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CIVIL SOCIETY, PUBLIC PARTICIPATION, AND RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION. EXPLORATORY INVESTIGATIONS IN THE LIVEZILE-RIMETEA AREA (APUSENI MOUNTAINS, ROMANIA)

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The present work approaches a series of wide exploratory investigations in the Romanian rural area, most recently in Livezile-Rimetea micro-region (Apuseni Mountains). Within the civil society and public participation debate context, the study focuses on the variable of religious affiliation (orthodox, non-orthodox), which differentiates the real potential public participation at the population level in the studied area. The immediate conclusion to be drawn is that in the differences in religious affiliation induce variations in expressing the civic activism and in the real or the potential public participation. At the end of our study, the paradox of public participation as diminishing factor of the civil society role is taken into account and this concerns new reflections and investigations on the subject.

Civil society and public participation

The origins of the concept of *civil society* can be traced to the 19th century politics and ideology tightly related to liberalism and democratisation.[1] The interest in recent redefinitions of the concept has been resuscitated by the global socio-political transformations and by the failures of both the state and the markets in adequately responding to some of the human needs.

As the civil society is both a philosophical and a political practice concept it has been often criticised as being vague, slippery, and lacking conceptual accuracy at a philosophical level. Through social and political theory debate attempts are being made to reduce some of these weaknesses.

John Keane defines the civil society as a Weberian *idealtype,* which looks at the complex of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in relation to both themselves and the state institutions. NGOs show a tendency for non-violence and are self-organized and self-reflexive. They

find themselves in a continuous state of tension both between themselves as well as in relation to state institutions that frame, constrain and, at the same time, empower them.

The use of a contrasting term may put things into perspective. Keane for instance, points out the concept of nationalism as being an example of the *uncivil society*. Compared to nationalism, the civil society fosters tolerance and support for diversity and opposes monistic and barbarian tendencies that attack core values of *civilisation* and of *civilised behaviour*.[2]

Jeffrey Alexander[3] envisions the civil society as being an autonomous sphere of social solidarity, that is empirically and analytically distinct from other spheres such as the political, economical, religious, or the family ones. The resources of the civil society according to Alexander can be found in other of the society's subsystems such as in the independent, rational, and self-controlled behaviour encouraged by the market economy.

From a normative perspective, Heins sees the civil society as a counterbalancing force between two negative aspects of the political world: the excessive state power on one hand and the undesirable social phenomena such as social disintegration, violence, and religious fanaticism on the other.

In the contemporary political debates, the notion of *civil society* has become a stronghold against the type of totalitarianism specific to the former communist countries in the Eastern and Central Europe[5].

Krishan Kumar also states that the concept of *civil society* is related to the transformations that happened in the Eastern and Central European countries after the communism's fall. He points out the notion's broad usage by the scientists of 1989 revolution and warns the intellectual elite about unrealistic expectations regarding the reconstruction programmes of the civil society. The combination of a democratic pluralism and a continuation of the state regulatory role, as an antithesis or alternative to state-party, is considered both attractive and risky in clearing the aim for which the concept of civil society is being used.[6]

At the beginning of the 21st century, this concept becomes significant and even paradigmatic for the domain of *policies and practices of development.* Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce propose the kind of genealogy embodying the *civil society development*[7] as an alternative to the classic conceptual genealogies.

More recently, the relationship among civil society, development, and democratisation has been examined by Peter Burnell and Peter Calvert.[8] Diverse social areas, from the American neighbourhood to the Latin American countries, are brought into play.

The developmental perspective is a fundamental one for our study. To reach the goal of our study, the relationships of the civil society are of importance also, that of the civil society, in general, and of the *trust capital,* in particular.

An ample debate on the relationship between trust and the civil society - prevalent ideas in the works of Putnam, Fukuyama, Giddens and Seligman - can be found in the essay volume written by Fran Tonkiss, Andrew Passey, Natalie Fenton, and Leslie C. Hems. In all eight essays the trust and civil society are examined in relation to individuals, family, religion, volunteering organisations, environment, state, and economy. The authors' declared goal is that of providing a critical analysis of the way these two (often abstract) concepts are applied to different social situations.[9]

Such analysis can bring the theory closer to the empirical and the evaluation areas. Fred Powell, for instance, in his essay entitled "State, Welfare, and Civil Society" notices that, although the volunteering sector is often considered as an alternative to state-supplied citizen welfare, it has yet to achieve a consolidated position. Consequently, the civil society crystallisation is of great interest in volunteering organisations, as well as *their capacity in establishing relationships with the public institutions on a trust basis.* [10] The idea is fully shared by other researchers in the social capital domain, as the historical perspective on the relationship between trust and civil society is sometimes associated with the doubt of being sufficient nowadays:

> "Dealing with the classical patterns of trust, based on the interactions between free, rational, isolated individuals proves to be insufficient in the recent modern social conditions."[11]

An equally widespread concept like that of the civil society that embodies the same level of complexity, is that of *participation.* The association between *civil society* and *participation*, in some current meanings, might result in some theoretical arguments capable of reshaping the very substance of the so-mentioned notions. In the specialized literature on participation, this concept seems to be directly related to the civil society's manifestation forms. It is the case of popular participation concept analysed by Stiefel and Wolf in their work "A Voice for the Excluded. Popular Participation in Development: Utopia or Necessity?". For Stiefel and Wolf participation represents:

> "...organising the efforts in order to increase control over the resources and institutions that administrate them in defined social situations from the perspective of those excluded from such a control at some point."[12]

The authors identify six perspectives through which participation could be approached: 1) the confronting perspective between components

of society already excluded and those that maintain or enforce exclusion; 2) the would-be perspective; 3) the biographical perspective, of the individual experience participation; 4) the perspective of participation as a program or a project proposed and organised by the governmental agencies, volunteering organisations, and international organisations; 5) the perspective of participating as part of national development policies; 6) the perspective of either visible or secret anti-participating structures and ideologies - entrenched obstructions against popular participation.

Notwithstanding the global societal perspective a simpler and more practical approach may be that of focusing on the intersection between civil society and development projects. For Somesh Kumar for instance, participation takes a central place in development theory and practices:

> „Governments, financing agencies, donors, civil society actors including the ONGs and multifunctional agents such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund came to the conclusion that development can not be sustainable and long-lasting if only the people participation is part of the development process."[13]

Kumar's definitions on participation embody a series of common ideas which are underscored by us as follows: 1) *participation as a volunteering contribution*, 2) *participation as involvement in decision making* and 3) *participation as an active process of influencing the direction and execution of a development project.*

Kumar also presents in his study a typology of participation taking into account, among other aspects, *its intensity*: 1*) passive participation* (population is informed with no particular interest on its answers); 2) *participation in information giving* (for example, in the case of a grassroots inquiry of a development project); 3) *participation by consultation* (people ask and find solutions together with the specialists involved in the development project); 4) *participation for material incentives* (people participate by providing non-qualified work in exchange of money, food, or other material rewards); 5) *functional participation* (people participate through groups that meet the objectives associated to projects and that get involved in major decision making); 6) *interactive participation* (people participate in common analysis, in the development of the action plans, and in the formation and consolidation of local institutions); 7) *self-mobilization* (people participate by spontaneous initiatives, independently from the external institutions which provide them with resources and advice, and without loss of control over the way resources are being used).

Participation advantages are described by five concepts that Quakley *et al.* suggested 1) *efficiency* (participation can assure the appropriate usage of available resources); 2) *effectiveness* (the lack of people participation has

been seen as one of the major causes for the great majority of projects' failure); 3) *self-reliance* (when participation is lacking, people are being confronted with the dependency syndrome; dependency appears when we deal with exclusively external intervention, government, or state intervention, for instance; 4) *coverage* (people participation can be a persuasive way in directing the benefits toward the target-groups); 5) *sustainability* (people participation is considered an essential premise of developing the activities, by setting up the basis of ownership over the development projects' results).

Taking as a starting point Quakley and his colleagues' ideas, Kumar also pinpoints a series of *arguments against participation*: 1) participation can lead to a starting point and to project development delays, with direct implications on public and financial resource attraction; 2) participation requires an increased demand for human and material resources if it is to be sustained); 3) resistance will likely be encountered if participation implies decision making empowerment of the people through transfer away from other factors; delegating control has rarely been easy.

Although Kumar starts his analysis on participation with enthusiasm, he becomes more realistic and quite critic in the end:

> "The truth is that due to these reasons, many projects prefer to involve the people only in the implementing stage. But in most of the projects participation proves to remain more illusory than real. That is why participation remains rather rhetorical than a reality. And this despite the general recognition of the fact that participation in its meaning of interactive participation or participation through self-mobilization must be an essential ingredient of development processes."[14]

In time, a series of problems mentioned here have benefited from coherent solutions from the more generous perspective of partnership. Participation appears, beside partnership, as a fundamental principle of territorial intelligence.[15] Taking into account either the economic intelligence, in a territorial context,[16] or the collective intelligence[17] and its manifestations, at a territorial level, the territorial intelligence is characterized by the same principles, which nowadays represent the basis of sustainable development.[18]

Public participation and religious affiliation

In the contemporary approaches of religion two themes seem to be constant and of great heuristic vitality from the perspective of participation*: religious participation* and *religious-based public participation.* In

particular, the Central and Easter European post-communist areas have generated numerous studies attempting to identify patterns of religious phenomenon re-vitalisation, following the collapse of the atheist state.[19] Comparative East-West studies, of which we consider Miklos Tomka's[20] to be most remarkable, are taken into consideration, as well.

As the public participation is concerned, Chambers and Thomson's[21] centre their study on Casanova's[22] proposed concept of public religion. One can notice that public religion refers to the active participation of groups of faith in public matters. This participation can be viewed as follows: 1) public religion involvement at the state level; 2) faith groups' participation in the promotion of social politics and 3) involvement of faith groups' into matters of civil society. The first two types of public religion concern particularly the defence of some privileges, while the third type focuses on the social justice and the protection of human rights. Chambers and Thomson notice that, for Casanova, the first two types correspond to pre-modern social and political structures. Such examples are found even nowadays. The third type is fully compatible with the principles of the structurally differentiated modern society and of the open discourse civil society.

The relationship between *public religion* and civil society is complex and contradictorily mediated by the social capital. Looking at the religious capital as source of social capital, Andrew Greeley states that, at the volunteering level - seen as dimension of social capital - the religious structures are loosing some influence. Not to imply, however, that the religious structures are loosing influence at all levels of social capital.[23]

The comparative observations regarding the orthodox specific at the European level are also of interest for our study.

Differences between the orthodox religion and the Western Christianity are also considered by Miklos Tomka who chooses to stress the following aspects: 1) the constant tendency on minimising the religion influence in society is given by the fact that culture and politics seem to characterize the Western Europe; dissimilarly, religion is an ardent player in the public life of former 'sovietised' Europe. Consequently, both scientists and ordinary people from Western Europe postulated and experienced a general decline of religion in modern times, while people from Central and Eastern Europe noticed a development and an expansion of the religious phenomenon, at both individual and social levels; 2) while in Western Europe the youth represents the lowest percentage in religious involvement, in Eastern Europe the number of young individuals who discovered God is higher than the number of those having lost their faith; 3) the Western countries confront themselves with diminishing the church role and influence, while in the East the churches are providing great support to the new social actors; here the churches really enjoy their status of public institution.

Another aspect to be brought into play concerns the church-state separation in the West. While that confers the Western Church more opportunities of adopting a critical position, it also diminishes the opportunities of making the political domain more dynamic.

A remarkable fact is the high level of confidence invested in the Church by the former communist populations. The Church is often situated at the top level, alongside the Army. Siniša Zrinščak offers a quite interesting perspective on this topic when he analyses the case of the Croatian Catholic Church. The trust in the Croatian Catholic Church and in the Army, he speculates, can be regarded as a sort of compensation to the lack of trust in the major public institutions. As a symbol of the fight for an independent national state, the Croatian Catholic Church has become tightly intertwined into the social fabric. The vast majority of Croatian public expects the Church to present its viewpoints on a wide array of social concerns such as unemployment, poverty, and abortion. Similarly, in Romania, the Church reaches the top level on people's trust[24] and it proves to be more open to what the *social development projects*[25] are concerned.

Perspectives on the sociological field research

The tight relationships noticed nowadays between the civil society and the development policies[26] on one hand, and the participation and the development practice[27] on the other, can represent a starting point and a fundamental opening for the sociological field research. For the purpose of research design or for that of data analysis, *religious affiliation* can be an important predictor in shaping and developing investigations. Even if we do not necessarily aim to verify the applicability of the Weberian thesis[28] to modern times, similar hypotheses can be formulated concerning the civic activism and/or public participation. Differences in religious affiliation imply differences in religious ideological affiliations such as orthodoxism or non-orthodoxism (a generic term encompassing all non-orthodox religious ideologies). One of the hypotheses based on the above mentioned distinction may be as follows: *differences in religious affiliation (in the case of orthodoxism or non-orthodoxism) induce differences in expressing the civic activism and in the real or the potential public participation.*

Starting from this type of hypothesis, but not only, we have designed a series of exploratory investigations in the Livezile-Rimetea micro-region of the Apuseni Mountains, Romania. We called this research an exploratory one because it is testing such hypothesis as well as some instruments such as the civic activism and participation questionnaire and the results restitution interview of the religious communities' leaders. Some of these results will be presented in the section that follows.

Exploratory investigations in Livezile-Rimetea Micro-region (Apuseni Mountains, Romania)
Description of the studied area and some methodological aspects

The micro-region taken into consideration consists of the Livezile and Rimetea communes from which it also borrows its name. Geographically, it is situated in the Depression of Trascau, an area with a specific landscape in the Apuseni Mountains, Romania. At the last census (2002), there had been registered 2739 inhabitants, 50.97% men and 49.03% women. The micro-region's particularity is also given by the long-lasting cohabitation between Romanians (60.28% in the micro-region and 98.68% in Livezile) and Hungarians (33.8% in the micro-region and 87.30% in Rimetea).

The Rimetea commune consists of the villages of Rimetea, the administrative hub, and Colţeşti. The Livezile commune consists of five villages: Livezile, the hub, Izvoarele, Poiana Aiudului, and Vălişoara. Our research explored the representations and opinions of 366 inhabitants, aged over 18 from Rimetea, Colţeşti, Poiana Aiudului, Izvoarele, and Livezile.

The population distribution according to the religious affiliation within this area is shown in Table 1.

Table 1. People distribution according to their religious affiliation

Village	Religious affiliation (%)						Total
	Ortho-dox	Catholic	Reformed	Unitarian	Neo-protestant	Other	
Livezile	97.1	1.8	0.0	0.0	0.1	1.0	100.0
Izvoarele	97.9	0.5	0.0	1.0	0.0	0.5	100.0
Poiana Aiudului	99.0	0.7	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.2	100.0
Colţeşti	1.6	3.4	7.5	81.0	1.3	5.1	100.0
Rimetea	23.8	1.8	2.3	71.3	0.3	0.5	100.0
AVERAGE	63.9	1.7	2.0	30.7	0.4	1.5	100.0

Source: Population census, 2002.

At the sampling level of our research, the distributed population had been grouped as *orthodox* versus *non-orthodox population*. The proportion of each of the groups in the total population is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Faith groups by village

Village	Faith group (%)	
	Orthodox	Non-orthodox
Colţeşti	2.2	97.8
Izvoarele	100	0.0
Livezile	98.8	1.2
Poiana Aiudului	100	0.0
Rimetea	13.4	86.6

The methodology employed by our study included two types of research instruments: *questionnaire-based inquiry* and *results restitution interview.* As the general inquiry methodology has been fairly well documented in other works[29], some remarks are left to be said about result restitution.

The more advice on the design of data collection instruments is being provided by a host of research books and methodological guides - Bernard Bergier notices - the less attention seems to be paid to the relationship with the beneficiary and its resulting (sometimes damaging) impact on the researcher; this, in a world where the restitution beneficiaries are the very providers of source information (Bergier, 2000).

Bergier proposes this definition for restitution:

> "...That act or that dynamics through which the researcher shares to his speaker in territory the temporary and/or final results of processing the collected data for being analysed, for ethic and/or heuristic purpose."[30]

Not only do we take account the ethical and heuristic objectives but we do attempt to define a finer grain of restitution concepts. Thus, one may speak of *restitution-gift* or *ethic restitution* on the one hand and of *restitution-knowledge* or *heuristic restitution* on the other. When one considers the relationship with strategic action-research and with sociological intervention, one may see reasons to go even further and define *restitution-gift*, *restitution-knowledge,* and *restitution-intervention*, the latter manifesting sometimes as the "animate restitution", as envisioned by R. Mucchielli. [31]

In the first stage of our research in Livezile-Rimetea the goal has been restitution-knowledge. This is the reason why the sociological inquiry results have been returned to the local religious community leaders.

A few results from the investigations

We should mention some of the predictors involved in the association among religious affiliation and the variables of civic participation. Age, education level, and ethnic affiliation have been considered. As far as the faith groups' age no major differences have been identified: about 21% of their members were between 18 and 34 years old, about 41% between 35 and 59 years old, and about 38% were 60 years old and older. See Table 3.

Table 3. Faith groups on age categories

Faith group	Age categories (%)			Total
	18-34	35-59	60 and over	
Orthodox	20.5	40.5	39.0	100.0
Non-orthodox	21.1	41.6	37.3	100.0
Total	20.8	41.0	38.3	100.0

Based on the education level, there are differences within the lower levels (grades 0-10). Thus, the proportion of orthodox followers is slightly higher (53.7%) than the sample average (51.1%), as opposed to the non-orthodox group (47.8%). Also, 15.6% of the orthodox followers had vocational training, as opposed to only 19.8% of the non-orthodox ones. Although the values seemed to be closer to the category of those graduating a high school, a college, or a university (about 30%), we should mention that the number of the orthodox followers graduating a university has been twice higher than that of the non-orthodox group's members.

The ethnic factor is much more relevant in characterising the two faith groups: about 98% of the orthodox followers were Romanians, as opposed to the non-orthodox ones who were mostly Hungarians (91.8%). See Table 4.

Table 4. Faith groups according to ethnic group

Faith group	Ethnic group (%)				Total
	Romanian	Hungarian	Gipsy	Other	
Orthodox	98.0	1.0	0	1.0	100.0
Non-orthodox	6.9	91.8	1.3	0	100.0
Total	58.1	40.8	0.6	0.6	100.0

The communitarian attachment may be a subtler predictor of the relationship between faith and civic participation. We noticed that 94.6% of orthodox followers and 84.5% of the members of the non-orthodox group declared to be highly attached to their villages.(Table 5).

Table 5. Communitarian attachment

Faith group	How much do you feel attached to your native village?					Total
	Not at all	Little	Much	Very much	No answer	
Orthodox	1.0	3.9	32.2	62.4	0.5	100.0
Non-orthodox	1.9	12.4	31.1	53.4	1.2	100.0
Total	1.4	7.7	31.7	58.5	0.8	100.0

As we shall see later, the category of those highly attached (orthodox) is potentially less open to civic participation, as some indicators show.

Next, we shall dwell into the actual analysis of some potential and real public's participation indicators.

Trust and communication. A general picture of trust as a dimension of social capital that can intensify civic participation is shown in Table 6. A first remark is that the non-orthodox persons declared to have great trust in the village intellectuals (teaching staff) and businessmen. They seemed to refer more critically to the commune mayor and to the priest (the religious leader). Fewer highly trusted the police officers as legal representatives. This lack of trust in the local authority representatives is also accompanied by less trust in people, in general. Naturally sometimes, paradoxically some other times, these aspects have been associated with the communication on the "village's common concerns" subject: less members of the non-orthodox group discussed these matters with the public authorities, while more discussed them with the priest. See Table 6.

Table 6. Trust expression and faith group

Trust referees	Very high and high level of trust (%)		
	Orthodox	Non-orthodox	Total sample
Commune Mayor	76.6	40.1	60.1
Local councillors	35.6	35.5	35.6
Priest	85.9	64.0	76.2
Teaching staff	50.2	58.4	53.9
Doctor	69.8	70.2	69.9
Police officers	58.1	54.7	56.5
Businessmen	28.3	35.4	31.4
Other village inhabitants	58.5	59.6	59.0
People in general	60.7	57.1	53.5

While the members of the non-orthodox group liked to discuss these matters with their friends and family members, more of the orthodox followers liked to discuss them with their neighbours rather than with their family members. These assertions allow us to suggest a differentiated focus of possible interventions for stimulating civic participation: *neighbourhood-based for the orthodox and friends and family-based for non-orthodox group.*

Table 7. Communication on the "village's concerns" subject

Communication partners	Communication expression as YES (%)		
	Orthodox	Non-orthodox	Total sample
Mayor, Vice-Mayor and other persons from the City Hall	71.7	54.0	63.9
Priest	8.8	10.6	9.6
School principal, teaching staff	0.5	1.2	0.8
Doctor	2.0	3.1	2.5
Police officer	1.0	0.6	0.8
Neighbours	41.1	32.9	37.4
Friends	14.1	23.0	18.0
Family members	37.6	39.8	38.5
Villagers living somewhere	0.5	1.9	1.1
Nobody	8.3	9.9	9

Dissatisfaction, expression, and consequences. We asked our target groups to declare if, at times, they had been discontent with the quality of public works undertaken in their village. The responses showed that the percentage of discontent non-orthodox followers was higher than (65.2%) than that of orthodox ones (47.3%).

Official complaints (oral or written) addressed to the City Hall and Local Council as means to express dissatisfaction had been used by 35.3% of members of the non-orthodox and 25.9% members of the orthodox one. See also Table 8.

Table 8. Expression of dissatisfaction

Faith group	Have you complained to City Hall or Local Council? (%)						Total
	Yes, I complained orally when I had the opportunity	Yes, I asked for a meeting and I complained orally	Yes, I made a written complaint	No	It is not necessary	No answer	
Orthodox	23.4	1.5	1.0	24.4	49.3	0.5	100.0
Non-orthodox	32.9	1.2	1.2	31.1	32.9	0.6	100.0
Total	27.6	1.4	1.1	27.3	42.1	0.5	100.0

As for the intervention results, the percentage of those declaring that their complaints had a positive follow-up is almost identical (about 7%), which implies that a higher proportion of non-orthodox group's members continued to be dissatisfied. We can make some associations among such a situation and the trust on authorities. This way, we consider that the authorities' lack of reaction is the source of mistrust and the reason for the avoidance to discuss local matters.

Affiliation to organizations and to other forms of association. Being an indicator of both social capital and civic participation, affiliation to various organisations and other forms of associations is extremely limited in our area of study. As shown in Table 9., the orthodox group seemed to be more involved in the life of the political parties, while the non-orthodox one was more involved with school (via parents committees), with humanitarian and charitable organisations and displayed more interest in arts and music as means of promoting education.

Table 9. Affiliation to organisations and other forms of association

Organisations and other forms of association	Affiliation expression as YES (%)		
	Orthodox	Non-orthodox	Total sample
Professional associations	1.0	3.7	2.2
Parents committees	3.4	9.9	6.3
Humanitarian and charitable organizations	1.5	5.6	3.3
Consumers security organizations	0	0.2	0.6
Ecological organizations	0.5	3.1	1.6
Political parties	8.3	6.2	7.4
Unions	1.0	1.9	1.4
Art, education, and music organizations	0.5	3.7	1.9
Sport and recreation organizations	4.9	2.5	3.8

Communitarian projects and informational foundation. Taking into consideration the newly observed connections between civil society and development, on one side, and between participation and projects-based development, on the other side, throughout our exploratory investigations we were interested in the optimism/pessimism variable of implementing a research project. Thus, the number of the people of orthodox faith believing that a basic research project can be successfully completed was higher than the number of those of non-orthodox faith, but not that high to lead us to a definite conclusion (81% v. 78%).

Another important factor for project-based development is the degree to which the project is supported by a sustained supply of information on the communitarian life. At least partially, such sharing of information could enlighten the idea of partnership, as the base for the territorial intelligence concept. We asked our speakers if they were willing to provide the necessary information to a village centre. Looking at the data provided in Table 10 one can notice, at both faith groups, a temperate enthusiasm towards providing the information.

The non-orthodox group seemed to be less open to share the information on land transactions and on church attendance. The attitude seems to be tightly related to providing information about family

relationships or local business matters. An interesting topic remains for further study: the intriguing difference in attitude when dealing with violent behaviour. The orthodox group showed more willingness to provide information on this subject than the non-orthodox one.

Table 10. Information providing

Potential domains to provide information	Agreement on information providing (%)		
	Rather agree - orthodox	Rather agree - non-orthodox	Rather agree- total sample
Family concerns of villagers	42.9	42.9	42.9
Social concerns of villagers	52.7	50.3	51.6
Relationships of the village families	45.9	44.7	45.4
Animal percentage in each household	52.2	49.7	51.1
Transfers of lands	59.5	49.1	54.9
Changes in population dynamics	58.0	54.0	56.3
Violent behaviour	54.1	48.4	51.6
Religious ceremony attendance	60.8	49.7	55.9
Business development	45.9	45.3	45.6
Environment security problems	59.5	53.4	56.8

A question to be raised now is in what social context has a development project better chances of success and in what social context should the above information be collected? We have to take into account the (paternalistic state) dependency syndrome. According to our research data, 87.4% of the orthodox followers and 84.4% of the non-orthodox ones accept the idea of the state being the sole contributor, although they do not completely exclude the option of limited partnerships between foreign investors, businessmen and local inhabitants (0.8% for orthodox and 3% for the non-orthodox). The state dependency syndrome can offer us a global explanation concerning the reduced civic participation in the area. The more this syndrome is manifesting, the less the socio-psychological resources are employed.

Following the same ideas, it may be important for future research that the public participation subject be approached in connection to these faith-based variations in the dependency syndrome, especially in Eastern Europe where there are tighter links between the Church and the state.

Results restitution. The use of restitution has taken into account many dimensions of civic participation, both potential and real, like the *trust* in organizations and the *involvement* associated with the participation-enhancement Church's role. Although not considered initially, the Church's role as a communication channel between authorities and citizens, has been identified as a new dimension of public participation.

Next, we shall take notice of the restitution beneficiaries' (local religious leaders) opinions on the role of the Church, both in sustaining public participation and in facilitating communication between secular authorities and local population alike.

Through the use of an interview guidebook we showed the religious leaders our findings on the reduced degree of participation and we asked them to comment on it.

Commenting on this topic, one of the non-orthodox leaders pointed out the Church's importance in fostering participation: "*Not everybody participates at the 'so-called' volunteering work, but... we would organize that sort of work better through the Church rather than through other institutions like the City Hall, for instance*". Another non-orthodox leader came with an explanation for the phenomenon of low participation, estimating it to be even less than we measured: "*...Due to democracy, people are interested only in money and they forget about church ... now it's all talk, but the action leaves to be desired*". One of the orthodox leaders stated: "*There are people who always remain passive, but the vast majority do get involved. There have been other activities, not only those related to church, charitable activities, when people proved their generosity according to their means.*"

From this snapshot on restitution we should remember the communities' participative potential outside an organizational or associative context. This type of potential can be, and it seems to be, in fact, more easily valued through the church's activism, rather than through the impulses of the local authorities. We did not identify a significant debate of the most religious leaders on this issue.

The church, seen as a mediator between the state authorities and the citizens, appeared, for the first time in our research, to be concerning the political life in communist times. These results were published later[32] . In our research study from Livezile-Rimetea we asked the religious leaders what were their opinions on acting as mediators when secular authorities asked them to pass on information further, to the citizens. Here are some of these opinions:

"*I believe the priest involvement is necessary and even beneficial, but not the a-synchronized involvements in what the local institutions' projects are concerned. The Church will not operate against a project implemented by the City Hall. It is* necessary *to have cooperation between the local and the religious authorities, cooperation that does exist in our village ... We always analyse everything that comes from authorities, we look at all its sides, but if the local leader says it's so, and the spiritual leader says it's so, than that's what it is, and then things will go smoother.*" (an orthodox leader)

"*...It is absolutely natural that the priest should act as mediator between authorities and citizens. The existence of a good communication between authorities and citizens leads to improvement in the community social life.*" (a non-orthodox leader).

"*I think this phase should be over-passed. I think a City Hall should have its own authority and means of communication. We certainly cooperate with the City Hall, but I do not think that all the decisions should be transmitted via the Church. I don't think it will be better to pass on every detail provided by the mayor, even if he asks me to convey it from the pulpit. I think that all institutions should have a moral authority and all its decisions should have an effect on population. It is not necessary for the Church to be a mediator.*" (a non-orthodox leader).

As it may be noticed, the church's role as a mediator is not entirely rejected by the religious leaders. It appears to be rather a suggestion on optimising the communication methods. However, this slant is important in defining the civic attitude of the leader. The research might go further in order to see to what extent this attitude is being transmitted down to the religious community he is leading.

Conclusions

We started our present study with the hypothesis that the differences concerning religious affiliation (orthodox v. non-orthodox) lead to differences in expressing the civic activism a well as in the real or potential public participation.

Our exploratory investigations revealed the fact that, in the studied area, there is a stronger civic spirit and a higher potential for participation among the non-orthodox population. Synthetically, the following aspects are to be remembered: 1) more of those of orthodox faith expressed higher trust in the local authorities; 2) more of those of non-orthodox faith expressed directly their complaints to the local authorities; 3) the members of the non-orthodox group proved to be more concerned about different associative forms, accepting the idea that only the state should focus on resolving the local problems; 4) the church's role as a communication mediator has been hardly accepted by the non-orthodox religious leaders.

Other aspects that seem to reinforce the existent differences at micro-region level, from the perspective of religious affiliation, are as follows: 1) when community matters are taken into account, the non-orthodox have a tendency to turn towards their close friends' groups as opposed to the orthodoxy's propensity towards their neighbourhood,; 2) there is a differently oriented availability in providing information to support communitarian projects, depending on the information content (the non-orthodox showed more concern for protecting the information on land transfers and on participation to sermons; this kind of information seemed to be offered with more generosity by the orthodox population).

The self-evaluation of our investigations results can be seen in a series of critical notes and signals regarding the continued research in this domain.

A limitation of the research may be the fact that our investigation object consisted in a series of communities which are profoundly marked by the rural life's specificity. Of course, we cannot say that civil society and public participation are essentially urban, as they used to be at their origins. From this point of view, the choice of rural communities as an object of study can be looked upon as a serious handicap for any investigation with heuristic valence, albeit exploratory. Nevertheless, the introduction of the religious affiliation variable into the analysis can lead to better results in the case of the rural area, where the religious participation becomes a dimension of local traditions and interferes profoundly with the traditional norms. Consequently, variations on the real or potential public participation become an issue to be neglected for neither theoretical nor practical purpose. To allow theoretical generalization, the research must be rigorous. For practical participation-stimulating interventions, however, the non-orthodox communities and their leaders might be an important vector.

Another critical note can refer to the extremely pale references of religious ideology (orthodox and non-orthodox) and to their impact on civic activism and participation. We may consider that, once we identified the existence of some religion-based differences, new research is needed. Such a research should have an enriched theoretical basis and adequate instruments to show the way the orthodox and non-orthodox ideologies support the civic activism and the public participation components, especially where the project-based development practices are concerned.

As a general remark, beyond the practical opportunity of enhancing public participation through religion-based approaches, an important theoretical challenge still lingers - that of modelling the future relationship between the civil society and public participation.

Although, nowadays, the civil society draws its substance from the fertile ground of representative democracy, it shows fine chances to become an agency for surpassing some of its limitations. The road from traditional to participatory democracy may actually bring a progressively diminishing role for the civil society. This remains a theme of challenging reflection that is likely to accompany us throughout this beginning of the century.

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Notes

[1] See Philip Nord, „Introduction", in Civil Society before Democracy: Lessons from Nieneteenth Century Europe, ed. by Nancy Bermeo and Philip Nord (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2000), xiv-xv.

[2] John Keane, Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 175-176.

[3] Jeffrey C. Alexander, Real Civil Societies: Dillemas of Institutionalization, (London & Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998).

[4] Volker Heins, "Civil Society's Barbarisms", European Journal of Social Theory, 7(4), (November, 2004): 499. http://est.sagepub.com/.

[5] See Eva Bellin, "Civil Society: Effective Tool of Analysis for Middle East Politics", PS: Political Science and Politics, Vol. 27. No. 3. (Sept., 1994): 509.

[6] Krishan Kumar, "Civil Society: An Inquiry into the Usefulness of an Historical Term", The British Journal of Sociology, Vol. 44. No. 3. (Sep., 1993): 375-376.

[7] Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, Civil Society & Development. A Critical Considerations, (Boulder London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2001), 13-38.

[8] Peter J. Burnell and Peter Calvert eds., Civil Society in Democratization, (Frank Cass: London, Portland, Or, Routledge, 2004).

[9] Leslie C. Hems and Fran Tonkiss, „Introduction", in Trust And Civil Society, ed. by Fran Tonkiss et. al., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 1.

[10] Fred Powell, "State, Welfare and Civil Society" in Trust and Civil Society, ed. by Fran Tonkiss et. al., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 102.

[11] Natalie Fenton, "Critical Perspectives on Trust and Civil Society" in Trust And Civil Society, ed. by Fran Tonkiss et. al., (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000), 172.

[12] Matthias Stiefel and Marshall Wolfe, A Voice for the Excluded. Popular Participation in Development: Utopia or Necessity? (London & New Jersey: Zed Books Ltd., 1994), 5.

[13] Somesh Kumar, Methods for Community Participation. A complete Guide for the Practitioners, (Bourton on Dunsmore, Rugby, Warwickshire: ITDG Publishing, 2007), 23.

[14] Somesh Kumar, Methods for Community Participation. A complete Guide for the Practitioners, (Bourton on Dunsmore, Rugby, Warwickshire: ITDG Publishing, 2007), 28.

[15] Jean-Jacques Girardot, "Activities and prospects of CAENTI", International Conference of Territorial Intelligence Alba Iulia 2006. Vol 2: Proceedings of CAENTI, (Alba Iulia: Aeternitas Publishing House, 2007): 7-18.

[16] See Yan Bertacchini (coord.), Intelligence territoriale. Le Territoire dans tous ses états, (Toulon: Presses Technologiques, 2007) and Philippe Herbeaux, Intelligence territoriale. Repères théoriques, (Paris: Harmatan, 2007).

[17] Pierre Levy, "Collective Intelligence: A Civilisation", Crossings:eJournal of Art and Technology, 1.1. (Jun. 2001), http://crossings.tcd.ie/.

[18] See also Mihai Pascaru, Intelligence territoriale et développement locale / Territorial Intelligence and Local Governance, (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006).

[19] Siniša Zrinščak, "Rôles, attentes et conflits : la religion et les Eglises dans la société en transition", Social Compass, 49(4) (2002), 509-521.

[20] Miklós Tomka, "Is Conventional Sociology of Religion Able to Deal with Differences between Eastern and Western European Developments?", Social Compass, 53 (2), (2006), 251-265.

[21] Paul Chambers and Andrew Thomson, "Political Religion and Political Change in Wales", Sociology, Vol. 39(1), (Sage Publication, 2005): 29-46.

[22] José Casanova, Public Religions in the Modern World, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1994).

[23] Andrew Greeley, "Coleman Revisited. Religious Structures as a Source of Social Capital", American Behavioural Scientist, Vol. 40. No. 5 (March/April, 1997): 587-594.

[24] In this respect, see also the results of the Public Opinion Barometer (semestrial Gallup poll since 1994), widely analysed by both the scientific community and the media. The databases, presentation notebooks and other publications that are based on these results are available at the Foundation for an Opening Society's address: http://www.osf.ro/ro/program_articol.php?articol=18.

[25] Romanian charitable associations and foundations founded by churchmen are more and more seen in the beneficiaries' non-refundable lists for social projects. Among these ones, we can mention Asociaţia Filantropia Ortodoxă Alba Iulia, which provides a wide range of charitable services for Alba and Mureş counties.

[26] Jude Howell and Jenny Pearce, Civil Society & Development. A Critical Considerations, (Boulder London: Lynne Rienner Publisher, 2001), 13-38.

[27] Somesh Kumar, Methods for Community Participation. A complete Guide for the Practitioners, (Bourton on Dunsmore, Rugby, Warwickshire: ITDG Publishing, 2007), 23.

[28] As it is well known in the Protestant Ethics and Capitalism Spirit (1904), Max Weber started with the presumption that even a brief examination of the professional statistics of a confessional mixed country, has often emphasised a debatable phenomenon in the catholic media and literature in Germany: the predominant protestant character of capital possession and employment, and of highly qualified employees, especially of the staff with technical and business management qualification. Consequently, Weber will elaborate the famous thesis on the relationship between protestant ethics and capitalism spirit.

[29] See Traian Rotariu and Petru Iluţ, Ancheta sociologică şi sondajul de opinie, (Iaşi: Polirom, 1999).

[30] Bernard Bergier, Repères pour une restitution des résultats de la recherche en sciences sociales. Intérêts et limites, (Paris: Harmattan, 2000), 8.

[31] Roger Mucchielli, Psycho-sociologie d'une commune rurale, (Paris: Entreprise Modern d'Edition – Libraires Technique, Les Editions ESF, 1976).

[32] See Mihai Pascaru, Matricea comunitară. Cunoaştere, comunicare şi acţiune comună în satul contemporan, (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003).