

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND IDEOLOGY SOCIAL WORK MODELS

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Abstract: The problem of social protection and of social work services has been under public debate in Romania lately. A series of dysfunctions at macroeconomic level has worsened this problem: In what degree is the state responsible for the social protection of the social-economically active or passive citizens? Must it assume an absolute role or transfer a part of its responsibilities to other sectors of society/community? Are the theoretical and ideological premises no longer valid? These questions are essential, especially when a relatively new field is being created in Romania, that of social work. The possible answers are given by applied approaches, such as the European financing projects, for example the “European Qualifications and Standardization within the Social Work Field – Acronym Eur-As” project. (PERSEUS: POSDRU/18/1.2/G/11966)

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In the specialty literature and in the current language, as well, the modern society is defined and characterised by a series of components, which are approached by different socio-humanist disciplines: the economic component, the political component, the civil society component, the non-profit sector. It would be too costly to detail each and every one here. However, a component of the civil society deserves, from the approached theme perspective, some considerations.

The civil society is mainly represented by the social and civic institutions and organisations which are created in a functional democracy. Usually, the civil society organisations are involved and are present in taking public interest decisions or those concerning social development. “Civil society is a notion that describes apolitical associative forms which are not parts of a state fundamental institution or of the business sector. Therefore, nongovernmental institutions - associations or foundations, unions, private unions are actors of the civil society which influence the decision factors, the state institutions in order to defend the rights and interests of groups of citizens representing them.” (www.fdsc.ro).

There are different definitions of the “civil society“ concept. In everyday language, the meaning is often a reductionist one, many people understanding by “civil society” nongovernmental institutions. We can find a broader sense in the British definition. The London School of Economics and the Centre for Civil Society use the following definition: “The civil society refers to a set of institutions, organisations and behaviours present among state, business and family. This includes non-profit organisations, philanthropic organisations, social and political movements, other forms of social and civic participation. Thus, it can be said that the civil society contains: nongovernmental organisations (NGO’s); community-based organizations; professional associations; political organisations; civic clubs; unions; philanthropic organisations; social and sport clubs; cultural institutions; religious organisations; ecologist movements; media; etc. (www.fdsc.ro)

Beyond the institutional aspect, the civil society is formed of citizens, who, associated under different forms, takes part in public life, influence policies, defend and promote the population’s interests. However, the specialty works make this distinction – the creation of the civil society is the result of a spontaneous and creative movement of citizens that willingly institute different forms of political, economic and cultural association. Within the civil society the citizens enter a network of social relationships, willingly taking part in the activity of a multitude of associations, organisations, clubs, in order to promote a diversity of objectives and interests. The civil society organisations are autonomous, in a way, in relation with the state, representing, a multitude of centres of power, a system of non-state powers (Tamas, 1993). And the creation of a real democratic society takes a long

time. A first step towards a functional democracy is represented by the democratic institutions and mechanisms, and the civil society actions, within this context, as a regulating mechanism for democratic societies.

The civil society has the right and duty to influence the political, economic or public interest decisions. The reactions of the civil society towards the administrative or economic policies which are in contradiction with its interests are varied: manifestations, campaigns, protest messages etc. As such actions are difficult to organise and often have a short-term impact, it is necessary to create parallel state structures: non-governmental organisations, professional associations, unions, patronages, etc that have to monitor the activity of state institutions and the way to solve the claims and maintain a constant pressure on the decision factors. These have to collaborate with the structures involved in administrating the society, in order to find the best solutions and to permanently improve the quality of life.

The community development is directly conditioned by the level of economic development (working places, economic activities, entrepreneurs), by the infrastructure development (appropriate facilities, approach road, public lighting, dispensaries, schools, kindergartens, electric current, telephony system), by the human resource and the quality of human relationships (mentalities, behaviours, values). Of all these, the most important is the human component, as it conditions all the other aspects of development. The development of a community is and has to be the result of the actions and interactions of all people belonging to that community. Therefore, the development of human resources programmes and projects has become a community priority. (Neamtu, 2009).

The projects and programmes which aim at improving the living conditions in a community can have two types of approaches: outside the community (the conventional approach) and inside the community (the community development approach). The conventional approach is when the outside of the community decides to implement a project and chooses a mode of action. After the decision was made outside the community, a specialist tries to convince community members that this project is important to them and that they must contribute to its implementation. Such a community is characterized by passivity, paternalism, apathy, individualism, and even conflicts. Such a community is dependent on others because it has no internal mechanism for development. This type of community is waiting for problems to be solved by others. This expectation gives birth to some practices of both governmental institutions and NGOs, of "donors", which, considering that beneficiaries do not know what is best for them and can not solve their problems, make decisions in their place.

In the participative approach, the community initiates the whole process, comes with ideas, decides what to do, how to do, who to do so etc. therefore, when the community comes with its real problems, with its solutions and implements them, people will want even more to maintain the results. In this case, people are involved from the beginning to the end of activity, thinking, planning, and leading the projects, analysing different situations which may come. Thus, they will find solutions, they will feel capable and responsible and will believe in the materialisation of the project.

The community development is the process by which individuals in a given geographical area or a geographically defined community take responsibility for producing changes in the community, without waiting for the government, local authorities or other social actors to do so in their place. These changes consist in building new services, in improving the environment, in promoting policies to deter crime, etc. The purpose of a community development process is primarily to create a culture of self-development among community members. That means the transfer of attitudes, knowledge and social skills conducive to development.

The ultimate purpose of community development projects, regardless of the theme, is the creation of local capacities and the community organisation, so that the community acquires the ability to identify, analyse and solve its problems without any outside intervention. Sometimes, community organisations are created as a result of the community development process. A community organisation is a non-profit private organisation or an informal group of citizens formed of community members that are associated in order to initiate activities contributing to the growth of the collective welfare, meeting the local needs of the community members. The development based on community initiative and participation may require a longer period, but the changes have a greater durability that is they can be sustained on a longer term. In order to do this, organisations act according to some values and principles. (Krogsrud, 2006)

Community development is based on the following principles:

The collective action principle, according to which people act together in order to prevent and eliminate the situations of vulnerability and discrimination by identifying problems and common needs and by finding the best solutions;

The democracy principle, according to which a maximum degree of participation of all interested parties is required, and the whole community is included in the decision processes.

The principle referring to the development of one's own capacities is based on the development of skills, knowledge and individual and group skills within the local community.

The participation primarily aims at involving as many community members as possible, especially those marginalised from an economic and social point of view, in taking decisions and initiating some actions which influence their living conditions. Participation is different from community contribution or community consultation. The community participation in community development initiatives and projects means the participation in identifying problems, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating community projects. The community contribution to a project refers to the fact that, during the project implementation stage, community members share their resources (material resources, labour force, information and psycho-social resources). The community consultation means that community members express their opinion on various initiatives undertaken by external actors (non-governmental organisations, development agents, government) or by internal ones (town hall, local organisations), but they do not effectively participate in identifying and analysing problems and in taking decisions for their resolution.

The community contribution with resources (for example donations, labour force), the dialogue and collaboration with external agencies are encouraged, but they should not be confused with the community participation which is more comprehensive and inclusive than "contribution" or "consultation".

The community participation does not happen spontaneously. It is necessary for people to be encouraged to participate and be given a context for participation. In order to stimulate the participation of community members, trained facilitators are most often used to work in the community. They may come from inside the community, sometimes even representatives of community organisations or from outside the community.

It is important for community members to participate in the projects and activities of a community organisation, as, this is how the local needs and problems are known, new development ideas are generated, the local knowledge and skills are promoted, the feasibility of improvable proposals is tested. Also, the capacity of communities to handle their own problems and have more control over decisions taken on their own community development is increased, the local resources (labour force, financial resources, and managerial skills) are identified, developed and mobilised, stronger relationships among people are promoted, especially through the cooperation to achieve common goals, supporting thus community projects.

However, community members often do not participate in the elaboration and implementation of projects, some of the reasons being: the lack of habit of being involved in taking important decisions for their community development, a passive attitude and the solicitation of help from the government, from development agencies or external organisations, the lack of trust in those who initiate community development actions, the negative self-evaluation of resources (they are considered too poor and deprived of participation resources), the lack of success models and examples concerning the participation of community members to community development projects.

The participation of as many community members as possible is essential to strengthen the capacity of the community organisation, of the community and, not last, to improve the living conditions in the community. The important decisions that have to be taken and to which the community members should participate, include: a. assessing the community needs and the potential to meet these needs as well as other opportunities; b. prioritising problems and setting appropriate goals; planning actions, plans of action within the community, planning certain projects; d. implementing actions and projects, monitoring actions and projects; e. assessing results.

A great advantage of the community members' participation in all the above mentioned stages is that the community knows and better rank its needs and problems, but also activates and develops the potential to meet and actively involve in their resolution.

The development of **social services** is one of the objectives of any community's medium term strategy, and also of a national community – as it is the case of Romania, as a member of the European Union. (Buzducea, 2009). The recognised engine in achieving this goal is the economic growth – in order to achieve the European indicators and standards, by supporting a competitive

business environment. The implementation of active policies on the labour market is strongly connected to the social development, and the civil society is considered to have a crucial role. The most comprehensive aspect is the Western democracy model, which is one of cooperation, being primarily based on the quasi general participation of community actors. As an appropriate reflection in the participative democracy models is the practice - quite recent for Romania's experience - of the authorities, of mass-media institutions and of the non-governmental sector, of educational institutions which promote, implement, develop and support programmes, projects or interventions at macro or micro social level. These practices (projects, programmes, interventions) generally aim at producing community changes. As resources, there are mobilised European funds, most of them non-refundable, that can be accessed by various communities in order to finance their own positive change, on different coordinates. The emphasis is on the development of the institutional capacity of organisations and of the community, in general. Yet, the absorption of funds and their use for the benefit of under-privileged groups depends on the cohesion of the actors involved in the community's life.

The measure of a change is given especially by the dimension of the participants' active participation and involvement, including the target groups, in this change. This is the only way we can talk about community development, of increased institutional capacity, of positive practices, and especially of efficient social interventions. Yet, the socio-cultural differences are frequent, as well. Here's an example: in Romania, the participative initiatives and voluntary ones of local communities are quite rare and do not have the support of NGO's or of the local authorities. Although the development of associations and foundations has flourished in Romania after 1990, the annual reports show, as characteristics of non-governmental Romanian organisations, the weak voluntary activity, the lack of a donation culture, the opportunist attitude, precarious resources, inconclusive results etc. In this case, the activity of non-profit organisations within communities proves to be troublesome and especially difficult to correlate with programs and governmental interventions of the same kind. On the opposite side, that of good practices, we have the example of Holland, where there are national networks which support the local initiatives, some of them developing their support activity at the continental level. (www.asociatiabetania.ro)

Here, in this lack of participative practices, we can find the roots and explanations of the oversized development of some "nationalised" social work services, creative of social dependency.

In principle, social work has a basis and utility which meet the most generous principles and values of the modern society. The main objective is the protection of persons, which, due to some economic, physical or social reasons, do not have the possibility to meet their basic psycho-social needs, to develop their own skills and competences for the active participation to social life. In this context, social work is the non-contributory component of the social protection system and is made of all institutions and programs/policies by which the State, the public authorities of local administration and civil society ensure the prevention, limitation or elimination of temporary or permanent effects of some situations that may lead to the marginalisation or social exclusion of individuals.

However, this segment of community development has generated dysfunction-causing practices. It is true, it has rapidly developed after 1990, but it has also been criticised for its drawbacks: fragmentary development, "crisis or 2 campaigns character", without a long term ranking of priorities, with non-standard practices etc.

In a first period after 1990, the social work system aimed at ensuring a minimal protection and the legislation of this period had to develop a system of benefits in order to overcome the transition period towards a market economy. (Paşa, 2003). Then, the attempt of rapid decentralisation which took place especially after 1997 has generated organisational inconsistency, high social costs and has decreased the capacity for supervision and control. (Neamţu, 2003). This is caused especially by the fact that there are more coordinating institutions on various sector fields, at the same time - for example, children in need, the elderly, the disabled etc. The year 2001 was a necessary stage towards a legislative and institutional coherence, a specific law on the national social work system being adopted, a normative act which was considered to accelerate the development of the social work system.

The main directions of this new system targeted (Neamţu, 2010):

1. A new approach of the institutional construction according to the "funnel" principle:

a. At a central level, the social work policy is coordinated by the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family and is carried out by several government agencies with some roles or tasks

(Ministry of Health, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Administration and Home Affairs, Ministry of Education and Research and other central institutions).

b. The coordination of the social work field was achieved with the passage of the National Authority for Disabled Persons, the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption and the National Agency for Family Protection under the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity since 2003 .

c. Since 2005, the College for the coordination of social work has been functioning. The College is coordinated the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family and is composed of the State Secretary of the Department of Social Work and Family Policies within the Ministry of Labour Social Solidarity and Family, the President of the National Authority for Child Protection, the President of the National Authority for Disabled Persons, the President of the National Agency for Family Protection and the President the National Agency for Equal Opportunities between Women and Men. The College ensures the unitary character of the general policy in the social work field and also of sector policies.

d. At a local level (county and locality) the social work system is integrated and unitary, through the coordination of the activities developed by the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family through its territorial directions and the social work public service under the local and county councils, set up in accordance with the Government Decision no. 90/2003 for the adoption of the Regulations for the organisation and functioning of the social work public system and with Law no. 27/2004 on the protection and promotion of child's rights.

2. *The decentralisation of social work at the local authority level.*

The local authorities receive increased responsibilities in establishing social work rights and in providing financial support for services. At the same time, the role of county councils in the development of social work at the county level and in organizing and supporting social activities is reinforced.

3. The organisation of the social work national system is based on the following fundamental principles: the focus on family and community, community organisation, partnership, and the diversification of activities together with to the growth of resources.

4. From the point of view of social work measures, they are divided in social work allowances (family allowances, indemnities and benefits) and social services. The *social work allowances* represent financial transfers that can be granted on a determined period and contain: family allowances, social benefits, indemnities. Social services represent a whole range of measures and actions carried out to meet the social needs of individuals, families, groups or communities in order to prevent and overcome some difficult, vulnerability or dependency situations in order to increase the quality of life and to promote social cohesion.

5. Social services are provided by the authorities of the local public administration, as well as by natural persons or by private or public legal persons. The provision of social services is based on principles, such as: social solidarity, the focus on family and community, the global approach, community organisation, partnership, and team work. The greatest types of services are: primary services having as purpose the prevention or limitation of some difficult or vulnerability situations that can lead to marginalisation or social exclusion; specialised services having as purpose the maintenance, recovery or development of individual skills in order to overcome a social need situation.

6. The financing of social services is done mainly from the local budgets, the contributions of beneficiaries, donations.

The characteristics of the social work system are numerous. It is not our purpose to enumerate them all here. However, it is worth mentioning the fact that, until 2006, the institutional construction of the social work system faithfully followed the French model, where the central terms are the community and the decentralisation of services to the local level. Here is an example of an organisation – municipality – in the local French community, in the Rhône – Alps area ¹. If we compare it with the organisation of the local social work system - for example a Public Social Work Service, in a municipality in Romania – we will notice rather embarrassing similarities.

The premise of the French system is based on the local decentralisation. As a result of this policy, the municipality assumes a part of responsibilities, which previously belonged to the state. For example, in education, kindergartens and primary schools are distributed to municipalities, colleges

¹ These elements were occasioned by common activities with local authorities in France within the project "Social Work for Better Life" , cod Perseus RO:RO 2005/ 017-537.01.01.21, PHARE CBC - 2005

depend on the departmental organisation (similar to Romanian counties) and high schools belong to regions (Development Regions in Romania). Social services are normally appended to departments and are financed by the General Council, similar to the County Council. The particularity of some municipalities comes from the priority given to the social policy, thus assuming, at the local level, the financing and management of Social Services. This approach results from the objective of disposing efficient, proximity and accessible social services. The municipality assumes the integral payment of the expenses inherent to Social Services and only 50% of the amount is repaid to the municipality retrospectively by the General Council, which kept its function of employment and training of the Social Sector staff.

The social sector is the main factor in the municipality policy. The town hall locally assumes some departmental social services, developing at the same time various local initiatives that essentially improve the way of approaching certain serious social problems. As far as the structure is concerned, the Social Sector is organised into seven departments: the Social Department, the Housing Department, the Department for Prevention, Intervention and Alert in Education, the Elderly Care Department, "Little Childhood" Department for Child's Protection, "The Urban Contract of Social Cohesion" Social Cohesion Department, the Department for Communal Social Action "The Communal Centre of Social Action".

Each department is led by a person in charge whose main role is to ensure the permanent relation of its department with the responsible of the Social Sector and with the other departments. Also, the department's person in charge can intervene in solving its subordinates' problems. The division of the Social Sector into seven departments aims at accurately defining the objectives and activities of each department and at ensuring an inter-department and partnership functioning with the social work external structures. The success of the aimed social actions within the municipality results from the good inter-department functioning of the Social Sector and from the local partnership of all the actors involved in these actions.

A short presentation of departments is useful – be it only for the possible assumptions of institutional practices.

The Housing Department, made of 3-5 persons that deal with the guidance of the population in difficulty towards social houses. These houses are for the French nationality people and for the foreigners accepted to live on the French territory under legal conditions and having resources under a ceiling established every year by the state services. Another function of the department is the *information* of the public on the aids the low resources persons can benefit from and the support in the presentation of the application forms for house, aid etc.

Social houses are of two types: in private administration and in state administration.

The selection conditions are the same, the difference being the rent. In the private sector, the price of a square metre is of 12-18 euro while in the state social houses, the price of a rented square metre is of 6-8 euro. An average community has 3,000 – 5,000 social houses. But even if a town has a number of social houses above the average, there is still a waiting list of the persons applying for a social house. The actual waiting duration is of approximately 10 years. Most social houses were built in the '60s to offer accommodation to low-income families, even of foreign origin. The government's error was to place these constructions at the outskirts of the towns, the territorial marginalisation being transformed today into social marginalisation. The actual policy stipulates the construction of social houses in central areas and the possibility for families whose income increases to still beneficiate of social house with the same rent. This measure has been taken in order to create a social integration and not a marginalisation of low-income persons.

The municipality provides parents with **nurseries** for children aged 2 months – 3 years. Each nursery has a reception capacity of 20 children. The staff is composed of professionals in the early childhood field: teachers, nurses specialised in paediatrics, foster care (in French *assistante maternelle*), cooks, paediatrician. The staff number is determined by the age of the children enrolled in kindergarten. For security reasons, only one professional attends five children who cannot walk by themselves, and eight who can walk. In any case, the presence of two persons is required even for one child. Municipality kindergartens are paid (between 4.10 and 42.30 Euros per day), amount varying depending on family income. Children are accepted Monday to Friday, from 7 am to 6.30 pm. The nursery is closed for a period of three weeks in summer and one week between Christmas and New Year.

Another service for temporary supervision created for children whose both parents do not work is called temporary kindergarten. The children are accepted twice a week - half a day and the

payment is made according to the family income. The municipality has 15-20 kindergartens of this type, thus allowing children an early socialisation for the life in collectivity. This form is very appreciated and solicited by parents.

Another way of helping parents is by placing the child, during the day, in a foster home authorised by the Departmental Service for Mother and Child Protection. The list of maternal assistants is published and permanently updated at the town hall by the Department for Child Protection. In each community 200-300 maternal assistants activate. They are either employed by the town hall or are in family nurseries, who, according to the family income, receive a child support from the Family Support House (national institution).

A specialised service is the **Departmental Service for the Protection of Mother and Child**. The premises of this service appeared at the end of the 19th century. It ensures: obligatory, free and accessible sanitary supervision through prenatal medical examination, examinations for the new born and babies, by creating the health card; the systematic home monitoring of all new born by the social workers for the early tracing of diseases and guiding to appropriate medical care; the control of the collective supervision structures and the supervision of maternal assistants. In 1962, services receive supplementary trained staff (besides social workers): nurses specialised in paediatrics, psychologists, midwives.

Currently, the service contains qualified staff in the following fields: medical, paramedical, social and psychological. Their actions have in view: The Early Prevention – as a basic part of the missions, efforts of information during pregnancy and during the first months in the child's life will facilitate the creation of connections and relationships between parents and children - essential factors for the prevention of further relational problems. This period is characterised by a great psychological fragility of the mother – this fact should be emphasised. **Child's protection** – through the detection and care of maltreated children. In the case of a signalled maltreatment or when an already supervised situation becomes worse specialised measures are taken: evaluation, support, and even judicial protection.

A special organisation is the **Prevention Service for "Little Childhood"** which was created with the purpose of preventively supervising all child care modalities and of organising preventive activities both for municipality structures, for private structures, and for the families that do not have any kind of support and are sometimes in difficulty of carrying out educative tasks without a support from professionals. The mission of this service made of several persons (staff specialised in paediatrics) is to ensure a limited presence within different ways of preventive supervision by organising various activities. The service actions are of two types: **Permanent actions**, such as music workshop, fine art studios, sport workshops etc.

Temporary activities – organised throughout the year in partnership with other social actors: festivals, shows, concerts, tours, creative activities etc.

These playful activities address children aged 18 months to 4 years, accompanied by a parent. Their purpose is to include the child and the parent in a recreational activity and to help create a strong family relationship. The presence of the specialised staff allows parents with difficulties in educating their children to get specialised help. In the case of a serious development, behaviour or health problem of the child, the parent is guided to a specialist in the field. The presence of qualified personnel allows timely detection of problems and their rapid solution, even when there are relational or family problems. All these measures are taken taking into account the basic postulate of prevention: Prevention is better than cure

The Department for Elderly Care operates within the town hall together with the Departmental Service of the Elderly with the purpose of maintaining the autonomy of the elderly at home and to help them integrate in medical institutions when needed. The following services are carried out: A. Home care services which daily assist the elderly at home by: Delivering meals at home, tele-alarm system, information and assisting the elderly in domestic activities, leisure time activities. B. The House Service - usually, small-apartment buildings which are rented to the elderly who wish to live independently and simultaneously could count on a close and permanent human presence. These also include: free collective services (lunch, socialisation activities); the elderly care in daily activities, support services from social partners (the association of home help, home nursing service); medical care of the elderly and their hospitalization when necessary.

The other local services are similarly organised. A Regional Social Department is added to them. In our country there is the County Direction. **The Social Department** is a regional body subsidized by the General Council. Thus, the Social Department staff intervenes in the social

programs elaborated by the municipal, departmental and national authorities. Typically, this department is involved in the following areas: the prevention and protection of children, social and professional integration, social counselling and mediation of disadvantaged people, support for achieving autonomy for people with social difficulties.

The department is divided into two charts dealing with the public according to the place of residence. This division was realised with the purpose of changing social services into operational proximity services. The department works in partnership with the other six local departments of the social sector, with social protection departmental bodies and with nongovernmental organizations.

There are two categories of social workers in the department:

- a. **Social workers** – are involved in the neighbourhood social policy and offer help to people with difficulties, in partnership with the other city or department organisations.
- b. **Advisers in Family and Social Economy** – who intervene together with social workers in solving housing problems, especially the cases of immigrants, refugees and expulsions.

By offering social services, the social department aims at implementing the “**Urban Contract of Social Cohesion**”. The town hall, the State and the social partners of the city policy have signed the Urban Contract of Social Cohesion – a type of contract that will support socially vulnerable urban areas. Signed for a period of 3 years, the contract dynamically associates community structures, regional structures, the social department, public services, social managers, associations and inhabitants of neighbourhoods for the community social development.

The activities and directions of actions of the contract aim at five intervention domains: the living environment, the access to employment, the economic development, the school success, health, the active citizenship - crime prevention, social, educational, and sport development. They may also include: Department of Prevention, Intervention and Social and Educational Alert (our equivalent is the Service for the Combat of Delinquency), restaurant and space for rest and entertainment for the elderly (something like our country’s social canteens), the social store food.

We do not want to express our opinions on the success and effectiveness of these social services. Neither the local authorities – most interested in these evaluations – can offer this kind of answers. The purpose of our approach is to define - as far as possible - at what level there can be taken organisational models and professional practices that could eliminate the waste of financial resources and the optimum use of human resources. We also look for answers for the plausible situation where the import of models and practices becomes inappropriate, inefficient and even damaging by its effects. As the next step in the creation of the national social work system, respectively the Law 47 from 2006, seems to be based on these premises. However, an analysis in this direction will be the subject of another approach.

What we want to highlight is that both models or social work systems, the Romanian and French ones, are based on the same premises: social security and protection in the modern sense of a democratic society. In both models, social protection designates all collective prevention mechanisms that enable vulnerable people to cope with consequences generated by “social risks”. These are situations that may affect the economic security of the person or his family, causing the decrease, sometimes dramatically, of resources or the intolerable increase of “expenses”, including the psychosocial ones (old age, sickness, disability, unemployment, maternity, finance charges, etc).

In both models, the reference point is the concept and application of “the providential state”. In France, the implementation of the developed providential state materialized by the creation of the Social Security in 1945 by General de Gaulle’s government. In Romania, restructured after the Western model of democracy in December 1989, the doctrine of the saving state was re-built in the last decade of the 20th century. It may seem paradoxical, but it was revived in Romania in the period when the providential state was endangered in the Western society. Its Western reformulation, although representing only forms of transition towards a more competitive organization of society, attracted false ideologies of post-communist governments.

During the late 1980’s the crisis of the providential state was visible and recognise. Initially, this was built and correlated on the logic of social protection connected to a professional activity, than completed by a compensatory logic. But in the meantime, society faces more frequent and more intense crisis-generating phenomena - economic downturn, rising unemployment, under-funding of social policies, social exclusion, demographic aging, impoverished large sections of society - which raises the question of its effectiveness and the adaptation of mechanisms to new social needs. Social protection has gradually become universal, covering all categories of persons, whether they were / are economically active or not.

For Romania, these global effects were enhanced by an erroneous management – willingly or not – of social problems. By importing social policy models already outdated and by copying some moribund social work schemes, the social protection model was thus compromised in Romania: by abusively applying universalistic logic (the abolition of the contributory condition for broad categories of population), social protection is no longer a form of insurance – professional, respectively – neither compensatory – temporary and planned. The national social work system has gradually changed into a governing mechanism, with a two-way dependency: on the one hand, the assisted manifest a quasi permanent dependency on the cheerfulness of governors and, on the other hand, governors are cyclically at the will of the enslaved population. So far, the social protection schemes in Romania, modelled on the providential state ideologies, prove only their limits and perverse effects.

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