

# **Europeanisation from the Bottom to the Top: Civil Society Inclusion in Cluj-Napoca**

An Exploratory Case Study



Bachelor Thesis

**Nienke Johanna Helene van Zijverden**  
**s1865129**

Public Governance across Borders

3rd July 2019

Reference Number  
of Ethical Approval: 190417

1<sup>st</sup> Supervisor: Dr. Veronica Junjan  
2<sup>nd</sup> Supervisor: Dr. Ewert Aukes

Word Count: 18750

University of Twente, Enschede (NL)  
Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität, Münster (D)

*“Everyone benefits when civil society is strong,  
proactive and independent. Democratic  
governments know they are stronger when they  
listen to you.”*

Johannes Hahn, European Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy at the  
Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum 2015, Kyiv

## **Abstract**

Romania has not yet completed the Europeanisation process and is still being monitored under the EU's Cooperation and Verification Mechanism. As the literature suggests, the country's slow development processes do not seem to be an issue of legal adoption but rather a matter of practical implementation of administrative reforms. Trying to emphasise the need of an interplay of different system levels and various actors in Europeanisation processes, the aim of this thesis is to explore the influence of public participation on reform implementation to consequently foster local administrative capacity building. Therefore, the thesis approaches the role of NGOs in governance processes by means of an exploratory case study: the inclusion of civil society in designing and implementing the development strategy of Cluj-Napoca. The analysis is based on expert interviews and document analyses. The use of an extreme case study provides a fruitful basis for further research on public participation in Romania's local public administrations, in order to elaborate the potential key player position of NGOs in boosting Europeanisation from the bottom to the top.

## INDEX

I. List of Abbreviations .....	4
II. List of Figures.....	4
1. Introduction .....	5
1.1 Research Question.....	7
1.2 Scientific and Societal Relevance .....	7
1.3 Structure .....	8
2. Theory .....	9
2.1 Europeanisation: top-down and bottom-up perspectives.....	9
2.2 Administrative capacity building .....	10
2.2.1 Reform implementation.....	12
2.3 The concept of governance.....	12
2.4 The shift of the government-civil society relationship.....	13
2.4.1 Analysing public participation: Arnstein’s ladder of participation .....	14
2.4.2 Analysing public participation: from agents to partners?.....	15
2.5 Conceptualising civil society.....	17
2.6 An answer to sub-question a) and theoretical expectations.....	18
3. Methodology .....	21
3.1 Research design.....	21
3.2 Case selection .....	24
3.3. Data collection.....	25
3.4 Data analysis strategy .....	27
4. Analysis.....	30
4.1 Context of this thesis .....	30
4.2 EU level analysis.....	33
4.3 National level analysis.....	36
4.4 Local level analysis .....	37
4.4.1 Discrepancy analysis .....	39
4.4.2 Development analysis: An answer to sub-question b) and c).....	45
5. 1 NGOs as governance actors boosting local administrative capacity building?.....	48
5.2 Suggestions for further research.....	49
5.3 Practical implications .....	50
6. References .....	51
7. Appendices .....	53

## **I. List of Abbreviations**

Administrative Capacity Building	ACB
Civil Society Organisation	CSO
Cooperation and Verification Mechanism	CVM
European Union	EU
Neo-Weberian State	NWS
New Public Governance	NPG
New Public Management	NPM
Non-Governmental Organisation	NGO
Open Government Partnership	OGP
Public administration reform	PAR

## **II. List of Figures**

Figure 1: Arnstein's ladder of public participation

Figure 2: Relationship between public authorities and civil society in government and governance structures

Figure 3: Theoretical graph

## **1. Introduction**

The fall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 provided the opportunity for a reunification of the divided European continent. With the enlargement in 2004 and 2007, the European Union (EU) integrated ten post-communist countries. Accession to the EU requires countries to have sufficient institutional and administrative capacity, next to a number of political and economic requirements (European Commission, 2016). Hence, the process of European integration demanded Eastern European countries to undergo extensive transformations. Even though the region has made huge progress in many fields, especially its administrative capacity remains relatively weak, compared to Western Europe. In order to strengthen good governance, many countries are therefore undergoing the complex processes of Public Administration Reform (Dzatkova, 2016) But why does administrative capacity matter so much? According to El-Taliawi and van der Wal (2019) administrative capacity can be understood as the ability of government to achieve its objectives. The importance of administrative capacity lays hence in its connectedness to the quality of government. Governments with a strong administrative capacity are able to implement designed policies successfully, since they rely on a stable and well-functioning public sector. In other words, weak administrative capacity leads to a low ability to implement policies effectively and results in weak policy outcomes. Assessing and enhancing administrative capacity is, however, exceedingly difficult, since administrative capacity is very contextual. Governments are structured and organised differently and operate in various ways. The investigation of administrative capacity requires thus a comprehensive knowledge of the contextual circumstances in which governments act (El-Taliawi & van der Wal, 2019). Membership in the EU demands eastern European countries to constantly enhance their administrative performance in order to be able to not only adopt European law but also to practically implement designed EU policies. In this thesis, emphasis is laid on Romania as currently one of the weakest member states in terms of public administration and its ongoing struggle to reach more administrative capacity. Since the collapse of the communist regime and the growing democratisation of the country, Romania has undergone important steps of development in its administrative system. The transformation of the public sector mirrored political and societal processes and was driven by modernisation and Europeanisation pressures. Reform processes in Romania especially include a decentralisation and the consolidation of local governments (Matei, 2013). Even though the country joined the EU already in 2007, reform processes are not yet terminated and Romania is still being monitored by the EU under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism (CVM) with the aim to monitor the development of an effective

administration in the country (European Commission, 2019). Hence, Romania has not yet completed the process of European integration and struggles to comply with EU requirements. Until today, there has been little consensus among researchers what caused the delay in reform processes in the country and how to expedite it. Existing literature, however, states that Romania generally lacks administrative tradition and stability and is challenged to create a stable enough political system at the same time as it has to implement principles of effective governance (Văduva, 2016). Furthermore, the literature in recent years suggests slow reform processes as not being an issue of legal adoption but a matter of practical implementation of policies (Thomann & Zhelyazkova, 2017). Therefore, discovering and strengthening factors which support the practical implementation of policies and hence foster Romania's administrative capacity is of extreme importance. Still, this is not an easy task, since public administration in a Romanian context is very different from the western European context of the 'old' EU member states and requires careful investigation of the respective circumstances. Like many other member states, Romania's transition process was marked by a shift from government to governance principles (Dzatkova, 2016). As governance accentuates the role of local governments and participation to effectively steer society, this process shed light on a new emerging factor with a potential relevance for Romania's administrative system: civil society. In the past two decades, many authors have stressed that civil society can emerge as a possible key player not only in democratisation processes but also in the implementation of public sector reforms (Butkevičienė et al., 2010; Veltmeyer, 2008). In post-communist countries, however, the non-existence of civil society was for a long time a typical characteristic (Dzatkova, 2016). Especially Romania lacks civil society tradition and trust in non-profit organisations, due to its historic development (Badescu et al., 2004). Nevertheless, also in Romania the third sector has been growing in the last two decades. This rise of civil society and the non-profit sector is inseparably tied to the shift from government to governance, which was driven by Europeanisation pressures (Dzatkova, 2016). Since then, the EU encourages the country to strengthen civil society as a key player in governance processes and accompanies the participatory transformation of public administration in Romania (Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, 2016). The aim of this thesis, therefore, is to approach the practical governance role of civil society in local reform processes in order to foster Romania's administrative capacity on a local level, by means of investigating a particular case: the inclusion of civil society organisations in the process of planning and implementing the development strategy of Cluj-Napoca.

### **1.1 Research Question**

The main research question guiding this thesis is: *‘To what extent have NGOs emerged as governance actors boosting the practical implementation of administrative reforms in Romania’s local governments to increase the local administrative capacity since the country’s EU accession in 2007 until 2018?’* This research aims to explore the impact of public participation on local administrative capacity building. Therefore, it aims to highlight the functions Romanian civil society fulfils in local governance and the extent to which it can hence be seen as a driving actor supporting the implementation of administrative reforms on a local level.

In order to structure the thesis, the main research question is divided into three sub-questions:

- a) How has the shift towards governance principles (driven by EU conditionality) highlighted local Romanian non-governmental organisations (NGOs) as a possible supporting factor in local governance?
- b) In what ways were NGOs involved in the process of designing Cluj-Napoca’s development strategy?
- c) To what extent do the tasks NGOs perform in Cluj-Napoca contribute to the actual implementation of the city’s development strategy?

Sub-question a) is posed to structure the theoretical framework. Sub-questions b) and c) are used to form the analysis and explicitly relate to the case study.

### **1.2 Scientific and Societal Relevance**

The thesis focuses thus on the power of domestic actors (civil society) in Romania’s European integration process: a Europeanisation from the bottom to the top, opposed to Europeanisation as a top-down process, as it is being discussed in much literature (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). In other words, Europeanisation theory often stops at the national level, at the so called ‘adoption-stage’ of EU policies. The problematic of this top-down point of view is that policy adoption might be experienced as a short success but does not lead to long-lasting administrative capacity. To reach long-lasting administrative capacity, successful policy implementation is crucial. What makes the thesis scientifically relevant is thus that it tries to introduce Europeanisation as a starting point but also as a favourable outcome, to be achieved from the bottom to the top: The thesis explores to what extent Romanian civil society has emerged as an actor capable of bridging the gap between policy adoption and its actual implementation to consequently enhance local administrative performance and strengthen Romania’s position in the EU on the long-run. With this bottom-up approach, the thesis presents



an alternative to the top-down perspective, which has proven to have failed to find explanations for Romania's slow development in public administration. In other words, an exploratory bottom-up approach allows to find different factors of administrative capacity building which might have been missed by the top-down approach. With its investigation from the grassroots-level, the thesis can thus contribute to the study of public participation in a region in which until now not much attention has been spend on. The thesis tries to fill this gap and aims to investigate the linkage between Romanian civil society and local reform implementation by means of an in-depth analysis. Only with such investigation, current developments can be further promoted, and specific measures can be taken to strengthen the inclusion of civil society, for the purpose of enhancing administrative capacity. In terms of societal relevance, the thesis aims to contribute to the changing views on civil society in Romania, in order to make Romanian people believe in their society again, having the power to enhance good governance by supporting local reform processes. Good governance and sufficient administrative capacity are determinants of the quality of government. Enhancing them accordingly increases the quality of life for the citizens and provides the basis for a further democratisation of the country.

### **1.3 Structure**

This thesis consists of five main chapters and is structured as follows.

Based on a literature review, chapter two introduces the theoretical framework of this thesis in which important theoretical concepts are discussed. In particular, section 2.1 discusses different Europeanisation literature, section 2.2 defines administrative capacity building and the need to guarantee reform implementation to build administrative capacity, section 2.3 introduces the characteristics of governance as a public administration paradigm, which is applied in several member states of the EU. Furthermore, section 2.4 points out the way governance shifts the government-civil society relationship and introduces Arnstein's ladder of public participation to analyse different stages of civil society involvement in policymaking. Section 2.5 conceptualises the term civil society and clarifies what part of civil society is subject to investigation in this thesis and why. In section 2.6 the first sub-question is answered and the theoretical expectations which guide the subsequent analysis are presented.

Chapter three introduces the methodology on which this research is based. Section 3.1 discusses the research design and the way its limitations are addressed, section 3.2 presents the reasoning behind the case selection and section 3.3 zooms in on the data collection method. Within section 3.3, the operationalisation on which the measurement of the key concepts is based, is being illustrated. In section 3.4 the data analysis strategy is outlined.

Chapter four presents the analysis of the documents and the expert interviews. Section 4.1 presents relevant context information and the case background. Afterwards, the sections 4.2 and 4.3 present the findings of the document analyses for the macro level. Section 4.4 displays the results for the meso level, combining insights from the documents and the expert interviews. Furthermore, the section gives an answer to sub-question b) and c) and discusses the previously made theoretical expectations.

Chapter five concludes the thesis. In section 5.1 the research question is answered, section 5.2 provides suggestions for further research and section 5.3 illustrates the practical implications of this thesis and concludes with some concrete recommendations for Cluj-Napoca.

## **2. Theory**

The aim of the second chapter is twofold. Firstly, it presents, based on extensive literature review, the theoretical concepts of this thesis. These theoretical concepts serve as a basis for the subsequent empirical investigation. Secondly, the chapter answers sub-question a) and presents theoretical expectations which can be derived from the theoretical framework. Due to the exploratory nature of this thesis, it is important to keep in mind that the presented concepts can be further elaborated or adjusted throughout the research process (Mills & Wiebe, 2010).

### **2.1 Europeanisation: top-down and bottom-up perspectives**

In the past, the term Europeanisation has been analysed and conceptualised in various ways without leading to one collective understanding. This section will introduce several definitions of Europeanisation, considering that they all complement each other. In a first step, this thesis will focus on the definition of Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005) who characterise Europeanisation “as a process in which states adopt EU rules” (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005: 7). A mechanism through which the EU is able to influence domestic change is conditionality. Conditionality is according to Schimmelfennig and Sedelmeier (2005) the EU’s power to establish a linkage between compliance and rewards or in other words it is the way in which EU incentives impact domestic administrative and political change. Following the logic of conditionality, the EU thus influences the European rule adoption, by either rewarding compliance (e.g. through funding, etc.) or sanctioning non-compliance (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005).

In this vein, Europeanisation may appear as a clear top-down process. Incentives from the EU level pressure the governments of the member states to take action and to change domestic rule

according to EU law. Following this approach, the above broached issue of discrepancies between rule adoption and implementation is often left out of consideration.

As stated above, Europeanisation literature has, however, recently started to emphasise the importance of investigating Europeanisation beyond compliance, at the practical implementation stage of European policies (Thomann & Zhelyazkova, 2017). An alternative approach of Europeanisation that allows to shift the attention in this direction is the multi-level governance approach of Europeanisation, as discussed by Dossi (2017). According to him, “the key idea is that decision-making competences are, though to varying degrees, shared by multiple actors at different levels and the nature of decision making into the boundaries of the states is now ‘collective’” (Dossi, 2017: 8). Consequently, this approach allows to assess more than just the hierarchical structures of European policymaking at the adoption stage. In doing so, it especially highlights the interplay of different levels in the EU’s governance system (Dossi, 2017). Such an interplay of different system levels is also emphasised by Spendzharova and Vachudova (2012), who find that domestic change only happens through an interplay of EU pressures and domestic forces. Another approach to Europeanisation is introduced by Parau (2009), who argues that the EU can be seen as an ‘opportunity-structure’ for domestic actors to pursue their goals and that Europeanisation also has a societal component: the wish of domestic actors to become part of the European community and to have a strong position in this community.

What can be drawn from those different approaches of Europeanisation is that European integration must be regarded from different angles. Following the line of argumentation of those different scholars, Europeanisation is considered to be a process, starting with external pressures from the EU (Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005) which are transferred to all system levels of the member states (Dossi, 2017). To complete Europeanisation, transformations according to EU requirements must at those levels be supported by a political commitment of the domestic actors (Spendzharova & Vachudova, 2012). Such domestic will either results from rewards given by the EU or the will to be part of the EU community (Parau, 2009).

## **2.2 Administrative capacity building**

Accession to the EU requires countries to have sufficient institutional and administrative capacity (European Commission, 2016). In other words, completing the Europeanisation process demands member states to undergo transformations of their public administration which increase their administrative capacity, to be able to implement the Acquis

Communautaire. Since this thesis aims to find factors which enhance Romania's administrative capacity on a local level, an explicit conceptualisation of administrative capacity and capacity-building is required.

As stated above and based on the definition by El-Taliawi and van der Wal (2019), administrative capacity is the ability of government to achieve its objectives. In other words, administrative capacity is a precondition for democratic and effective governance and hence an important factor determining the quality of government. The need for administrative capacity is simply based on the necessity of successful policymaking as a condition of a well-functioning state apparatus. Following Nelissen (2002), administrative capacity can be assessed on a national, regional or a local level.

Difficulties to investigate and assess administrative capacity arise from its high contextuality. Since governments operate in various ways, a comprehensive knowledge of the domestic government practices is required. Furthermore, administrative capacity can be influenced by several socio-political factors, demographic developments or institutional leakages (Nelissen, 2002). According to El-Taliawi and van der Wal (2019) there are, however, some determinants which foster administrative capacity. First, administrative capacity must be seen as a continuous process of capacity-building without a prior defined goal. Secondly, capacity-building must be based on a careful investigation of prior reform efforts, current capacity-gaps as well as possible failures, in order to learn from previous experiences. This means, administrative capacity building requires tailored reforms which fit the local context. Thirdly, capacity building requires the political will to adapt to contextual circumstances and to improve the status quo. Lastly, administrative capacity building also requires accountability of public authorities and transparency of public sector activities (El-Taliawi & van der Wal, 2019).

Even though administrative capacity building has increasingly been in the spotlight of public administration research, questions how to enhance administrative capacity building in different contexts remain. However, scholars agree on the fact that administrative capacity is based on a well-functioning public administration in the public sector. Increasing the public sector effectiveness thus requires public sector reforms. Reforms are "deliberate attempts to change the structures, processes, and/or cultures of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better" (Politt & Bouckaert, 2017: 24). However, to refer again to Thomann and Zhelyazkova (2017), Europeanisation does not only require the adoption of public sector reforms, but also their implementation.

### **2.2.1 Reform implementation**

The quality of government can be assessed by looking at the government's ability to adopt and implement designed policies (El-Taliawi & van der Wal, 2019). Talking about administrative capacity and capacity-building requires thus a more specific focus on the implementation stage of policies and hence an explicit definition of what policy implementation actually means.

Generally speaking, the process of policymaking requires many steps of which policy implementation is one of the most important. Following Khan "Implementation can be viewed as a process, an output and an outcome, and it involves a number of actors, organisations and techniques of control" (Khan, 2016:4). In other words, policy implementation does not simply mean putting a policy into practice. Instead, it is the procedure of reaching policy goals (Khan, 2016). In line with this definition, Rainey (2014) argues that policy implementation can be assessed by using the goal achievement approach, thus by investigating whether outlined policy targets have been attained or not. Furthermore, Khan (2016) introduces three different ways of approaching success and failure of policy implementation by looking at different actors. The top-down approach can be understood as the carrying out of policy targets by government-level authorities. In contrast to this, the bottom-up approach highlights street-level actors on the local level and their direct involvement in the target-achievement process of the respective policy. In other words, the bottom-up approach highlights the lowest system level and its actors as the only ones crucial for successful implementation and service delivery. An approach that connects those two levels is the hybrid approach, which emphasises the interplay between the government level and street-level actors to ensure successful and long-lasting policy implementation (Khan, 2016).

Recent public administration literature highlights the strong connection between administrative capacity building and the need to ensure the practical implementation of reforms to enhance the public sector effectiveness (El-Taliawi & Van der Wal, 2019). As discussed above, administrative capacity building is dependent on different determinants. Since successful policy implementation leads to an increase of administrative capacity, it is important to make sure determinants of administrative capacity building are not only considered in policymaking and at the adoption stage but also in the implementation.

### **2.3 The concept of governance**

To ensure the ability of governments to adopt and implement reforms, the field of public administration research was since the 1970's driven by debates about different reform trajectories and their ability to enhance the effectiveness of the public sector (Pollitt &

Bouckaert, 2017). A reform paradigm which has prevailed in several member states of the EU is governance.

According to Pollitt and Bouckaert (2017), the common ground in the various conceptualisations of governance is that effective policymaking requires not only the government to take action but also needs active participation of different actors in the process. Accordingly, governance tries to be more inclusive (in terms of partnerships among several governments, with business corporations or civil society) in its nature than it does in the traditional model of government. Due to the focus on decentralisation, moreover, the role of local governments is emphasised (Pollitt & Bouckaert, 2017).

Governance is thus a way of public policymaking, which is quite different from the traditional form of bureaucratic government. However, governance as a paradigm of public sector reform does not replace governments. According to Nielsen (2016) it should rather be understood as a reaction to globalisation and modernisation processes and as an extension to the traditional way of government ruling, in order to make it more efficient. In this vein, many scholars define what the process of building governance structures looks like and which attributes consequently constitute good governance. According to Dzatkova (2016), the EU defines good governance as being primarily based on the following constituting elements: openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence.

The member state's application of governance structures changes the way we look at administrative capacity building. In this thesis, the argument is made that comprehensive European integration requires both: First, top-down mechanisms to enable a more effective ruling of the member-state's public sectors and second, a bottom-up perspective of Europeanisation, enabling domestic actors to foster practical implementation to consequently strengthen administrative capacity on the long-run.

#### **2.4 The shift of the government-civil society relationship**

*“The shift from local government to governance paved the need for engagement of citizens in the decision-making process. Local authorities have the ability to fostering civic engagement in the policy decision-making, because, at this level, the concerns of the “grassroots” intersects directly with those of the state and governance and a high concentration of time and resources are spent locally, on the direct delivery of services” (Mititelu, 2019:2).*

In its participatory nature, governance changes the way different actors collaborate in the system and opens new paths towards the achievement of long-lasting administrative capacity.

The emphasis on public participation thus changes the government-citizen relationship, aiming to increase the public sector quality. In order to understand this shift, it is important to define what public participation is and what added value it is assumed to have on public sector processes.

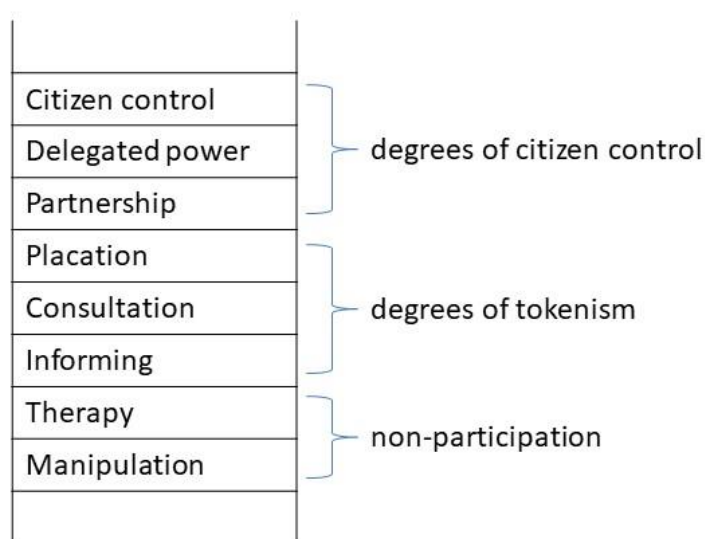
Public participation is today commonly understood as an inevitable part of a functioning democracy. However, this has not always been the case. For a long time, citizens were only seen as receivers of government services, without impacting them themselves (Waheduzzaman, 2010). The shift from government to governance changed this assumption, but still today, public participation is not a clearly defined concept. As Mititelu (2019) emphasises, the main characteristic in definitions of public participation is that it is described as an *active* involvement of people in a specific context. The goal of such an active involvement is to enable citizens to articulate their opinion and to influence and to monitor decision-making processes and different system levels. In other words, public participation means to increase the opportunities for citizens to participate and to accordingly expand the number of participating citizens, in order to raise legitimacy, accountability and transparency in decision-making. Consequently, the process is expected to lead to a growth of democratic structures (Dzatkova, 2016).

#### **2.4.1 Analysing public participation: Arnstein's ladder of participation**

In order to assess how the focus on public participation in governance systems affects and changes the government-citizen relationship and the way the public sector operates, several public administration scholars have put forward models of public participation. One of the most widely agreed models is Arnstein's ladder of participation (Mititelu, 2019). It is a model that offers theoretical guidance, in order to analyse government-citizen relationships. In other words, it is a means to assess the participatory status of present governance structures, which eventually lead to theoretically grounded statements about the level of public participation in a context under study.

The so called 'ladder of participation' describes eight different possible levels of citizen's involvement in decision-making processes (Arnstein, 1969). The first two and lowest stages of the ladder are described as 'non-participation' and consist of the two levels 'manipulation' and 'therapy'. The idea behind those low stages of participation is not that citizens are being involved in any kind of process, but rather that authorities use their power to steer and indoctrinate society. 'Non-participation' stages are followed by three levels of moderate participation. 'Informing', 'consultation' and 'placation' are grouped together as 'degrees of tokenism'. At those stages, the power clearly remains with the authorities. However, citizens

have to varying degrees a say in the decision-making process, as they have the chance to advise the power holders. The difference of those levels of tokenism to the levels of non-participation is thus that those upper levels of participation allow those parts of society, which would normally be excluded from any kind of policy process, to express their opinion. Nevertheless, their influence remains limited. The top of Arnstein's ladder consist of three stages: 'partnership', 'delegated power' and 'citizen control'. Those so called 'degrees of citizen power' enable citizens at the 'partnership'-stage to negotiate with authorities on an eye-to eye-level and on the top rungs to even engage as powerholders themselves (Arnstein, 1969).



*Figure 1: Arnstein's ladder of public participation*

#### **2.4.2 Analysing public participation: from agents to partners?**

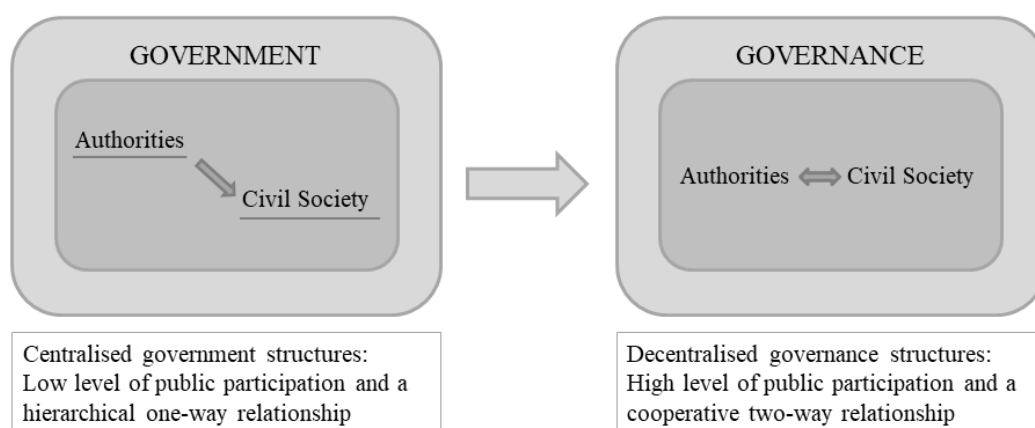
Moving up on Arnstein's ladder means moving up in terms of good governance (Baba et al, 2009). Public participation is hence both, a constituting element of governance and also an indicator to assess the present extent of good governance. Nevertheless, participation differs from country to country and is dependent on several contextual factors. The most important of those factors in the analysis of government-citizen relationships is the extent to which governments promote public participation and offer scope for development and action for citizens (Mititelu, 2019). In order to understand the complex patterns of public participation and how they could drive good governance and administrative capacity building, many public administration scholars have developed theoretical models which build on Arnstein's ladder of participation but go more in depth about the distinctive features of those different forms of government-citizen relationship at different stages in the shift from government to governance.



In the following, government-citizen relationships will be highlighted in their ideal appearances in government and governance structures. In the traditional form of government system, the power remains completely with the authorities. Relationships between government and civil society are characterised by a high extent of hierarchy and imply low or no scope of action for the civil society (Waheduzzaman, 2010). As a result, this may lead to what Arnstein (1969) calls ‘non-participation’ of citizens.

On the contrary, in the ideal type of governance, government-citizen relationship is emphasised as a partnership. Brinkerhoff (2003) defines partnership as being built on equality in decision-making and organisational autonomy vis à vis the partner (Brinkerhoff, 2003). In terms of goal attainment, a partnership can be advantageous. Complex circumstances usually require several measures which are easier to conduct with someone else’s help. For instance, partners can contribute to public service delivery with information provision and tactical support (Brinkerhoff, 2002). Transferred to the relationship between government and civil society, the principle of partnership means that both entities meet each other on an eye-to-eye level and pursue aligned goals. Resulting from this, civil society has a wide scope of action in its task-fulfilment, which is based on trust. Whilst earning financial support, trust and satisfaction from the governmental institution it can support its partner by initiating policy dialogue and presenting solutions from the most immediate level. Whenever the governmental level is unable to present answers to societal and political difficulties and conflicts due to its distance to society, civil society actors can break down those complexities as mediator and local supporter (Brinkerhoff, 2003).

From these ideal types of government and governance and the principal-agent and partnership relations within it, the following graphical models and ideal types of public participation can be derived, which have been designed for this thesis and were inspired by the models of Waheduzzaman (2010):



*Figure 2: relationship between public authorities and civil society in government and governance structures*

However, it is important to keep in mind that those graphics are only theoretical models. Accordingly, reality mostly looks different. However, the principle of partnership is clearly highlighted as a condition of good governance. Hence, the closer the government-citizen relationship is to a partnership, the more is this important aspect of good governance fulfilled. Good governance is an ideal which stands for an efficiently working public sector, the basic requirement of administrative capacity. Therefore, contextual circumstances must always be considered when the government-citizen relationship is being studied, in order to assess at what stage of the government-governance shift a country stands and how much power civil society potentially has in the respective context to further that shift (Butkevičienė et al., 2010).

## **2.5 Conceptualising civil society**

Before one can look at government-citizen relationships in reality and what they imply for the achievement of good governance and administrative capacity, it is important to be clear about what kind of actor, what kind of civil society is emphasised due to public sector transformations and will be highlighted in the course of this thesis.

Civil society has many faces. It includes citizens, civil society organisations (CSOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the non-profit or third sector. As a concept, it remains thus rather blurry. As Butkevičienė et al. (2010) highlight, many scholars agree, however, on the definition that civil society always is an actor operating outside of the state and the market. A characteristic, which underlines the value of civil society in political systems. From its outside-position, civil society can enhance the legitimacy of decision-making, when processes are based on dialogue and exchange with the society. Furthermore, civil society can increase

the accountability of government action, when authorities need to justify their action before the public. Moreover, civil society can enhance the transparency of government ruling, when they are involved in decision-making processes (Mititelu, 2019).

In this thesis, the focus will be laid on NGOs, in order to investigate their importance as local actors, involved in reform processes and boosting local administrative capacity. From a theoretical perspective, a democracy consists of three sectors: a public sector, a private sector and a non-profit sector. In this third sector, NGOs are the ruling actors. Due to this position in between the two other sectors, NGOs have one main benefit. On the one hand, they can forward information from the government-level to the citizens and on the other hand they can aggregate information from the people and transfer it to the government. In doing so, NGOs are strongly connected to both sides, but still remain independent: A position that allows them to influence policy planning and policy-outcomes in a way that benefits the public good (Popowska & Lunski, 2014). This special position of NGOs is the reason why they have been chosen as the part of civil society which will be under study in the following. Civil society as such is barely within reach and its contribution to good governance and administrative capacity building can hardly be assessed. NGOs, however, have increasingly gained importance. As actors, they have the ability to mediate between different system levels and to make use of their specific expertise. As organised forms of civil society at this specific position within the system, their impact can more clearly be made visible.

## **2.6 An answer to sub-question a) and theoretical expectations**

The EU, through Europeanisation and conditionality pressures, influences transformations and stimulates public sector reforms, in order to guarantee a comprehensive European integration of the new member states. Countries like Romania, however, still lag in their reform process and are therefore being challenged to find factors that expedite their transformation process (European Commission, 2018). For a very long-time, public administration researchers did not find explanations for Romania's weak performance, since they regarded Europeanisation as a clear top-down process, which stops at the adoption stage of European policies at the national level (cf. Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier, 2005). Recently, scholars like Dossi (2017) changed this perception and regarded Europeanisation from a different angle. Within the multi-level governance approach (Dossi, 2017) it becomes obvious that it is not European rule adoption that causes problems, but rather the practical implementation of designed policies which seems to be difficult to realise for countries like Romania (Thomann & Zhelyazkova, 2017). Emphasising this issue of policy implementation shifts the attention from the state-level to the

local-level and highlights that Europeanisation is more than European rule adoption. Europeanisation is the complex process of integrating in the EU, at different system levels. With its multilevel approach, Europeanisation also drives the shift from the traditional, bureaucratic form of government to governance, a participatory way of ruling the public sector which should enhance its effectiveness.

To answer sub-question a) (*How has the shift towards governance principles (driven by EU conditionality) highlighted local Romanian NGOs as a possible supporting factor in local governance?*) it can be stated that governance principles change the way we look at administrative capacity building. In its participatory nature, domestic actors are highlighted to play a crucial for effective policymaking and thus for the process of increasing administrative capacity. As the literature review has shown, NGOs can assist at various stages in the policy-process. With their expertise, they can assure that a policy is adapted to the local context and fits the need of the citizens. A function, which allows to assume that NGOs can also be valuable actors with respect to the implementation of policies. However, as emphasised by many scholars, the impact of public participation on administrative capacity building is conditional on the relationship between government and civil society (Mititelu, 2019). In an ideal type of governance, government and civil society operate as partners on an eye-to eye level. Due to this trust relationship and the large scope of action for civil society which results from it, civil society can make use of its expertise to restrict policy-failures and can emerge as a possible supporting factor for administrative capacity building in local governance.

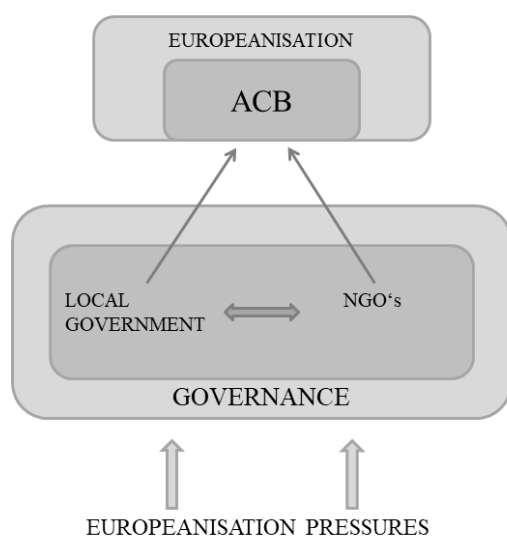


Figure 3: theoretical graph

Derived from these core insights, the analysis will be based on the following theoretical expectations:

1. Due to the shift towards governance principles, local government and NGOs in Cluj-Napoca are in the process of developing a partnership relationship.
2. Due to the position of Cluj-Napoca's NGOs in the local governance system, they are developing as actors capable to bridge the gap between policy adoption and policy implementation and hence play a crucial role in the implementation of the city's development strategy, which is designed to enhance the city's administrative capacity.

To conclude, the literature review sheds a light on the complex interplay between the concepts introduced in this study. However, it is important to recognise that all presented concepts are very contextual. Discrepancy between theory and practice, between the NGOs theoretical contribution for local governance and practical implementation and their real impact on those processes are thus likely to appear. One reason for this is the rather Eurocentric point of view introduced by the different scholars. Eurocentrism is an intellectual current which evaluates everything from a European point of view. In doing so, it builds on the mastery characteristic of the enlightenment, applied in a different, post-colonial context. Repeatedly, Eurocentrism is hence criticised for its perception of the superiority of European values. This criticism also applies for the theoretical concepts elaborated in this thesis. Europeanisation literature highlights the power of the EU to foster domestic change in the member states, according to the values and ideas of the EU (McLennan, 2003). As such, it does neither leave much room for different developments in the member states, nor does it leave scope for alternative explanations of domestic transformations.

A similar criticism can be applied on Arnstein's ladder of public participation. Since climbing up Arnstein's ladder is considered to be beneficial for the achievement of good governance, the Eurocentric and normative touch of this theoretical approach can easily be depicted. The perception that a high level of public participation is crucial for democratic governance, is clearly a western European one. It remains thus questionable to what extent the ladder of public participation can also be applied to very different contexts, such as to countries like Romania which do not have a long tradition of democratic participation like western European countries. Even though it is very important to consider this critique, there is still justification to use those theories as an explanatory basis in this thesis. According to McLennan (2003) Eurocentrism is still valuable to understand what guides our actions. This is also valid here. The EU is a

voluntary Union of states and needs to set certain requirements vis à vis its member states to guarantee its credibility. Since Romania wanted to become member of the EU and is willing to improve its position in the EU, it is rather helpful to use Eurocentric theoretical constructs to understand expectations from the EU, to consequently support Romania in complying with them. Furthermore, to relativize Eurocentric connotations, this thesis uses a bottom-up approach, as opposed to a Eurocentric top-down approach. In doing so, it offers the opportunity to find solutions for political and societal problems from a less mastery perspective, emphasising the contribution of the grassroots-level for a voluntary Europeanisation from the bottom to the top (see section 3.1 – bottom-up approach). Moreover, the explanatory nature of the thesis allows for the adoption to local conditions and leaves room for different explanations than the one's presented in this theoretical framework. Additionally, the thesis aims to highlight the impact of public participation on the specific determinants of administrative capacity building, instead of only generally emphasising the potential benefit of civil society inclusion.

Therefore, the subsequent chapters offer an in-depth analysis of contextual circumstances, as well as an investigation of the NGOs role at the local level, without denying expectations formulated by the EU and Romania's national government. Doing so permits a comprehensive discrepancy analysis between theory and practice, in order to investigate the real impact of public participation on local administrative capacity building.

### **3. Methodology**

In chapter three the research design, the case selection, the data collection and the data analysis strategy are introduced. Thus, the chapter discusses how this research project is structured and designed, in order to ensure its reproducibility.

#### **3.1 Research design**

The following section illustrates the research design employed in this thesis. This thesis follows a qualitative approach. Qualitative research methods are generally used to generate an in-depth understanding of social contexts. A major advantage of such an approach is that it enables researchers to immerse into the world of the study population to find an answer to societal problems from the most immediate level (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). In this particular study, a descriptive-exploratory case study is employed, in order to analyse the impact of public participation on local administrative capacity building. Exploratory research is a form of the

qualitative approach, which is used to analyse phenomena in a field in which not yet enough empirical data is gathered to conduct a testing research. Therefore, the aim of an exploratory research is to contribute to the existing data with an in depth-analysis which can then be used for further causal or explanatory research (Mills & Wiebe, 2010).

Next to the exploratory nature of the study, a case study is used to answer the research question. Following Van Thiel “the case study is a research strategy, in which one or several cases of the subject of study are examined in an everyday, real-life setting. A case can be almost anything: a group, an organization, a country, a city or neighbourhood, an event, a relationship, a project or process – it can even be a law or decision” (Van Thiel, 2014, p.2). Hence, a case study means doing field research which aims to find explanations for a particular social phenomenon or issue in the field under study. Especially important components of a case study are thus its applied nature and its explicit focus on details (Van Thiel, 2014). Merged together, an exploratory case study is a very flexible method of conducting research. Since it is not based on testing strict hypotheses which have been derived from the theory, it allows for a combination of data collection methods and adjustments during the research process, in order to react to new arising insights. Those characteristics make an exploratory case study the most suitable research design for this research project (Mills & Wiebe, 2010).

In this thesis, the impact of public participation on local administrative capacity building is studied. Transferred to the specific context, the research aim of this thesis is to study the contribution of NGOs to the implementation of Cluj-Napoca’s development strategy. As elaborated above, a lot of research only focusses on the adoption of policies which should enhance administrative capacity but does not take the importance of implementation, to achieve administrative capacity, into account. The gathered data in the framework of this exploratory case study allows for an in-depth analysis of this important issue of effective public sector ruling. Until now, there is very limited data available about the impact of civil society on practical governance, especially in the context of Romania’s local administrative systems. Therefore, the research design employed does not only provide the opportunity to contribute to the filling of this research gap, but also provides a basis for further testing research on this topic.

### *The bottom-up approach*

Content-related, this thesis follows a different approach than many other studies with related topics do (cf. Levitz & Pop-Eleches, 2010; Börzel & Schimmelfennig, 2017). Whereas a lot of research projects focus on a top-down perspective about how to enhance administrative capacity

and how to make member states comply with EU rules, this thesis focusses on a bottom-up perspective. In doing so, it aims to highlight the impact of domestic factors and actors on administrative capacity building and hence on strengthening Romania's position within the EU. However, studying Europeanisation from the bottom to the top is only possible when the research design allows for this approach. The 'real-life setting' of a case study is in this respect especially important, since the context plays a crucial role in this research. All steps of the analysis must incorporate and respect the local conditions of Cluj-Napoca's local administrative system, in order to be able to make statements whether NGOs can be a boosting factor of local administrative capacity building or not.

Besides respecting the local conditions, an exploratory case study design also allows to get involved with the local actors, to hear about their experiences, successes and the challenges they are facing. With regard to the research question, those are very valuable insights. Nevertheless, following Khan's (2016) argumentation of the hybrid approach to guarantee successful policy implementation, both government authorities and street-level actors need to cooperate. Therefore, this study does not only aim to explore determining factors of local administrative capacity building from the most immediate level with expert interviews, but also takes the EU level and Romania's national government level into account via document analyses. The goal of this approach is to lighten the macro level, regarding the expectations there are in terms of participatory governance and to compare that with actual circumstances at the meso level. The meso level will be explicitly highlighted and take the most part of the analysis, nonetheless the importance and driving force of the macro level must be considered.

### *Reliability and validity*

Reliability and validity are two criteria to assess the quality of empirical research. Discussing how to tackle threats to reliability and validity is of high importance in this methodology section. Reliability means, according to Yin (2009), to ensure the reproducibility of the study. In other words, in order to be reliable, a study must show the same results in its initial conduction as when it is carried out again. Due to the extensive discussion of data collection and data analysis strategies, as well as a detailed elaboration of the concepts and their operationalisation on which this research is based, the reproducibility of this thesis has always been respected during the research process. Validity is generally concerned with whether a research uses purposeful methods, in order to answer the research question. Validity can again be split up in three different types. Construct validity refers to whether a concept has been



precisely operationalised (Yin, 2009). In this thesis, there are the two main concepts ‘level of public participation’ and ‘local administrative capacity building’ which have been derived from an extensive literature review and which are carefully operationalised according to their main determinants (see section 3.3 -*operationalisation*) Internal validity is a criterion to assess whether the results of a research appear to be trustable. To ensure internal validity, a research must reduce biases as much as possible (Lewis & Ritchie, 2003). A helpful method to diminish biases is called triangulation. Triangulation is “a way of collecting or processing information by using different operationalizations, data sources, researchers, or methods” (van Thiel, 2014, p. 92). In doing so, the richness and precision of the gathered data is increased and according validity is being improved. In this study, document analyses and interviews are combined as data collection methods to ensure the validity of the results (see section 3.3). To decrease biases and to safeguard a systemic way of data analysis, coding strategies have been employed for the document analyses and the interview transcripts (see section 3.4). Moreover, to ensure reproducibility, all interviews were based on an interview guide included in annex A.3. The semi-structured nature of the interviews was used to reduce biases and to strengthen internal validity. Interview questions were derived from the theoretical framework and are posed in an open way (Van Thiel, 2014). External validity is concerned with the applicability of a study’s findings on a different sample than the one that has been studied already (Yin, 2009). Due the in-depth nature of the analysis as well as the uniqueness of the context studied, it is difficult to generalise the results of this thesis. Hence, findings for Cluj-Napoca are not automatically valid for any other city in Romania. However, explanations found in this particular context are still meaningful, since they offer an in-depth description of the subject under study and can be used as a basis for further research.

### **3.2 Case selection**

The following section illustrates the reasoning behind the case selection for this thesis. In this thesis, the case selection is based on the extreme case method, introduced by Seawright and Gerring (2008). “The extreme case method is a purely exploratory method – a way of probing possible causes for Y, or possible effects of X, in an open-ended fashion (Seawright & Gerring, 2008, p. 302). It is hence a useful method to answer my exploratory research question. In this thesis, it was decided to take a deeper look on Cluj-Napoca and its development strategy, while especially focussing on the inclusion of civil society in designing and implementing this strategy. The focus is laid on the local (city-) level, since the EU emphasises the important role of local governments in implementing EU policies, achieving economic growth and competitiveness and promoting social and territorial cohesion (European Parliament, 2017).

What makes Cluj-Napoca an extreme case, is its vibrant population and its extraordinary ambition to strategically develop and improve the local public administration. A major advantage of the city is that it has a university and thus a high degree of intellectual capital. In Cluj-Napoca, advancements are visible which could potentially act as an example for other Romanian municipalities. The city can therefore be described as a ‘best practice example’, which makes investigating the functions of civil society in such an advanced environment very interesting.

### **3.3. Data collection**

The following section illustrates the data collection methods which have been employed in this thesis. This research is based on a qualitative data analysis and combines document analysis and four semi-structured interviews with key experts in the field. This approach thus integrates existing data with original data, gathered from the interviews. Hence, the data collection of this study is based on triangulation, to ensure validity and wealth of data.

#### *Document analysis*

The first method of data collection employed in this study is a document analysis of different policy papers. The aim of these document analyses is to characterise the context of this study and to define the expected involvement of NGOs in fostering administrative capacity building, especially with regard to the inclusion of NGOs in designing and implementing Cluj-Napoca’s development strategy. The documents are used to gather information from different system levels: *What does the EU expect from civil society in transition countries?* – to understand the driving force of Europeanisation behind Romania’s transition. *How is civil society inclusion highlighted at the national level? What measures are taken to strengthen participatory governance and why?* – to understand national efforts behind the development of participatory governance structures. *How is civil society highlighted at the local level?* – to understand local efforts behind the development of participatory governance structures. In doing so, the meso level as well as the transition towards the macro level is highlighted. The data analysis strategy is discussed in section 3.4 An overview about the documents used for this part of the analysis can be found in annex A.1. All documents are publicly available in English, except the extensive version of Cluj-Napoca’s development strategy. The relevant chapter on public participation in the strategy has thus been translated to English, by means of Google Translate. The translation is available upon request.

### *Expert interviews*

The second method of data collection employed in this study is the conduction of several expert interviews. The interviews are semi-structured in their nature. Semi-structured means that the interview questions are defined before conducting the interview but are posed in an open manner. This method ensures the reproducibility of the study and allows the interview-partner a certain extent of discretion while answering the questions. Semi-structured interviews are therefore a useful method to gain an in-depth knowledge of the social reality of the interview-partner and include the opportunity of exploring additional factors which might play a role for the research problem (Van Thiel, 2014). In this thesis, the goal of the interviews is to study the de facto involvement of NGOs in designing and implementing Cluj-Napoca's development strategy. In order to find this out, the interview questions primarily focus on two topics: 1) the level of public participation in Cluj & the relationship of NGOs to the local governments 2) the impact of NGOs on local administrative capacity building. Depending on the present level of public participation, conclusions can be drawn to what extent determinants of local administrative capacity building can be influenced by the work of NGOs. Hence, the interviews are used to gather information which cannot be derived from the prior document analysis. The four chosen interview partners are all experts in Cluj-Napoca's NGOs sector, either because they are working for one of the local NGOs which has been involved in the design and/or implementation stage of the strategy, or because they are representatives of the local university, which has been in charge of managing the NGO involvement.

Besides triangulation, the two methods of data collection allow to assess whether there is discrepancy between the expected involvement of civil society in local governance processes on paper, and the de facto involvement of civil society in Cluj-Napoca, investigated by means of the interviews.

### *Operationalisation*

Operationalisation of the core concepts is used to connect the theoretical discussion of the main concepts to some concrete measures. The two main concepts in this thesis are 'level of public participation' and 'local administrative capacity building'.

*Level of public participation* is for this thesis defined as the extent to which NGOs are involved in local governance processes in Cluj-Napoca. The concept has three main determinants, which have been derived from Arnstein's (1969) ladder of public participation. Measuring all stages

of Arnstein's ladder would not be possible because of the smooth transition between the different stages, whose measurement would require more time than the scope of this thesis offers. Therefore, the most relevant stages are grouped together. *Information* is measured as the extent to which NGOs receive information from the local government about the decisions made in the city's development strategy. *Consultation* refers to the extent to which comments and feedback from the NGOs on the development strategy are taken into consideration. *Partnership* refers to the extent to which NGOs are even continuously involved in decision-making processes and earn trust and a certain scope of action in their task-fulfilment from the local government.

*Local administrative capacity building* is for this thesis defined as the process of getting governments to achieve their objectives by enabling practical policy implementation in participatory governance structures. For this study, the main focus is laid on the need for practical implementation as a crucial determinant of local administrative capacity building. Practical implementation has some relevant determinants which also apply for administrative capacity building in general. The four main determinants of this second concept are derived from El-Taliawi & van der Wal (2019) and Khan (2016) and are measured with respect to the NGOs ability to have an impact on them. First, as the theory suggests, local administrative capacity building requires participatory processes. *Participation* is measured as the extent to which the local government and NGOs have a partnership relation in Cluj-Napoca. Secondly, implementation and local administrative capacity building requires the political will of the local authorities to implement. *Political will* is measured as the extent to which the political will of local authorities is present and influenced by the work of NGOs. Thirdly, *tailored reforms* as a determinant of implementation is measured as the extent to which NGOs can influence the strategy's fit to the local context. Lastly, *accountability and transparency* are measured as the extent to which decisions are transparent and justified before the public due to the cooperation between the local government and NGOs.

### **3.4 Data analysis strategy**

The following section illustrates the data analysis strategy which is used to answer the research question. "In qualitative research, we start looking for patterns or relationships while collecting data" (Neuman, 2014: 479). Qualitative data analysis is thus less standardised than quantitative analysis, open for adjustments during the research process and has the goal to conceptualise, link concepts and create theoretical relationships. To arrive at this goal, it is however useful to follow a strategy for analysing the gathered data.

The goal of the analysis is a theory-based process evaluation of the level of public participation in Cluj-Napoca's development strategy, in order to find out whether civil society can be a factor enhancing the local administrative capacity building by contributing to the design and eventually implementation of the development strategy. Therefore, this thesis assesses the participatory structures in Cluj-Napoca's local governance and their impact on crucial determinants of implementation and local administrative capacity building on paper and in practice. As stated above, the expected involvement of NGOs is highlighted by means of document analyses and is compared to their de facto involvement, assessed by means of the expert interviews. In doing so, potential discrepancies, as well as measures how to overcome those, can be demonstrated.

Furthermore, Cluj-Napoca is expected to be in a development process, which this thesis wants to highlight and investigate. *At what stage of the shift from government to governance is Romania's local public administration?* A process is in this thesis defined as a development which leads to the achievement of policy goals. As mentioned before, the underlying study proposition is thus:

*The more participatory the local processes are, the more likely is Cluj-Napoca's development strategy successfully implemented, since cooperative structures allow a greater contribution of NGOs on the determinants of policy implementation and local administrative capacity building*

The analysis is therefore based on a theoretical model of public participation and applies its criteria to the context under study. The level of public participation is then measured at two moments of time, according to sub-question two and three: 1. public participation in the development of the strategy 2. public participation right now, at the implementation stage of the strategy. Since the interview questions refer to those two moments of time, it is possible to reveal what the current relationship between local government and civil society is and whether there has been a development in the level of public participation in Cluj-Napoca or not. To further highlight the influence of public participation at the implementation stage of the strategy, the ability of NGOs to impact specific determinant of policy implementation and hence local administrative capacity building is investigated. To do so, the thesis uses the three methods/steps transcription, coding and comparison.

### *Transcription*

All interviews are recorded and transcribed with the computer programme F4. Names and other personal information are treated anonymously, in order to guarantee the privacy of the

interview-partners. The transcripts are available upon request and under specific conditions.

### *Coding*

Coding is a useful method of analysis with the aim of finding similar patterns in a set of data. In the process of coding, words or short sentences are assigned to text segments in a describing or interpretative manner (Saldana, 2016). In this thesis, all documents, as well as the interview transcripts are coded to ensure the systematic treatment of the data and a structured comparison. The coding is done manually. In a first step, codes are assigned to text segments of the analysed documents in a descriptive manner. In a second step, similar codes are grouped together and assigned to code categories. Those code categories correspond to the main determinants of the central concepts introduced in the operationalisation section (data analysis-3.3). Text segments with codes which are not assigned to one of the code categories are perceived as not being particularly relevant for the concept analysis but used as valuable source of context information or for further elaborations. A list of the code categories and their definitions can be found in annex A.2. The codebook is available upon request.

### *Comparison*

In a next step, all data is concept-wise summarised and compared. *What are the core statements? Are there differences between the document data and the interview data? If so, does the interview data offer explanation for those discrepancies?*

To sum up, the presented data analysis strategy does not only offer a way to link the local conditions to the broader picture of Europeanisation and Romania's struggle to complete its European integration, but also clearly focusses on the meso level. In doing so, the development process of local administrative systems becomes visible and offers the opportunity to assess progresses and challenges which need to be considered to enhance the local administrative capacity. However, the data collection and analysis also have some limitations with regard to the quantity and diversity of the conducted interviews. Those will be further addressed in section 5.2.

## **4. Analysis**

In chapter 4, the data is analysed and discussed. Section 4.1 presents relevant context information and the case background. Afterwards, the sections 4.2 and 4.3 present the findings of the document analyses for the macro level. Section 4.4 displays the results for the meso level, combining insights from the documents and the expert interviews. Furthermore, the section gives an answer to sub-question b) and c) and discusses the previously made theoretical expectations.

### **4.1 Context of this thesis**

This section aims to examine the context of this thesis in a threefold way. Firstly, this section gives an overview about the relation between Romania and the EU and its evolution over time. Secondly, the section highlights the development of civil society in Romania. Thirdly, the section concentrates on the case study about Cluj-Napoca and gives some relevant background information about this case.

#### *Romania and the EU*

Since the overall goal of this thesis is to gain first insights whether Romanian civil society can be a crucial actor to further the local administrative capacity building by contributing to the implementation of local development reforms and consequently strengthen Romania's position in the EU, it is important to look at the evolution and the current status of Romania-EU relations. Doing so does not only give insights about Romania's pre- and post-accession development, but also about the impact of the EU on this development (see section 2.1), an important observation with regard to the analysis in the subsequent sections.

Romania entered the EU in 2007, as one of ten post-communist countries which are now members of the EU. Prior to its accession, Romania had to undergo a complex pre-accession process, in order to comply with the *Acquis Communautaire*. Compared to other Eastern European member states, Romania still performs relatively weak in terms of its administrative development and its public sector effectiveness. Moreover, the country is challenged to overcome the high degree of corruption (Spendzharova & Vachudova, 2012).

In order to support Romania in its transformation process and to monitor its advancement, the EU established the CVM. By means of regular reports, the EU assesses the country's progress and gives recommendations how to address shortcomings in specific policy-areas (European Commission, 2019). According to Spendzharova and Vachudova (2012), the CVM can thus be seen as a method of expanding Europeanisation pressures to the post-accession period.

However, as Andreev (2009) states the first two years of membership in the EU were marked by a lack of political commitment at the Romanian side to continue the development process and Europeanisation pressures had only a minor influence. As stated in section 2.1 this argumentation is in line with the findings of Spendzharova and Vachudova (2012), who emphasise that domestic change only happens through an interplay of EU pressures and domestic forces. Fruitful EU-Romania relationships are hence crucial for Romania to make the next steps in its European integration process. Only when there is a domestic will for transformation, Europeanisation pressures have an impact. After a longstanding process with successes and backsliding, the European Commission observed in 2018 that Romania has not yet fulfilled the goals set in the CVM and needs to be further monitored during the following Commission mandate (European Commission, 2018). Even though there are hurdles to overcome and Romania still needs to finish its Europeanisation process, the country participates actively at the EU level. For instance, from January until June 2019 Romania held the presidency of the Council of the EU, a valuable opportunity for the country, which has been in this position for the first time since its accession (European Commission, 2019).

#### *Civil society development in Romania*

Since the Romanian civil society is the subject under study in this thesis, it is important to illustrate some distinctive features and context information. In comparison to other Eastern European countries, Romania's non-profit sector has for a long time been characterised by a slow development, due to political and societal instabilities, the religious domination of Orthodox Christianity and the communist regime (Badescu et al., 2004).

With the fall of the communist regime in 1989, Romania's civil society became more active and the non-profit sector started to grow. An important step to enable public participation was the establishment of a legislative framework, which introduced a legal basis for public participation in Romania's public administration (Matei, 2013). However, according to Matei (2013) not only the legal opportunities for civil society increased after 1989, but also the societal perceptions of active participation and NGOs evolved. Whereas the 1990s were still primarily marked by scepticism towards the non-profit sector, the perception of NGOs changed during Romania's pre-accession period to the EU and are constantly improving. "The NGOs played an important role in the preparation of accession into the EU by influencing public policies, engaging in lobbying and advocacy, and providing specialized expertise for drafting or coordinating various studies" (Matei, 2013: 230). Still, there are scholars which disagree with the visible empowerment of civil society or at least have a far more critical view on the actual



contribution of Romanian civil society to policy processes, not only before the country's accession to the EU but also afterwards. According to Badescu et al. (2004), Romanian civil society is still challenged to overcome the lack of trust in public institutions, which has endured after the fall of the communist regime. Accordingly, many people do not feel encouraged to participate in the public life. On the other hand, even if the civil society is willing to get involved in public sector activities, the political will of public authorities still remains a crucial determinant for public participation. As Parau (2009) emphasises, the political will to involve civil society arises from the country's wish to be an accepted member in the EU community and the community itself promotes public participation extensively. Due to this dependency and given the very young tradition of liberal democracy in Romania, it is traceable that public participation undergoes phases of increase and decrease according to the political situation in the country, however, with a general tendency of a slowly growing and more widely accepted non-profit sector (Matei, 2013).

#### *Case background*

Since the following analysis, in a last step, zooms in on the meso level to reflect on the de facto involvement of NGOs in designing and implementing local reforms to contribute to the local administrative capacity, it is important to illustrate characteristics of the meso level by providing background information. Results from the comprehensive meso level analysis will then be compared to expectations formulated by the EU and the national level at the macro level, in order to depict potential discrepancies.

As mentioned above, the city under examination in this thesis is Cluj-Napoca. Cluj-Napoca is Romania's second largest city, located at the centre of Transylvania. Within its more than 320.000 inhabitants, Cluj-Napoca unifies people with various ethical backgrounds and confessions. Moreover, the city can be characterised by its vibrant cultural life and its high degree of human capital. The degree of human capital is grounded in the city's university life and its innovative business sector (Cluj Napoca City Hall, 2019)

*“Cluj-Napoca is today a regional center of innovation and opportunities, an attractive tourist destination, a pleasant place to live, work and study; a city with responsible and open local authorities, active citizens and a dynamic and involved business community.”*

(Emil Boc, Mayor of Cluj-Napoca - Cluj Napoca City Hall, 2019)

What can be derived from this statement is that the city promotes itself as a role model not only in terms of the opportunities it offers its citizens, but also with respect to the quality of its public

sector. The city's evolution is based on a strategic process, framed by the City's development strategy. It is in line with recommendations made by the EU, which promotes the implementation of governance structures in all member states and encourages countries like Romania to strengthen their administrative capacity. Therefore, and in order to comply with EU regulations, reform processes are no longer limited to the national level of the member states, but also expand to the local level. The development strategy of Cluj-Napoca is thus an example of local efforts to transform the public administration and make it more effective. Since the EU supports such reform processes, it has been spending about 100 million Euros under the umbrella of the EU's Cohesion Policy until 2018 (Cluj Napoca City Hall, 2019). Accordingly, the development strategy for Cluj-Napoca was designed in 2013 for the period 2014-2020, to fit to the financing framework of the EU (Cluj-Napoca Development strategy, 2013a). The overall aim of the strategy is to promote Cluj-Napoca's local development to guarantee a better quality of life for its residents. To achieve this objective, the strategy is built on the three main pillars: Innovation, University and Participation. Besides the local strategy, the local efforts to develop and enhance the local administrative capacity become visible in the city's application for the title of EU's capital of culture in 2021.

To conclude, the aim of this section was to display important background information about the subjects under study in this thesis. Those insights are crucial to understand the contextuality of the concepts in this thesis. All results of the subsequent analysis should be viewed in this specific context, since they are only applicable in this presented framework.

#### **4.2 EU level analysis**

Against the background of the in section 2.2 presented Europeanisation literature and the in this vein displayed power of the EU to influence and boost domestic change in its member states, it is important to analyse expectations and recommendations given by the EU in terms of transformations towards governance and administrative capacity building developments. From a theoretical point of view, it is hence likely that suggestions made by the EU will be taken into consideration and incorporated at the national or local level of Romania's public administrations, since the country is willing to improve its position in the EU. By analysing EU documents, it is furthermore possible to reveal whether the determinants of administrative capacity, which have been theoretically discussed in section 2.2 are incorporated and promoted by the EU. This is an important step, in order to support or adjust the theory.

In the analysis of different EU documents, it becomes visible that the EU functions in a multi-layered system and particularly highlights the contributions of each system level for the

functioning of the Union as a whole. The EU hence also highlights the local levels as important for policymaking. In this thesis, the particular case under study is the city Cluj-Napoca. As stated in the EU paper ‘The role of cities in the institutional framework of the European Union’ (2017) European cities have an important role in the European governance system. According to the EU, cities have the potential to improve the effectiveness of policymaking in the EU, since their expertise of the local conditions can ameliorate the fit of policies to those local conditions and hence increase the likelihood of successful policy implementation (European Parliament, 2017). The importance of tailor-made policies or reforms is hence not only theoretically emphasised by El-Taliawi and van der Wal (2019) but also practically highlighted by the EU. However, the inclusion of cities is dependent on the political will of local authorities to engage and to create linkages to the EU in local policymaking (European Parliament, 2017). Thus, political will is another factor which has proven to not only be theoretically relevant, but to be visible and discussed in EU documents.

Enabling local levels to engage in EU policymaking, however, requires more than political support. The EU highlights the implementation of governance structures as crucial for an inclusive policymaking at all system levels. For each member state of the Union, the goal must be to achieve good governance by strengthening the constituting elements openness, participation, accountability, effectiveness and coherence. Only through a restructuring of the public sector, member states are able to increase their administrative capacity, for the EU a requirement “for delivering the EU’s treaty obligations and objectives, such as creating sustainable growth and jobs, and maximising the benefits from EU membership” (European Commission, 2018: 7). With this demand to invest in administrative capacity building, the EU shows that it is aware of its potential to initiate domestic transformations, but also that development needs a clear set of criteria to be successful. Next to political commitment and tailor-made policies, it is thus visible that the EU also promotes the other in section 2.2 discussed determinants of administrative capacity, namely accountability, transparency and participation by enumerating the constituting elements of good governance.

In terms of accountability and transparency the EU aims for more clarity in public sector activities, especially in decision-making and policymaking at all system levels (European Commission, 2001). Making polices more accountable before the public and the process of designing and implementing them more transparent, requires according to the EU, a rethinking of the nature of reform and transformation processes, towards a less top-down practice (European Commission, 2018). In the analysis of EU documents, it can be discovered that the

EU especially highlights methods of open government and public participation to increase accountability and transparency. Since public participation and its impact on local administrative capacity building is at the core of this thesis, the extent and way in which the EU highlights the role of civil society as an important actor in public administration, will be expressed in the following paragraph.

In the European Commission's paper 'Public Administration Reform in Europe: Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations for future EU policy' (2018) it is stated that "even though civil society is not seen as major reform driver, it still has a role to play in terms of accountability, transparency and participation" (European Commission, 2018: 30). Public participation is hence seen as an opportunity to increase the connection between the EU and the civil society in all member states with the goal of improving policymaking on site. Moreover, partnerships between administrations and civil society serve, according to the EU, the efficiency of the public sector and ameliorate the public service delivery (European Commission, 2014). Eventually, inclusive processes are expected to increase the public's trust in policy outcomes and institutional structures within the member state's public sectors (European Commission, 2001). To strengthen public participation, the EU demands its member state to invest more in the support of an active civil society (European Commission, 2018).

What can be drawn from the analysis of EU documents is threefold. Firstly, the EU documents have shown accordance with the prior theoretical considerations in terms of Europeanisation pressures. As the formulations in the EU documents show, the EU is aware of its position vis à vis the member states and develops clear requests what should be done to comply with EU requirements. In doing so, the EU also emphasises the need to foster developments in the member states. Secondly, the findings of the EU document analysis support the theory related to the importance of administrative capacity building. High administrative capacity and good governance are presented as objectives to be achieved. Determinants of administrative capacity building accord with the ones elaborated in the theory section. Thirdly and highly important for this thesis, is the finding that the EU sees a need for government-civil society partnerships and an impact of civil society on the different determinants of administrative capacity building. Besides some development measures for administrative capacity building, the EU thus also promotes the power of domestic actors to support the transformation of its member states according to the *Acquis Communautaire*.

Hence, the promotion of public participation by the EU has the potential to drive transformations in Romania from the grassroots level to the top to increase administrative

capacity on the long run, provided that expectations of the EU are transferred to the national and local level. To shed a light on this issue, section 4.3 presents Romania's strategic goals at the national level and section 4.4 will zoom in on the local level.

### **4.3 National level analysis**

Zooming in on the national level of Romania's public administration provides the opportunity to gain knowledge about the status quo and the national efforts behind Romania's shift towards governance structures. Due to the special focus of this thesis on public participation as a potential driving factor of administrative capacity building, the analysis of national level documents furthermore helps to understand national endeavours behind the development of participatory governance structures.

In order to facilitate the implementation of participatory governance structures, Romania became member of the Open Government Partnership in 2011. The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is an initiative that aims to strengthen participatory governance structures in those countries which join the initiative. Until now, Romania has developed and implemented four national action plans under the umbrella of the OGP (Open Government Partnership, 2019). The stated goals and implementation processes of these national action plans have been subject of analysis for this thesis, in order to understand the efforts and developments made by the national level to enhance the level of public participation.

To conclude, the national action plans under the umbrella of the OGP show a clear development of the level of public participation for Romania's national level. The government emphasises the need for public participation from the first action plan in 2012 onwards and develops programs and institutional structures which further the public's access to relevant information in the national public administration and open processes for public consultation. In this manner, preparations are made to enhance the level of public participation towards a partnership relation between public authorities and the civil society, embodied by various NGOs. Combined with the insight gained through the analysis of the 'National Sustainable Development Strategy' (2008) it becomes obvious that the expectations of the EU are being transferred to the national level. Just as the EU, Romania's national government is committed to increase the level of public participation, not only for democratic reasons, but also because it expects participation to have an influence on the effectiveness of the public sector. However, according to the third action plan, the implementation of the stated goals is rather low at the local level compared to the national level (Romanian Government, 2016). What can be derived from this is twofold: Firstly, the national government emphasises again what has also been stated by the EU, namely

the importance of well-functioning local governance structures. Secondly, it becomes visible that joining the OGP at the national level is not enough to promote the creation of participatory governance structures at the local level. To enhance public participation at the local level, local strategies are needed.

To sum up the results of the national level analysis it can be stated that whereas the EU formulates its expectations in a rather general way applicable to all member states, the national level adds to the European dimension a clear national strategy, which respects the country's history and formulates partnership rather as a long-term vision than as a goal to be achieved right away. In the EU's multi-level system, policymaking does, however, not only require developments at the national level. The EU also highlights the local level as equally important. According to Romania's government, OGP values must be further promoted at the local level.

Therefore, section 4.4 zooms into the meso level, in order to investigate whether and how goals of upper system levels are also incorporated at the local level. To do so, Cluj-Napoca and the city's development strategy are investigated as a case study, in order to find out whether participatory governance structures are useful to strengthen the local administrative capacity building.

#### **4.4 Local level analysis**

The subsequent local level analysis focusses on Cluj-Napoca, the city's development strategy and the role of NGOs in the drafting and the implementation of this strategy. The aim of this local level analysis is threefold. Firstly, the section depicts the extent to which expectations formulated by the EU and Romania's national government in terms of the development participatory governance structures are also transferred to the local level of public administration and are thus visible in the local development strategy. Secondly, the section reveals in section 4.4.1 whether there are visible discrepancies in the realisation of the local strategy, between the expected involvement of NGOs (derived from the results of the document analysis) and the de facto involvement of NGOs (derived from the results of the expert interview analysis). Thirdly, the section portrays in paragraph 4.4.2 potential developments between the design stage and the implementation stage regarding the level of public participation and the contribution of NGOs on the determinants of reform implementation and local administrative capacity building in the course of time and thus gives an answer to sub-question 2 and 3. Combining the results of those three steps pursues the overall goal of displaying whether Cluj-Napoca's civil society, embodied by local NGOs, can be an actor

capable of contributing to the implementation of the development strategy to consequently foster the city's administrative capacity building.

In the analysis of different local documents which all relate to Cluj-Napoca's development strategy (see Annex A.1), it becomes visible that Cluj-Napoca's municipality urges the development of a well-functioning local governance, to guarantee a high quality of life for the citizens. This focus on the importance of strengthening local administrative systems is thus just as well visible in the strategy as it was depicted in the analysis of the EU and national level documents. Moreover, the municipality highlights that through the implementation of the development strategy, the city aims to evolve as role model of good governance in the region of Transylvania. As stated above, the EU also encourages its member states to reform their public sectors in order to implement good governance structures (Dzatkova,2016). It can thus be stated that Cluj-Napoca meets the expectations of the EU in this respect, by introducing its development strategy. Furthermore, accordance between the city's development strategy and the expectations formulated at the EU level are visible regarding the EU's power to influence domestic developments. "We share the conviction that Europeanization will generate pressure towards the modern governance model that allow a flexible framework where we can find solutions and answers to all this problem" (Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy, 2013a: 10).

To arrive at 'modern governance' Cluj-Napoca's development strategy introduces several benchmarks which should be achieved within the timeframe of 2014-2020. Of particular interest for this thesis are the outlined objectives related to the establishment of participatory governance structures. In order to foster the local capacity-building, Cluj-Napoca promotes a local administration which is based on a cooperation between the local government and the citizens. As it is stated in the strategy, this wish for cooperation was already incorporated during the design stage of the strategy. Next to several expert groups, the strategy was elaborated in an open process with 300 local experts from over 60 local organisations. Moreover, the implementation of participatory governance is sought to be achieved by introducing participatory budgeting. Furthermore, the strategy promotes the involvement citizens in public debates and local development initiatives. It can thus be derived from those insights that the EU's aim of expanding participatory structures to all system levels in its member states has succeeded. However, the way in which the strategy is formulated makes it obvious that Cluj-Napoca does not simply rely on Europeanisation pressures but emphasises the need to push transformations from the most immediate level and with local actors. "We embarked on a unique and authentic process of transformations generated from bottom-up. We feel special

because we took the courage and determination to recognize, face and address our challenges” (Cluj-Napoca European Capital of Culture – Application form:78).

With the employed bottom-up perspective, the municipality acknowledges that there are problems to be solved at the local level, which exceed the sole power of the local government and which can best be addressed by involving non-state actors (Cluj-Napoca development strategy, 2013b). Hence, the municipality highlights the inclusion of civil society as an action serving the tailored fit of the reform to the local conditions and needs. Taking care of the tailored fit of reforms is a crucial requirement of their implementation and consequently also for administrative capacity building, as it has been discussed in the theoretical framework and also depicted in the analysis of EU and national level documents (see section 2.2). To guarantee a local development which corresponds to the local needs, the strategy emphasises further the widening of the already established participatory structures to the general public, since their knowledge of the local conditions is seen as a valuable addition to the already created bodies of expertise. Next to the aim of enabling public participation for all social levels, Cluj-Napoca is eager not to restrict the involvement of civil society to the field of politics and public administration, but to also widen it to the business sector to enhance innovation and economic growth in the city (Cluj-Napoca development strategy, 2013b).

To conclude the first part of this local level analysis, it can be stated that overall expectations and goals regarding the development of participatory governance structures mentioned in the EU and the national level documents can be equally found at the local level. Theoretical expectations that EU pressures have an impact on transformations in Romania can thus be confirmed regarding the promotion of participatory governance structures. However, Cluj-Napoca introduces with its strategy a development plan which does not only build on the goals set at higher system levels, but also presents itself as capable of developing its capacity based on its own power and inclusive strategy (Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy, 2013a). In sum, the results of the local level analysis are hence similar to those of the national level up to this point: expectation of the EU are incorporated and adjusted to the local conditions, by introducing measures and involving actors which are expected to contribute to the tailored fit of reforms.

#### **4.4.1 Discrepancy analysis**

In a next step, the analysis refers in an in-depth manner to the level of public participation presented in Cluj-Napoca’s development strategy compared to the level of public participation as it is perceived by members of local NGOs. Insights gained through this comparison uncover



discrepancies between the expected involvement of civil society in policy processes and their de facto involvement, as it becomes apparent in the analysis of the expert interviews. Revealing those possible discrepancies serves as a basis to depict the current status of participatory governance structures in Cluj-Napoca, a first important insight to make statements about the contribution of NGOs to the implementation of reforms which are designed to increase the local administrative capacity building. The level of public participation is for this thesis defined as the extent to which NGOs are involved in local governance, measured by means of the three different stages: information, consultation, partnership, which have been derived from Arnstein's ladder of public participation (1969) (see section 3.3).

### *Information*

Information refers to the extent to which NGOs receive information from the local government about the decisions made in the city's development strategy.

In the strategy, the aim to provide information for the civil society is visible in various ways. Primarily, the municipality introduces the implementation of e-governance as a means of facilitating the flow of information. "E-governance can substantially contribute to the modernization of public administration in Romania and can provide the tools to transform the interaction between government and citizens, companies, NGOs or other institutions. It was said from the beginning that e-government should not be considered as a new bureaucratic layer, but it takes its integration into long-term vision of the way administration will be conducted" (Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy, 2013a: 11). Furthermore, in the strategy the need to establish public information sessions to update the civil society about current developments is emphasised (Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy, 2013a).

From the analysis of the expert interviews it becomes obvious that the amount of information provided by the local government concerning the development strategy varies significantly between the development stage and the implementation stage of the strategy. During the design stage in 2013, NGOs and the general public had access to all relevant information about progresses on a specifically created website, on which the working groups in charge of drafting the strategy were able to release their progress (Respondent 4). However, in the implementation stage, the flow of information is perceived as much lower or even not present at all. "No, we don't receive any kind of information from the city hall regarding the implementation process of the strategy" (Respondent 2: 70).

### *Consultation*

Consultation refers to the extent to which comments and feedback from the NGOs on the development strategy are taken into consideration.

The content of Cluj-Napoca's development strategy underlines the goal of the municipality to restrict the involvement not only to the provision of information, but to extent it also to the provision of opportunities to give feedback to the way the city develops. However, the strategy also discusses the need to improve that status quo to achieve a development in this respect. "The current legislative framework allows participation in decision making through recommendations in public sessions, but the representatives have full autonomy in taking the recommendations of citizens" (Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy, 2013b: 156).

With the analysis of the interviews, it becomes visible that there was not only the possibility to comment and give feedback on the way the strategy was designed, but also that NGOs had the possibility to develop parts of the strategy on their own. With the decision to establish different working groups, consisting of actors from different sectors, the municipality has transferred its responsibility and did not take any decisions until it adopted the strategy (Respondent 4). None of the interviewees referred to the possibility to comment or give feedback during the implementation stage of the strategy.

### *Partnership*

Partnership refers to the extent to which NGOs are continuously involved in decision-making processes and earn trust and scope of action in their task-fulfilment from the local government. In the development strategy, partnership between civil society, embodied by NGOs, and the local government is formulated as one of the main goals. With the implementation of participatory governance structures, the municipality emphasises the aim of including civil society in local decision-making processes. In doing so, a clear distinction between consultation and partnership is visible in the formulation of the strategy: "involve making a decision (and not just consultation) on policies" (Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy, 2013b: 155).

What can be drawn from the expert interview in this respect, are large discrepancies between the involvement of NGOs in the design phase and in the implementation phase. Whereas the cooperation between the local government and the NGOs was perceived as being on an eye-to eye level in the elaboration of the strategy (Respondents 1,2,3) there is only one interviewee who confirmed a follow-up cooperation in the implementation of the strategy and in the drafting of a new development strategy (Respondent 4). As stated above, the design phase offered NGOs

the possibility to get engaged in different working groups, managed by the University (Respondent 1). During this phase, the local government thus shared its responsibilities with the civil society – a major characteristic of a partnership relation. However, all respondents agreed on the fact that this partnership, even at the design state, had some notable limitations. Firstly, it was only project-driven and ended (for the majority of the respondents) with the adoption of the finalised development strategy by the municipality (Respondent 1). Secondly, a partnership as it was defined in section 2.4.1, is based on mutuality. In this case, the municipality only transferred its responsibility to design a local strategy to different stakeholders, without participating actively itself (Respondent 4). Moreover, particular criticism of the interviewees addresses the lack of continuity concerning their participation, not only in the design phase but also in the implementation of the strategy (Respondent 1,2,3 & 4). To establish a real partnership relation with the local government, respondent 3, emphasises to reduce the financial dependency on the local government on the side of the NGOs and to increase the awareness of the importance of NGOs on the side of the local government (Respondent 3).

#### *Conclusion – level of public participation*

In sum, the analysis of the level of public participation in Cluj-Napoca reveals discrepancies between the expected involvement of NGOs in the local development processes and their actual involvement. Against the background of this preceding comparison, it can be stated that the level of public participation has not yet reached the goals outlined in the local strategy. Since the local strategy matches expectations at the EU level, it can be concluded that, solely for this case, Cluj-Napoca has not yet implemented enough participatory governance structures. Nevertheless, the developments are in line with the expectations of Romania's national level, which emphasises the low level of public participation at the local level and which welcomes the effort of local administrations to change this status quo.

Even though the local experts realise an increase of public participation in general (Respondent 2 & 4), the main obstacle is the lack of continuity in the level of public participation. With regard to the concrete example investigated here, it can be concluded that the level of public participation was close to a partnership relation with the municipality at the design stage of the strategy but is declining in the implementation towards no or very little cooperation. Nevertheless, this does not exclude the possibility of successful implementation of some parts of the strategy, since "the implementation of the strategy later depended a lot [...] on the group

leaders [...] and on everybody else in the city, but not [...] on the municipality” (Respondent 4:126).

In a next step, the analysis zooms in on the way local NGOs are able to influence the determinants of administrative capacity building, which have been derived from the theory (see section 3.3): political will, tailored reforms, as well as transparency and accountability. In the same manner as in the analysis of the level of public participation, potential discrepancies will be highlighted.

### *Political will*

Political will is measured as the extent to which the political will of local authorities is present and influenced by the work of NGOs.

The strategy highlights a high political commitment to support the city’s development. Following the formulation of the strategy, the local authorities show the willingness to improve the status quo and to improve participatory governance. However, the strategy also sheds a light on the present limitations of the political will. The political scope of action is described as being restricted to the legislative framework of Romania’s representative democracy, in which final decisions must always be taken by the authorities. Nevertheless, this framework allows, according to the formulation of the strategy, for the establishment of participatory structures and Cluj-Napoca’s city hall has shown the will to “to integrate explicitly formulated recommendations by different parts of the social body” (Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy, 2013b: 171).

Analysing the expert interviews brings the insight that the local experts see their contribution on the political will in the way they are able to convince the local authorities of the importance of public participation and the work of NGOs (Respondent 2). Furthermore, respondent 4 emphasises a contribution to the political will, when NGOs design local projects which then receive EU funding because they comply with specific EU expectations. Generally, the interviews uncover that the political will is not perceived as being naturally present, only because the strategy says so (Respondent 3).

### *Tailored reforms*

The tailored fit of reforms is measured as the extent to which NGOs can influence the strategy’s fit to the local context.

In the strategy, the goal to increase the capacity of the local public administration to ensure a

better service delivery for the citizens is mentioned various times. In order to achieve this, the strategy highlights the cooperation between the public, private and non-profit sector to find solutions to local problems from the most immediate level (Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy, 2013a). A measure introduced to ensure the tailored fit of the strategy to the local conditions is community mediation, which is expected to provide a framework, enabling the exchange and contribution of different stakeholders (Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy, 2013a).

The local experts see their contribution in the promotion of participatory structures which allow for an articulation of the citizen's interests (Respondent 2). Moreover, NGOs can use their expertise of the local conditions to continuously improve and adapt the strategy, in interaction with stakeholders from different sectors (Respondent 3). This continuous interaction is guaranteed through the openness of the different working groups and several consultation meeting, which allow for the discussion of achieved milestones or their adjustments if necessary (Respondent 4).

#### *Transparency & Accountability*

Transparency and accountability are measured as the extent to which decisions are transparent and justified before the public due to the cooperation between the local government and NGOs. The improvement of the local administration includes, following the formulation of the strategy, also the enhancement of transparency and accountability of Cluj-Napoca's public sector. First and foremost, the strategy highlights in this respect the importance of facilitating access to public information, for instance through the establishment of e-governance structures. Moreover, transparency and accountability are expected to be increased by a comprehensive monitoring system, which builds on the evaluation of local projects in cooperation with the civil society (Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy, 2013a).

From the analysis of the expert interviews it can be drawn that the local NGOs see their contribution to transparency and accountability mainly in their position as mediator between the public authorities and the citizens. "I think it is very important in the implementation for the transparency to involve NGOs because in that respect NGOs are a communication channel between the decision-makers and the citizens (Respondent 2:173). Besides that, the local experts emphasise their role in the monitoring of the strategy. "And every two years [...] we were supposed to meet together [...] with the other group leaders under the facilitation of the university to update ourselves and to update the strategy and to make improvements. This

unfortunately [...] didn't happen. It only happened once” (Respondent 4: 102). As it is visible in this statement, the lack of monitoring and an ‘accountability system’ (respondent 4:164) is generally understood as a weakness in the implementation of the strategy, which must be addressed in the future, according to respondent (Respondent 4).

*Conclusion – the impact of NGOs on the determinants of local administrative capacity building*

The preceding section of this analysis has highlighted the way the main determinants of policy implementation, which have been derived from the theory (see section 2.2) and which are expected to be crucial for administrative capacity building in general, are present in Cluj-Napoca’s development strategy. To further highlight the influence of public participation at the implementation stage of the strategy, the ability of NGOs to impact those specific determinants has been investigated. In doing so, some discrepancies between the formulation in the strategy and the present circumstances have been revealed.

In terms of the political will, the strategy emphasises a comprehensive commitment of the local authorities to realise the objectives set in the development plan. This hence also includes the establishment of participatory governance structures in the way they are mentioned in the strategy. From the analysis of the expert interviews it becomes, however, visible that the NGOs still feel the need to convince the local authorities of their contributions to the city’s development, unless the involvement of NGOs permits financial benefits through EU funds. Regarding the tailored fit of reforms, the strategy promises the implementation of community mediation. The local experts, however, reveal that the cooperation of different stakeholders is not encouraged by the local authorities, but by the NGOs themselves, who guarantee the openness of their working groups. Concerning transparency and accountability, the strategy emphasises the importance of monitoring. The interviews, however, uncover that this goal is not fully achieved yet. To conclude, those discrepancies, combined with low levels of public participation in the implementation stage, can account for decelerations in the implementation of the strategy, following the theoretical expectations of El-Taliawi and Van der Wal (2019) and Khan (2016).

#### **4.4.2 Development analysis: An answer to sub-question b) and c)**

As stated above, Cluj-Napoca is expected to be in a development process, which this thesis wants to investigate. A process is in this thesis defined as a development which leads to the achievement of policy goals (McConnell, 2010). Transferred to the context under study, an increase of the level of public participation between the design stage and the implementation stage and consequently augmented opportunities for civil society to influence the

implementation of Cluj-Napoca's local strategy, are perceived as a development process leading to the realisation of the objectives set in the local strategy.

The strategy is formulated for the period between 2014-2020 and thus expects the realisation of strategic objectives within this time frame. With the implementation of the strategy, the municipality wants to encourage a development in the city towards Cluj-Napoca being a model of good governance (Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy, 2013a).

To answer sub-question b), it can be stated that Cluj-Napoca's local NGOs were involved in the process of designing the development strategy in various ways. As stated above, many local organisations were participating in the working groups responsible for drafting particular chapters of the comprehensive strategy. In doing so, they have been given responsibility and scope of action from the local government, which itself did not participate actively. Due to the lack of active cooperation in this stage, it is difficult to characterise the level of public participation precisely. The shift of responsibility is a strong argument for a partnership relation, however, a partnership as it was defined in the theory section would require continuity and an active participation of both actors with joint responsibilities (Arnstein, 1969).

To answer sub-question c), it can be concluded that given the revealed decrease of the level of public participation during the implementation phase, the actual contribution of NGOs to the implementation of the city's development strategy remains questionable. The discrepancy analysis has shown that NGOs generally have an influence on the determinants of policy implementation, but that this influence is restricted by a lack of effort by the local authorities to establish the required framework (continuous flow of information, monitoring system), which has been promised in the strategy. However, the analysis has shown that the tasks local NGOs perform in the established working groups can still foster the actual implementation of those parts of the strategy, which do not require the establishment of a specific framework or a close cooperation with the local government (Respondent 4).

Contrary to the theoretical expectation 1 (*Due to the shift towards governance principles, local government and NGOs in Cluj-Napoca are in the process of developing a partnership relationship*) the development between the design stage and the implementation stage of the strategy has not led to an increase of the level of public participation. Instead the analysis has revealed a decrease in the level of public participation during the implementation stage – a development which does not comply with the expectations formulated in the development strategy.

Ergo, the second theoretical expectation (*Due to the position of Cluj-Napoca's NGOs in the local governance system, they are developing as actors capable to bridge the gap between policy adoption and policy implementation and hence play a crucial role in the implementation of the city's development strategy, which is designed to enhance the city's administrative capacity.*) cannot be confirmed either. Until now, the NGOs in Cluj-Napoca are not capable to fully bridge the gap between policy adoption and policy implementation, since their contribution is still limited due to their inconsistent relation to the local authorities and the from the side of the NGOs perceived lack of effort from the local authorities to continuously involve civil society actors.

However, the results must be relativized with regard to the research methods employed in this thesis. Since the interviews have been conducted with NGO representatives and one university representative, the point of view of the local government remains underrepresented in this thesis. Moreover, it is important to state that the respondents agree on the overall success of introducing this strategy in Cluj-Napoca. “[...]From a city perspective it's good too, that your PR is a little better than your reality. And I think it's the case in Cluj and I don't think that it's actually a problem, because the reality is also [...] good and strong and a real model for other cities” (Respondent 4:.281).

In sum, the analysis has brought valuable insights in a manifold way. Shedding a light on EU level documents and the way expectations formulated at this level are transferred to the lower system levels was a useful method to reveal the influence of the EU on transformations towards participatory governance structures in Romania's public administration. Zooming in on the national and local level, offered the possibility to see that international expectations are being adapted to the local conditions. The in-depth case analysis of Cluj-Napoca's development strategy has further highlighted the interplay of different actors (local public authorities and NGOs) in the drafting and implementation of the city's development strategy. Conclusion which can be derived from this analysis for the answer of the overall research question will be presented in the next chapter.



## **5. Conclusion**

The aim of chapter five is threefold. In section 5.1 the overall research question of this thesis is answered, and the key insights are related to the prior introduced theoretical discussion. Section 5.2 subsequently introduces suggestions for further research which have been revealed in this thesis. At the end, section 5.3 highlights the practical implications of this research and gives concrete policy-recommendations for Cluj-Napoca.

### **5.1 NGOs as governance actors boosting local administrative capacity building?**

*‘To what extent have NGOs emerged as governance actors boosting the practical implementation of administrative reforms in Romania’s local governments to increase the local administrative capacity since the country’s EU accession in 2007 until 2018?’*

The research question guiding this thesis can only be answered for the case of Cluj-Napoca. The analysis has revealed major discrepancies between the expected involvement of NGOs and their de facto involvement in the city’s development process. This discrepancy becomes especially visible in the regressive development of public participation between the design stage and the implementation stage of the local strategy. This discontinuity of the cooperation does not only contradict the goals set in the strategy, but also limits the opportunities for NGOs to contribute to the implementation of the strategy. It can thus be concluded, that until now, NGOs are not capable to bridge the gap between policy adoption and implementation in Cluj-Napoca. However, the establishment of participatory structures in Cluj-Napoca can still be seen as a success. The comprehensive involvement of NGOs in the design stage has delegated power to them, which they have used to increase the tailored fit of the reform and to raise the transparency and accountability of the related public sector processes. Even though the involvement was not perceived as being continued on the same level in the implementation phase of the strategy, those processes show per se a great development of the local public administration, since they reveal an incorporation of goals and expectations set at the upper national and EU level. In sum, it can be argued that the NGOs still contribute to the local administrative capacity building, even though they do not ensure the implementation of the local reform. With their engagement they open up processes and bring them to flow which are designed to increase the local administrative capacity and which can, on the long-run, convince the local authorities to invest more in the capacity-building frameworks, which have been promoted in the strategy.

All in all, the results of the analysis seem to be in line with the argumentations made in the theory section. Firstly, the way expectations are transferred from the EU level to Romania’s

national and local levels, supports the multilevel governance approach within Europeanisation literature, recently discussed by Dossi (2017). Moreover, the analysis has revealed that the determinants of administrative capacity building (El-Taliawi & Van der Wal, 2019) and reform implementation (Khan, 2016) are not only theoretically relevant, but also practically discussed in EU, national and local level documents in terms of administrative capacity building. Moreover, the analysis has shown that Arnstein's (1969) ladder of public participation can very well be applied in the context of this study. At all analysed system levels, public participation was measured at different stages, which are similar or identical to the one's discussed by Arnstein and reaching higher stages, was just as in the theoretical discussion perceived as desirable for good governance. Due to the exploratory nature, however, it lays beyond the scope of this thesis to confirm or reject the theory. It can only be stated that for the single case study employed here, the theoretical framework is well suited. What the thesis adds to the field under study is that it does not only apply Arnstein's ladder to the specific context and based on that derives conclusions about the impact of public participation on administrative capacity building, but also investigates the influence of NGOs on the main determinants of practical implementation and administrative capacity.

## **5.2 Suggestions for further research**

With its exploratory approach and the specificity of the analysed data, this thesis can serve as a valuable basis for several similar research projects. The focus of this thesis is laid on one particular case the case of Cluj-Napoca and the city's development strategy, in order to investigate to what extent, the present level of public participation has an influence on the local administrative capacity building. The results drawn from this investigation can hence only be applied to the context under study and cannot be transferred to other Romanian municipalities. In order to follow the bottom-up approach of Europeanisation which has in this thesis shown to be valuable, it would thus be important to extend this one-case study to a multi-case study, to compare different Romanian municipalities and to be able to learn from best-practice examples. Moreover, further research would benefit from including the point of view of the local authorities on the issues at stake. In this thesis, the focus is solely laid on revealing discrepancies between the involvement of NGOs as it is expected in the strategy and the involvement as it is perceived by members of local NGOs. The aim of the thesis is not to make general statements about the current status of the implementation of the reform, but rather to illustrate how NGOs perceive developments in the implementation phase and how they see their impact on those developments. Therefore, the conclusions drawn are limited to the NGOs angle of view. To get

a more precise picture about the involvement of NGOs in Cluj-Napoca and the impact of this involvement on the city's administrative capacity building, the thesis suggests two improvements for further research: Firstly, to increase the number of interviewees and secondly, to increase the diversity of the interviewees. Most valuable would be an equal number of local authority representatives, university representatives and NGO representatives for the interviews. Additional insights could further be gained through interrogating citizens of Cluj-Napoca. Their observations could be valuable to find out how citizens perceive the cross-sectoral cooperation in the city and where they see room for improvement – because in the end, the strategy is designed and implemented to serve the citizen's needs and to improve their life quality.

### **5.3 Practical implications**

This thesis discusses a topic which has a high practical relevance. Results drawn from the analysis must be seen in the broad context of administrative capacity building in post-communist countries. The insights gained are not only valuable for Cluj-Napoca's local NGOs, which are the core actors under study in this thesis, but also for the local authorities and the citizens. All together, they are part of an urban development process which is until now unique in Romania and could serve as an inspiration for other Romanian cities on the long run. To support the ongoing transformations in Cluj-Napoca, the thesis ends with some concrete recommendations addressed to the local authorities, based on the findings of this research and formulated from an outside perspective:

1. Cooperation between the local government and local NGOs should be based on openness, an equally active participation and shared responsibilities.
2. Cooperation between the local government and local NGOs should be continued in the implementation phase of the strategy and in the planned follow-up strategy.
3. To allow for fruitful contributions of NGOs in designing and implementing this and following strategies, the local government should provide consistent long-term funding that enables NGOs to build up networks among themselves and with NGOs in other cities, to facilitate the exchange of information and best-practice examples.

## 6. References

- Andreev, S. A. (2009). The unbearable lightness of membership: Bulgaria and Romania after the 2007 EU accession. *Communist and Post-communist Studies*, 42, 357-393.
- Arnstein, S. (1969). A Ladder of Citizen Participation. *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 35(4), 216 — 224.
- Baba, C., Cherecheș, R., Mora, C. & Țiclău, T. (2009). Public Participation in Public Policy Process – Case Study in Seven Counties from North-Western Region of Romania. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*. 5. 5-13.
- Bădescu, G., Sum, P., & Uslaner, E. M. (2004). Civil Society Development and Democratic Values in Romania and Moldova. *East European Politics and Societies*, 18(2), 316–341.
- Brinkerhoff, J.(2003). Donor-funded government NGO partnership for public service improvement.Cases from India and Pakistan. *International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organisations*.14(1).105-107.
- Butkevičienė, E., Vaidelytė, E., & Šnapštien, R. (2010). Role of civil society in local governance: Theoretical approaches and empirical challenges in Lithuania. *Journal of Public Policy and Administration*, 33(1), 35-44.
- Börzel, T. A., & Schimmelfennig, F. (2017). Coming together or drifting apart? The EU's political integration capacity in Eastern Europe *Journal of European Public Policy*, 24(2), 278-296.
- Cluj-Napoca City Hall (2019). Retrieved from: <https://primariaclujnapoca.ro/en/>.
- Dossi, S. (2017). Cities and the European Union : mechanisms and modes of Europeanisation.Colchester, United Kingdom: ECPR Press.
- Dzatkova, V. (2016). The role of civil Society in public governance *Rocznik Administracji Publicznej*, 2, 373-383.
- Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. (2016). Cooperation with civil society to promote public administration reform in the neighbourhood.
- El-Taliawi, O., van der Wal, Z. (2019). Developing administrative capacity. An agenda for research and practice. *Policy Design and Practice*. 1-15.
- European Commission (2016). Accession criteria. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/accession-criteria\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/policy/glossary/terms/accession-criteria_en).
- European Commission (2018). Public Administration Reform in Europe. Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations for future EU policy. Retrieved from: <http://www.ifuturo.org/sites/default/files/docs/ke-03-18-294-en-n.pdf>.

European Commission. (2019). Cooperation and verification mechanism for Bulgaria and Romania. Retrieved from: [https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/effective-justice/rule-law/assistance-bulgaria-and-romania-under-cvm/cooperation-and-verification-mechanism-bulgaria-and-romania\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/info/policies/justice-and-fundamental-rights/effective-justice/rule-law/assistance-bulgaria-and-romania-under-cvm/cooperation-and-verification-mechanism-bulgaria-and-romania_en).

European Parliament (2017). The role of cities in the institutional framework of the European Union.

Hintea, C., Profiroui, C.E., & Ticlau, T.C. (2015). Strategic Planning and Public management Reform: The Case of Romania. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*, 30-44.

Khan, A. (2016). Policy implementation. Some aspects and issues. *Journal of Community Positive Practices*, 16(3), 3-12.

Lewis, J., & Ritchie, J. (2003). Generalising from qualitative research. In J. Ritchie & J. Lewis (Eds.), *Qualitative research practice: A guide for social science students and researchers*. 263 - 286. London, England: Sage.

Levitz, P., & Pop-Eleches, G. (2010). Why no backsliding? The European Union's impact on democracy and governance before and after accession *Comparative Political Studies*, 43(4), 457-485.

Mastenbroek, E. (2005). EU compliance: Still a 'black hole'?, *Journal of European Public Policy*, 12(6), 1103-1120.

Matei, A. Public administration in Romania. Historical milestones and daily realities. In: *Public Administration in post-communist countries* (pp. 217-249). Tylor and Francis Group.

Maxwell, J. A. (2009). Designing a qualitative study. *The SAGE handbook of applied social research methods*, 2, 214-253.

McConnell, A. (2010). Policy Success, Policy Failure and Grey Areas In-Between. *Journal of Public Policy*, 30(3), 345-362.

McLennan, G. (2003) Sociology, Eurocentrism and Postcolonial Theory, *European Journal of Social Theory*, 6 (1), 69-86.

Mills, A. J., Durepos, G. & Wiebe, E. (2010). *Encyclopedia of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications,

Nelissen, N. (2002). The administrative capacity of new types of governance. *Public Organization Review*, 2(1), 5-22.

Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Nielsen, A. (2016). NPM, NWS & NPG in relation to the Danish Welfare State around the time of Kanslergadeforliget.

Pollitt, C and G. Bouckaert (2017). *Public Management Reforms*. Oxford University Press

- Popowska, M. & Łuński, M. (2014). Third sector characteristics and importance, *Przedsiębiorstwo we współczesnej gospodarce*, 3, 31-41.
- Rainey, H. G. (2014). *Understanding and managing Public Organisations* (Fifth Edition ed.). San Francisco A Wiley Brand.
- Saldana, J. (2016). An introduction to codes and coding. In: *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London. UK: Sage.
- Sánchez-Salgado, R. (2007). Giving a european dimension to civil society organizations. *Journal of Civil Society*, 3(3), 253-269.
- Seawright, J., & Gerring, J. (2008). Case selection techniques in case study research: A menu of qualitative and quantitative options. *Political research quarterly*, 61(2), 294-308.
- Schimmelfennig, F., & Sedelmeier, U. (2005). *The europeanization of central and eastern Europe*: Cornell university press.
- Spendzharova, A. B., & Vachudova, M. A. (2012). Catching up? Consolidating liberal democracy in Bulgaria and Romania after EU accession. *West European Politics*, 35(1), 39-58.
- Thomann, E., & Zhelyazkova, A. (2017). Moving beyond (non-)compliance: the customization of European Union policies in 27 countries. *Journal of European Public Policy*, 24(9), 1269-1288.
- Văduva, S. A. (2016). The future of public administration reform in Romania. In *From corruption to modernity. The Evolution of Romania's Entrepreneurship Culture* (1st ed.). n.d.: Springer International Publishing.
- van Empel, C. (2013). Measurement tools for a consultation process. Christchurch Polytechnic Institute of Technology.
- van Slyke, M. (2007). Agents or stewards. Using theory to understand the government-nonprofit social service contracting relationship. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 17(2), 157–187
- van Thiel, S. (2014). *Research methods in public administration and public management: an introduction*: Routledge.
- Veltmeyer, H. (2008). Civil society and local development. *Interacoes*, 9 (2). 229-243.
- Waheduzzaman (2010). Conceptualising people's participation for good governance. *School of Management, Victoria University, Melbourne, Australia*.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*: Sage publication.

## 7. Appendices

**Note: Other Appendices are available upon request.**

*A.1 Table 1: List of analysed documents*

System level	Selected documents	Content/ data analysed	Reference
EU level	The role of cities in the institutional framework of the European Union (2017)	Importance of local governance highlighted by the EU	European Parliament (2017). The role of cities in the institutional framework of the European Union. Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596813/IPOL_STU(2017)596813_EN.pdf">http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/STUD/2017/596813/IPOL_STU(2017)596813_EN.pdf</a> (Last access: 01/07/2019)
EU level	Public Administration Reform in Europe Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations for future EU policy (2018)	Goals and status quo of PAR	European Commission (2018). Public Administration Reform in Europe. Conclusions, lessons learned and recommendations for future EU policy. Retrieved from: <a href="http://www.ifuturo.org/sites/default/files/docs/ke-03-18-294-en-n.pdf">http://www.ifuturo.org/sites/default/files/docs/ke-03-18-294-en-n.pdf</a> (Last access: 01/07/2019)
EU level	European Governance - White Paper (2001)	Governance reform and principles of good governance	European Commission (2001). European governance. A white paper. Retrieved from: <a href="https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/european-governance-white-paper_en">https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/european-governance-white-paper_en</a> (Last access: 01/07/2019)
EU level	Promoting Good Governance - European Social Fund thematic paper (2014)	Importance of good governance and administrative capacity building	European Commission (2014). Promoting good governance. European Social Fund thematic paper. Retrieved from: <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/esf/BlobServlet?docId=444&amp;langId=en">http://ec.europa.eu/esf/BlobServlet?docId=444&amp;langId=en</a> (Last access: 01/07/2019)
Nat. level	Open Government Partnership – National Action Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2012-2014</li> <li>• 2014-2016</li> <li>• 2016-2018</li> </ul> 2018-2020	Actions that have been taken to strengthen participatory governance since 2012	Romanian Government (2012). National Action Plan. Open Government Partnership. Romanian Government (2014) National Action Plan. Open Government Partnership. Romanian Government (2016) National Action Plan. Open Government Partnership. Romanian Government (2018). National Action Plan. Open Government Partnership.  All retrieved from: <a href="https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/romania/">https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/romania/</a> (Last access: 01/07/2019)
Nat. level	National Sustainable	Current state of social	Government of Romania & United Nations Development Program (2008)

	Development Strategy (2008)	capital and goals to be achieved	Retrieved from: <a href="https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&amp;nr=623&amp;type=504&amp;menu=139">https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/index.php?page=view&amp;nr=623&amp;type=504&amp;menu=139</a> (Last access: 01/07/2019)
Local level	Cluj-Napoca development strategy 2014-2020  - English version  - Romanian version (translated to English)	Development goals (with special focus on participatory governance)	Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy (2013a) Retrieved from: <a href="http://clujbusiness.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Cluj-Napoca-2014-2020-Development-Strategy.pdf">http://clujbusiness.ro/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/Cluj-Napoca-2014-2020-Development-Strategy.pdf</a> (Last access: 01/07/2019)  Cluj-Napoca Development Strategy (2013b) Retrieved from: <a href="http://cmpg.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/strategie-cluj-napoca-2014-2020.pdf">http://cmpg.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/strategie-cluj-napoca-2014-2020.pdf</a> (Last access: 01/07/2019)
Local level	Cluj-Napoca European Capital of Culture – Application (2016)	Development goals with view to the special status of the city in 2021 and the contribution of this strategy to the long-term strategy	European Capital of Culture (2016) Retrieved from: <a href="http://culturenext.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Cluj-2021-ECOC-BID-BOOK.pdf">http://culturenext.eu/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Cluj-2021-ECOC-BID-BOOK.pdf</a> (Last access: 01/07/2019)

**A.2 Table 2: Code categories and their definitions**

Code category	Definition
Importance of local governance	Text segments that emphasise the role or importance of local governance, transformations, reforms and different stakeholders in general
Level of public participation	Text segments that describe the present or desirable status of public participation or ways to increase public participation
If applicable:	
Level of public participation: information	- Text segments that describe that information is or should be provided
Level of public participation: consultation	- Text segments that describe that public consultation takes places or should take place
Level of public participation: partnership	- Text segments that describe partnership as the current status or a desirable goal
Level of public participation: development	



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Text segments that describe whether there has been a relationship in the level of public participation or not</li> </ul>
<p>ACB</p> <p>If applicable:</p> <p>ACB: participation</p> <p>ACB: political will</p> <p>ACB: tailored reforms</p> <p>ACB: accountability and transparency</p>	<p>Text segments that describe administrative capacity building or requirements for administrative capacity building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Text segments that describe public participation as already present or desirable factor for ACB</li> <li>- Text segments that describe political will as already present or desirable factors for ACB</li> <li>- Text segments that describe tailored-ness (respect for local conditions, etc.) as already present or desirable factor for ACB</li> <li>- Text segments that describe accountability and transparency as already present or desirable factors for ACB</li> </ul>

### A.3 Interview guide

**Note: The interview transcripts are available upon request under specific conditions**

Topic	Question
<b><i>Introduction</i></b>	<p><i>Goal of the research project: process evaluation of public participation in Cluj-Napoca's development strategy, in order to see whether civil society is a supportive 'factor' for local administrative capacity building</i></p> <p>Before we start: recording ok?</p> <p>Could you please present yourself and your workplace? What are the general tasks of your organisation in Cluj-Napoca? What are your tasks within the organisation?</p>
<b><i>Romania &amp; the EU: Romania's local administrative systems in transition</i></b>	<p><i>EU suggests public sector transformation towards governance structures (decentralisation, public participation, etc.) At what stage of the shift from government to governance is Romania's local public administration?</i></p>

	1.	How would you describe the role of public participation in local governance when it comes to strengthening Romania's position in the EU?
<b><i>Level of public participation /Relationship to local government</i></b>		<i>Focus on Cluj's development strategy: How would you describe your relationship to the local government?</i>
	2.	To what extent did you receive information from your local government concerning the development strategy in the process of designing this strategy and also right now in the implementation of the strategy?
	3.	To what extent did you have the possibility to comment on the decisions made by the local government concerning the strategy, during the development of the strategy and also right now? Whenever you provide feedback, how much do you think your feedback is taken into consideration?
	4.	To what extent are you also continuously involved in the decision-making processes concerning the development strategy? To what extent do you feel to have shared goals & responsibilities with the local government and a certain scope of action in fulfilling your tasks?
	5.	If you think back to the time when Cluj's strategy was developed and compare that to nowadays, how much would you say has your relationship to the local government developed over time?
	6.	What factors are crucial in establishing a fruitful relationship with local government?
	7.	If you think that there is still some scope for development in your relationship to local government, what would be the most important steps to take to enhance public participation in the future?
<b><i>Local administrative capacity building and reform implementation</i></b>		<i>The following questions relate to the overall question: How do you think can the work of your organisation contribute to the implementation of the strategy? Implementation of policies is a complicated process and requires a lot of work. I would now like to speak with you about some crucial factors of policy implementation and how you see your impact on those determinants.</i>
	8.	To what extent do you have the feeling that you can influence the political will of the local authorities to implement the designed strategy?
	9.	To what extent do you make sure that the development strategy fits the citizen's needs?
	10.	How much do you think you can contribute to accountability and transparency in the implementation process when you cooperate with the local government?
	11.	Besides those factors mentioned, what other factors do you think you can impact in order to contribute to the implementation of the development strategy?
	12.	What are the main challenges you have to address in order to implement the development strategy?
	13.	How do you think policy implementation could be improved in local governance?