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## VOLUNTEERING AND SOCIAL CONTEXT: A CASE STUDY OF ROMANIA

This paper was written to answer the question of why the Romanian volunteering sector is still underdeveloped and it is based on the research undertaken at the University of Warwick, Coventry, United Kingdom, by a Masters student of Social Research (Gheondea-Eladi 2008). After exploring the problems of defining volunteering, the second chapter will present the modern historical and social context of Romania, namely from the 1900s until the present years, with an emphasis on the history of civil society and the role of voluntary associations. In explaining the influence of the social and institutional context upon the individual choices regarding volunteering, I have adopted a rational choice perspective, in the tradition of Coleman (1990), while the volunteering situation is viewed from the point of view of the Volunteer's Dilemma (Diekmann 1993; 1985). In this perspective, the social and institutional context is the equivalent of some *initial knowledge* everyone should have about the consequences of one's actions (*benefits* or *costs*) and about how much trust one can place in the other potential players. The initial knowledge will be presented as a social and institutional analysis of three phases in the Romanian history: Romania before, during and after communism. Although some researchers think that institutions are likely to change despite historical events such as late independence and previous institutional habits (European Foundation for Improvement of Life and Work Conditions 2006: 31), this paper will argue that, at least in Romania, historically old social institutions and values have contributed to very low levels of social trust and thus have supported the current state of volunteering in Romania.

To start with, let us look first at the volunteering in Romania, as it is defined by some of the indicators available in the Eurobarometer (2011). Compared to other European Union member states, Romania and Bulgaria have one of the lowest percentages of people who admit working unpaid

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for a certain organization (14% and 12%, according to the Eurobarometer (2011)). The lowest percent of people who mentioned working without payment, among the countries selected in Illustration 1, was Poland, Portugal and Bulgaria while the highest rates were recorded in the Netherlands, Denmark and Finland, respectively. From the other data we may also have a detailed look over the membership in different types of organizations, as presented in Table 1.

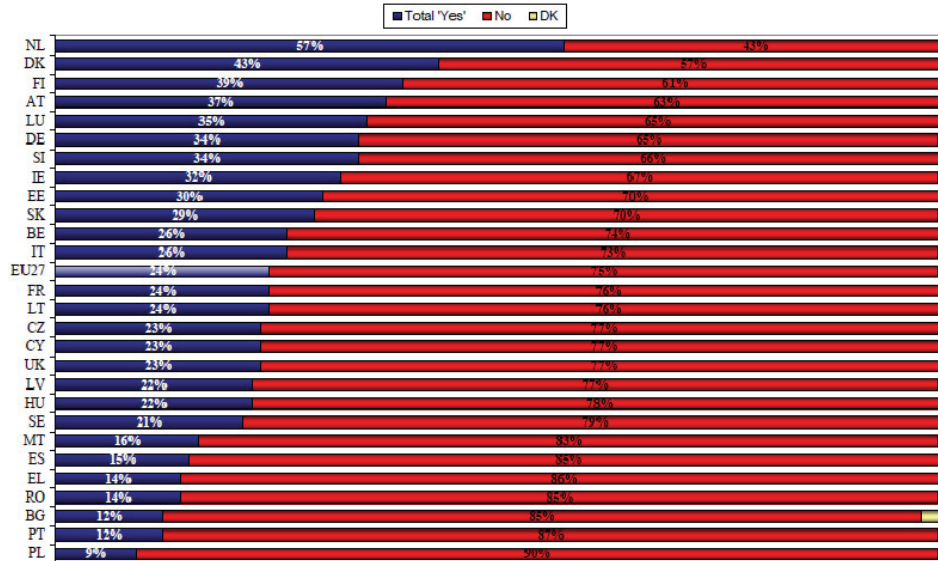


Illustration 1. Volunteering as unpaid work in European countries (aggregated data from Eurobarometer 2011)

In Table 1 one may view percentages of people who mentioned having an affiliation to either a welfare organization, a religious organization, to cultural activities, trade-unions, political parties, local community activities, development/human-rights organizations, environmental organizations, youth work, sport or recreation organizations, women's groups or peace movements. A significance test for comparison of means allowed the emphasis of organizational membership areas for which there is a significant difference of means. The same type of analysis was undertaken to present the significant differences in means regarding the types of organizations which participants at the 2004 Eurobarometer on Social Capital mentioned working for without any payment. In general, membership in organization has slightly higher percentages than working unpaid in an organization. There were significant differences in means of the distribution of people who admit

to performing unpaid work in most of the types of organizations. Particularly interesting is the case of unpaid work in religious organizations, in Romania (compared to all the average in all other countries surveyed through the Eurobarometer (2004), result is significant at  $p < 0.05$ ), Poland and Germany (compared to Romania, result is significant at  $p < 0.001$ ). In general, it may be said that 6.2% of the interviewees admitted to working unpaid in religious organizations, 2.4% performed unpaid work in cultural organizations and 1.1% and 2.1% were active without payment in youth organizations as well as sports and recreational organizations, respectively (Table 1).

Table 1

Volunteering as membership in organizations and as unpaid work in Romania, Poland, Germany and Great Britain. Data summary made by the author based on the Eurobarometer (2004)

Eurobarometer (2004)					
Percent who mentioned that they belong to an organization or that they do unpaid work for an organization					
	All countries except Romania	Romania	Poland	Germany	Great Britain
<b>Do you belong to</b>					
welfare organisation	5	3.9**	1.1*	4.6	5.3
religious organisation	9.7	9	3.6*	8.2	13.1*
cultural activities	7.9	3.9°	1.1*	5.2	10.4*
trade unions	10.2	5.8*	4.5	6.1	6.4
political parties	4.5	3.6	0.8*	3.1	2**
local community action	2.7	1.7**	0.6**	1.1	3.9*
development/human-rights	3	1.1*	0.3**	1.4	3.3*
environment, ecology, animal rights	4.6	3.2**	0.8*	3.8	6.7*
professional associations	4.7	1.9*	1.9	4.2*	7.5*
youth work	3.5	1*	2.5**	2.8*	4.7*
sports/recreation	12.1	3*	1.9**	18.7*	14.6*
women's groups	2.6	1*	0.9	3.5*	3.6*
peace movement	1.1	0.9	0.5	0.6	0.9
<b>Do you work unpaid for</b>					
welfare organisation	3	2.6	0.8*	2.3	2.7
religious organisation	4.2	6.2**	2.5*	3.6*	6.3
cultural activities	4	2.4*	0.5*	3	3.2
trade unions	2.3	1.9	1**	1.2	0.3*
political parties	2.2	2.1	0.2*	1.1**	0.5
local community action	1.6	1.4	0.1*	0.2*	1.4
3 <sup>rd</sup> world development/human-rights	1.2	0.8	0.1**	0.3	0.9
environment, ecology, animal rights	1.9	2.6	0.3**	1.2**	1.7
professional associations	1.8	1.3	0.8	1.1	0.8
youth work	2.5	1.1*	1	1.9	3.3*
sports/recreation	5.5	2.1*	1.3	7.9*	3.6**
women's groups	1.5	1	0.4**	2**	1.2
peace movement	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.1	0.4

° Independent samples t-test for the comparison of means with the other countries; the result is significant at  $p < 0.001$

°° Independent samples t-test for the comparison of means with the other countries; the result is significant at  $p < 0.05$

\* Independent samples t-test for the comparison of means with Romania; the result is significant at  $p < 0.001$

\*\* Independent samples t-test for the comparison of means with Romania; the result is significant at  $p < 0.05$

Of course, it is difficult to accept that volunteering is represented only by the percentage of people who work without being paid or of those who are active members of an organization. There are several characteristics of volunteering which are not caught in this narrow definition, like the intrinsic motivation to do so, the risks involved when performing a voluntary action and the type of rewards expected (particularly non-monetary). This is why, the next part of this paper will further look at the problems of defining volunteering and of its determinants. Nevertheless, in the light of this general presentation of the state of volunteering, this paper will later look at the way historically old institutions have defined norms and regulations which proscribe volunteering.

### **Defining Volunteering**

As far as volunteering is concerned, much has been said about motivations to volunteer from a psychological perspective, (e.g. Phillips 1982), from a sociological perspective (Clary et al. 1996; Putnam 2000; Sappington et al. 1988) or from a macro-economical point of view in studies about the connections between volunteering organizations and the market (e.g. Lammers 1990). Most of these authors think of *volunteering as formally organized, unpaid work done to answer some needs of the community*. Other articles try to establish a boundary between volunteering and leisure activities (Henderson 1984) or work (Taylor 2004; 2005).

There is one important distinction between the concepts of a civil society, volunteering and the third sector. A *civil society* manifests itself in a society through *volunteering* and it also manifests itself on the market through non-governmental organizations (NGO) which form *the third sector*. The indicators used to define these three inter-related concepts differ depending on the type of analysis employed. Even though a civil society is more than just the number of volunteers, NGO membership or the rate of appearance of new NGOs (Pralong 2004) statistics usually refer to these indicators as a sign of a civil society being present and active. Qualitative research, on the other hand, sees volunteering as 'caring' or as 'helping' behaviour (see for example Meier and Stutzer's (2006) study of volunteering in post-socialist Germany). But this definition does not restrict volunteering to the social services. Volunteering can also be done in environmental, cultural and educational organizations, as well as in professional associations, social clubs, funding organizations (Gronbjerg 1989), political parties (Anheier and Salamon 1998) and health and development (Saulean *et al.* 2003) and still be concerned with 'caring' for and 'helping' others. The European Foundation for Improvement of Life and Work Conditions (2006)

includes on the list of civil society organizations, on top of the voluntary organizations and political parties, the ‘informal social networks’ and the ‘transnational European public space’.

Another very important idea emerging from the literature is that the meaning of volunteering has evolved historically, primarily upon its degree of formalization. Problems arise at the boundaries, in situations where volunteering has a very low degree of formalization or a very high one.

- In the countries where volunteering is highly formalized and has a long-term tradition, (e.g. Canada or the UK) doing volunteering became just as important in getting a job as having previous work experience in Romania, where volunteering is less prestigious. But if volunteering becomes a pre-requisite of getting a job, then we can ask ourselves if this is still volunteering or just unpaid work. In the case of countries with very formalized volunteering, one could argue that there should be differentiation given by the origin (interior or exterior) of the motivation to volunteer as well.
- In the countries where volunteering is not very formalized, the question is whether leisure activities should be considered volunteering (Henderson 1984). For example should training a group of kids in soccer or helping your child and their friends to use the computer every weekend count as volunteering or not? This paper will consider this type of behaviour as *proto-volunteering* – an old form of volunteering which is not institutionalized. It is present in the societies where formalized volunteering does not have institutional support, as is the case of Romania.

On the other hand, Functional Theories (tested by Clary, Snyder and Stukas 1996) vary the points of view considered when differentiating the types of volunteering, when they explain why people volunteer using four psychological needs: to respond to some *values*, to have a *career*, to gain new *understandings* of his/her own strengths and skills and to respond to the values of a person they *socially* respect. By using Clary, Snyder and Stukas’ (1996) concepts, we may subsume the internal motivation with either the desire to respond to some values (individual needs) or to gain new understandings of own strengths and skills (social needs). Subsequently, the external motivation could be subsumed to the desire to have a career (individual needs) and to social influence (social needs). To sum up, it is of great importance for my paper that I consider volunteering from the point of view of the degree of formalization and from the origin of the motivation,

which in turn may be described by reference to the individual needs and to the social needs.

Another important characteristic of volunteering emerges from the game theoretical model proposed for it. In Diekmann's Volunteer's Dilemma (1993; 1985) *volunteering is a potentially risky activity from the point of view of making an effort and not receiving the promised (or maximum) outcome*. Unlike in the abstract game theoretical models, in most real-life situations, risk is handled first through communication, formalization, authority, indebteding and so on, and only when the risk is perceived to be minimal, an action takes place. There are also, different kinds of risk: the risk of losing the reputation, the risk of making an effort and not getting anything in return, the risk of being denied the contribution, risk of being taken for granted and many others depending on the characteristics of the situation.

In this paper, volunteering shall have a definition that includes most previously presented ones: *potentially risky activity, under the form of unpaid work, formalized or not, done to answer some needs of the community, by personal choice and without coercion, but not necessarily in the absence of incentives*. We need our definition to be as permissive as possible, especially concerning the forms of proto-volunteering, mainly because the research conducted is undertaken in a country where volunteering is still at its beginnings and probably more informal than formal. Some of the terms – risk, needs of community – are left ambiguous, because they should be defined by each person, as she/he perceives it, and her/his understanding only will be further used. By formalized, I understand an activity that is regulated by law. In my paper, incentives appear as personal, social or institutional rewards.

### **Social Trust and Volunteering**

An important issue for the decision to volunteer is social trust (Koster 2007; Delhey and Newton 2005; Anheier, Kendall 2002). In some perspectives social trust is connected to volunteering in macro-social and macro-economical measurements (Bjørnskov 2008), while in others they are connected by psychological or micro-social factors (Haas and Deseran 1981; Fine and Holifield 1996). The theories of social capital seem to relate volunteering and social trust by both macro- and micro- social measurements (Newton 2001; Delhey and Newton 2005; Pichler and Wallace 2007).

Unlike Anheier and Kendall (2002) who see trust as a feature of a society rather than an individual characteristic, social trust could be based on

partial information, just as Zajonc (1980, cited Wildavsky 1987) suggests preferences are formed. A similar approach is suggested by Hasmann (1980, cited in Anheier and Kendall 2002:346) who explains the trust given to non-profit organizations by ‘information asymmetries’ and the perception of profit acquisition.

The conclusion emerging from all these theories is that social trust is created in different ways according to different levels of social interaction – individual, social and institutional. Therefore, they assume that social trust is constructed *emotionally*, in *socialization* and/or by *evaluating* (rationally) the information at hand. This dissertation shall use these three steps in social trust formation – 1) emotional reaction, 2) rational evaluation and 3) institutional incentives – as occurring all at once or in succession.

On the other hand, we can define trust as being a person’s preference to interact with a person/group/organization. At institutional level, if indifference between interacting with one or another person is maintained institutionally, that is when people know that their problem will be solved in a bureaucratic system, they no longer need to create trust by other means – they trust the system. If however the system cannot be trusted, then the other levels are used to establish trustworthy relations.

As Haas and Deseran (1981:12) show, volunteers from formal organizations build trust by ‘tokens of good faith’ in processes of ‘symbolic exchange’. The corruption in Romania in the form of giving and receiving gifts/money for services (but not in the strictly legal meaning as in Schroth and Bostan, (2004)) would actually be trying to overcome an acute lack of trust by partially restoring old ways of establishing and maintaining a social structure through the symbolic function of gifts (Lévi-Strauss 1949; 1950; 1962; 1964; 1964, cited in Godelier 1996). Thus, if trust is defined as a preference and if social exchanges of gifts create trust, it means that social exchanges of gifts actually create a preference in interaction. Therefore, the next chapter shall look at the types of social exchanges in the Romanian society as a way to create the preferences for our GT game.

### **Rational Choice Theory and Voluntary Action**

In 1985, Diekmann proposed a game called Volunteer’s Dilemma (VD). It is a combination of prisoner’s dilemma and common goods dilemma constructed for  $n$  players. The story is the following: there are  $n$  people that need a certain common good. This common good is achievable if one person volunteers to do it. The problem is that if there is not at least one volunteer, nobody will benefit from the common good. The best outcome for each individual is to receive the common good at no cost, but if everybody chooses

the best individual strategy, the group will not benefit at all (so the game is indeed a dilemma). Consequently, *to volunteer means to make an effort to the benefit of the group, but at some cost*. Rapoport (1985) draws attention to the fact that Diekmann's VD is constructed like a 'leader' game rather than a 'hero' (Appendix A) game (Rapoport 1985)<sup>1</sup>.

A different approach to volunteering was done using social networks theory. Jun and Sethi (2007) prove that in a network with the small world property<sup>2</sup>, where cooperation comprises a personal cost and makes the network neighbours benefit as well, but non-cooperation does not have an additional cost except the fact that nobody benefits from the common good, and where each person cooperates if and only if there is a sufficient proportion of neighbours who cooperate, while individuals can alter their ties with the neighbours in random ways, *the degree of the network increases cooperation in the long run if it is neither small nor great*, if people have rather *homogeneous inner groups* that are neither small nor great and *if people don't change their relationships* very fast.

In this dissertation I expect to find a version of the VD that is modified by the Romanian context. Practically, the VD version that Romanians encounter as a result of social and institutional forces should be a modified version of Diekmann's (1985; 1993) VD where not volunteering is a dominant strategy.

### **Volunteering in Romania in Historical and Social Context**

This chapter is meant to draw the boundaries of a certain social and cultural area by emphasizing a series of events that have probably shaped the beliefs about how trustworthy people are in general and how costly it is to volunteer. I am not saying that Romanian people are completely aware of these events and their implications upon their behaviour or beliefs, but that insecurity creates the context for deciding whether to volunteer. My argument is also that this environment has a historical continuity and that it is currently sustained by the laws and the state institutions. The historical continuity will emerge from the analysis of three moments of the Romanian modern history, while the institutional incentives should be reflected by analysing the impact of some laws and social norms.

My endeavour is in line with Weigle and Butterfield (1992) who see a civil society rooted in the historical and social context and partly with Mishler

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<sup>1</sup>There are also games where the redundancy in volunteering is sanctioned, but this is not our case.

<sup>2</sup>'highly clustered [networks with] any two individuals...connected by a relative small chain of links' (Watts 1999; Watts and Strogatz 1998 cited in Jun and Sethi, 2007:2).



and Rose (1997:442) who argue that: ‘the past may be less important for its influence on contemporary values and beliefs and more important as a baseline for judging the relative performance of contemporary institutions’. Taking into account the historical path means also relying on a theory of socialization (as in Haski-Leventhal and Bargal’s 2008, despite its difficulty in being empirically evaluated (Canover and Searing 1994, cited in Mishler and Rose 1997)) and a theory of ‘continuity of institutions across an individual’s life time’ (Mishler and Rose 1997:440). In Roy and Ziemek’s (2002:13) categorizations, our approach of volunteering through its history is among the macro theories, namely the ‘social origins theory’. This is particularly relevant if we think that I am trying to triangulate the VD model with a macro-social analysis – the historical and institutional analysis – and a micro-social analysis – the interview analysis – in order to show that the construction of the model is culturally determined, while the game itself is individually played.

Despite the results of Bădescu (forthcoming) who concludes by suggesting that either Romanians had not had different pre-communist values or communism completely replaced them for those born before World War II, the interviews I have done show that – especially in the rural areas, but also in the urban ones – the values of mutual exchange and neighbourly relations still persist similarly to what they were in the pre-communist period, thus motivating a three-transformation historical presentation instead of restricting it to the communist and post-communist times. As a result, I shall take the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century as the starting point here, mainly because the period after 1877 is the one when Romania began its path as a more independent and self determined united nation.

As a consequence we shall see that because a civil society was barely emerging in pre-communist Romania (Pralong 2004; Rachieru 2004; Popescu 2004), it was also among the things destroyed by communism (Verdery 1996). Even now, after almost twenty years from the fall of communism, a civil society remains under the level one could wish for in a democratic society (Roy and Ziemek 2002; Association of Voluntary Service Associations and European Volunteer Center 2005; Saulean and Epure 2003) as a result of a combination of social and institutional norms.

### *Romania before Communism*

The *Guild* was a Middle Age association around certain trades and the ‘first associative and voluntary institution [...] in Romani[a]’ (Saulean and

Epure 1998:4). The 15<sup>th</sup> century brought the first brotherhood of poor and the late 16<sup>th</sup> century the first philanthropic donation was recorded at the Romanian Treasure House, from the church to the poor people (Saulean and Epure 1998). During the late 1700s ‘*Domnița Bălașa Women’s Asylum*’ offered social services for women, ‘*Colțea Hospital*’ had free treatment for the poor and the Moldovan ‘Charity House’ and the Red Cross Society were created (Saulean and Epure 1998). Other cultural associations were founded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century in order to support the cultural development of Romania, especially concerning the emergence of a literary language.

Despite all these efforts and mostly because of the highly unstable political context and the late independence (Saulean and Epure 1998) at the beginning of the 20th century, Romania was a highly agricultural country – ‘Europe’s granary’. Poverty, high infant mortality rates (31% including the deaths in early childhood (Hr̄vic 1974)), low levels of education (even though the laws from 1864 guaranteed free and mandatory education for all children, irrespective of gender (Ciupală 2004)) and mainly peasant occupations were the characteristics that described those times. Ownership was distributed among a few landlords, while entire villages worked on their lands in a feudal organization. Political parties, trade-unions and co-operatives also emerged (Saulean and Epure 1998).

An important and old social and economic organization was the *obște* *satească* (Stănciulescu-Bârda 2008). Initially based on mutual cooperation between the villagers, *obște* *satească* acquired the status of an association or a ‘cooperative society of production’ in 1905 (Cernea 2003). The legislative and administrative responsibility was held by the *sfatul bătrânilor* (the council of the elders) that was appointed by the community and was presided by the *cneaz* or *juz* (Stănciulescu-Bârda 2008). The customary law – based on precedent decisions and customs transmitted for generations – was preponderant and was based on moral and religious values (Stănciulescu-Bârda 2008). Members of the community were expected to help the others in the system of mutual exchange based on moral and neighbourly relations. In the cities social class was more visible in the relations between the suburban poor and the rich. Cultural life was closer to the western one as some writings from 1835 say (Genilie 1835, quoted in Murgescu 1999). The city is also the place where feminist organizations – *Reuniunea femeilor române din Brașov* [*Union of Romanian Women from Brașov*] (Popescu 2004) – were formed as well as partly philanthropic and partly voluntary organizations for orphans, widows<sup>3</sup>, the wounded from the war and homeless. Other

<sup>3</sup>By law of the time women (and their children) who became widows after less than 15 years of marriage would not receive any pension (Popescu 2004).

associations were made around professions, like *Uniunea Educatoarelor Române* [*Union of Romanian Female-Teachers*] (Rachieru 2004), in connection with armed conflicts in the shape of volunteers for the army (Union of Ex-volunteers 1925; Gheorghe and Burca 1971) or as frank-mason associations (Saulean and Epure 1998).

Just to put things in a European perspective, while in 1601, in the United Kingdom, the formalization of philanthropy was beginning (Kendall and Knapp 1997), Romania was united for the first time under the rule of Michael the Brave, but for less than a year. The first British legislation regulating the voluntary sector was given in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, while Romania, declared poverty a social problem in the 15<sup>th</sup> century (Saulean and Epure 1998). In other post-communist countries like Hungary (Kúti 1997) and Poland (Weigle and Butterfield 1992) the history of non-profit association starts long before its formalization in the eighteenth century.

### *Romania during Communism*

This section will present some of the characteristics of the communist regime in Romania that probably resulted, at an individual level in a different system of values. These aspects are generally true for other communist countries. What differs is the degree to which they were present (Weigle and Butterfield 1992). Still, I would particularly wish not to abide to what I would call ‘complaining’ about the overly difficult past. I am not contesting the truthfulness of this theory, but putting things in these terms is not useful for the purposes of this paper. Also, without subscribing to a homogeneity perspective (criticized by Fuller 2000), I shall simply point to a set of values (as potential preferences in our game) that might contribute to or discourage volunteering in today’s Romania. Bădescu (forthcoming) actually shows that many of these values have remained after communism. Others, like Weigle and Butterfield (1992) say that communism failed to impose its system of values and this is why it fell. Along with these ideas, the next part of this chapter shall present the situation of the non-profit sector during communism in Romania.

In winter 1948, King Michael I was forced to abdicate and as the new year started, the Romanian Communist Party came into power. Soon the nationalization of banks, industry, transportation and agricultural lands was initiated.

The general characteristics of the communist regime in Romania were:

- ‘Total control’ assumed by the central ruler (Linden 1986, p. 351) and central planning (Linden 1986; Earle and Săpătoru 1993) with

consequences in *apathy*, *distrust* and *scepticism* among the population (Mishler and Rose 1997), as well as an '*illusion of agency* which obscured the anarchy and chaos that actually took place behind the scenes' (Verdery 1995:4, emphasis added).

- *No culture of opposition* or of the necessity of alternatives (Radulescu 1997) sustained by a perception of homogeneity (Fuller 2000; Vonița Răduțiu 2004) and ethnocentrism (Nelson 1979) as well as by the polarization of social class (nomenclature and the working class), political parties ('who is not with us is against us') and any other aspect of life.
- An educational system that guaranteed everybody a work place after graduation which probably had implications for the *perceptions of competition*. In fact, the few times when competition was an issue happened when trying to catch a place to work in a town instead of a village and when trying to be among the first in the queues at the local store in order to be able to buy food.
- Legitimation of suppression through *nationalism* (Linden 1986) and the 'interests' of the working people' (Nelson 1979, p. 24) later resided in despising the nationalist values in the years after the revolution (Verdery 1993), even among the 'intellectuals' (Tănăsioiu 2008: 97).
- Political manipulation of mass-media (Coman and Gross 2006)
- *Constant surveillance* and *symbolic violence* sustained by the omnipresence of the *Securitate* – the political police – members. Also everybody, including the *Securitate* members feared being listened to or being betrayed by their neighbours. Personnel rotation and employing family members contributed to an *insecure* environment for all, including the dictator himself and were likely to have caused nepotism in all levels as a measure of minimizing the uncertainty (Linden 1986).
- A different appreciation of money (Verdery 1995) with its implications for understanding the economical life and further adjusting to the capitalist world.
- A 'hypocritical show of involvement or at least compliance' (Zaslavsky and Brym 1978, cited in Mishler and Rose 1997) regarding participation in civil life and politics, leading to political and civil apathy in the post-communist years (Mishler and Rose 1997) followed by a retreat from society as in the case of Germany (Meier and Stutzer 2006)

Beside all this, the communist period represented a forced transition from an agricultural, feudal system to industrialization and urbanization. This was done in a rather careless way, leaving huge gaps in some sectors and overdeveloping others, pushing the population towards incredible degrees of deprivation in order to pay external debts and still increase economic growth (Linden 1986).

Verdery (1995) states that propaganda is responsible for people's belief that the only 'acceptable source of money was work in the productive process: money from 'commerce' and from 'speculation' was tainted with capitalist traces' (p.4). The direct implications of this for the person who might receive a free social service or public good would be:

- If 'unearned (*nemuncit*, from *munci*, to work)' money is 'bad'/'immoral' (Verdery 1995:5) and economically speaking any service or goods can be evaluated in money then is any 'unearned' service 'bad'/'immoral'?

For the person who might later on consider volunteering the questions could be:

- If receiving something without work is immoral then why should anyone volunteer to make any goods or provide a service which will only support this behaviour?
- If work is the only socially acceptable means to make a living, then do those who do not work/cannot work deserve their poverty?

A different example is given by Rădulescu (1997) when talking about the disgust for Romanian folklore music and gipsy music. Her immediate reaction to the suggestion of creating an alternative to the gipsy music rather than forbidding it as a way to solve the musicological problems in Romania is the following:

'It took me some time to digest his words. When I understood, I was struck with consternation, impotence and guilt. I realized for the first time that I had not been able to avoid communist indoctrination, even if I thought that I had held out. I also realized that I was not able – at least, not yet – to imagine a strong and coherent alternative for the music I detested. Finally I knew that even if I had such an alternative

available, I would not be able to challenge anything with it.’ (p. 12).

We can see in this passage two main characteristics of the communist ideology: the fact that even for intellectuals the idea of an alternative was not among what they could think of and another one – the idea that one person could not change much, mainly because the means for a social change were unknown to people since they perceived the government as the only possible agent of change. This last idea probably translates now into the apathy identified by many studies in the post-communist societies (like the one of Mishler and Rose 1997), which in turn is important in the decision to volunteer.

In terms of volunteering, communism banned any form of individual initiative and agency as this was seen dangerous for the state. ‘Patriotic work’, meaning ‘mandatory unpaid work’ which comprised crop gathering or gardening in the courtyard of the factory a.s.o. and some tolerated associations around certain interests (philately or numismatics), trades (apiculture, growing animals or fishing), special groups (the *Association of the Blind in Bihor*), literature or tenants associations were all under the party control (Saulean and Epure 1998).

Even though Romania had less signs of opposition to communism than Hungary and Poland, for example (Weigle and Butterfield 1992; Saulean and Epure 1998) the reasons for this can be found in the way in which the communist regime was applied (Weigle and Butterfield 1992) in the less powerful volunteering spirit of the Orthodox church (Weigle and Butterfield 1992; Saulean and Epure 1998; Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas 2001) – and in the short history behind philanthropy, volunteering and free association (Weigle and Butterfield 1992; Saulean and Epure 1998). Also freedom of association was less restrictive in Hungary in the 1950s and 1970s, despite the current law (Kúti 1997).

### *Romania after communism*

The aim of this part is to show that the years following 1990 were characterized by insecurity and probably made people think that others could not be trusted or counted on if in need of help on top of a historically fatalistic attitude (Shafir 1983, cited in Wildavsky 1987) sustained through religion and the influence of communist values. All these variables were shown to have implications on social trust (Delhey and Newton 2005; Koster 2007; Bjørnskov 2008). Despite the barriers to volunteering created by the general distrust and particularly the distrust in the non-profit sector, there are also:

- laws that either try to avoid the state responsibility by legally directing it towards individuals (like the law for the restitution of land or the bureaucracy resulting from other laws) or send blurred signals about what is private and what is public (law on privatization);
- the presence of former *Securitate* members and organized crime (Tănăsioiu 2008; Pralong 2004; Verdery 1996);
- the distorted information coming from untrustworthy and corrupted mass-media (Coman and Gross 2006; Gross 2008) that might have implications for social trust and trust in the non-profit sector.

In Romania, the 2002 World Values Survey found that 10% (decreasing from 1990, when it was 16% and 19% in 1996 (Delhey and Newton 2005)) of the interviewed people thought that ‘most people can be trusted’, thereby positioning itself towards the end of the scale where Denmark (with 67%) and Sweden (with 66%) occupied the first places (Basáñez et al. 2004, A165). Still these measurements (Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you need to be very careful in dealing with people?) were criticized for not making a difference between trust and carefulness (Miller and Mitamura 2003) and were later changed. In my opinion, the problem with this question in Romania is that it does not make the difference between socially accepted answers and real levels of mistrust and scepticism.

The fatalistic attitude in stories about plots, come a long way in the Romanian culture. As Shafir (1983:405, cited in Wildavsky 1987) remarks:

‘The most famous Romanian folk ballad is „Miorița” or ‘The Lamb’ [...] a moving, beautiful story of a Moldovan shepherd whose fellow shepherds plot to kill him and steal his flock. Learning of the plan from his ‘wonder lamb’, the young shepherd makes no move to keep it from being carried out. He serenely accepts his fate, confronted by the thought that he will be reunited with nature.’

The influence of this myth also comes from its ranking among the four basic myths in the Romanian literature (Călinescu 1945, 1968, 1979, 1983, 1997). For Tănăsioiu (2008) and others (Mungiu-Pippidi 2002, cited in Tănăsioiu 2008) the adjective *mioritic* ‘carries references to passivity and propensity towards escaping the present („a tendency to boycott history” [Blaga 1985, cited in Tănăsioiu 2008:98])’.

In my view, the fatalistic attitude is also profoundly connected to the religious values – Christian orthodox – that are very much embedded in our culture and that propose, among other things, the abandonment of one's destiny in the hands of God. Some studies have shown that increased social trust levels are highly connected with the Protestant ethic (Delhey and Newton 2005), while other studies show lower correlations (Koster 2007; Bjørnskov 2008). Generally, the religion was shown to be important in determining social trust levels.

After the communist regime fell, in December 1989, one of the first examples of volunteering, after many years, was given by external organizations – *Peace Corps*, and *Voluntary Service Overseas* (*ProVobis* National Voluntary Centre 2007). The first voluntary organization appeared in 1997, followed by two others in 1999 and a real bloom in their activity in 2002. Instability can partly be seen from the several modifications of the 2001 law of associations and foundations until its 2006 final form (*ProVobis* National Voluntary Centre 2007). In 2002, the Foundation for the Development of Civil Society (FDSC) had 16000-17000 officially registered associations and foundations and a growth rate of 400 new associations, foundations and NGOs per month (Pralong 2004). Pralong (2004) points to the fact that these numbers seem smaller when compared with those in Hungary in the same year, but they also seem smaller when thinking that in 1989 the Hungarian non-profit sector was already developed. In Germany, the decrease in volunteering participation as a result of the German reunification is explained by the unemployment and the retreat from the society caused by high levels of insecurity (Meier and Stutzer 2006). According to Pralong (2004:234) the Romanian NGOs form four types:

- ‘the Western-funded professional NGOs’;
- ‘the „enthusiastic” but under-funded, local groups’;
- ‘the „profiteers” who took advantage of the tax loopholes’;
- ‘the „political frauds” representing ‘shadow organizations created by the Iliescu regime between 1990 and 1996 to undermine the segment of civil society involved in politics or [by the] current stream of civil servants who, taking advantage of the slowness of the administration, quickly set up foundations to receive Western funds’.

If there was or is any volunteering done around the church, then it seems like it is not documented.



In the Romanian context, the presence of the *Securitate* before 1989 and after supported a difficult legacy with the past and created a context of suspicion in the non-profit sector and among Romanians. The networks of *Securisti* are blamed for ‘underachievement or failures of the transition process, be it economic (the rise of an official economic mafia through a distorted process of privatization), social (persistent suspicion and inability to build community spirit) or political (difficult and slow pace of reforms)’ (Patapievici 1998; 2000; Adameşteanu 1992; 1999, quoted in Tănăsioiu 2008:86). Yet, the *Securitate* is blamed by both parties, ex-communists and liberals (Tănăsioiu 2008). Several scandals revealed in the press about how NGOs take Western money and use it for their own purposes (Lica 2008; PresaOnline.com 2006; Dâncu 2006) also brought mistrust in the non-profit sector. I am not contesting the accuracy of these issues, but pointing out to their influence on social trust.

In other countries the voluntary sector is better developed and ‘more immune against moral hazards’ (Anheier and Kendall 2002:348). If in 2003, the non-profit share in the total employment in Hungary was 1.3%, in Romania it was 0.6%, while the UK had 6.3% and the Netherlands (with the highest share) 12.6% (The Association of Voluntary Service Associations and European Volunteer Centre 2003). Nevertheless, non-profit organizations are seen as protected against distrust because of their interest in both the supply and the demand side (Ben-Ner and Van Hommissen 1993, in Anheier and Kendall 2002).

In 1991-1992, the *privatization* system proposed by the government did not only have transparency problems in defining tasks and defining the division of labour, but also blurred the boundary between public and private in the very laws that regulated its functioning (Earle and Săpătoru 1993:154). This is important for my dissertation because when applying the public goods dilemma, the distinction between private and public is crucial. In Czechoslovakia, the privatization system was constructed in such a way that the funds and the people competed over the company shares, while in Poland more than one scheme was implemented (Earle and Săpătoru 1993) thus reflecting a better definition of the private, public and of the rules of competition.

An interesting idea emerging from Verdery’s (1996) book is that the *laws for the restitution of land* actually made people’s interests oppose other people’s interests by virtually making the state a neutral party. During the communist nationalization, land ownership was transferred to the state. The state then rented it back to the initial owners or to other people. After 1989, the relatives of those who were paying the rent decided to buy the

house from the state. But soon after this, the law for the restitution of land was established forcing them to fight with those people that owned the land before communism, while the state was strategically left out of this conflict, even though it was the state who sold the land to the last owners. The idea here is that when the law makes you fight with someone else than the real ‘villain’, it becomes very easy to blame those blamed by the law, rather than those who are truly to blame.

Another mechanism that makes people’s interests oppose each other while carefully masking the flaws of the system is the *bureaucracy* (see for example the laws on Associations and Foundations, the law for Sponsorship and Trade Unions in Bideke 2000). The reason for this ill used bureaucracy is generally given by the way in which laws are made. Usually, the problems raised by bureaucracy, specially the time needed for simple tasks to made or the arbitrary results of such procedures and lack of transparency, push people to bribery and corruption. But if one bribes the state representative or the lowest branches of the service and the job is done, then it is easy to assume that the problem comes from these people that need to be corrupted to actually do their job, instead of seeing the true source of the problem, which is the way the rules are made and implemented. I am not saying that corruption is by any means justified and that those that accept bribery are not to blame, but I am only pointing to the implications of this state of facts on attributing responsibility.

The 2006 and 2007 *Press Freedom Report* (Media Monitoring Agency 2007; 2008) gives a picture of the extent to which freedom of press is practiced in Romania, by pointing to cases of attacks, threats and pressure (political and from other authorities) on journalists, censorship and legislation breaches. These cases were only sanctioned by some NGOs like Reporters Without Borders but not by the authorities (Gross 2008). The fact that this information is partially communicated is important for my paper in supporting the presence of partial information and for spreading rumours (regarded as partial information too (Kapferer 1993)).

It is interesting how some of the characteristics of the Romanian mass-media communication after 1989 (Coman and Gross 2006; Gross 2008) still point to old communist legacies, while others just sustain misinformation and distrust:

- Homogeneity – in an organization, financial support, staff, a final product, target group, as well as in defining the role of journalism in creating a democratic state (Coman and Gross 2006) and the styles of writing – is in tandem with the previously suggested lack of alternatives.

- Avoidance of public responsibility combined with an uninformed, incomplete and not-verifiable speech is the result of a mix between the high levels of insecurity and a bit of freedom of speech (Coman and Gross 2006; Gross 2008).
- ‘Tabloidization’ and its consequences, like: ‘sensationalization’, and a focus on popular subjects (Coman and Gross 2006:52) have consequences on the formation of stereotypes and the transmission of rumours.
- Also, the presence of the ‘human interest issues’ (Coman and Gross 2006:53) in the afternoon sessions of the television news, while the prime time ones are filled with crime, gives grounds not to trust the other members of the society.

Another important issue around communication is the level of distrust transmitted in the discourses of public figures. Even if Tănăsioiu’s (2008) article does not make it very clear who exactly makes the Romanian intellectuals, it unravels the distrust in the Romanian people that might have an impact on people on either part of the political spectrum:

„Romania will not evolve unless the people, *misera plebes*, is denied access to decision.” [Patapievici 1996] [...] „I do not know the nation, I do not want to know the nation, the people other than through institutionalized forms.” [interview with H.R. Patapievici, philosopher, CNSAS member]’ (Tănăsioiu 2008:98-9 and endnotes at p.111).

Nevertheless, this perspective is based on an old theory of the elite class and how this influences the development of Romania (Manoilescu 1942) but its usefulness is contested (Fuller 2000).

## Conclusions

Throughout this paper we were able to see that the present underdevelopment of Romanian volunteering (Roy and Ziemek 2002; Association of Voluntary Service Associations and European Volunteer Center 2005; Saulean and Epure 2003) is historically and institutionally determined. Low levels of social trust (Delhey and Newton 2005; Basáñez et al. 2004, A165) influence the participation in voluntary associations in Romania (Koster 2007; Delhey and Newton 2005; Anheier, Kendall 2002)) also through some institutionally rooted communist values and a historically fatalistic attitude sustained by an insecure context and a certain type of religious values. A short and diluted history of volunteering and free association as a result

of an unstable political context also bring their contribution to the current state of volunteering in Romania.

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## WOLONTARIAT I KONTEKST SPOŁECZNY: PRZYPADEK RUMUNII

### *Streszczenie*

Tekst powstał w celu udzielenia odpowiedzi na pytanie, dlaczego w Rumunii wolontariat jest wciąż słabo rozwinięty. W pierwszej części tekstu prezentuję problemy związane z definiowaniem wolontariatu i wyjaśniam, dlaczego uważam, że wolontariat jest wciąż słabo rozwinięty w porównaniu do innych krajów.

W drugiej części omawiam historię wolontariatu w Rumunii od jego początków do sytuacji obecnej. Rozwój sektora opierającego się na wolontariacie w Rumunii został pokazany z punktu widzenia instytucji, które reprezentują i tworzą wolontariat, a także normy społeczne, które pojawiły się w konsekwencji tych działań.

Trzy główne stadia rozwoju tego sektora stanowią strukturę tej analizy. W związku z komunistyczną przeszłością Rumunii można wyróżnić wolontariat - przed, - w czasie i - po komunizmie. Stosując do analizy instytucji podejście socjologiczne, niniejszy artykuł pokazuje, że obecny stan wolontariatu w Rumunii wyłonił się jako racjonalna odpowiedź na występujące wcześniej instytucjonalne i społeczne ograniczenia.