Approaching the territory as a space of the action. Predictors of the participation in the Livezile-Rimitea micro-region (Romania).

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APPROACHING THE TERRITORY AS A SPACE OF THE ACTION. PREDICTORS OF THE PARTICIPATION IN THE LIVEZILE-RIMETEA MICRO-REGION (ROMANIA)

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Summary: There is an increased interest in community participatory development through the involvement of local social actors. Development through participation has shifted the traditional paradigm by placing emphasis on a diversity of local actors, and has generated mixed results, depending on the socio-cultural context of the development area. The socio-cultural characteristics of the local respondents may provide clues that can prove helpful in optimising the strategy of social intervention.

Approaching the Territory as a Space of the Action.
Predictors of the Participation in the *Livezile-Rimetea* Micro-region (Romania)

During the last decades the problem of territorial development has increasingly been looked upon through a new paradigm, that of participation. Judging by the diversity of forms, one could conclude that there are no legal or institutional barriers to public participations in the political or administrative acts of democratic countries. Although a professional consensus exists on what makes a "good" public participation, the practice ranges according to local preference, availability of funds, and according to the values as seen by governing officials.

Although the principle of public participation is being quasi-unanimously accepted for the purpose of policy making, its practical implementation via local territorial development actors displays particular features that require consideration. Within the framework of local evaluation and development programs, and particularly when it comes to political and administrative decision making, the role templates of the social actors become more fluid and increasingly contextualized.

The public in action becomes social actor and the territory becomes the "scene" with sets that can be reconfigured through collective actions. In recent discussions on development issues the territory is defined as a complex system, which is not reduced to just a natural or geographical space. It is also the space for project and that of action of a community. (Girardot, 2007). The sustainable [territorial] development is the requirement that rattled the policies and practice of governance" remarked J. J. Girardot (2005). To the three generally accepted principles (of *complete actor involvement*, the *global and balanced approach* and of the *actor partnership*), Girardot also added three methodological principles. Out of these, the approach of the territory as a space of the action has been the first to be stated. The action and the participation are ontologically related concepts. The current work attempts to identify the predictors of citizens' participation to those acts of governance which target territorial development. The methodological principle stated by Girardot has been applied in two neighbouring but slightly contrasting communities of Livezile and Rimetea.

1.   PUBLIC PARTICIPATION – RECENT DEBATE

Public participation is a process through which public gain influence and take part in public policy. Within Western cultures, the term public participation has strong positive connotations, and is associated with the promotion of democracy. The theoretical literature on public participation is growing rapidly. The need for better conceptual and theoretical understandings of public participation has become clear. Public participation theories have not received great attention, and few have been proposed or tested. Yet theory offers much to practitioners of various interventions. Some examples of fields where public participation often occurs in policy, planning, and development include environmental impact assessment; public health policy; urban, transportation, and energy planning, community economic development; risk management; natural resource management; and democratic reform. But discussion of public participation has lacked a comprehensive framework. As such S.A. Newson (2001) considers the term public participation being poorly defined. Programmes are frequently implemented without suggesting or defining the objectives to be achieved. The key to understanding citizen participation depends largely upon the identification of the explicit and implicit objectives intrinsic to the process. In many circumstances, there has been a gap between the policy for public participation and the implementation strategy or process.

More recently, a somewhat different opinion is that of Nancy Glock-Grueneich and Sara Nora Ross who consider that the field of public participation has reached a triple maturity: conceptual, theoretical and institutional *Institutional maturation* occurs when the development turns a field of practices into a field of academic study, professional instruction, and required usage in all the institutions where that would be an improvement over current functioning. But before institutionalization can occur *theoretical maturation* must take place. By this, they mean the stages by which a field of sustained study and practice takes on intellectual tasks of increasing complexity leading to its possessing ever more potent theories for anticipating and handling recurring situations. This process of naming key ideas accompanies theoretical maturation. *Conceptual maturation* means developing a shared language of terms used with enough consistency and precision, and related to each other in a manner coherent enough, that we actually can understand each other across our diverse practices, settings, cultures and languages.

An interesting resurgence of interest over the origin of the term public participation is generated by Ricardo S. Morse (2007), who authors the study „Mary Follett, Prophet of Participation". Mary Follett (1868-1933), a community organiser, scholar, and popular lecturer, became known as one of the seminal thinkers in the fields of public administration and business management. She has been named the „prophet of management". Yet it was democracy and public participation that formed the core of her life's work. The theoretical and practical implications of her writings on public participation have not been adequately explored, said Morse. Follett's work is strong on theory and it is also very much practice-oriented. Her work represents a framework for thinking about democratic governance and points to how that kind of participation can be applied in concrete ways. Follett identifies the neighbourhood as one of the primary vehicles for institutionalizing genuine participation. This is one of the features of her work that distinguishes her from her contemporaries, a feature that requires serious consideration from the public participation community given the rapid growth of so-called *neighbourhood programs in communities*. The organizing premise of Follett's work lies in her notion of *circular response* or experience. Human activity is in response to a changing environment. Circular response means that we are making our environment, responding to it, and being "recreated" by it simultaneously, from moment to moment, our whole lives (Morse, 2007).

Notwithstanding the global societal perspective, a simpler and more practical approach may be that of focusing on the intersection between public participation 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 NGOs 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." (Kumar, 2007, p. 23).

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 others *its intensity*: 1*) passive participation* (population is informed with no particular interest in 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 decisions 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 resources and advice, and without loss of control over the way resources are being used).

Taking as a starting point Quakley and his colleagues' ideas, Kumar also pinpoints a series of *arguments against participation*: 1) participation can lead to starting point and 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." (Kumar, 2007, p. 26).

In time, a series of problems noticed here have benefited of coherent solutions from the more generous perspective of partnership. Participation appears beside partnership in its quality of territorial intelligence fundamental principle. (Girardot, 2007). Taking into account either the *economic intelligence* regarded in territorial context, (Bertacchini, 2007; Herbeaux, 2007) or the *collective intelligence* (Levy, 2007) and its manifestations at territorial level, the territorial intelligence is characterized by the same principles, which represent nowadays the basis of sustainable development (Pascaru, 2006).

In terms of public participation in Romania, a recent study (2006) - undertaken under the auspices of The Resource Center for Public Participation and coordinated by Mihaela Lambru – noticed that the citizens' involvement in public policy making is limited to being informed and occasionally consulted but lacking *active*

participation[1]. Furthermore, even the public consultation process is not only limited to the activities and situations sanctioned by law, but also poorly managed overall. This is consistent with the excessively legalistic modus operandum of public administration, and not with the more modern understanding of public management.

2.   THE MICROREGION – A POSSIBLE SPACE OF COLLECTIVE ACTION

Within the European social development policy and practice the creation of development regions rests on the territorial-projected change rationality derived from the principles of participation and of decentralisation.

2.1.   The function of regional development zones in Romania and microregional carving

The vision and the ensuing development actions are to be the results of a bottom-up process while the resource distribution being propagated top-down, starting from the higher political and administrative levels. The demarcation of territorial development regions within both the member and the aspiring states of The European Union is one of the conditions imposed for accessing structural funds. Being considered both a European requirement and an internal necessity (Mitroi, 2006), the creation of the eight development regions in Romania has been defined by M. Pascaru (2005) as a politico-economic rationale driven engineered process named *regioning* ("regionare") as opposed to the socio-historically spontaneous process of *regionalisation*. Dumitru Sandu (1999, p.168) makes the additional point that the demarcation of the development regions in Romania has been accomplished having in mind both the ideas of development disparity reduction and that of regional competitiveness maximization.

The Law 151/1998 is the first normative act sanctioning the elements summed up under the aforementioned "regionare" of Romania and has been followed by Law 315/2004 which preserves a substantial part of the original content. These laws establish the institutional framework consisting of the two principal institutions, The Regional Development Council and the eight Regional Development Agencies, and specify the geographical demarcation of the regions. The development regions are clearly defined by law as of economical type, not administrative and not having any legal power. Their main function is that of designing regional development strategies and of facilitating the implementation of European financed projects.

Territorial development disparities are a commonly encountered problem of countries under transition (Mitroi, 2006). For the dual purpose of both regional and local needs, the micro-regional approach could be a viable solution. A good example is Hungary where the constitution of micro-regions has led to a reduction in economic disparities and to a more efficient absorption of funds, according to the most acute priorities. In Romania also, through the initiative of NGOs' and of inspired local leaders, development micro-regions[2] have been (more or less formally) created. Their effectiveness could be assessed through local-scope development projects.

Development through projects, as a form of social change, is an option with significant implications at the territorial level. The broad development objectives, generously formulated (in terms of social desirability) allow freedom for actively involved local actors to identify their own problems, opportunities and solutions and align them with the development direction set by the financier.

Socially and economically, the Apuseni Mountains area (of with the Livezile-Rimetea microregion belongs to) is considered under-privileged for several reasons. Accessibility to urban and rural centres is hampered by the lack of transport infrastructure. A process of demographic ageing is taking place, which is likely to increase depopulation in the future. The standard of living is low and is accompanied by low purchasing power; the prices tend to be higher that the national average. Local producers face difficulty in marketing their product surplus. Employment rate has increased due to mining and light industry restructuring. The (although high) tourism potential - due to rich resources (natural setting, karstic landmarks, cultural customs, specific architecture) – is being poorly exploited (Pascaru *et al.*, 2005).

Similar research into the public participation issue has been undertaken into another micro-region within the same Apuseni Mountains (the microregion of Albac – Scarisoara – Gârda[3]). These relatively recent findings

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[1] The superior participation level according to OECD

[2] As an example please refer to http://www.greenagenda.org and http://www.mtmm.ro

[3] See the project *The Utilisation of Catalyse Method in the study and the dynamization of rural communities. Socio-psicho-pedagogical experimentation in the Albac – Scarisoara – Horea (Apuseni Mountains, Alba)*, Grant CNCSIS, Cod 678/2004., Project Director Mihai Pascaru.

have shown that a regional community development approach becomes more functional if framed within the theory of systems. The territorial separation between systems can be achieved based on the intended objectives. The borders between communities acquire a more administrative and managerial character. The human inter-relationships get more institutionalised due to the individual social actors' limitations in their ability to integrate into a wider system. This could partially explain the dissolution of the traditional sense of community. The communitarian system becomes more effective when it accomplishes the politico-managerial function, rather than just the one of support, maintenance and adaptation. The effectiveness obtained by community development (development driven by external inputs) however is different from that obtained by *communitarian development* (development from within, through and for the community) (Sandu, 2005). Citizens' participation goes beyond the minimal level of electioneering and tax paying, to exchanging information about community's problems and opportunities and to architecting a common development vision and an active engagement strategy (Buțiu, 2006b).

2.2. The Livezile – Rimetea microregion as a space of the action

The subject territory, as a development micro-region and as a possible space of collective action consists of two neighbouring communes, Livezile (including the villages of Livezile, Izvoarele, Poiana Aiudului and Valisoara) and Rimetea (including the villages of Rimetea and Coltesti). The two communes are situated in the northern side of Alba county, at an average distance of 40 km of Alba Iulia, the county's administrative centre. Four of the six villages belong to a distinct geographical region, The Trascau Depression[4].

There are some significant differences between the two communes as to the local territorial development. The Livezile commune encompasses more villages but with less inhabitants and dwelling units per village[5] (4 villages with 584 dwellings and 1526 inhabitants as opposed to 2 villages with 496 dwellings and 1213 inhabitants). Ethnically the majority is Romanian in Livezile (98.7%) and Hungarian in Rimetea (87.3%).

According to 2003 official statistics, both communes display low employment levels (80 working people in Livezile and 110 in Rimetea respectively). The main source of employment remains agriculture (wheat, rye, corn, fruit and vegetable growing, horticulture and some small-scale cattle growing). People in Rimetea commune however have recently become a lot more involved in agro-turism (40 bed-and-breakfast currently registered) and auxiliary trades (tourist guiding, artisan objects crafting and small commerce). The village of Izvoarele within the commune of Livezile however, although with very similar tourism potential (and notwithstanding a more aged demographic) shows less consistency in generating agro-turism revenues.

The houses in Rimetea are build under a straight unitarian architectural style, remarkable enough to achieve an architectural conservation status and the EUROPA NOSTRA prize for the centre village house restoration in 1999. The road to public participation in community development programs has not been easy in either of the communes, but it is noticeable that people in Rimetea have been more instrumental in attracting private funding (particularly from Hungary, but not only) and more engaged in small business versus those from Livezile who relied more on public funding.

The poor condition of the transport infrastructure is a common problem and the main obstacle to further development. The county road Aiud-Buru is the main artery passing through 5 of the 6 villages and is in a state of deterioration. An improvement in its' condition, coupled with the proximity to Rimetea village to the Transylvania highway will certainly maximise the development opportunities of the micro-region.

Within this context we considered that special attention to the participatory process is warranted.
The survey, applied through a questionnaire, had taken place during the month of December 2007. Three hundred and sixty-six respondents have been queried by selecting every 3rd dwelling from 5 out of the 6 villages. The proportion of male/female respondents was fairly equal, ethnically being split 60% Romanian and 40% Hungarian (weights reflecting the actual population distribution). Age wise 20.8% were young respondents (18-34 years), 41% adults (35-59 years) and 38.3% seniors (60+ years). Based on the educational level 44.3% were high-school graduates at best, 41.1% had additional studies and 4.1% had higher education. The sample details are illustrated in Annex 1.

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[4] As a geographical unit, it is considered as one of the most pitoresque and attractive turistic areas in the Carpathian Mountains and having an important natural development potential.

[5] The statistics refer to the last (2002) government survey.

The survey aimed at (1) the identification of local problems and community's future citizens' representation, (2) trust in public participation and (3) the relationships within the community. The current study examines the results connected to participation.

(a) Participation as contribution to community projects

During the discussion on development through projects, three methods of social actor engagement were considered: *the supply of ideas and solutions* as one of the territorial intelligence forms of expression, the *material contribution* through monies and goods and the *labour contribution*. On the predefined list of social actors we included the community dwellers, local businessmen and the City Hall, and external actors such as the European Union, the state authorities and foreign investors.

The data in Table 1 dispels the myth that most are expecting EU monies contribution; the European Union is barely ranked 4th, after the central public administration, local administration and foreign investors. Less material contribution is expected from those inhabitants with problems, but more in terms of work effort and ideas. These findings suggest the existence of favourable premises for those processes of community development that rely less on public financing and more on *empowerment*, those processes centred on local human resources.

Tabel 1: *Opinions as to the expected social actor contribution to community problem solving (%)*

YES it should contribute with ...	The European Union	Foreign Investors	State Authorities	City Hall	Local businessmen	Inhabitants with problems
Ideas	58.2	55.7	66.7	84.4	69.4	81.1
Monies/Goods	77.9	78.4	86.9	80.6	73.5	52.2
Work effort	40.4	45.1	50.5	71.3	62.8	83.1

It remains to be seen though to what extent are the expressed opinions translated into behaviour, as a step between desirable and realizable. Where the question "Do you think a community project like road fixing, school repair or bridge building could be successfully completed in your village?" was asked, 79.5% answered YES, arguing[6] that: people would work (25.7%), it's in their interest (17.5%), because people are hard-working and committed (16.4%), due to financial resources (15%), because there is interest from local authorities (12%), due to competence of City Hall personnel (11.7%), because other projects have finalized (11.2%), because firms would contribute with monies/goods (9.6%), due to good project management and coordination (5.5%), because people would contribute monies/goods (3.6%).

We are not surprised that hard-workmanship, commitment and money are ranked first and the local financial contribution last. We do notice however some firm denial of some of the arguments on the list and some marginal proportion of those that come up with their own argument (3.3%). That makes us pause for a moment and think of the reasoning behind it. For instance out of those believing in the success of a project, 68.4% do not think it would be due to the hard-workmanship of the people, 78% do not even think that being in their interest would suffice and 81.5% doubt that the financial resources are the key to success. The other arguments are denied in even greater proportions.

When analysing the reply distribution across villages, we notice that most affirmative confidence in the success of a community project comes from the Livezile village (92.6%), where a large number of infrastructure projects with a wide spectrum of beneficiaries have recently been completed. From the fact that, except that of Livezile, no other positive recent experience determinants are known, we confirm the fact that there is a lack of active participation to the implementation of community projects. Age-wise the adults display a higher degree of confidence in the success of a project (84.7% from the 35-39 years of age category) than the young (15.8% of the 18-34 years of age category). The more optimistic young however are likely to attribute the success of a project to participants' contribution in terms of effort, monies and goods, rather than to the competences of local authorities. Gender-wise the levels of confidence seem close (79.1% of men and 79.9% of women). Women seem less inclined to support any of the pre-defined reasons and refer more frequently to the "other" category, without being more specific. More significant differences appear in relation to the religious beliefs. The Greek-Orthodox display a majority of confidence in the success of a community project. The non-Orthodox scepticism

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[6] Multiple response to a pre-defined list of reasons given to the consecutive question « Why do you think it would succeed ? »

is based more on a distrust in the interest and in the competence of local authorities. The more optimistic non-Orthodox attribute the success of a project more so than the Orthodox (57.1% v. 42.9%) to the private firms' contribution in goods and monies.

(b) Participation as preoccupation for the community problems

Within the micro-region, the proposals, the doubts and misgivings on community problems are discussed mostly with the mayor and vice-mayor (63.9%), followed by the family (38.5%) and then neighbours (37.4%). Only 19.1% state they discuss with local councillors and 9.6% with the priest (Table 2). We notice however significant differences between villages, most probably rooted in different cultures, in the position of the authorities and depending on the distance to the administrative centre.

Table 2: *When you have a misgiving or a proposal about a community problem, whom are you discussing it with*? (%)

Village of the respondent	Mayor / Vice-Mayor	Local Councillor	Neighbours	Family Member	Priest
Livezile	82.7	24.7	38.3	51.9	8.6
Poiana Aiudului	66.1	12.9	33.9	27.4	14.5
Izvoarele	68.0	16.0	50.0	26.0	4.0
Rimetea	53.7	24.4	29.3	41.5	1.2
Colţeşti	52.7	15.4	39.5	38.5	17.6
MICROREGION	**63.9**	**19.1**	**37.4**	**38.5**	**9.6**

The peripheral position of the village in relation to the commune administrative centre seems to negatively affect the discussions with councillors and the diversity of sources. The preference for neighbour discussions seems highest in Izvoarele (peripheral village, exclusively inhabited by Romanians and having an ageing demographic) and is minimal in Rimetea (centre of the commune, inhabited mostly by Hungarians). Family members are high on the list also in the villages central to the commune, Livezile and Rimetea, most likely due to the diversity of the sources of information and feedback. The preference for the priest as councillor from the villages of Coltesti and Poiana Aiudului can be explained by the well-known activism of those church figures and their community involvement and not necessarily related to the dominant faith (Unitarian in Coltesti and Christian-Orthodox in Poiana Aiudului).

The interest in community problems as manifested through discussions with various actors, peeks with adults and bottoms out with young. Gender-wise males are more likely to discuss the issues with officials, friends and family (differences of 10-20%), as opposed to women who prefer engaging in discussions with the priest and the neighbours (differences of 35% and 10% respectively). Religion-wise the Greek-Orthodox seem more likely to engage a variety of social actors as opposed to the non-Orthodox who prefer the friends (56.1% v. 43.9%).

Another aspect that was discussed was that of the feedback given by the villagers to local authorities as to the quality of public works. The results show that the majority of respondents (55.2%) had dissatisfactions with the quality of some works and only 30.1% have voiced it to the authorities. The majority of complaints have been expressed verbally and casually (27.6%) with only 1.4% having requested a formal audience and even less so (1.1%) going to the extent of putting it in writing. Out of the total number of complaints about a quarter have been solved satisfactorily.

Overall the method of complaint seems to have a minimal influence over the resolution of the problem. As one Coltesti councillor suggestively explains "the small problems are solved in relation to how one can and to how the law allows". Distribution-wise, most of the dissatisfaction with public works manifests in Rimetea and Coltesti, the same villages where trust in mayor and councillors is less. In these villages the general infrastructure problems are compounded by dissatisfaction with the quality of waterworks and with the poorly controlled waste disposal system.

Young are most dissatisfied with public works (68.4%) albeit admittedly being the least likely to formally report it (38.2%). Men are more dissatisfied than women (57.8% v. 52.5%); and non-Orthodox more than the Orthodox (65.2% and 47.3% respectively). Gender and religion-wise the same order applies to the propensity to report the dissatisfaction.

(c) Mobilisation for Action

Under the Communist regime, a good part of the public works has been undertaken through citizens' labour contribution. The apparently volunteer act of "patriotic work", which concealed a hidden politically-driven obligativity, has managed to discredit the idea of voluntary participation; community leaders continued to encounter resistance to the idea of participation long after the regime change. After two decades of democratic exercise we notice that territorial affiliation and the level of education being the two most important factors affecting the response behaviour (Table 3 and Annex 2). At least that's what our survey shows[7]. We remark that in the predominantly Hungarian villages (Rimetea and Coltesti) the influence of territorial affiliation supersedes that of the level of education, even though the community attachment seems more clearly expressed in the predominantly Romanian villages[8]. Also as stimuli for participation, before political affiliation, what matters more is the neighbourhood and the blood ties. As a matter of fact, within the rural space of Romania, the neighbourhood and blood ties are the main institutions of mutual support (see Butiu 2006a). Otherwise said, if the social networks and the institutional contacts stimulate participation (Marschall, 2004) the leader's prestige and the experience of mutual support are vectors of mobilisation for action as a superior level of participation.

Tabelul 3: *When someone is asking you to help with a communal item (ideas, solutions, labour, goods or monies) how much does it matter… ?*

Significant factor	Micro-region	Rimetea Commune	Livezile Commune
	Score calculated as an average from 1 (at all) to 4 (very much)		
The fact that he/she is from the village/commune	2.57	2.64	2.49
The fact that he/she is educated	2.46	2.40	2.52
The fact that he/she is neighbour	2.09	2.03	2.15
The fact that he/she has a house farm or business firm	1.95	1.90	1.98
The political party to which he/she belongs	1.66	1.75	1.57
Other *… Trust, Correctiveness,. the interest in village problems etc.*	Score calculated as an average from 0 (NS/NR) to 4 (very much)		
	0.2	0.3	0.1

Analysing the distribution of the significant factors in relation to other characteristics of respondents (Annex 2) we conclude that the level of education matters more for Orthodox than for non-Orthodox (2.53 v. 2.40) while the territorial and political affiliation matter more for non-Orthodox (2.68 v. 2.51 and 1.66 v. 1.59 respectively). Blood ties, neighbourhood and the economic prosperity have equal footings. The young value more the level of education and political affiliation while older people put a higher emphasis on territorial affiliation, blood ties and neighbourhood. Gender-wise women place less importance on all the above factors, except for the political affiliation.

CONCLUSIONS

From the literature review we notice a relatively well structured discourse on public participation, populated by theories, instruments and examples of success. Nevertheless discrepancies exist between discourse – typically political – and territorial realities. Across the flow of participatory processes one encounters obstacles that have more to do with the profile of the social actors rather than with the territorial configuration. New challenges arrive particularly where there are no instituted governing structures or where they are insufficiently consolidated. It is the case of the development regions and micro-regions where the technocratic component dominates the territorial development projects, but the action and the participatory reflection instruments lack definition. The understanding of the socio-cultural particularities of the population inhabiting a certain territorial contour is a necessary step in the process of stimulation to participate.

Our methodological start point was the first principle for accomplishing a sustainable development - approaching the territory as a space of the action (Girardot, 2005). We focused on a territorial image made up of two neighbouring communes, Livezile and Rimetea, placed in a relatively unitary geographical framework, and which present quite contrasting socio-cultural characteristics. Out of the set of dimensions the concept of participation can be mapped upon, in the current study we took particular interest in the following: participation as contribution to community projects, participation as preocupation for the community problems and the mobilisation for the local development actions. On the basis of the questionnaire-based survey carried throughout December 2007, we draw some conclusions which carry some significance for the local participation-based development actions: 1) there is a relatively healthy feedback to local authorities on the

quality of the public works projects, but a poor follow-up response in return 2) the locals consider that many of their ideas and workforce potential can be used as successful contributions to the resolutions of community problems and 3) there is a relatively high level of confidence in the successful completion of community projects, mostly based on a mutual perception of hard workmanship.

Starting from the premise of tourism-based development opportunities (offered by the distinctive location of the two communes) we set to identify the main predictors of local actor participation, in an area with various degrees of tourism potential utilization. Among these, the village, as a territorial entity and the religious affiliation seem to be the most significant predictors of the mobilisation for action response, in association with certain characteristics of the mobilising leader.

So it is expected that in the predominantly Hungarian (and religiously Unitarian) villages of Rimetea and Coltesti the response is more positive to the solicitations coming from a higher educated leader who above all is member of the territorial community. In the predominantly Romanian villages (with the exception of Livezile) the prime quality of the leader should be e high level of education, the territorial affiliation falling secondly. For none of the villages the political affiliation matters much. In a nutshell, the leader that who can mobilise towards development actions in the micro-region is one who is well educated and who belongs to the territorial community, regardless of his or her political affiliation.

ANNEX

Annex 1: Descriptive Characteristics of Sample (%)

Village	Age Group			Gender		Ethniticity				Education Level			
	Young (18-34 years)	Adults (35-59 years)	Seniors (60+ years)	Female	Male	Romanian	Hungarian	Rrom	Other / Undeclared	High-school at best	Medium Eduction	Higher Eductaion	Other
Livezile	23.5	49.4	27.2	44.4	55.6	98.8	1.2	-	-	34.6	63.2	6.2	-
Poiana Aiudului	27.4	30.6	41.9	61.3	38.7	98.4	1.6	-	-	51.6	43.6	3.2	1.6
Izvoarele	4.0	36.0	60.0	46.0	54.0	100	-	-	-	68.0	28.0	4.0	-
Rimetea	19.5	37.8	42.7	50.0	50.0	15.9	79.3	1.2	3.6	42.7	52.4	4.9	-
Colţeşti	24.2	46.2	29.7	45.1	54.9	7.7	89.0	1.1	2.2	36.3	49.5	2.2	1.1
MICROREGION	**20.8**	**41.0**	**38.3**	**48.9**	**51.1**	**58.1**	**40.8**	**0.6**	**1.4**	**44.3**	**41.1**	**4.1**	**0.5**

Annex 2: The leader's significant characteristics facilitating mobilisation to action for community development

Predictor	Is member of the territorial community	Has a high level of education	Is relative or neighbour	Is an Entrepreneur	Represents a particular political party
SATUL/ COMUNA					
Livezile	2.83	2.78	2.05	1.89	1.52
Poiana Aiudului	2.29	2.24	1.94	2.19	1.74
Izvoarele	2.38	2.54	1.91	1.86	1.44
LIVEZILE COMMUNE	**2.50**	**2.52**	**1.97**	**1.98**	**1.57**
Rimetea	2.79	2.49	2.15	1.89	1.78
Colţeşti	2.49	2.32	1.91	1.92	1.73
RIMETEA COMMUNE	**2.64**	**2.40**	**2.03**	**1.90**	**1.75**
Age					
18 – 34 years	2.59	2.57	2.03	1.96	1.80
35 – 59 years	2.51	2.45	1.89	1.84	1.64
60+ years	2.66	2.46	2.14	2.05	1.59
Gender					
Women	2.46	2.34	1.92	1.93	1.67
Men	2.70	2.60	2.10	1.96	1.64

Religion					
Greek-Orthodox	2.51	2.53	2.00	1.95	1.59
Non-Orthodox	2.68	2.40	2.02	1.94	1.75

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