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**Review of *Europa în context. Identități și practici discursive*
[Europe in Context. Identities and Discursive Practices]
by Camelia BECIU and Nicolae PERPELEA (eds.).
Bucharest: Ars Docendi, 2011, 244 pages**

1. Europeanization as a Social Concept

The book “Europe in Its Context. Identities and Discursive practices” is focused on a rather sensitive subject: Europeanization as a social construct. The key research question is formulated by the two editors – Camelia Beciu and Nicolae Perpelea: “How do institutional and non-institutional actors start to use the European repertoire (e.g. the official terminology, the regulations, various institutional opportunities) as a means of surpassing the expert or political-like approaches?” (p. 7). The authors approach the Europeanization as a vivid academic arena, where various theories and concepts mix in order to create a fertile field of research. Several operational questions play an important role in configuring the authors’ discourse on Europeanization: “What kind of developments would lead to Europeanization processes?” or “How could one analyze the Europeanization of various organizations, institutions, and public spaces?” (p. 10).

The book adopts a constructivist tone, as its authors are interested in the indirect impact (“bottom up”) exerted by European regulations on social systems and actors. Thus, the focus is on “adaptation, gradualism, and social construct” (p. 17). Most of the research is dedicated to exploring the mechanisms that transform the social actors’ discourse into a public discourse focused on public problems.

2. Europeanization and Mass Media

The chapter on „The Journalistic Public Sphere and the Media Discourse” consists in four studies prepared by both Romanian and foreign researchers. It offers a comprehensive perspective on the relationship between mass media and the European public sphere.

In the study „Professional Socialization and the <<Europeanization>> of Journalists’ Working Routines and Discourses” (pp. 21 – 35), the author – M. Lazăr – undertakes an analysis of the European news production and mediation streams. The conclusions are presented in an optimistic tone – Brussels, seen as a production hub for most of the European news, favors the formation of a European journalism.

The study „From <<them>> to <<us>>: Study of the Impact of the European Construction on the Social Responsibility of Journalists” (pp. 37 – 46), authored by C. Beciu, N. Pelissier, and Nicolae Perpelea, offers pertinent answers to a challenging research question:

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„What are the generalization strategies which journalists deploy in order to legitimize their participation in the definition of the post EU-accession period as a public issue?”. The research design obeys the constructivist exigencies and uses a semiotic-discursive methodology. The authors’ conclusion is that „at the time of the imminent accession to the EU, the press begins to use certain identity themes and imageries” (p. 37).

The study „European Format for the Romanian Press. The Column Europa”, authored by V. Pricopie - presents a quantitative analysis undertaken on a corpus composed of 16799 newspaper articles published in Romanian press before 2007. The conclusions are in line with the editors’ key assumption that, in deed, the Romanian press has undergone deep transformations under the pressure of European integration.

The last study within this chapter refers to „Women’s Voices and Themes in Media Discourse”. Its author, F. Roventa-Frumusani, reveals a rather unexplored side of media studies – the feminine blueprint in global and European media. The author’s conclusions underline the fact that the journalistic field still has to dismantle a series of barriers and myths related to women’s involvement in mass media.

3. Europeanization and Institutions

The institutional dimension of the book is illustrated through five studies, which seek to explore how various institutions react to the new realities created by European integration.

C. Beciu authors a study on „the perceptions on Europeanization in public institutions” that deals with Europeanization of three Romanian public organizations after Romania’s accession to the European Union. Under the pressure of European integration, the analyzed public institutions underwent a transformation process, consisting in the passage from “Europeanization” to “integration”. This conclusion is reiterated by E. Balica in her study about the institutionalization of probation in Romania.

N. Perpelea reveals the human and emotional side of European integration by investigating how the emotional climate of “white collars” was modified as a consequence of European accession.

The study on a European model for public relations is prepared by A. Rogojinaru and it is meant to analyze how a new model for public relations has emerged in the European arena. The author observes an important European contribution in the field of international public relations, which mainly consists into a new and improved sense of social vocation and critical approach.

D. Mănescu focuses her research on the Europeanization of institutional communication and illustrates this phenomenon by exploring an interesting case study – the advisory forum “Bridging the Gap” at the European Economic and Social Committee.

4. Europeanization and Politics

The last section of the book explores the complex relationship between politics and Europeanization. The theoretical contributions consist in four studies aimed at illustrating various aspects related to the role played by politics in creating “more Europe”.

L. Radut-Gaghi addresses an important side of politics – the public discourse, and its impact on Europeanization processes. The discourse analysis, performed on several famous speeches given by prominent political actors (e.g. Emil Constantinescu, Adrian Severin, Traian Basescu), reveals that there is a strong tendency to adopt an European referential when discussing about Romania's accession to the EU. The European values are brought into lime-light and are used as an argumentative tool by many political actors. The same perspective is adopted by R. Boicu in her research about the presidential discourse on Europe.

A. Mamina undertakes an analysis of democracy, starting from the works of Alexis de Tocqueville and Theodor Adorno. His statement is that the “historical and politological analysis should follow not only the systemic morphology of a certain regime – institutions, organizations, practices – but also its intrinsic phenomenology” (pp. 227 – 228).

M. Petcu advances a historical approach, by researching how the European system of reference emerged in the Romanian press during 19th century.

To conclude, the book “Europe in Its Context. Identities and Discursive practices” offers a multilateral perspective on Europeanization processes taking place in Romania and elsewhere. The constructivist approach creates a conceptual framework rich in conclusions and interpretations. Most of the articles are elaborated before Romania's accession to the EU. This is instructive in terms of historical evidence and helps the authors and researchers interested in Europeanization to understand the complex evolutions that shaped the Romanian social imaginary during a key momentum – Romania's accession to EU. Furthermore, there are several papers that contribute to the consolidation of several niche trends in the research on Europeanization. These studies had to design their research, by coping with several challenges, which are implicit when approaching new themes. Last but not least, it is the editors' merit that they structured the book around the three most important pillars of Europeanization – mass media, institutions, and politics. This multilateral approach transforms the book into a “must read” by scholars interested in European integration studies.