

AN IDENTIFICATION OF THE CAPACITY FOR INSTITUTION  
BUILDING WITHIN THE CIVIL SOCIETY SECTOR  
OF ROMANIA

by

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Abstract

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This study identifies the capacity for institution building for civil society development in Romania. A secondary analysis of raw interview data obtained in June, 1996, as part of The Listening and Learning in Romania Project of the Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio, is utilized for the study. The identification of the capacity for institution building is based on the two concepts of growth and maintenance, drawn from General Systems Theory, and the two concepts of prevailing codes and linkage points, drawn from institution building theory. This exploratory, qualitative, analysis identifies a primary Capacity for Growth for institution building of moderate to vigorous strength. The specific areas in which a Capacity for Growth is identified

are: Political Culture, Services, Education, Economic, Business, Religion/Church and Agriculture and Village Life. A Capacity for Maintenance for institution building is identified in several subcategories of the area of Political Culture. These areas include: the Transition, the General System, Government, Human Relations, Religion/Church and External Relations. The findings from this study provide descriptive and predicative data regarding the nature and direction of civil society development in Romania. The descriptive data further elaborate the social context of institution building in Romania. The findings have implications for social welfare theory development, policy and practice.

In Memoriam:

Professor Ioan Aluas, Sociologist

1927-1994

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## Glossary of Terms by Theory

### SYSTEMS THEORY

Systems Theory: An integrative theory of systems in which the concepts and principles apply to all systems, organic and social, large and small, from atoms to the universe.

System: "A complex of elements in interaction being of an ordered (non-random) nature (Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 109). "An organized whole made up of components that interact in a way distinct from their interaction with other entities, and which endures over some period of time" (Anderson & Carter, 1974, p. 164).

Subsystem: The parts or elements of a system characterized by organization and structure.

Suprasystem: A larger whole of which a specific system of interest is a part. The system of interest is referred to as the focal system. The family is a suprasystem for a person. The personality system is a subsystem of the person. The community is a supra system for the family.

Development: The process of "differentiation of an original whole which segregates" (Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 69) and moves toward "higher order, heterogeneity and organization" (p. 41). The survival and development of systems is accomplished by the dynamic balancing and interaction of two opposing trends. These two trends have been referred to as, "maintenance" and "change" (Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 196), "expressive" and "instrumental" (Parsons & Bales, 1955), and as "communal" and

"agentic" (Bakan, 1966).

Growth/instrumental/agentic Trend: The system trend oriented toward the "manipulation of the environment in the interest of goal attainment" (Parsons & Bales, 1995, p. 401), and the acquisition and utilization of energy within the system (Anderson & Carter, 1974; Parsons & Bales, 1955; Turner, 1986), also referred to as adaptation.

Maintenance/expressive/communal Trend: The system trend which is oriented toward the integration and cohesion of the system.

Transition: A "critical time" (Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 70) within a system in the process of moving toward a state of "higher order, heterogeneity and organization (p. 41) characterized by loss of system performance and undeterminacy (p. 70).

Equifinality: In systems theory, "the same final state may be reached from different initial conditions and in different ways" (Bertalanffy, 1968, p. 40). An example is the growth of children to adulthood under varying conditions, given the prerequisites for physical survival (Anderson & Carter, 1974).

## SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Social Development: "(A) process of planned social change designed to promote the well-being of the population as a whole in conjunction with a dynamic process of economic development" (Midgley, 1995, p. 25).

Sustainability: The endurance of social development projects in the presence of minimal deleterious effects to ecological and human environments.

## INSTITUTION BUILDING

Institution building: The introduction of new organizations into an environment, or the reconstitution of existing organizations for the purpose of integrating innovation within a system.

Institutionalization: The thorough integration of innovation into the larger social system evident by established supportive norms and behaviors (Esman in Eaton, 1972).

Fit: From institution building theory, the degree of compatibility between innovative organizations and the norms and values and existing technologies and potentialities in the environment.

Prevailing codes: One of two primary variables related to "fit" in institution building theory which focuses on the accepted ways of making sense of the world and behaving (Landau in Eaton, 1972) evident in the values, norms and customs of society. This concept is an example of the concept of the maintenance trend in

systems theory as applicable to the relationship of organizations to the larger environment.

Linkage points: One of two primary variables related to "fit" in institution building theory which focuses on technologies and potentialities within the environment which are compatible with proposed change (Landau in Eaton, 1972). This concept is an example of the application of the systems concept of growth to social systems in the relationship of organizations to the larger environment.

### CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil Society: The social space between the private realm of the individual and the public realm of the state, which is sanctioned by the state. It is made up of a network of free associations and organizations which fulfill a mediating function within the social structure.

Social Capital: Factors such as trust and dependability, which contribute to cohesiveness within a social system and which are viewed as resources. It is part of the maintenance trend in a social system.