

# **Building Social Capital in Post-Communist Romania: The New Horizons Foundation and Experiential Education**

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*“It happened unexpectedly on a warm sunny June day in 2004. Standing before a celebratory group of parents, teachers and classmates gathered at an end-of-year event at Saint Sava High School in Bucharest, Roxana Iosif stepped forward to address the gathering. But instead of anticipated platitudes, her words turned serious. ‘We have been taught for four years that we don’t have the right to comment, to have other opinions than the one imposed upon us, that a lie is the best way to get a good life, that dishonesty may be a quality, that corruption does pay, that we can earn without working. We are taught that cheating at tests is better.’” (Dimancescu 2004, 111).*

Few people could have pinpointed one of Romania’s major development challenges more poignantly and credibly than Roxana did at her own graduation. Teachers and school officials were naturally taken aback, but nineteen of Roxana’s graduating peers stepped forward in support. Reactions varied. The principal recommended that she visit the school psychologist, while US ambassador Michael Guest praised her courage, called her a future leader and said that “such a unique act of courage redeemed my trust in the future of this country” (Dimancescu 2004, 111). Joining Roxana, her nineteen peers and the US ambassador are many others who identify corruption as one of the scourges of Romania. Corruption is the main reason that the European Union has repeatedly postponed Romania’s accession as a member state. Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index for 2005 ranks Romania as

among the more corrupt countries in Eastern and Western Europe. It is what makes political historian Tom Gallagher pessimistic about the future of participatory democracy in Romania.<sup>1</sup> Corruption is denounced by Romanians too. In a recent assessment of the country's development prospects, seven Romanian scholars studying at Harvard contend that corruption is Romania's single major obstacle. Like Ambassador Guest, these authors are hopeful that the young, post-communist generation will be able to overcome the corruption that many believe is a carryover from the communist era (Dimancescu 2004).

A post-communist nation like Romania, one struggling with pervasive corruption, provides a challenging case environment to apply, test and perhaps extend some of Denis Goulet's innovative contributions to development theory. Anticipating much of the contemporary conversation on the role of culture, the importance of social capital and the ongoing importance attributed to participation and engagement, Goulet's ideas about fostering an authentic development that arises out of the values of the people remain highly relevant to today's efforts to understand and promote human development.<sup>2</sup> For Romania, the bar is high, because efforts to promote authentic development must address the reality that Romanian values and institutions are still struggling for their own grounding and respectability in the post-communist era. How can one build on local values that were intentionally destroyed, and how does one promote real participation when social capital has been corrupted? Some hope that joining the European Union, an expected boon to economic growth, will resolve these questions. But for Goulet it was never good enough just to get the economy growing, for people also need their self-esteem, freedom and fulfillment in their search for meaning and purpose, what Goulet

refers to as transcendence. How does one help people aspire to transcendence when for 45 years transcendent meanings were denigrated and religious activities were harshly penalized and at times violently repressed? These are among the questions addressed in this study of contemporary Romania and of one NGO, the New Horizons Foundation (NHF)<sup>3</sup> that is facing these issues head-on.

As an NGO, the NHF is not among the world's largest, oldest or most well-known. What draws one's attention to NHF is that its explicit mission is to build social capital among the nation's youth and thus to prepare a new generation of leaders who can restore a culture of virtue, civic responsibility and community. By explicitly targeting the development of social capital, NHF is blazing a new trail in development practice. While many development scholars and organizations consider social capital of utmost importance, I am aware of no organization whose explicit mission it is to build social capital, which Woolcock and Narayan define simply as "norms and networks that enable people to act collectively" (2006, 32-33).<sup>4</sup> As this chapter attempts to show, by undertaking this mission, working through the strategies of adventure education and service learning, NHF is indeed fostering an authentic development that recovers and builds on the positive values inherent in Romanian culture. It thus provides a real-world example of what authentic development work can actually look like in a post-communist society.

### **Denis Goulet and the Idea of Authentic Development**

It was through life experience that Denis Goulet encountered the basic ethical problem of human development, a problem he styled "the cruel choice." As a young man, Goulet lived among two nomadic tribes in Algeria as a participant observer and was

there confronted with an existential dilemma that seemed to allow these societies only two equally unacceptable options for the future. They could either hold onto their cherished traditions or they could modernize, but the cost of either choice was high. If they opted for modernization, then they would lose their culture, their language, their traditions, their religion and their very identity. If they chose to keep their traditions, they were likely to remain materially poor, marginalized on the world scene and powerless against the onslaught of modern technology, international political power and economic globalization. Not being willing to accept the inevitability of either of these options, Goulet embarked on a search for a third way, one that honors and respects the integrity of local cultures even as it also allows for the discretionary adoption and integration of modern technologies and ways of life.

Goulet refers to this third option as “authentic development,” defined as “the construction by a human society of its own history and destiny, its own universe of meanings” (Goulet 2000, 134). Like Chinua Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*, Goulet witnessed how the lives of people in culturally rich, but materially poor, societies were torn asunder as modernizing trends stripped them of control over their own futures. Goulet argues that if people were the authors of their own development rather than the objects of a development imposed from the outside, then they would be able successfully to navigate the path between the two extremes. By so defining authentic development, Goulet strikes a resonant chord with post-development scholars like Arturo Escobar (1994) and localization proponents like David Korten (2006). But Goulet is more than a localist and a relativist, for he believes that all societies, in their own existential contexts, strive for meaning and transcendence, not only for themselves, but for all of humanity. In

the numerous cultures, societies and countries Goulet has studied, he finds in local efforts everywhere a striving for universal values and meaning as people pursue “the good life.” Among Goulet’s most respected and oft-cited findings is his identification of three common values that he says “are goals sought by all individuals and societies: optimum *life-sustenance, esteem, and freedom*” (1985, 41).

For development to be authentic, these three values, or goals, must be kept in balance. Apparently oblivious to the need for esteem and freedom, the reigning paradigms in development over-emphasize life-sustenance to the point that “having more,” measured as economic growth, is seen as the only truly significant development objective. Authentic development, on the other hand, is fundamentally holistic and systemic, for these three goals embed within them the importance of enriching not only the economic, but also the “moral, cultural, spiritual, social and political” elements of life (Goulet 1981, 9). To achieve such balance, the fundamental moral agency of each person must be respected so that everyone, as individuals and as members of groups, can freely participate in the choices that define their path into the future. Authentic development thus arises from the engaged participation and collective decision making of the people themselves.

Goulet has a lot of confidence that people everywhere, granted such respect and freedom, will be able to construct an authentic development in the context of their own cultures, for he believes that every culture, though a mix of many different and competing values, is nevertheless endowed with “latent dynamisms” that will ultimately allow them to address their real life problems with integrity and foresight.

None of this means that people the world over should simply be left to their own devices, which seems to be the counsel of post-development scholars like Arturo Escobar. Instead, drawing in part on Catholic Social Teaching, Goulet emphasizes such universal values as justice and the common good. As a student of cultures around the world, Goulet finds common threads of justice and the common good in many religious traditions, all of which contain the basic value that the well off should come to the aid of those less fortunate. He cites Christian church fathers like John Chrysostom and other spiritual leaders like Gandhi, both of whom argue that, in Gandhi's words, "whenever I live in a situation where others are in need, . . . , whether or not I am responsible for it, I have become a thief" (1985, 58).

Having developed both the idea of an authentic development and an ethical rationale for the concept of development assistance, Goulet must then address the question of how people can actually help each other in times of need. The dilemma is that helping others is so much easier said than done; it requires great wisdom, and there are many ways to do more harm than good.<sup>5</sup> In Goulet's words, "love without disciplined intelligence is inefficient, naïve, and in its bungling good intentions, catastrophic. And intelligence without love breeds a brutalizing technocracy that crushes people..." (1985, 193-4). If development aid is to be both loving and intelligent, then it will foster local processes that allow people freely to construct their own development.

If authentic development is so fundamentally experiential, then it is essential to find practices that really do facilitate it. That's why Goulet studied real development programs. Though he found examples of good development work, especially in movements like Sarvodaya Shramadana (1981), he also found plenty to be concerned

about. Unfortunately, the world of development assistance is populated by what Goulet calls “one-eyed giants,” development professionals who more often than not see local cultures and values not as legitimate in themselves, but as instruments to be manipulated to serve their own Western views of what development should look like (1980). Instead of applying what Goulet calls an ethical rationality, development workers instead work out of a technical rationality, one that sees people as objects, or instruments to be manipulated, rather than as subjects. The people themselves are thus marginalized in their own development and tend to respond by withdrawing rather than engaging. In the real world of development assistance, the power held by Western donors (financial, intellectual and organizational) leads to domination much more readily than to facilitation. Even so, Western development models, inherently flawed because of their over-emphasis on “having more,” are willfully imposed on societies unable to resist (1985, 184). “One-eyed giants” may have technical expertise and powerful interests behind them, but they lack an appreciation for and sensitivity to cultural diversity and the esteem and freedom every person needs and deserves.

Still, Goulet remains hopeful as he continually encourages development practitioners to use both of their eyes. One way that organizations can work to facilitate an indigenous and locally owned authentic development is to build up local leaders, people who, according to Goulet, 1) possess “an intuitive grasp of the larger historical dimensions latent in local struggles,” 2) “the ability to reconcile multiple class alliances,” 3) “moral and physical courage,” 4) know “how to communicate their own vision of possible success to less imaginative or less experienced masses,” 5) have “the ability to learn quickly from their mistakes” and 6) are “committed in principle to eliciting from the

powerless a creative and critical formulation of their hopes and needs.” Such leaders are able to facilitate the dialogue in which a broad range of people can join the constructive process (1985, 190-91).

To summarize, effective development interventions...

1. Introduce technical expertise, but not in a dominating way,
2. Respect local values and work to build on the latent dynamisms within the culture,
3. Foster esteem building participation and ownership,
4. Foster the ability to work together in community,
5. Accept a holistic, but flexible, view of development and
6. Build leadership for the future,

In today’s world of development assistance, few if any organizations would contest these principles and goals, but the difficulty of really adhering to these principles is belied by a constant stream of books and reports arguing that the rhetoric and the reality don’t match. Michael Edwards is one voice among many when he says that development organizations typically cut corners on such principles due to “short-termism, control orientation and standardization that have infected development work for a generation or more” (Edwards 1999, 86). This is why the work of NHF is worthy of study. NHF was formed in the crucible of experience, later informed by social capital and general development theory, especially the capabilities approach of development. As it continues to evolve, NHF’s ideas and practices have allowed it to participate in a development that to all appearances is truly authentic.

### **Working in Romania: The Theory and Practice of NHF**

Since the 1989 coup that overthrew communist dictator Nicolae Ceaucescu, hundreds, even thousands, of well-meaning NGOs have come and gone in Romania. Throughout the 1990s they surged into Romania intent on helping the nation get a fresh start. Encountering the depth of Romanian corruption, and not seeing the measurable and rapid progress required by their donors, many of these NGOs lost hope and left. Dimancescu reports that of the over 27,000 NGOs listed in the Romania registry since 1989, only about 2,000 are still active. Hopes were initially high that the spread of civil society would usher in a new era of good governance and economic growth, but Gallagher tells us that by the year 2000 “civil society was reduced to a few NGOs which were only surrogate clubs for the frustrated.” Moreover, the Civic Alliance, the best known pro-democracy NGO, had been discredited by its own associations with corrupt officials (248).

One of the 2,000 NGOs currently active in Romania is NHF, which evolved from a 1990s backpacking trip epiphany of a visionary young married couple from the United States, Dana and Brandi Bates. As experienced leaders in adventure education, they hatched a plan to bring to Romania a high ropes course and other forms of adventure education, a plan that came to fruition in 1999 with the inauguration of a summer program called Viata (Romanian for “life”).<sup>6</sup> The program settled in the Jiu Valley, a storied coal mining area and a politically restive region during the last century. The valley lies amidst some of the most beautiful mountains in all of Europe, yet is one of the poorest, most corrupt and socially stressed regions in all Romania.

The patterns of life and prevailing social norms that developed in the valley have much to do with the synergies between coal mining and communism. During the communist era, coal became a main source of energy, so the mining industry and the miners themselves grew in importance, partly because the coal miner is a paragon of the working class. In 1977 they staged a strike for better working conditions and Ceausescu found himself forced to accede to their demands. Ceausescu sought to regain control by bringing in additional mine workers from around the country, choosing especially those likely to cause division in the ranks of the unified miners. Consistent with communist practice and ideology throughout the Soviet Bloc, Ceausescu intentionally implemented strategies to keep people from cooperating with each other, like conscripting people from all sectors of society to be informants to the state security organization, the Securitate. Housed in uniform concrete apartment blocks, denied any role in civic life, discouraged from religious involvement and in constant fear of the Securitate, people learned to cope by withdrawing into ever diminishing circles of trust and fellowship. Lying and stealing became a way of life in the struggle for survival.<sup>7</sup>

Once the Communist era officially ended with the execution of the Ceausescus on Christmas day in 1989, the Jiu Valley coal industry began what became a precipitous decline, due in part to the low quality of the lignite coal. Though the miners continued to play a key disruptive role in the politics of the nation in the 1990s, especially when they followed the demagogic leadership of Miron Cozma, the leader of violent raids on Bucharest, there was no escaping the reality that the region was in economic freefall. First one mine closed, then another. Now, in an industry that directly employed 40,000 workers in 1989, only about 18,000 people are employed and the World Bank has

designated the area as severely disadvantaged. Hollowed out concrete hulks of former industrial plants line much of the main highway and official unemployment is over 20%, though people in the valley say it is much higher. From 1992 to 2002 the population declined by about 9% (*Jiu Valley Region...*, 13,16). Owing to its turbulent past, the Jiu Valley has developed a reputation as a difficult place to do business, which many believe has driven national and international investors away. The communist era holdover Social Democratic Party (PSD) remains strong in the area (in part by providing perks like free rent and heat to the remaining mine workers). Community organizations and civic life are minimal. Apathy and a spirit of hopelessness reign, especially among the older generations. The youth of the valley largely want to leave once they come of age, and many have already departed, often illegally, for EU countries where they can find work. Remittances make a big difference to the local economy.<sup>8</sup>

Much as it was with Denis Goulet and his participant observer experiences, living in the Jiu Valley helped the Bates and other NHF/Viata leaders come to appreciate the depth and significance of the social, moral, economic and governance breakdowns that defined life in the valley. Interpersonal trust was low, corruption was taken for granted and there was little to no interest in contributing to community well-being. The Jiu Valley, like much of the rest of Romania, was suffering a severe shortage of social capital. How could people work together and act collectively if they didn't trust each other? If people in the Jiu Valley were to take stock of their own values and begin a process of constructing an authentic development, it would first be necessary to create environments in which people could build up a reasonable degree of interpersonal trust and civic commitment. Early attempts to organize youth were met with suspicion. Jiu

Valley residents assumed that NHF was just another organization perpetrating some corrupt game on them or carrying out some other nefarious purpose. At one point the local newspaper carried a story accusing them of being a Libyan terrorist training camp. Early on, when NHF organized young people to clean up a river, a crowd gathered on the bridge, heckled them and rained trash down on them. But NHF persisted.

Building on what had quickly become a successful program in adventure education, NHF began intentionally to target the development of social capital. One of NHF's standard slogans is "Bonding for Bridging," a reference to the need to build tight bonds of trust within groups that then provide a secure platform from which to build relationships across groups and serve the broader community. As an education and leadership development strategy, adventure education has a built-in bias toward youth wherever it is used, and, with Romania's older generations so deeply scarred by communism, NHF believed its focus on youth was the right strategy at the right time. Moreover, it has enough intrinsic motivators (excitement and fun) to attract youth who might resist joining other organized youth activities.

Finding strong conceptual foundations in the social capital theories of people like Robert Putnam and Francis Fukuyama, and in experiential education theories of John Dewey and Paulo Freire, NHF evolved in two main directions. First, the summer Viata program increased its emphasis on trust-building, team-work and community building. Each summer up to five hundred young people, many from the Jiu Valley, participate in the program. Participants are encouraged to take leadership in their communities, to believe they can bring about change and to take action. Graduates of the Viata program, which is only five days long, speak glowingly of the excitement and inspiration they felt

during these few days, and NHF's own research showed significant improvements in trust, teamwork, solidarity and openness to cooperation.<sup>9</sup> It soon became evident, however, that Viata wasn't enough, because once they came down from the mountain, both literally and figuratively, young people found themselves once again in home and community environments that undermined their learning and offered no obvious outlets for putting their training into practice. To address this need, NHF organized a number of what are now called IMPACT Clubs, which bring 10-20 young people together twice a week, year round, to build social capital, engage in community service and develop leadership for the future.

The name "IMPACT," a Romanian acronym built on the principles of service learning, was chosen on a retreat of club leaders, both paid and volunteer. Coincidentally, due to the Latin origins of the words, it almost works in English too.

I –	Implicare	(Involvement)
M –	Motivare	(Motivation)
P –	Participare	(Participation)
A –	Actiune	(Action)
C –	Comunitate	(Community)
T –	Tinar	(Youth)

IMPACT meetings typically last for about two hours and are based on a simple three part structure. The meetings begin with games, which are followed by an activity or a story that highlights the value of a personal or civic virtue. The third and longest component of the meeting is the training and planning for community service projects, of which each club might do from three to six every year, depending on their complexity.

Each of these three components plays an intentional role in this experiential education model. According to the IMPACT Training Manual, the games play a major role in attracting youth to the clubs and are taken from the strategy of adventure education, which thus promotes “active group participation and an invitation towards greater community involvement.” Stories “serve as springboards for the teaching of the moral values” and “reinforce the sense that life makes sense,” an “essential ingredient for ethical behavior.” Finally, “the process of choosing, planning, and execution of community service projects is the cornerstone of every IMPACT club,” an emphasis that draws support from Robert Putnam, who says “All our societies need more social capital...and in my view the single most promising area of initiative is youth service” (Ford Foundation 2000, 9). As such, the purpose of service projects is more than the actual community service outcome; it is also the transformative influence the activity has on the participant herself. Diana Certan, national director of the IMPACT Clubs, says that the overall purpose of the clubs is “to develop moral values and social and vocational competencies among the youth in Romania so they feel empowered to act in their communities in the future.” In addition to their developing social capital and their growing understanding of the importance of service, young people in the clubs also gain concrete skills in project management, computers and communication.

An illustration from club life will help illuminate how the experiences contribute to the development of character, competency and leadership. Ancuta Predan, an IMPACT leader who has been with NHF for five years, says that she and other IMPACT leaders are carefully instructed in methods to facilitate, not dominate the group process. The club begins a project with a brainstorming session about community needs and how

the club might address them. They discuss these ideas together, reach a decision in a highly participatory process and then proceed with planning and implementation. Projects often require some local fundraising, which is usually achieved by soliciting assistance from business owners or other people in the community. Sometimes it involves writing a grant proposal and submitting it to an appropriate organization, like an NGO or the mayor's office. For a recent project focused on domestic violence, Predan's club wrote a proposal to an NGO in Bucharest, which contributed \$500 worth of informational videos, posters and other materials. For the domestic violence campaign, the project culminated in a public presentation at which they informed community members through skits and other presentations about the reality of domestic violence, its causes and how the community could address it. The presentation attracted an audience of eighty adults in the midst of a driving thunderstorm, but it was also picked up by local television and other media, which reported on the activity at length. Club members were then interviewed on a half hour TV news show. The program was so well received that the club made additional presentations in three other towns. Once the project is completed, the club evaluates the activity from beginning to end, holds a celebratory event and begins preparing for its next project.

Even though the service projects themselves might not be the sole purpose of the clubs, their activities are nonetheless noteworthy. Newly formed clubs with relatively young people may begin with a simple project like a river clean up, which involves little more than the commitment to set aside a day to do it. As the club matures through experience, the youth are encouraged to take on more complex projects, like one to install speed bumps on a stretch of dangerous road. Such projects involve meeting with

business leaders, writing to appropriate organizations, working through legal issues with various governmental offices, and getting the media involved. Some examples of activities from the past year include a public education campaign against corruption, putting up an outhouse and ecological information board at the entrance to the nearby national park and a Christmas show for the community that highlighted the importance of community spirit.

IMPACT clubs began in the Jiu Valley in 2001, but in the last two years have been spreading due to a partnership with Romania's Ministry of Education and the Orthodox Church. Under the agreement, local schools provide designated rooms for the clubs and teachers are encouraged to participate as volunteers. The Orthodox Church provides volunteer staff to the clubs and sees its involvement as an opportunity to influence the character formation of Romania's youth. There are now twenty-four IMPACT clubs in Romania and NHF's goal is to have one in every high school in Romania. NHF has a full time year round staff of fifteen, which is complemented with the help of some seventy-five volunteer leaders. NHF is transitioning to a model in which its paid staff trains volunteer IMPACT leaders, but does not lead the clubs themselves. Apart from the training received from the paid staff, the clubs themselves are financially self-sufficient.

### **NHF and Authentic Development**

Dana and Brandi Bates arrived in Romania with expertise in adventure education, but with little knowledge of Romanian culture. The charge of "one-eyed giantism" doesn't stick, however, in part because the strategy of experiential education is intentionally designed to foster grassroots participation, strengthen local leadership and

build participatory skills. It does not tell Romanians exactly what to do, but enhances their capabilities to take charge of their own development. In addition, the program spread rapidly. Leaders in the first years of the adventure education program (Viata) were so enthusiastic that the program quickly caught on in Romania and triggered an unforced expansion into other forms of experiential education. Volunteers are springing up around the country to work in IMPACT clubs, and this in a country in which volunteerism is not a strong part of the culture.<sup>10</sup> The partnership with the Ministry of Education and the Orthodox Church is another indication of the model's acceptance by influential sectors of Romanian society. Drawing from a broad spectrum of Romanian society, the Bates have cultivated a group of advisors who give freely of their time. One of these advisors, Matei Paun, business leader and board member of the influential Romanian Think Tank, serves on the advisory board because of how impressed he has been to see the excitement, the change of spirit and the desire for involvement in the young people who participate in the program. Social capital theorist Gabriel Badescu, professor of Political Science department at Babes Bolyai University in Cluj Napoca, serves on the board and has encouraged his students do research on NHF, a contribution that helps NHF assess its programs. One former leader in the Viata program developed the first master's program in adventure education in Romania at the university in Timisoara. Remarkably, the spread effects of the program have not been motivated by financial incentives. Involvement in IMPACT clubs on the part of youth and leaders, participation on the board and in other advisory roles, and the partnerships are almost all voluntary. The only exception is the relatively small paid staff of NHF.

The paid staff themselves express strong commitment to the mission of NHF. For many, that's because they participated in the Viata program and have themselves been changed as a result of their involvement with NHF. Salaries of paid staff are lower than what the coal miners make, but they are here, they say, because they love what they do and they believe in it. One staff person says that through his involvement in the program "I have grown right along with the kids," while another says "Viata and NHF have made me into a new person and I want to bring that to others too."

Respecting local values is complex when for many years Romanian values and ways of life were subjected to the regimented, numbing and ultimately dehumanizing influences of Ceausescu's autocratic rule. Where then does one find the latent dynamisms within the culture? NHF's answer is fourfold. First, a basic purpose of the focus on building social capital is to generate the character and the capacities to work in community forums with the express purpose of discovering, or rediscovering, their common values and goals. Second, the stories used in IMPACT clubs include those from Romania that highlight the nation's positive values and role models, like the story of Roxana's courage that opened this chapter. Third, in spite of the communist attack on organized religion, 85% of Romanians consider themselves members of the Orthodox Church, a tradition and an institution with a rich moral heritage. As part of their integration into Romanian culture, the Bates have themselves joined the Orthodox Church and NHF has embarked on an effort called "Leveraging Tradition" in partnership with the Orthodox Church.<sup>11</sup> Together, they are discovering and rediscovering the theological underpinnings in Orthodox Christianity for personal and social virtue, engagement in the life of the world and community service. The Orthodox emphasis on

the relational aspects of the three persons of the Trinity and their overall emphasis on human relations with God and with each other provide a powerful rationale for the promotion of social capital as well as a strong intrinsic motivation for people to care for each other and work together for the common good.<sup>12</sup> Fourth, at various junctures in both Viata and IMPACT, youth are invited themselves to identify values they want their group to honor, and to covenant with each other to live up to these values and hold each other accountable. Covenants typically include values like honesty, trust, cooperation, teamwork, tolerance, caring and service, all of which are reinforced in service learning activities.

A major aspect of human development is self-esteem, which grows when the young people embrace the responsibility of making their own decisions. Their sense of confidence and personal pride grows as they convert their decisions into action. Today in Romania, youth as a whole are disaffected and feel disenfranchised. A recent Romanian government study on the state of the nation's youth reports that young people in Romania face unemployment and a social/political/economic system they do not trust. In such a world, youth in Romania have very small circles of trust and exhibit a marked tendency toward individualism and selfishness. The report finds that altruism, compassion, sociability, and positive communication are weak and on the decline. This report is consistent with NHF's own assessment that "most of today's young people are cynical, hopeless, and seeking ways to leave Romania" (*IMPACT manual*, Chapter 1, 8-10).

To get young people involved, IMPACT clubs draw on the theories of adventure education and service learning to help create active and informed citizens. By engaging young people in addressing the problems that confront their communities, service

learning works “to create circumstances in which youth are intrinsically motivated to reflect critically and to work together to improve their communities and the lives of people in them.” It helps them “develop a deeper understanding of their world and themselves and an improved sense of purpose, justice, agency, and optimism” (Claus and Ogden 1999, 70). Within the IMPACT clubs, NHF works to create an environment in which young people can grow within the bonds of a nurturing and accepting social group that can then seek out ways in the community to build bridges to other groups and to foster the construction of bridges among various groups within their communities. In the process, young people are encouraged to care about and then to work toward the common good. Dana Bates says he never tires of reminding young people in Romania that “Community and trust are better than suspicion and apathy.” The IMPACT training manual emphasizes what it calls “Samaritan capital,” which is the moral vision behind bridging capital. It encourages young people to care for the well-being of others, and in so doing to make the whole community better off.

Though difficult to measure precisely, the enthusiasm of the young people in the IMPACT clubs is hard to mistake. They speak with obvious pride of their involvement and achievements in the community. There are plenty of young people who choose not to participate in IMPACT clubs, and there seems to be a strong correlation between young people who exhibit natural leadership skills and their involvement in IMPACT. As IMPACT leader Vali Popescu says, IMPACT doesn’t work for young people unless they come “with a little bit of willing.” Before IMPACT clubs were present, leadership skills, willing commitment and active involvement went largely untapped and uncultivated.

### **Process and/or Results: The Perennial Development Dilemma**

For a half century now, Denis Goulet has been promoting a development ethics that centers on engaged participation of people who, precisely because of their participation, can be relied on to ensure their own sustainable physical well-being and enjoy the esteem that derives from involvement and ownership. For many years, this message was regularly promulgated by a relatively few dissonant voices on the outskirts of the development enterprise.<sup>13</sup> Goulet was not unlike Jerry Maguire, in the movie of the same name, who, having given a stirring speech to his mercenary sports agency firm on how life is about more than money, is roundly applauded and then summarily fired and ostracized, only to be vindicated as the movie goes along. Goulet has constantly reminded us that development is more about the human person than it is about technique and goal achievement. His views were applauded as ideals, but fell victim to the practical, results oriented world of “real” development work. For decades now, participation and ownership have been trumpeted while top-down development planning continues to be the norm. Yet today numerous and varied voices are carrying the message forward and showing more and more that the connection between process and results is a tight one and not be ignored.

Among the most influential of those voices is Amartya Sen, who, along with Martha Nussbaum and others, has gone a long way toward establishing the Capabilities Approach to development as an industry standard. On Sen’s view, development is understood as the “freedom to lead the kind of lives we have reason to value” (1999, 14). Development work must therefore focus on providing the means or capabilities to human

development rather than identifying some target end and then finding the techniques for achieving it. Like Goulet, Sen emphasizes the process, confident that good process will lead to good conclusions.

As anthropologist Mary Douglas points out, reading people out of the process of development not only hinders their freedom and their esteem, it also renders them apathetic. If that happens, people disengage and withdraw, as happened in Romania, creating an almost insuperable challenge to development organizations. Douglas argues that apathy is one of the worst anti-developmental scourges to fall on a people, for it surrenders to the self-oriented interests of the powerful, tolerates corruption as an unassailable social illness and generally leads people to hope for nothing more than marginalized and poverty-stricken lives (Douglas 2004). This is the environment in which NHF works as it tries to counter apathy by building up the spirit, social capital, leadership and, ultimately, the constructive involvement of the country's youth.

Importantly, neither Goulet, nor Sen, nor Douglas, nor NHF have a vision for what society should ultimately look like, though they are confident in the ability of free people with strong value foundations and the necessary capacities to work things out for themselves. The centrality of engagement, involvement and participation keeps coming back. In a recent book that is largely a refutation of Jeffrey Sachs' ideas in The End of Poverty, William Easterly attacks the notion of development planning from his perspective as a reformed World Bank planner (Easterly 2006). He traces the history of development assistance, showing how over and over again the plans of rich, educated and powerful developed country players overwhelm the true involvement of the poor.<sup>14</sup>

Though he doesn't use Goulet's terms, Easterly is referring to how the development establishment fixes its goals according to its own prerogatives, needs and visions and then manipulates the world around it to meet those particular needs. In the process, the people themselves are lost or instrumentalized. They are no longer the authors of their own development, but instruments in the hands of what Easterly terms "the Planners." Having been a planner for years himself, and having seen all the myriad ways in which development assistance fails, Easterly now focuses on how development assistance can support what he calls "the Searchers." These are people who "adapt to local conditions," employ "trial and error experimentation," and believe that "only insiders have enough knowledge to find solutions, and that most solutions must be homegrown (Easterly 2006, 6).

In Easterly's parlance, NHF is among the searchers, working to build the moral and social fiber and the leadership capabilities in young people so they can become the authors of their own development. Unlike "the planners," NHF has no grand vision of exactly what people ought to achieve. Instead, by strengthening moral value, fostering the leadership potential of young Romanians and nurturing the bonds of trust and the ability to work together for the common good, NHF is building up the social capital necessary for people collectively to address the development challenges ahead. As stated in NHF's training manual, "it is now clear that our standards for living (values) determine our standards of living (income). Only when the values of respect, responsibility, and mutual cooperation are internalized and consistently acted upon—only then can Romania move from corruption to broad-based sustainable development (*IMPACT Manual*, Chapter 1, 7)." Adventure education and service learning among the youth are especially

effective in Romania, but these strategies for youth development may also be effective elsewhere, especially where social divisions and lack of interpersonal trust are major obstacles to community cooperation. Searchers the world over should take notice.

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<sup>1</sup> Gallagher believes the corruption of political leaders, combined with the cultivated apathy of the citizens, has created a political environment ripe for the picking by a demagogic, nationalist, autocratic leader like Corneliu Vadim Tudor (see chapter 9, "A Messiah for Romania?").

<sup>2</sup> Recent books by such diverse development scholars as Amartya Sen (2000), Lawrence Harrison (2006), William Easterly (2006), Joseph Stiglitz (2002), Jagdish Bhagwati (2004), Jorge Santiso (2006) and John Kay(2004) all argue that authentic change must come from within and be associated with a long, slow process of evolutionary change. As ever, there is a chasm between recognizing the importance and knowing how to achieve it on the ground.

<sup>3</sup> The present paper compares NHF's philosophy and practices with some of Goulet's main ideas about development. It is not a standard program evaluation of NHF. Several outside evaluations of NHF have been done, including a study by Thorup and Kinkade (2005). Thorup and Kinkade were so positive about NHF that they told organizations from other East European countries to come visit NHF and learn from them.

<sup>4</sup> In thorough study of social capital and how the World Bank has integrated it into its thinking and its work, Woolcock and Narayan discuss a number of ways in which social capital is taken into account, but there is no mention of an organization whose explicit mission it is to build social capital.

<sup>5</sup> For a contemporary litany of the troubles development plans and workers can bring, see Easterly (2006).

<sup>6</sup> The Bates came with expertise in adventure education. Both had been instructors for many years and Dana was full time coordinator of adventure education at Gordon College in Massachusetts.

<sup>7</sup> Anthropologist David Kideckel has spent many years interacting with and studying the working classes of the Jiu Valley. He writes that post-socialist transition for these workers has been especially difficult, because as industrial workers in the socialist era they enjoyed a position of prominence and prestige. Now, however, they are workers in a

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declining industry in an increasingly forgotten valley of Romania, a reality that has resulted in many personal and social dysfunctions (Kideckel 2007).

<sup>8</sup> United Press International reported on its web site that two million workers abroad sent about \$5 billion back to Romania in 2005. Jiu Valley families benefit greatly from remittances too, though no official data are available.

<sup>9</sup> Current national director of NHF's IMPACT clubs, Diana Certan, did some master's level research on Viata's impact on social capital. She used a survey instrument, asking questions before the week at Viata and then again at the close of the week. Questions were adapted from the World Values Survey (Certan 2003, 6)

<sup>10</sup> I was told by a number of people that volunteerism fell into disrepute during the communist era, because in those days people were "required to volunteer." The practice gave volunteerism a bad name and people were glad when the days of "volunteer labor" were over.

<sup>11</sup> See NHF's web site for more information on this partnership with the orthodox church: [http://www.new-horizons.ro/about\\_us/tradition.asp](http://www.new-horizons.ro/about_us/tradition.asp).

<sup>12</sup> It is no small thing in terms of credibility with the Orthodox Church that Dana Bates is in a PhD program to study the theology of Romania's foremost 20<sup>th</sup> century theologian, Dumitru Staniloae. In addition, the Church Patriarch's office undertook a careful study of NHF's work and ended up strongly endorsing it. This study is one of the reasons behind the church's willingness to partner with NHF.

<sup>13</sup> Richard Jolly, Dudley Seers and Robert Chambers come to mind.

<sup>14</sup> This is a theme picked up too in the post-development oriented tome on the Tyranny of Participation. The rhetoric of participation had worked its way into all the development literature and planning, they said, but it really never came to anything beyond people being forced to go through the motions demanded by the aid enterprise (See Cooke and Kothari 2001).