOs may prove to be very helpful for the matter. The after evaluations are required in order to provide learning from the experience and rationally decide which projects/programs are to be continued based on their success and which are to be stopped.

**b.** *NGOs working with companies and corporations* provide an even better perspective over the Romanian capital’s future. Corporate Social Responsibility is yet another movement involving large companies into NGO projects. This may enable the possibility to

create competition among corporations and NGOs in terms of social accountability, level of performance and image improvement.

**c. NGOs working with community leaders** appears now as a good strategy to form groups and organizations. Special care should be taken that community leaders and local elites do not take charge of development in their own interests. People resist to change almost unconsciously, mostly out of self interest, misunderstanding, lack of trust, ignorance, disbelief or frustration. Community leaders are those who are ready to change and can be turned as well into change agents for their communities.

Community facilitators should be capable and willing to take risks and not get rushed or constrained by time. Indeed, there is no guarantee for active and full participation, it can only be encouraged, otherwise people will not come by themselves to get empowered.

### **3. PARTNERSHIP**

**a. NGOs mediating partnerships between public authorities and the community groups** would mean improving the communities' knowledge and relations with public authorities, along with improving their technical skills and professionalism to avoid their dependency on other institutions, even helping community organizations to form support networks.

Public authorities should be aware of both costs and benefits of citizen participation. "Keeping citizens informed and providing them access to information [...] takes staff time, budget resources, creativity, energy and sometimes, political will and courage." (Chetwind, 2001). Still, there are many more benefits: this restores and builds trust between local government and citizens by ensuring transparency in the governing process. It helps local governments identify the needs of the community sooner and directs the community towards a responsible decision, with political support, guiding the community towards agreement instead of conflicts. It helps in promoting a new legal framework, appropriate for the new type of co-operation and partnership. Moreover, LGs could in their turn mediate the relations between NGOs and communities, once trust is reestablished, thus reinforcing the associative and collaborative processes.

**b. NGOs** should be **mediating partnerships between other NGOs and community groups to ensure community development sustainability**. This way, community organizations once related to stronger local NGOs would be less prone to political influence or capture.

**c. NGOs establishing partnerships with public authorities** is also a most desirable opportunity. NGOs have the expertise and experience that most public authorities do not have on specific domains. NGOs may help increase the budget funds, especially when those NGOs have adopted CSR. This would eventually contribute to an increase of the financial motivation of public employees, which would implicitly make the public officials' team more viable and thus determine them to perform better.

Partnerships among NGOs and local governments would help as well to improve each other's relations and knowledge. It would stimulate NGOs to achieve high levels of competence and accountability and develop their staff's management skills, to improve their specialized technical skills.

As suggested by Davidson and Peltenburg (1993), NGOs should be working with the government on policy, planning and program development and with local governments to improve the management capacity of smaller NGOs or community organizations, thus stimulating the improvement of their technical capacity. NGOs advocacy would mean a strategic attempt to influence opinion and policy in a positive manner, while another direction of development would be to promote the dissemination of information for a better communication.

On the other hand, local governments are to review their policies regarding their relations with NGOs and make them more supportive. They should develop appropriate structures for involving the community (organizations). Public authorities should also organize or take advantage of training opportunities in the areas of strategic management, participative action planning and working with CBOs and NGOs, while reviewing their organizational culture and becoming more service oriented. Most important, they should minimize the transfer of staff involved in building and maintaining local community contacts and improve information flows, by sharing experience with other local governments and NGOs. They should involve NGOs and CBOs in planning and development, also ensuring that there should be effective two-way communication and the delegation of certain elements of decision making.



## **List of Abbreviations**

CBO – Community-Based Organization

CNMB – Colegiul National Matei Basarab (MBNC – Matei Basarab National College)

CREE – Centrul de Resurse pentru Educatie Economica (RCEE – Resource Center for Economic Education)

CWF – Commonwealth Foundation

DFID – Department for International Development

EU – European Union

GDSAC – General Direction for Social Assistance and Childcare

IPLDRC – International Plan for Local Development of Roma communities

LG – Local Government

LGA – Local Governance Assessment

MORI – Market Opinion Research International

NAPLDRC – National Action Plan for the Local Development of Roma Communities

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

OECD – Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

OSF – Open Society Foundation

PWC – Price WaterhouseCoopers Consulting

RACD – Romanian Association for Community Development

RFR – Ratiu Foundation Romania

UNDP – United Nations Development Program

USAID – United States Agency for International Development

WB – World Bank

WDR – World Development Report

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## Websites

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- 3<sup>rd</sup> District municipality – <http://www.sector3primarie.ro>
- 4<sup>th</sup> District municipality – <http://www.ps4.ro>
- Matei Basarab National College – <http://www.basarab.ro>
- Network of Organizations Active in the Field of Community Development in Romania – <http://www.ruralnet.ro>
- OECD – <http://www.oecd.org>
- Princess Margaret of Romania Foundation – <http://www.principesa-margareta.ro>
- Ratiu Foundation Romania – <http://www.ratiufoundation.org>
- Resource Center for Economic Education – <http://www.cree.ro>
- Romanian Association for Community Development – <http://www.RACD.ro>
- The World Bank – <http://www.worldbank.org>
- ‘Together’ Community Development Agency – <http://www.agentiaimpreuna.ro>
- Rural Assistance Center – <http://www.rural-center.org>
- Ethno-cultural Diversity Resource Center – <http://www.edrc.ro>
- Resource Center for Roma Communities – <http://www.romacenter.ro>
- CREST Resource Center – <http://www.crest.ro>

## **Annex 1 General interview questions placed in categories**

### **About the interviewee's personal background:**

1. Reasons for working in that particular organization:
2. Status/position within the organization:
3. Personal meaning of the organization:

### **About the researched organization:**

4. Nature/status of the organization:
5. Existence period:
6. Reasons for foundation:
7. Status of work place:
8. Main objectives of the organization:
9. Number of members/employees (sufficiency) and organizational structure:
10. Representativeness and legitimacy:
11. Criteria for admission and strategies to attract members/employees:
12. Level of member/employee motivation and suggestions for improvement:
13. Balance inclination between individual and team work:
14. Leadership accession criteria and required qualities:
15. Decision-making process:
16. Rights, responsibilities and obligations of members/employees:
17. Self sustainability and/or external help – nature, sources, ways of receiving:
18. Perception of organization's role in the Romanian social/community development context:

### **About the organization's activity:**

19. Direct work with the community:
20. Activities/projects in development or/and achieved:
21. Project planning/design:
22. Project implementation and criteria:

23. Project coordination:
24. Project monitoring:
25. Performance evaluation:
26. Enabling/providing project funding – sources, or other types/ways of support
27. Meeting the interests and needs of the community
28. Assessing the needs of the citizens within the community:
29. Setting the organization's priorities:

**About other actors and the organization's relations with them:**

30. Awareness of the existence of community organizations within activity area:
31. Necessity of CBOs in the social development process:
32. Working directly with CBOs:
33. Nature of these relations – enabling factors, obstacles and benefits:
34. Plans/solutions/suggestions for improving the situation:
35. Other stakeholders involved, partnerships:
36. Nature of relations with other actors – enablers, obstacles, benefits:
37. Necessity/benefits of government/local government interference:
38. Suggestions to the local government to do/improve in the matter:
39. Other plans for improving the situation (from the part of own organization):
40. Suggestions to the community members to do on their own:
41. Other ideas of support for the community (organizations):

**About the community involvement:**

42. The problems the community is dealing with in area of activity:
43. Assessing the existence and the nature of these problems:
44. Awareness of people in the community of the existence of any community organization acting in their area, or of the existence of own organization:
45. Suggestions for raising the awareness level:
46. People's participation/involvement in the community life – types of implication
47. Awareness of people of their rights as citizens in a democratic society:

48. Measures taken by the organization in this sense:
49. People's willingness to involve in the change process:
50. Reasons for little willingness, ways of helping them prepare and cope with it:
51. Level of implication of young people – reasons for low levels:
52. Strategies to involve young people:
53. Other means of improving people's participation:

**Closure:**

54. Strategies for the future regarding the community development process:
55. Other kind of improvements in the interest of the community:
56. Power holders in the Romanian society nowadays:
57. Influence of own organization over the district municipality - obstacles:
58. Organization's influence over NGOs and CBOs:
59. Influence of NGOs and CBOs in the development process:
60. Influence of district municipality to enable a genuine development process:
61. Suggestions for improvement:
62. Capacity of own organization to bring sustainable development within the community:
63. Necessity to work with NGOs/CBOs/LGs:
64. Own perception as mediators:
65. Concrete plans to mediate the relations between main actors:
66. Decentralization process brought the local governments closer to the citizens:



## **Annex 2 Citizens Poll**

1. Are you member of any organization/association?
2. If so, what kind of organization/association is it and what determined you to join it?
3. If not, what are the reasons for this?
4. In case you are not a member of any organization/association, would you consider becoming one?
5. If so, what kind of organization/association would attract you?
6. If not, for what reasons?
7. In what measure would you consider to voluntarily (without getting paid) give some of your time and labour to an organization/association, if you were a member?
8. To what extent do you trust the district municipality?
9. How about the politicians?
10. And what about NGOs?

For questions 8,9,10:

11. If the level of trust is high, which are the determining factors?
12. If the level of trust is low, what are the reasons for this?