

Institute for Political Science

Ph.D. THESIS

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**The development of the social capital in the
hungarian-romanian cross border area**

Abstract

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1. The premises of the research and the choice of topic

In our research proposal we recommend to analyze the effect of cross-border projects for institutional capacity building and for the social capital. The target is the creation of a new instrument “the cross border indicator” that can measure the level of institutional capacity building in organizations that participate in cross-border projects. The topic of the research is the impact of PHARE CBC Programme and the effect of these projects for the institutional development. The central theme of the research is that the cross-border cooperation project could be considered or not an institutional capacity building instrument. Since the middle of the 90’s the European Union has offered financial aid for the cross border cooperation. A few years ago, the term „cross border cooperation” for the local institutions was referring almost exclusively to the people to people project not to social and institutional development.

Our research used a new methodological approach, named: PAR-Participatory Research Action. I tried to realize one research in what the balance between the

theoretical and practical information are similar and in same time the most important part of this approach is that the researcher is part of the target group and in this way the researcher together with the target group will create a new type of cooperation and possibility to initiate joint action that will conduct to a new knowledge. All this type of thinking is a recognized method by a high number of researchers.(Nielsen-Svensson, 2006:89-92).

The topic of the research is the hypotenuse examination of the Romanian-Hungarian cross border area, especially of the public and civil organization from the border area. The research is based on three theoretical pillars and based on these we will realize the research in the border area. The study of border area has been of interest for the research for long time and we had on hand more sources. The aim is that using the knowledge of the Romanian and Hungarian language and in same time using the information and experience of six years of experience as project expert in border area, to realize one own cross-border index that will measure the intensity of the cooperation and the level of institutional capacity building.

Since the middle of the 90's years the European Union offers financial aid for the cross border cooperation. A

few years ago, the term „cross border cooperation” for the local institutions was referring almost exclusively to the people to people projects not to social and institutional development. The value of the financial sources has been growing in the border area in the latest years and it is expected that for the 2013-2020 financial programming period these sources to be bigger. So, it’s important to analyse if the use of this financial aid helped or not the establishment of institutional capacity building and in same time it’s important to analyse how it has involved the managing authorities in the border development and project realization.

During this period of PHARE CBC and INTERREG Romanian and Hungarian regions and localities had the opportunity to experience for the first time creation and implementation of EU funded cross-border cooperation projects. At the same time, institutional structures had to be built on national level in order to organize and implement the CBC programmes and projects. Our research as well as practical experience in local and regional development including cross-border cooperation, participatory approaches and institutional capacity buildings development, is reflected in this abstract.

2. Methodology

Our research is a special type, we make Participatory Research Action (PAR). What is the difference between the traditional and participatory research methods? The aim of the participatory research is to create practical knowledge that is not offer only theoretical information. This results obtained from the participatory research can be use in the practice. In this way these results offer help for defining the social and community necessity. In the time of realization of the research we built relations and commitments with the people who were involved in the research. The researcher renounced for the own neutral insights and become attached toward the target groups and in same time is created the connection between the knowledge and the actions, information.

In our research we try to realize one “cross border indicator”. The idea of this indicator was given by Bertelsmann Transformation Index realized annually by the Bertelsmann Stiftung in 119 countries. This indicator measures the political and economical changes. We propose to analyze the possibility of creating a resemblance, but in same time my own indicator will be realized with other evaluation methods and

characteristics, that won't measure the political and economical changes, we want this indicator to be able to measure the level of institutional capacity building.

The Bertelsmann Stiftung¹ economical realizations criteria are based on following: level of social and economical development, organizing of market and competitions, the national price and currency stability, private sector and prosperity. The proposed cross-border indicator is based on 4 dimensions: institutional (1), human resources (2), efficiency (3) and cross-border participation (4).

The first two dimensions of the cross border indicator will analyze and measure the achievements of the border institutions. With the unification of the 1st and 2nd dimension we will obtain the “institutional indicator”. This part of the final indicator will measure what the cross border institutions did so that there were beneficiaries of the funds for the sustainment of the projects results. The other dimension, 3rd and 4th, will present the participation of the border society in the institutional development projects. These two dimensions unification will result in the “participation indicator”.

¹ About Bertelsmann Transformation Index you can find information at http://www.bertelsmann-stiftung.de/cps/rde/xchg/SID-AE4EE828-00C98222/bst_engl/hs.xsl/307.htm

The unification of the institutional indicator and participation indicator will give the cross border indicator.

The target institutions of research can satisfy the following: to be functional in the border area, to be an organization that receives financial aid from PHARE CBC/INTERREG, to be civil or public institutions, to be functioning in rural or urban area. The selection of indicators and this indicators source of data were selected in accordance with the following principles: relevance, certitude, coverage and concern.

The sources for the data were: statistical data offered by the institutions from the border area, data from the realized projects (application forms, financial and process reports, documents, leaflets, handbooks, etc), institutional web pages realized in the frame of some cross border projects and the questionnaires that will be the most important source for the realization of indicator.

For the realization of the measurement of the institutional capacity building in the cross-border area we will analyze only the institutions that implemented projects in 2.3 People-to-people priorities. The final value of the level of capacity building will be expressed for instance:

- Between 30-40 the condition of institutional capacity building exist

- Between 20-30 the institutional capacity building meets some problems, but the general conditions for the institutional modernizing and reorganization exist
- Between 10-20 the institutional capacity building is conditioned by serious problems

The research first question (h1) was: in the hungarian-romanian border area are more development possibilities, but the level of social capital is low and in this way the territories that are situated in the cross border area could not obtain the waited development process. It is supposed that the increasing of the social capital and the strengthening of the civil society will conduct to the entire region development.

The second question (h2) analyze if the public administration and civil organizations could have influence or not for the social capital. Another part of this question is regarding to the partnership. We would like to know if the partnership were established only with the necessity of the project or the partnership have a really essence and importance.

In the third question (h3) we suppose that the project realized in the period of 2004-2007 will conduct to the increasing of interest and in this way in the period of 2007-2013 the number of realized project will increase.

3. Main research findings

After the realization of the research in Hungarian and Romanian institutions we draw the following conclusions:

- in Romania the institutions that are able to obtain more points than 30 were the NGOs and the County Council.
- the NGOs from Romania that obtained more than 30 points started to work for a long time in county and with these results we can affirm that the institutional capacity building level in these two institutions is better than in the public sector.
- The Romanian public administration institutions obtained between 20-30 points

With the data obtained from the analyses we can affirm that the NGOs capacity building and the effect for the social capital, the level of development and points are higher than the capacity of public administration. The reason of these things can be: the public servants who work in public administration don't have the financial motivation.

In the same time the lack of experts in public area who can be involved in managing the projects. And if they

need to be involved in these projects their implication is compulsory. In this way is easy to explain why the cross border participation indicator was low in the public sector. In the same time the people who work in public sector don't have knowledge of English language or experience.

The Hungarian institutions capacity building results were better than the Romanian ones. The difference can be justified with the experience that was accumulated by the Hungarian institutions in PHARE CBC period. For the Romanian institutions these kinds of projects were first, the first time when the institutions received European funds.

We believe that the success of cross-border projects is linked with more activities and process. First of all, if the actor (at whatever level of action) contributes to the implementation of the cross border project and they have enough competences the change that the community effect of the project to be felt is good. If his action does not strengthen or promote the preservation, control or development of good projects, we can talk about a low level of institutional capacity building. The actors who are important role in the success of cross border projects

and in the institutional capacity building can be define as actors from the cross border area-all those persons, groups and institutions who participate in the development of capacity building (not only institutional building) or whose economic, social, civil and/or cultural competence is aimed at the preservation, control and development of the cross-border system.

The proposed cross-border indicator can successfully do the following:

- Will increase the level of interest of the local actors in the cross-border projects
- Will generate public debates between the local actors about the topic: what are the real expectations of the citizens from the border area
- Will offer one methodological proof about the reform initiatives of actors in border area
- Will offer a base of comparison for other institutions who work in all border regions at the European level
- Will offer information about the problems met by the local actors and try to propose solutions for this problems

If thinking of future prospects of cross-border cooperation programmes and projects in Romanian-Hungarian border area, it needs to be careful because this

policy is of very high importance for the local levels involved in the programme implementation process through its cooperative projects. This is where the European Union come the closest to the small people especially in peripheral border regions, towns and villages. This is where the EU is needed and matters the most.

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