

**Threading the Waves of Development in East
Central Europe.
Democratic Transition and the Crafting of Emerging
Donors' Development Policies**

Bogdan Mihai RADU Ph.D.

Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj, Romania

(work in progress)

„This work was supported by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for
Scientific

Research, CNCS – UEFISCDI, project number PN-II-RU-PD-2011-3-0068”.

Idea and argument

- Exploratory research on the formulation/implementation of EU New Member States' international development policies
- I argue that development policies could be instances of “democratic” (participatory) policy making with beneficial consequences on public awareness and support for development – through the heated debate between governments and civil society
- Case study - Romania
- Civil society understood to include mostly NGOs (research/think tanks and advocacy)

Brief story

- After EU integration, NMS had to adopt a development strategy/policy
- From recipients of development funds they had to (re)become donors
- States were not prepared, and perceived it as mere compliance with EU obligations (BUT have “power”)
- Civil society was better equipped to handle it (they had the experience of “developing” their own countries)(BUT have “knowledge”)

Development policy in NMS

- Because of their communist past(s), these countries are usually considered as not having a tradition of offering international aid or offering it through rather ideological channels (Carbone 2004, Lightfoot 2008) (is mainstream development not ideological as well?)
- Lagging behind traditional donors in both conceptualizations and efficacy of aid
- The problematic nature of “communist” donor experience (Oprea and Novac 2011)

Development policy in NMS - specifics

- NMS follow EU development policy and supports MDGs
- The Monterrey Consensus, reiterated by the EU Council Conclusions in 2005 set the financial targets for NMS amounting to 0.17% of their GNI by 2010 and 0.33% of their GNI by 2015, ultimately reaching the more ambitious 0.7% of GNI
- None of the postcommunist EU member states reached their financial targets so far (perhaps unrealistic?).

Development policy in NMS – securing a niche –but is it really a niche?

- Capitalizing on transition experience
- Article 33 of the European Consensus on Development (2006) established transition management as a new element in the EU's development strategy
- The European Transition Compendium initiated by DG DEV “a collection of the new member states' transition experiences [...] [which] serves to create the foundation for a structured approach to the use of transition experience on the EU level” (Vegh 2013).
- Main message of ETC: ownership and partnership
- Big things to follow!!!
- But what is the added-value to development itself? It reinforces a mainstream discourse already...

Reasons and goals of development involvement (Eurobarometer 67.1 – 2007) – the puzzle

Reasons	Postcommunist countries (% out of all postcommunist respondents)	“Western” EU countries (% out of all Western respondents)	Goals	Postcommunist countries (% out of all postcommunist respondents)	“Western” Eu countries (% out of all Western respondents)
Self interest	26.8	29.3	Reduce poverty	68.7	65.3
Prevent terrorism	16.9	17.7	Access to primary education	32.6	34.2
Global stability	24.8	29.5	Gender equality	10.6	17.0
Encouraging democracy	17.6	22.4	Reduce child mortality	33.3	27.2
Clear conscience	11.1	11.9	Reduce maternal deaths	9.3	8.9
Political allies	17.0	13.8	Combat diseases	49.6	45.9
Avoid emigration	24.1	17.0	Sustainable development	23.4	33.6
Help poor people	10.5	12.6	Gobal partnership for development	16.2	18.4

Romania's Official Development Assistance (ODA) policy – the view from the top

- The Romanian ODA strategy (2011-2015) - complementary to both its foreign and commercial policies, to its other domestic policies and to the EU's wide development strategy (twinning with the German Federal Ministry for Cooperation)
- multilateral coordination/implementation of ODA (mostly through the EU) – more efficacious, also limited capacity
- bilateral agreements - less important than multilateral policy making.
- The main general objective is the reduction of poverty
- ODA - viewed as one of the most importance vehicles for attaining the general foreign policy objectives of the country

Romanian ODA 7 principles

- Participating in the EU's issue oriented or regional initiatives – Eastern Europe but also Africa
- Fulfilling the EU engagements
- Intensifying participation in the system of international organizations (UN)
- Fulfilling the engagements related to the EU regarding climate change
- Facilitating access in the administrative structures responsible for multilateral projects (UN)
- Ensuring presence in both central and field missions of international organizations
- Ensuring increased visibility through the use of multilateral channels

Romanian ODA – a response from NGDOs (FOND, 2009)

- The representatives of Romanian NGDOs see 4 causes for the rather unsatisfactory status quo, namely:
 1. the Romanian's government lack of interest in the potential impact of ODA and its advantages in terms of visibility (too much alignment with the EU)
 2. the continuous rotation of MFA personnel assigned to the ODA unit
 3. the rather small budget allocated for ODA (especially after deducting contributions to the EU and the European Development Fund and the money for scholarships disbursed through the Ministry of Education)
 4. the MFA's preference towards externalizing its ODA activities through UNDP Romania, thus both deliberately diminishing indigenous expertise and also overpaying in international organizations' budgets, since Romania already pays dues to the UN.

Romanian ODA – civil society suggestions (FOND, 2009)

1. Raising Romania's visibility and credibility as a responsible actor within the framework of EU's External Relations
2. Creating contacts and relations with partner states (beneficiaries) which can lead to economically mutually advantageous and diverse relationships (reducing dependence on the EU market)(the communist past!)
3. Improve diplomacy through making new allies
4. Changing the country's image in Europe and in the world
5. Improving the level/performance of human resources
6. Rerouting funds to more bilateral ventures
7. Attracting qualified work force in Romania (reversing the effects of migration)
8. Creating comparative advantages for Romanian's companies on emerging markets.

Results

- There are periodic consultations between the MFA and FOND
- FOND gains more ground (Ro-Mo expert exchange)
- There is a strong(er) network of people interested in development from both spheres
- ODA gained in visibility/education for development
- Bringing in the academia - MA program
- ODA unit became an “a-typical” unit in the MFA

Romanian ODA pressure from the EU

- The pressure from the EU had both positive and negative effects.
 - +the fact that with EU pressure the need for a development policy became legitimate
 - +the EU pressured for the state to make partnerships with the civil society, thus indirectly strengthening democratic policy making
 - NMSs' development policies being easily assimilated into the European development policy/consensus
 - ETC as a vehicle for reinforcing mainstream EU discourse
 - popular perceptions of this policy as rather remote, unnecessary, etc.

Romanian ODA pressure from the civil society

The pressure from the civil society also had positive and negative effects:

- + advantages of NGDOs towards promoting a development policy more driven on the recipients' needs (grassroots)
- +NGDOs are very efficient at awareness raising – education for development
- +some NGDOs challenge the EU's main discourse on development
- NGDOs preference towards placing themselves in oppositional/critical terms towards the state
- the fact that NGDOs are constantly looking for funding options of their projects.

Conclusions and directions for further research

- The involvement of civil society in the formulation of ODA principles and policy is critical
- An external positive consequence is increased public support for development
- Interviews are needed
- Explore other national contexts

Thank you!

- Please address all correspondence to radub@ceu.hu