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Semiosis in Communication: Differences and Similarities. Introductory Remarks

In a world of global communication, where everyone's life depends increasingly on signs, language and communication, understanding how we relate to otherness, to *differences* in all their forms and aspects becomes more and more relevant. Today, we often understand the *differences* in terms of adversity or opposition and forget the value of the *similarities*. According to Eco (1995), the radicalization of these concepts can lead to problematic situations such as "fear of difference", a typical feature of *Ur-Fascism*, or *Eternal Fascism*.

Semiotic approaches can provide a critical point of view and a more general reflection that can redefine some aspects of the discussion about the nature of these semiotic categories, *differences* and *similarities*. The dichotomy *differences* – *similarities* is fundamental to understanding the meaning-making mechanisms in language (de Saussure, 1966; Derrida, 1978; Deleuze, 1995), as well as in other sign systems (Ponzio, 1995; Sebeok & Danesi, 2000; Deely, 2009; Petrilli, 2014). While in science, "the oppositions, the differences are relevant", in history "social facts have two aspects: one of *coexistence*, which is described by *similarities*, and another one of *succession*, which is described by *differences*" (Marcus, 2011, p. 351). Meaning always appears in the "play of *differences*" (Derrida, 1978, p. 220) and *similarities*. Derrida (1978) seems to confirm Rousseau's (1998) intuition that "one must first observe the differences in order to discover the properties" (p. 305). Therefore, the phenomena of similarities and differences must be considered complementary (Marcus, 2011).

The three papers selected to appear in this issue of the *Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations* were initially presented at the second edition of the *Semiosis in Communication* conference, hosted by the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in June 2018. This edition of the *Semiosis in Communication* conference was a testimony of the interest in semiotic research among scholars around the world. Internationally renowned keynote speakers Augusto Ponzio (University of Bari "Aldo Moro", Bari, Italy), Susan Petrilli (University of Bari "Aldo Moro", Bari, Italy), Paul Cobley (Middlesex University, London, UK), Göran Sonesson (Lund University, Sweden), Dario Martinelli (Kaunas University of Technology, Lithuania), Massimo Leone (University of Turin,

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Italy), Luis Emilio Bruni (Aalborg University Copenhagen, Denmark) and Kristian Bankov (New Bulgarian University, Bulgaria) have shared their experience and knowledge in plenary lectures.

The three articles included in the *Semiosis in communication* section of this the current issues of the journal explore various forms of manifestation of *differences* and *similarities* in contemporary communication phenomena and examine how this dichotomy generates meanings in different communication situations, both from the theoretical and applied semiotics perspectives.

Maria Antoniou's papers examines certain issues that arise in the translation of political texts, especially titles of press articles, taking into consideration the linguistic and sociocultural factors as well as the "conditions that rule the political discourse in terms of linguistic politeness". Antoniou emphasize also the role of "cultural ethos of each linguistic community", especially politeness markers expressing a certain linguistic attitude towards the translated text.

The paper belonging to Katarina Damcevic and Filip Rodik investigates the peculiarities and manner in which nationalist discourse is built on selected right-wing public Facebook pages in Croatia using a quantitative approach. Moreover, in order to explore "the dynamics of hate speech online", Damcevic and Rodik analyzed the socio-communicative functions of hate speech from the perspective of cultural semiotics. The study offers insight into "meaning-making mechanisms and discursive strategies that influence and shape hate speech and its online dynamic" and draws attention to the proliferation of hate speech in post-conflict societies such as Croatia.

Nicolae-Sorin Drăgan's paper analyzes the differences that arise among political actors, from the perspective of how they manage the relationship between *handedness* (left/right polarity in hand gestures) and *political orientation* (left/right polarity in politics) in the 2009 Romanian presidential debate, compared to the 2014 presidential debate. Through this study, the author suggests that "the management of *handedness* – *political orientation* and *handedness* – *emotional valence* relationships influences 'image capital' of political actors, and produces effects in terms of credibility and political persuasion".

The articles included in this issue investigate the complexity of the meaning-making mechanisms in various communication situations, with reference to the *differences* – *similarities* dichotomy. Moreover, these articles highlight the interdisciplinary aspect of semiotic approaches and provide a starting point for further explorations in this direction.

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