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DEMOCRATIC FREEDOMS EXERCISED BY NGOS

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Abstract

Democracy is a model of government based on popular sovereignty, the participation of citizens in public affairs as responsible members of the social body. The phenomenon of political participation is an integral and complex recruitment of citizens in politics. It includes a variety of overwhelming participatory forms - from simple ones to some upper elementary characteristic of political leaders. Ultimately, political participation is presented as "output" (output function), the real effect of a particular pattern of behaviour, as a reflection and manifestation of the specific processes of political socialization, its effectiveness. An unbroken tradition of theories of democracy has given more attention to political participation of citizens, which is interpreted as a primary means to defend individual rights, the duty of citizen, as an indication of the welfare policy of the company and finally as a condition sine qua non of democracy. Institutional democratic reforms uninsured active involvement of citizens in the governance process proved to be formal and ineffective.

Keywords:

democracy, democratic reforms, non-governmental organizations, civil society

JEL Classification  K10, K19

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I. INTRODUCTION

The dictionaries define democracy as "government by the people", who holds ultimate power and who exercise it directly or through their representatives elected by free vote assured by the electoral system. "Democracy is government of the people, made by people and for the people". Dictionaries define various approaches to political theories and forms of democracy to the various ideologies: liberal democracy, popular democracy, representative or indirect democracy, direct democracy or participatory social democracy.

If we simplify, we can say that democracy can be reduced to two basic categories: direct democracy and representative democracy. In direct democracy, all citizens, without appointed or elected intermediaries, may participate in the decision making process. But, it is obvious that this system is practically applicable only to a relatively small number of citizens, such as in a local trade union organizations, the members can meet to discuss and vote by consensus or majority. The political representation of representative democracy depends on the existence of leaders and organizations that are meant to represent the interests of society in the political system.

Diverse range of interests is represented in the decision-making process, and the result of the negotiation process involving representatives of these interests is the public interest. Democracy is defined as a process of negotiation in which all significant interests in society are formally represented. Ensuring representing the interests of those who risk not being heard, because they have no organizational capacity or have an official representative in made by organizations assuming this mission expressly.

The words freedom and democracy are often used one instead of another, but are not synonymous. Democracy is indeed a set of ideas and principles about freedom, but it also means a set of practices and procedures that have been developed and clarified in time. We can simply say that democracy is the institutionalization of freedom. Democracy is more than a set of constitutional rules and procedures that determine how government works. Democracy is based on the principle that governments exist to serve the citizens

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II. THE SENSE OF DEMOCRATIC FREEDOM TARGETED BY NGO

In a democratic society, the government is only one of the elements that coexist in the fabric of society which include various institutions, political parties, civil society organizations and associations. This diversity is called pluralism, and requires the existence of organized groups and institutions independent of government, which have their own legitimacy and authority. In other words, we can say that democracy is present and flourishes when citizens and organized civil society groups:

• engage and use their right to participate in social and political life, and being heard in public debates,
• perceive the elected ones as being responsible to the citizens for their actions,
• accept the need for tolerance, recognize minority rights and equal opportunities.

Freedom of association is, along with freedom of expression, a fundamental feature of the democratic systems. If you do not have the right of association and the means to form organized groups, citizens are isolated and vulnerable and can become victims of tyranny of the authority or of the private sector.

The forms of association of civil society are meant to balance the exercise of power by state institutions. In societies where there is a history of freedom of association, freedom of expression and information, citizens carry out activities independent to the government, not infrequently reaching even in conflict situations with those who hold political or economic power. They are both educated and informed about the rights they have and about the responsibilities of power that have chosen to govern, and are aware that exceeds the scope of public policies within political parties and state institutions.

Whatever the reason of association and the formation of groups and NGOs that are created by associating individuals with problems, common interests and objectives, gives them the role of intermediary between citizens and public or private institutions, to represent and serve their common interests in an articulated manner. Across the world individual participation in public policy development process would be extremely limited if there were no NGOs to facilitate the representation of interests and ensure the promotion of these interests by influencing public decisions.
In democratic societies, NGOs constitute effective mechanisms through which citizens are represented and participate in government. NGOs are actually multitude of profiles, interests and aspirations present in a society that becomes coherent and visible in public life represented only by the activity of these organizations.

NGOs can play an important role in identifying and promoting the public interest (although not all realize this).

Representation is linked to the issue of the legitimacy and credibility of those who have a voice. Developments and work of NGOs in the former communist countries and in Romania led to increasing recognition of the role that they play in strengthening democracy and building an active, healthy and responsible civil society.

Civil society organizations may notify state and civil society to solve the problem of public opinion. Thus, we can say that NGOs can carry out essentially the following types of programs:

- Addressing governors and programs aimed at influencing government and public institutions to solve critical problems in society or group and improving the situation of the disadvantaged through efforts to modify legislative mechanisms, initiation and implementation of programs, projects that produce desired changes. Traditionally, non-governmental sector in general focuses on the following categories of requests / demands on government behaviour: transparency of decision making and providing mechanisms for participation, dialogue and negotiation, fair distribution of resources and the availability and quality of public services.

- Programs aimed at influencing public opinion or public part of the information and increasing knowledge on that critical issue or stimulate participation.

Strengthening democracy is a continuous process. NGOs can integrate in influencing government programs to promote changes in favour of the beneficiary for that act, the following activities:

- Monitoring democracy and good governance programs,

- Programs that seek to increase transparency in public decision-making and accountability on decisions of public interest.

Studies assessing the impact of various decisions, programs, public policy and analyse the proposals for programs / policies, the knowledge and information are extremely important in creating political pressure on decision makers and groups of vested interests in the shadow of power that
controls and influences the public policy process and public agenda. At the same time, they are not sufficient to change the public agenda, make the decision makers feel responsible or to change institutions behaviour.

Those involved in drafting policies and those in power, generally can misappropriate or invalid requests from civil society if organizations do not have the political force and legitimacy to counter these actions.

In a democratic society, the government is only one of the elements that coexist in society structure that includes various institutions, political parties, civil society organizations and associations.

NGOs' work makes an important contribution to strengthening democracy through monitoring activities on good governance, acting to increase transparency in decision-making in the public interest and accountability of the authorities, but also by increasing citizen participation, facilitates the direct involvement of disadvantaged groups in developing and implementing solutions to the problems they face, and behaviours influencing culture, government and citizens.

Democracy is achieved only by satisfying a balance between the relationship of institutionalized state power and extra-parliamentary opposition.

The concept of democracy is inextricably linked to the notion of pluralism. It finds its materialization in the multiplicity of political parties and organizations, trade unions, religious organizations etc., expressing the diversity of concepts and organizations that interpose between the individual and the state. Political pluralism is a principle by which democratic functioning of society, guarantee of rights and liberties that are subject to the existence and action of several political and social forces in competition.

By establishing political pluralism as a field of manifestation of democracy, political power over society no longer dominates, but intersects with all segments of social structure into a mechanism called to run on legitimacy, freedom.

The democratization of society involves the creation of social and legal conditions for expressing critical attitude towards power and ensure that social attitudes mechanism to turn into a political institution.

Political competition, founded on determined pluralist basis, in view of the uninterrupted democratization process amplification, the more safer and stronger participation of a greater number of political actors and by which can contribute to the continue emancipation and eventually to perpetuate sustainable democratic political system, which is perhaps the

biggest advantage and most beneficial aspect of the application of the scheme of analysis in terms of polygon of forces.\(^4\)

The democratization process in modern and contemporary time is inextricably linked with the effective participation of social groups. Political organization and democratic society cannot be conceived only through a perpetual relationship between Parliament and Government, as the supreme representative authority of the legislature and the executive branch of the civil society and public opinion, recorded by non-Governmental organizations.

Creating awareness is the result of political modernization that determined "as a more increasingly group of people to get involved in politics"\(^5\).

III. MEDIA INSTRUMENT OF INFLUENCE OF NGOS

Media and political journalism developing involves a direct determinism, demonstrated by the progress in changing societies. The phenomenon is shaped by the degree of development of the media and the democratization of society. An informed citizen is a powerful citizen, from the point of view of formation of competent individual opinions and arguments.

Transition from personal interests to the interests of the group was assured by the creation of nations. Awareness is an important step to national interests in the construction of modern democratic societies.

The formation of public opinion is just one of the conditions laid as foundations for the development of the political opposition. This process is complemented by institutionalizing national representative fora within political systems that are in constant evolution.\(^6\)

Conceptual analysis and review of the phenomenon of political opposition include two types of political opposition: in the parliament and extra-parliamentary. The parliamentary one includes minority opposition but exercising power within a majority boundary to her domination, and the extra-parliamentary one is the opposition that presses to governance by various NGO groups and represents the national consciousness of the

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5 Huntington S. Ordinea politică a societăților în schimbare. Iași: Polirom, 1999, p.21
people. Both forms of opposition only work in a democratic framework of governance.

Pressure groups or street groups incite through image and ask not always real democracy, freedom to penalize leader class.

A broader definition involves "placing liberal individual rights (freedom of association, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom to run for public etc.)", which justifies the constitutional framework of democracy.

Relations between the government and the opposition in a democratic system are different, the studies analysed so far had shown that the parliamentary opposition may merge with extra-parliamentary opposition in some cases when the purpose of the action is the same.7

However, in addition to this variety of shows, from the analysis of specific relations in the last period, it reveals a number of challenges that face both political power ruling and opposition political process involved in the act of exercising political power.8

One detected challenge relates to mutations within the opposition. Both democratization and modernization of democratic societies cause transfers of power centres within power relations. Referring to the political opposition, there is a tendency to strengthen the non-parliamentary or social opposition. Through such power centres is envisaged media and NGOs decision-making position, first of all, that under the information society development gains an increasingly higher influence. In addition, covers a range of national economic interest groups and transnational, which have the potential to be involved in politics. All these examples are samples of modernization processes that affect the system of power relations in society. Postmodern Era involves qualitative shift in government-opposition relations.9

IV. CONCLUSIONS

Both democratization and modernization of democratic societies cause transfers of power centres within power relations. Referring to the

7 Nemtoi Gabriela, Nicoleta Ionescu, Ciprian Ungureanu, The role of ngo’s in european governance, University, Suceava, Fascicles of the Faculty of Economica and Public Administration vol. 10, no.2(12) 2010 ISSN 2066-575X, p.291-296
8 Hermet G. Poporul contra democraţiei. Iaşi: institutul European, 2000, p.54
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In conclusion, the democratic transformation is a complex and multidimensional process that will penetrate not only the political, but also other social schemes. Democratic consolidation involves not only the modernization of democratic institutions and procedures.

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