THE DEVELOPMENT OF EU SOCIAL-INCLUSIVE CAPABILITIES BY REINFORCING YOUNG PEOPLE'S CIVIC SOCIALIZATION
THE SITUATION OF POST COMMUNIST COUNTRIES[†]

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Abstract

This study assumes that democracy is consolidated in societies which develop their own social-inclusive capacities. The degree of social inclusion does not depend only on the existence of democratic institutions but also on the predominance of a participatory political culture.

The present paper focuses on analyzing the necessity and efficiency of the young people's civic socialization process within EU post-communist societies. To what extent has the civic and political socialization process attempted and managed to develop a political culture capable of giving meaning and support to the process of conciliation, harmonization and international community solidarity? Has civic socialization basically confined itself to transmitting the axiological system specific for political and democratic culture or has it been a complex process that aimed at developing a multi-dimension civic identity: individual, national and European? Which were the results of civic formal and informal socialization? To what extent did formal and informal socialization manage to offer young people in EU post-communist countries the knowledge and abilities they need for assuming the role of political subjects? Does the current deficit of participatory political culture - characteristic of young people - require a more intense civic formal socialization?

Finally, the paper deals with the opportunity of introducing a new discipline in the higher education system: Civic sociology.

Keywords: social inclusion, civic socialization, civic culture, the young people, post-communist societies

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1. Introduction

Although there have been many progresses regarding the researches of the civic socialization and civic culture and of the effective – formal and informal - civic education of the citizens, especially of young people, we cannot speak yet about dominating of a participative model of political culture nor about a satisfactory result regarding the evolution of the social-inclusive capacities of the actual Romanian society.

This is the main reason that caused the analysis, the reflections that the present study tries to submit for debating.

This paper, in its first part, intends to demonstrate the existence of a positive correlation between the social-inclusive capacities of democratic societies and the political culture participative model. The study assumes that democracy is consolidated in societies which develop their own social-inclusive capacities. The degree of social inclusion does not depend only on the existence of democratic institutions but also on the predominance of a participatory political culture. Further, the paper focuses on analyzing the necessity and efficiency of the young people's civic socialization process within EU post-communist societies. This article also wants to give an answer to the question: is the intensification of the political socialization more pressing in the post communist societies of the European Union than in other societies?

Finally, the paper deals with the opportunity of introducing a new discipline in the higher education system: Civic sociology. The attempts to find a solution for increasing the political participation of young people led me to this idea. I would add here my professional experience in the field (research, training for trainers, elaborating curricula, textbooks and methodical guides on 'civic education'/'civic culture', organising competitions and conferences on the same subject), that also supports the proposal for introducing of this new university discipline: *Civic sociology*

2. Arguments concerning integrative tendencies of civic culture in the democratic society

The first question that this paper attempts to answer concerns the legitimacy of civic culture positive correlation with the phenomenon of social inclusion. We observe that the literature prefers rather to focus on the analysis of correlation between democratization and social inclusion rather than exploring the connection set forth above. Thus, numerous studies have been concerned to demonstrate that in those societies where the phenomenon of exclusion, of marginalized individuals or social groups, grows, democracy is in danger. They emphasized that the phenomenon has serious consequences on personal development as well as on the democratic functioning and evolution of the society. The excluded persons and the different marginalized groups: ethnic, religious or of a different nature are marked by anomy, suffering, isolation, and closing in what is called 'underclass', meaning the class of the disadvantaged, of

those pushed to the outskirts of society. A simple radiography of the contemporary society emphasis that these kinds of surroundings encourage manifestations of nationalism, inter-ethnic conflicts, and outbursts of violence with imprecise objectives.

The social effects of the marginalization are negative no matter what form it takes: civic exclusion - at the level of the legal and democratic subsystem, economic exclusion - on the labour market, social exclusion - at the level of the welfare state subsystem or interpersonal exclusion - at the level of family and community subsystem. So we can conclude that the social exclusion is a failure both at individual and social levels.

In counter-weight, democracy is consolidated to the extent it manages to reintegrate in the social and civic life the marginalized persons and groups, and to increase their impact in public life. Democracy works well in the societies capable to develop their social-inclusive and participatory capacities, to create the premises for the valorisation of all social actors: individuals, groups, social categories. Unfortunately, in democratic societies the development of these capacities is not automatically produced. Although necessary, the existence of the democratic institutions (even associated with political will) is not enough. It does not automatically lead to participation and inclusion [1]. A certain dominate type of political culture, respectively civic culture is needed for democracy to act its inclusive capabilities. The parents of the political culture, Almond and Verba sustain that this is "a pluralistic culture, based on communication and persuasion, a culture of consensus and diversity, a culture that enables change while moderating it. The more traditional political orientations tend to limit and to weaken the commitment of the individual in relation to politics, but they are under the hegemony of participatory orientations." [2]

Other famous researchers of the political field as Robert Putman, John Rawls notify the close connection between the quality of democracy and that of its institutions and the moral and civic qualities of the citizens [3]. While for Robert Putman ,political capital' is the key that makes democracy work, John Rawls emphasis the role that it plays in development, economic and social stability, and political maturation of a society. In his vision the 'political capital' refers to the ensemble of moral-civic values, mentalities and public virtues such as tolerance, openness to dialogue and compromise, reasonability, sense of correctness. Its absence makes unproductive the democratic institutions, and unsafe and unstable the socio political environment.

The same logic is part of the idea that people agreement with the governmental decisions is bigger when they take part in the process, in other words when there is a participatory political culture. So, we can notifies that the civic culture is in a triangular relationship with the democratic evolution and social inclusion, namely: the success of democracy is strongly connected to the development of a participatory political culture; developing civic culture through its participatory dimension tends to increase the level of social inclusion. By creating the premises and by giving the citizen a role in political life is a form of

valorisation and civic self valorisation of a person which gives birth to attachment, contributing to the increase of civic and social inclusion. More participation tends to convert to solid and functional democratic institutions. In other words, democratic institutions are working better when the members of the society feel more attached to it. Their attachment is even bigger when they are better informed, civically more competent, and assume their role in political life [1].

Another mention would be necessary analyzing this connections: the democracy strengthens social inclusion but not equally everywhere. There are gradual differences regarding the degree to which citizens assume their role in the political life of contemporary democratic societies.

In the societies in which dependent (passive) political culture continues to dispute prominence with participatory democracy, democracy is feebler, and the number of those civically and socially ignored is bigger. This is also the case with Romania.

Thus, according to the sociological studies, „the Romanian pattern of political culture keeps having a significant dependent component, its main coordinates being: insufficient information and political communication; reduced values of the subjective civic competence (under 20% of the subjects declare that they can act in order to prevent an unjust settlement), of the attachment to the governmental institutions (under 5% declare that they are proud of the political institutions); cooperation, solidarity, organizational affiliation, in general, and political and civic, in particular (more than 79% of the subjects are not affiliated). Moreover, we notice that the organizational affiliation has positively influenced the growth of subjective civic competence only to approximately ½ of the affiliated members and the degree of political participation only to approximately ¼ . An explanation to this situation would be the perpetuation within the new organizations of some styles of leadership which neither allow nor encourage initiative or are based on dependence and coercion." [4]

3. The need of civic socialization of the youth in the European Union societies

In view to see how much is needed to intensify the political-civic socialization of the young Europeans, especially those in post-communist societies, it is necessary to analyze first the political culture model the most met between these young Europeans. The question that arises here is: if most young Europeans assumed the role of the political life, or, contrarily, they register a participatory political culture deficit? Could the intensification of the civic socialization be an answer to the problem of the participatory political culture deficit?

O series of indicators provided by famous sociological studies such as: the IEA Study (1999), Euyopart (2005), Eurobarometer 2008-2011 lead us to the idea that there is a significant lack of participatory political culture among young

Europeans. The same studies emphasis the existence of common characteristics but also significant differences between the young Europeans (belonging to different nations) political culture.

Accordingly to the results of these studies, there is a significant disparity between the young people declarations regarding their interest for politics and their effective participation to the political life.

Thus, Eurobarometer 2007 points out that most young Europeans say that they are very interested or interested in politics and current affairs: 82% of them are interested in politics in their own country, 73% claim to be interested in politics at a city or regional level and 66% say they are interested in politics and current affairs in the EU. Young Greeks have the highest level of interest in politics and current affairs on all three levels while young people in Romania, Belgium and the Czech Republic have the lowest level of interest in politics. Although they declare their interest for politics, young adults in the European Union are not active in organizations or associations; we find that only 22% of young Europeans are members of an organization.

If at the 2004 elections, 50% of the European citizens with the right to vote were at the polls, the participation percentage in the new member states was only of 25%, the young people aged 18-24, electoral turnout was extremely low: 75% of them didn't go to vote, an indicator of the fact that they have a reduced level of understanding the importance of these elections and a limited awareness of the issues on the European agenda [http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_202_sum_en.pdf - The results of the Eurobarometer 2007 regarding youth International Assessments - Political Democracy and The IEA Civic Education Study].

Young Europeans suggest that they are not encouraged to get involved in politics and that they are not consulted in the political decisions process. When asked which measures would help to encourage young people's active participation in society, a majority of respondents (81%) suggest consulting young people before any public decision concerning them is taken. Slightly less than three out of four respondents (74%) think that a good measure would be the availability of more programmes encouraging voluntary work and 70% of young Europeans think that the introduction of a compulsory educational programme about citizenship at schools would encourage greater participation of young people in society Lowering the voting age as a measure to increase young people's active participation in society is mentioned by less than one out of five respondents (19%) [http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_202_sum_en.pdf]. In terms of how primary political socialization of Romanian youth is made, is relevant that approximately 60% of them declared that they did not feel free to protest in school, and 78% weren't given the opportunity to discuss in school controversial social and political issues [4, p.123].

The weak political participation of the young Europeans is seen in the low percentage of the trust in national political institutions. According to a new survey, European Youths trust NGOs like Greenpeace or Amnesty International much more than they trust political institutions

[http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/flash/fl_202_sum_ en.pdf]. In the case of the post-communist countries, Romania also, the situation of the civic involvement of the youth is even more dramatic. The Romanians take the last places when it comes to organizational affiliation, voluntary involvement, and civic participation. P. Anghel pointed out that the Romanian young people lack abilities and competences that are necessary for them to adapt to the new challenges brought about by civic society [5]. He referred to the following challenges: the need to exercise their rights, to make use of negotiation techniques, to acquire a critical way of thinking, a tolerant attitude and finally to learn the lesson of solidarity. When making this observation he used the research results of the Institute of Education Sciences.

The present patterns of political culture in Europe, especially those present in the new member states, support the intensification of civic socialization. The above-mentioned studies bring forth the low percentage of political participation (voting, activity in political, civic organizations, etc.) of the young Europeans, even though most of them have civic knowledge and declare their interest for political and civic life and have a positive understanding (vision) of the EU and its institutions.

In the post communist societies, in Romania also, the intensification of the youth political socialization is more imperative. Studies made by C. Barzea [6], P. Anghel, I. Marginean [7], G. Badescu [8] and others lead to the same conclusion. Civic initiatives are significantly lower with Romanian students than with European students from the countries with democratic tradition. Under these circumstances, developing a participatory civic culture needs the intensification of the steady process of civic socialization. The efficiency of civic socialization achieved both in formal and informal area registers also modest percentages. According to a study made by C. Bârzea, Romania is the 27th out of 28 countries when it comes to the efficiency of civic education through various means [6].

4. It is lawful the proposal of new paradigm: 'civic sociology'?

The legitimacy of the proposal of a new paradigm civic sociology is connected to the new macro-social construct specifically to the XXI century and to the Social sciences tend to hybridization, to the vocation inter and trans-disciplinary of the sociological approaches.

No one can contest that the XXI century society is 'a different' society. Its international and transnational dimensions are asserted with more boldness. Inside, social relations look like a network, with a variety of thicker textures [1].

The XXI century society is one with multiple civic dimensions. Besides the traditional ones, there are new forms of citizenship, interaction and civic conscience (European and even global). Explaining their social fundamentals needs a new theoretical approach, the emergence of a new branch of sociology which could call 'civic sociology'.

In line with inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary trends of the actual scientifically research, civic sociology could be the hybrid which would coagulate the knowledge, the concepts, the research methods from political science, political sociology, international relations sociology, international and communitarian law, human rights theory, international relations theory, and the list is still open.

In my opinion, Civic sociology will focus on the study of phenomena, processes and social institutions which determine the civic behaviours in their multidimensionality (the social fundament of civic behaviours). It will be focused on the actors in the civic actions, the power, the objectives, and the means they resort to. More that that, Civic sociology is an applicative science, a pragmatically science which helps the citizen to surpass the level of opinion, better understand the civic reality, the importance of the role he plays in this reality, finally, better put in act citizen role. In conformity with the macro-social changes, Civic sociology will be a discipline with multiple inclusive vocation (both at national and European level).

As showed above, the Romanian type of political culture is characterized by a low level of the subjective civic competence, reduced interest in cooperation and civic participation, and by a strong passive-dependent aspect. In their relations with the authorities, most Romanians have a passive attitude because they haven't yet assimilated their role. Unfortunately, the situation is approximately the same even when it comes to students: although they have a higher level of instruction, they do not aspire to join and to commit themselves civically and significantly more than the other categories. We can observe the inexistence of a strong correlation between the level of instruction and the level of civic initiatives. Civic initiatives are significantly lower with Romanian students than with European students from the countries with democratic tradition.

Under these circumstances, developing a participatory civic culture needs the intensification of the steady process of civic socialization. New efficient formal and informal ways of civic socialization for youth are necessary. The political socialization agents - school also - are faced with a new challenge: finding the most efficient strategies for a multidimensional development of democratic citizenship. In my opinion, the introduction of a university discipline meant to support the process of civic socialization, civic national and European inclusion, to correct the present deficit of participation is so much more needed. Teaching education/civic culture only in pre-university education, although welcomed, is insufficient in comparison with the need for civic socialization felt by Romanian society. Introducing Civic sociology as a subject matter at an age (18-19 years old) when the interest for politics and civism are well shaped is even more important and constitutes an educational and social priority worth taking into consideration.

This university discipline is meant to answer not only some internal needs but also some international ones. The process of European integration, of edification of a common identity in the age of globalization must be supported

by a political culture based on knowledge, communication, civic participation and tolerance [1]. Introducing in the curriculum the new discipline, named Civic Sociology, is in agreement with the objectives of a global education with a legislation regarding the global character of education.

5. Conclusions

This study emphasizes the incontestable existence of some integrative tendencies of civic culture in the democratic society. It puts civic culture in a triangular relationship with the democracy and social inclusion evolution showing that the success of democracy is strongly connected to the development of a participatory political culture; developing civic culture through its participatory dimension tends to increase the level of social inclusion.

The study confirms the need of intensifying the civic socialization in all European societies, but especially in the post communist societies. The civic socialization is meant to answer not only some internal needs but also some international ones. It can have a major contribution to the consolidation of the European integration process and to a better administration of its economic and socio-cultural effects. It is known that in democratic societies, even more in the post-communist ones, participatory political culture does not happen by itself, therefore it needs a serious and constant civic socialization process.

Consequently, the present study concludes that it is necessary to introduce a new discipline in universities, i.e. 'Civic sociology' which is meant to support the process of civic socialization, civic national and European inclusion and to correct the present deficit of political participation.

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