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**Faculty of Communication
and Public Relations**

New Perspectives on the Study of Political
Communication

Blogs as Sources for Political News

The Making of the 'Soft Villain' in a *Time* Magazine
Headline

The Building of a European Identity and Its
Challenges

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Comunicare politică și
comportament de vot

Mădălina BOTAN*

New Perspectives on the Study of Political Communication

Abstract

Political communication is a discipline still in search of a conceptual and methodological identity, unlike sociology, which had consistent conceptual scaffolding; political communication still faces a series of conceptual limitations. In this article, we review both classical and recent empirical research dedicated to political communication, arguing for a broader definition of effects and tracing recent social and technological developments brought by new media. This article also features some of the recently proposed interactive models of political communication, more complex than the traditional hypodermic approach.

Keywords: political communication, election campaigns, mass media

1. Introduction

Modern political theorists and specialists have been mainly preoccupied with understanding the social, psychological, political and economic transformations produced by media in contemporary societies. But societies have changed and so did people's response to media messages. Media exposure and its role in promoting political stakes is still one of the most empirically investigated topic, even though decades of academic research demonstrate that exposure to campaigns mainly reinforce voters' partisan views. In addition to that, traditional research has looked mainly at persuasion: effects of campaigns on voters' preferences, ignoring other relevant effects. The setting of campaign agendas, and alteration of the criteria by which candidates are judged are some of the recent conceptual developments.

Identifying the genesis of the political communication field might be relevant to the investigation of social changes that currently affect the composition of media audiences, and the access to information (and thus to political life itself). Turning to the historical background of the discipline, we stress the fact that political communication draws its roots from a variety of traditions and disciplines. Unlike sociology, mainly founded on the great sociological tradition of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Tarde, Simmel and later the Chicago and Columbia School, contemporary political communication is rather poorly connected to political science. The pioneers of the field, Harold Lasswell (1948/1973), and later, Murray Edelman (1967/1985) adopted multiple perspectives, from sociology, anthropology, psychology, linguistics, journalism, public relations and economics.

If we think of the famous era of "minimal effects", which was defined by research conducted in the 40s-50s, we must take into account the context of a social system previous to

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mass communication, where communities, and interpersonal networks ensured especially through unions and civic associations membership influenced media consumption (Putnam, 2000). Back in those years, the researchers concluded that media messages were filtered through interpersonal communication and group membership (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). At the same time, research dedicated to electoral campaigns in the 50s-60s in the United States have not established that campaign messages lead to opinion change, but moreover to reinforcing voters' preexisting partisan loyalties. "Hard" persuasive effects (change of opinion or behavior) are extremely rare because few individuals behave as rational voters (strong interest in politics, high level of information, lack of emotion etc).

Classical studies dedicated to voting behavior may have even deeper and more interdisciplinary roots; the psychological tradition of Lasswell's (now) commonplace formulation, "who says what, to whom and with what effects" (Hovland, Janis & Kelly, 1953) is one relevant example. Walter Lippmann (1922/2007) also captured for the first time the importance of understanding the relationships between media and government; in addition to that Tarde's theory (1902/2007) dedicated to diffusion, imitation and interpersonal influence has clearly influenced the research of Lazarsfeld, Berelson, Merton and Katz (1944/2004, 1955).

These pioneers of the field have promoted the idea that individuals had a reduced ability to develop opinions and assessments about the political world or even about simple decisions related to fashion or other areas of everyday life (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955). Their views are more likely influenced by group membership rather than direct media exposure. Media influence was therefore seen as dependent on social and interpersonal filters, and so were they illustrated in the two-step communication flow model proposed by the researchers at Columbia (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944/2004). Contemporary theories dedicated to political communication tend however to emphasize the role of cognitions within the electoral process (cognitive responses to political and media messages).

Another milestone in political communication was represented by Murray Edelman's thesis (1967/1985), based on semiotic and language theories. Later the same author has begun to incorporate in his political theories the ideas of some prominent modernist authors (Foucault, Baudrillard and Derrida). Edelman's thesis on categorization and error in the political process resonates with a wide range of research dedicated to framing. Among the most relevant authors who coined this concept, we name those who are part of the symbolic interactionism paradigm of research, such as Herbert Blumer (1969) and George Herbert Mead (1934/1963). Later contributions of Erving Goffmann (1959/2007, 1961/2000, 1974/1991) have provided a bridge to more recent authors, such as George Lakoff (1987), Robert Entman (1993), Shanto Iyengar (1991) and many others who were interested in the cognitive effects of media exposure.

At the same time, the tradition of the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer, 1937/ 1972), which has incorporated into the political communication study neo-marxist ideas, for instance Habermas' theories (1962/2005) on the public sphere, has influenced many political communication theorists. Therefore, some significant conceptual imports have resulted in the field of political communication, campaign effects and political information processing. At the same time, a parallel approach (Festinger, 1957; Hovland, & Jennis, 1953 or, more recently, Zaller, 1992) has focused on emotional predispositions, demonstrating that predispositions do matter and can be pivotal.

Recent approaches in the field of political communication consider however media a key player in electoral communication, given that the ability of citizens to understand the political stakes and to assess the politicians depend on media (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Iyengar, 1991;

Scheuffelle, 2000, 2007), and that the controversial capacity of elites to influence public opinion is also dependent on media (Bennett, 1988; Bennett & Iyengar, 2008; Zaller, 1992). In the context of modern political campaigns their influences on voter preferences are far from minimal. The transmission of information, the setting of electoral agendas, and alteration of the criteria by which candidates are judged become some of the recent advances in political communication research. The last example, known as priming, refers to media influence on the voters' criteria in judging the political candidates (Entman, 1993, Iyengar & Kinder 1987, Iyengar, 1996; Scheufele, in 2000, Scheufele & Tewksbury, in 2007, Weaver 2007).

2. Political Communication in the Mass Media Era

Thinkers such as those mentioned above have helped shaping the field of political communication and campaign effects. Perhaps the main obstacle to understanding the real-world role of political campaigns is a limited definition of effects. The minimal effects and the two-step flow of communication models can be both explained as the result of a context where media and its social impact were not yet fully understood. The misunderstanding of media effects persisted for decades until they were more closely studied and reinterpreted by contemporary research (Zaller, 1992).

The current context of electoral communication, due to the mutations produced by new media, can create some confusion, some authors outlining some important variables in the process of political communication, such as the group membership decline (Putnam, 2000) and the emergence of new technologies that allow broadcasters to reach targeted audiences. The proliferation of TV channels, new media, and social networks allows an increased flexibility in defining political interests and participation. The new communication processes require a high level of interactivity, make larger volumes of information available, and are therefore likely to produce more engaged and better-informed voters.

To summarize, it is clear that political communication has reached a turning point not only in terms of communication technologies, but also in terms of political exposure and participation. The existence of better-informed individuals, and also a proliferation of higher media literacy among younger audiences might explain the increasing mistrust of politicians, the lack of faith in the political consultants and, in general, in the electoral process itself. Such "perverse" influences translate what the researchers and political specialists call "political ennui": a disinterest of young people towards the political phenomena as a whole, and towards vote, in particular.

The main impact of new media is related to the amount of available information. For example, citizens interested in the contemporary presidential elections have access to thousands of online resources ranging from news organizations to candidates sites or unknown bloggers. But given this overwhelming amount of information, will consumers know how to process it and use it to form better-informed opinions? There is no simple answer to this question; especially since media exposure and consumption patterns are changing so fast. Nowadays important audience segments cannot be reached anymore through conventional communication channels (e.g. television), the young people being absorbed by new mediums, such as video games or online social networks.

Until a few years ago, voters depended on the media coverage of politics. The explosion of Internet-generated resources has created an extremely fragmented media landscape in terms of information acquisition; television news channels and various new media being in a never-

seen before competition. New media increase the selective exposure to information and the disinterest for politics. A single example suffices to illustrate this new *status quo* of media consumption: between 1968 and 2003, television news audience has declined in the United States with 30 million viewers (Bennett & Iyengar, 2009: 43). Campaigns can now influence voters in more than one way. Confronted with partisan messages, most voters resist and rebut such messages. Audience fragmentation and the changing patterns in media exposure are therefore a more subtle form of influence, occurring even without the voters' awareness.

Since the emergence of theories dedicated to persuasion and attitude change in the '50s, communication researchers have formulated the hypothesis that exposure to political information will reflect some kind of partisanship. In other words, people will avoid information that is expected to be dissonant to their opinions and attitudes, looking for the information that is expected to reinforce their own beliefs (Lazarsfeld, Berelson & Gaudet, 1944/2004). Party identification remains a salient feature of the American electoral process. However, nowadays reinforcing effects of campaigns must be attributed to the interaction between the content of campaign messages and voters' prior preferences (Iyengar & Simon, 2000).

A study conducted in 2004 and published in 2008 by American author Shanto Iyengar (Iyengar & al., 2004), used an innovative research design in order to analyze voters' exposure to campaign messages. Iyengar's team gathered an extensive selection of electoral speeches and TV commercials of both presidential candidates Al Gore and George W. Bush. The material was gathered on a multimedia CD and distributed to a representative sample of voters with Internet access, a few weeks before the election. Participants were informed that they were free to use the CD in what form they wanted and that the accessed information would be recorded on their computer. After the election, participants were instructed how to download and transmit the data collected to the marketing research firm that distributed the CDs. Pooled data have shown weak partisan preferences of the participants who had voted. Republicans and conservatives have been more active in seeking information related to Republican candidate George Bush, but Democrats had no preference for speeches or TV spots of either candidate. These data have indicated a stronger selective exposure among Republicans, which may be explained – believe the authors – by the popularity of pro-Republican channel Fox News, launched in 1986. A later stage of the study indicated that the Democrats have recovered the gap: in 2000, very few Democrat participants showed an aversion to George Bush's speeches, while in 2007 almost none of the Democrats did follow Fox News Channel.

Summarizing, we can say that the present media environment, which offers an abundance of alternatives to consumers, will tend to accentuate the inequalities in terms of political information acquisition. Secondly, increased information accessibility will lead to a high degree of selective exposure to political information. The current transition to a society in which each of us uses information in a different way will produce some changes in the direction of custom-made information era.

Analyzing the impact of such new practices on information producers, we can see that these new media consumption patterns will moreover increase the bias in the news, in order to gain or maintain market shares. On a more general level, partisan coverage seems to strengthen the hypothesis that new technologies will narrow, rather than widen, the viewers' political horizons. With time, avoiding unpleasant information might become so common that many consumers will turn to the favorite information source, whatever the covered subject might be. As a consequence, media audiences will be able to totally avoid topics and opinions that contradict their own opinions. Finally, this selective exposure process will produce a less

informed and more polarized electorate (which we already saw happening in the last Romanian presidential elections of 2009).

The reconfiguration of media audiences has significant consequences for media theoreticians and specialists. Researchers investigating the news exposure will find increasingly difficult to treat it as a potential source of political beliefs or attitudes. As we already argued, certain types of information can be deliberately avoided, meaning that exposure to media will mainly be a choice of partisan and politically involved individuals.

We anticipate therefore that media will reduce audience fragmentation in response to a particular type of news. The process of persuasion involves a certain level of attitudinal change in response to media stimuli. As media audiences are being dissolved into homogeneous electorate subdivisions it becomes increasingly unlikely that media messages will do anything other than reinforce voters' partisanship. This prediction has been emphasized in almost every consistent study of presidential elections since the 1940s.

The phenomenon of increasingly political polarization among the voters calls into question some postulates of contemporary media studies. Average voters will become increasingly reluctant to discrepant information, and messages that are counter-attitudinal will be actively resisted. For example, after consistent media allegations about the Bush administration's involvement in the Iraq war, the percentage of Republicans who gave an affirmative answer when asked if U.S. troops in Iraq have found weapons of mass destruction remained unchanged, while the percentage of Democrats who responded negatively increased by 30 percent (Bennett & Iyengar, 2009: 64). In short, Republicans have remained unaffected by the new wave of discrepant information.

Selective media exposure is increasingly based on partisan preferences, marking the transition to a new era of minimal effects. Other forms of media influence, such as agenda setting or priming continues to be important. These new aspects of political communication highlight the need for consistent conceptual scaffolding, in which the new social and communicational practices should also be inserted.

3. New Perspectives on Political Communication Research

Using mass media to achieve certain political goals is not only standard practice, but also essential to political survival. However, in the context of present electoral campaigns, these strategies become more elaborate and have a greater impact. The media influence on political campaigns move the stakes of the political game well beyond the media field, therefore campaign strategies become increasingly likely to have a great real-world impact. The ever-increasing level of budgets invested by candidates make some of the political specialists wonder "why the participants continue to invest when decades of research into the effects of media-based political campaigns purports to demonstrate that exposure to campaigns mainly reinforces voters; preexisting loyalties" (Iyengar & Simon, 2000: 150). Political specialists yet routinely assign electoral influence to structural variables, ignoring the impact of campaign events. Despite some current empirical research, some authors believe that campaigns are pivotal and that their consequences are far from minimal (Iyengar & Simon, 2009).

Research has traditionally investigated mostly persuasion processes (i.e. the impact of the campaign on voting preference). From this perspective, empirical data seem to support the minimal effects hypothesis; empirical evidence indicating that exposure to campaigns rein-

force partisan attitudes. Limiting research to persuasion effects ignore a variety of other relevant campaign effects. Moreover, even if we consider persuasion as the best way to evaluate campaign effects, it can hardly be measured because many campaigns use implicit messages that work in concert with voters' predispositions and sentiments.

Turning to methodology issues, we have to remark that political researchers were (and still are) dependent on sociological surveys. The founding fathers of modern research dedicated to campaigns effects (Lazarsfeld, Berelson and their successors at Columbia University) used the inquiry to investigate the exposure to campaign messages. However, like any scientific instrument, the survey method has some flaws, the most important is to consider media exposure reported by respondents as being an acceptable surrogate of actual exposure. The assumption that effective exposure converges with stated exposure is problematic in many respects. Short-term memory of past events is one of them.

In experiments dedicated to election advertising effects by American authors, Iyengar and Ansolabehere (1998), they have revealed that more than 50% of participants who have followed certain electoral spots could not recall them after thirty minutes of exposure. Some respondents have gone in the opposite direction, reporting a higher exposure to the real campaign messages, possibly to create a desirable image in terms of civic involvement.

Longitudinal studies, which identify changes in public opinion, provide an adequate picture of electoral campaigns influence on voters. Given the importance of contextual factors, such as economy, inflation or unemployment, such studies allow a comparison between the effects of specific events (which usually occur in a short period of time) and more general effects, subsequent to general campaign contexts. Thomas Holbrook's study (1994) dedicated to candidates' assessments indicated that attitudinal patterns were essential in earlier evaluations of candidates. While campaign events (such as the televised debates) contribute little to the overall voting percentages, their effects are far from minimal.

The modest results of research related to the persuasive effects of presidential campaigns have encouraged scholars to explore other aspects of voting behavior. Authors Iyengar and Ansolabehere (1998) have proposed two new areas of interest for the research dedicated to campaign effects: 1) how voters gather information about the candidates and major campaign issues and 2) how the use of campaign rhetoric sets the public's political agenda, a phenomenon called "agenda control" (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1998: 154).

Information is a very valuable resource for electoral campaigns, however media tend to prioritize competition-related stories, and to treat campaign as a horse race, presenting candidates in stereotyped positions. Since the competition frame prevails in media coverage during election periods, everyday events are selected if they match the horse race criterion (information about who is winning or has a better chance of victory etc.). In addition to the political game, journalists constantly pay attention to ratings, and one of the most effective strategies for keeping consumers' interest is to insert details about candidates' private lives, potential scandals or conflicts.

Apart from the cynical perspective, media information has a real influence on voters, at least at the level of information accumulation and processing. Experiments conducted by Iyengar and Ansolabehere (1996) demonstrated that participants (ordinary citizens in Southern California) exposed to 30-second commercials election were better able to identify the candidate's position on particular topics (selected by the experimenters), than participants who did not watched the commercials. This experiment revealed that direct exposure to the candidates' messages ensures a better reminder of the political topics discussed in the media during

electoral campaigns. Fact is that the media contributes to a better understanding of campaign issues and candidates positions in relation to those topics, and a close competition between candidates – as it was the case of Romanian presidential elections of 2009 – raises more attention from audiences, generates a higher level of information, and is more likely to produce better informed voters.

In addition to the acquisition of information, voters also make inferences about candidates' personalities based on what they see and read in the media; from this point of view the flow of information reaching the voters is very important. Experimental studies demonstrate that the favorable poll results can lead to increased public support for a certain candidate (Iyengar & Simon, 2000). Thus, especially during the first part of the campaign, electoral communication can generate "bandwagon" effects. In short, during campaigns information becomes a very valuable resource, helping voters to find out what are one candidate's chances to win, what are the most important aspects of their personalities or political positions. So we can say without doubt that, although they may seem superficial, media campaigns truly inform citizens.

Several remarks can be made at the end of this chapter:

1. Election campaigns are not limited to media coverage.
2. Election campaigns mobilize various resources, and involve interactions between campaign messages and voters' partisanship.
3. It is impossible to isolate a particular type of influence (electoral messages, electorate's predisposition, candidates' agenda or conjectural factors), in the voting process.
4. Unlike the hypodermic model, recent theoretical models emphasize more subtle forms of influence, such as the information acquisition and the media ability to direct voters towards a specific agenda (agenda control).

3.1. Agenda Control

Political and communication specialists seem to agree on the fact that ordinary citizens cannot monitor the entire political universe, but only certain aspects that seem important at a given time. The more prominent some issue in the news media is, the higher the level of importance people accord that issue (Iyengar & Kinder, 1987). Because candidates are the principal sources of news during campaigns, they are in the position to simultaneously influence the media and public agendas (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000).

The main implication of agenda setting for the study of campaigns effects is that issues considered significant by the electorate become criteria for evaluating the candidates. This process (equivalent to what psychologists call "priming") in which issues are evaluated in accordance with their perceived salience was investigated by a series of experimental studies. Shanto Iyengar and Donald Kinder (1987), for instance, found that the media sudden preoccupation with the Iranian hostage crisis in the last days of the 1980 presidential campaign caused voters to think about the candidates' ability to control terrorism when choosing between Carter and Reagan. This fact proved disadvantageous to the incumbent president, Jimmy Carter.

Given the judgments that the average voter employs, and the consequences of priming (which is very close to indirect persuasion, in the sense that altering the voting can alter the choice), candidates try to introduce on the electoral agenda issues on which they could have a competitive advantage. Events that have followed the Gulf War illustrate this situation very well. During the conflict, George Bush's popularity began to grow, but by the end of the war the media cover has shift attention to economy. This cost President Bush considerably in the

1992 elections because voters assessed Bill Clinton as better able to meet their expectations about the U.S. economy. Had the media continued to focus on national security issues, some authors (Iyengar & Simon, 2000) suspect that others would have been the results.

One clear evidence of priming effects is however the campaign rhetoric itself; it plays a role not only in persuading individuals, but also (especially) in directing voters to a specific agenda and to expectations related to this agenda, this is the reason why agenda control is one of the campaign priority stakes (Iyengar & Simon, 2000: 162). Agenda control can influence the voting process in several ways, especially since most voters reinforce their prior preferences when faced with partisan messages.

3.2. The Resonance Model

The earliest model dedicated to campaign effects has been to assume that candidates persuade voters by injecting them with appropriate messages. After the formulation of appropriate messages (regarding both content and presentation), the hypodermic model considered that exposure only was sufficient in order to achieve success, meaning reaching as many people as possible, all potential voters. From this perspective, all campaign staffs have to do is to identify messages that work. The “hypodermic injection” implies that such a campaign would be effective, regardless of voters’ political preferences or moment circumstances.

Some recent approach (resonance and strategic models) offer alternative explanations to voting, stressing the importance of context and strategies during electoral campaigns (Bennett & Iyengar, 2009; Iyengar & Simon, 2000). Although it assumes that voters can be persuaded, resonance model differs in that it gives an important role to voters’ predispositions and feelings. This model predicts that resonance effects are contingent and that the most important is the adequacy of the campaign messages with voter attitudes. The importance of partisanship allows quite accurate predictions about the impact of campaigns. However, during tight presidential race in which candidates reach the same level of hearing (decibel level), the main impact of the campaigns will be to radicalize the partisan voters (Iyengar & Simon, 2000: 164).

In their experimental studies, Ansolabehere and Iyengar (1996) confirmed that strengthening partisan views was higher among participants with low levels of partisan preferences. The two authors examined the differences in terms of persuasive effects of advertising materials used by the Democrat and Republican candidates for U.S. Senate in 1992. The two analyzed issues were crime and unemployment, and the same message was given both by Republican and Democratic candidates. The fact that the stories related to unemployment tended to be more favorable for Democrats and those related to security privileged the Republicans, led the researchers to conclude that there were various gradations of credibility in the candidates’ speeches related to those two topics.

3.3. The Strategic Model

Other theoretical model that offers a more complex perspective of the electoral process is the strategic model (Iyengar & Simon, 2000), which stresses the importance of campaign strategies. Although it assumes that voters can be persuaded, the resonance model differs in that it gives an important role to voters’ predispositions and feelings. The most powerful ingredient of electorate predispositions is obviously the political affiliation. In addition to that, the importance of partisanship allows quite accurate predictions about the impact of campaigns.

To summarize, we can say that campaign messages have different symbolic and cognitive effects, such as political knowledge acquisition and recycling, redistribution of political capital and the reconstruction of political identities. Each candidate trying to impose its own definition of the political situation, through speeches, symbols, images, movies, quotes, arguments, posters or videos etc. This new configuration of the electoral process demonstrates that such interactivity-based models, which encompass both voters' predispositions and media exposure, become paramount to voting understanding.

4. Conclusion

The majority of studies dedicated to electoral campaigns (using either psychological laboratory experiments or content analysis) indicate that individuals use cognitive filters, which eliminate or modify the information that they wish to receive, leading to particular media messages interpretations. Summarizing such postulates, we can conclude that both those who have seen the emergence of media as a sign of a new era of democracy, and those who have seen the media as a tool of discretionary political control, had shared the same limited representation of mass communication.

Ambition to incorporate social and technological change in a more comprehensive model, however, was overshadowed by the success of minimal effects paradigm, proposed in the 50's. Later, communication researchers began to discover more consistent evidence of direct effects of media and ways to develop new models of mass communication (Zaller, 1992). The controversy over the filtered versus direct effects of media has proven harmful, persisting for decades in the field of media and political studies. Recently, however, a new consensus seems to have emerged, linked to a famous argument, namely that the news indicates people not only *what* to think, but also *how* to think (Chaffe & Metzger, 2001: 375).

However, some authors consider that the extensions of the classic agenda-setting paradigm mark a decline of the latter or, in any case, require a rethinking of the initial assumptions. Although the classical theory is still widely used in experimental design, some authors (Bennett & Simon, 2000) argue that it has no longer much in common with the realities of the communication field. Unlike the minimal effects paradigm that seemed to be contradicted by the social context in which it appeared, agenda setting paradigm still seems to be very prolific, despite being unsuitable to the current socio-technical context. American researchers are already talking about a new rising paradigm dedicated to the "not-so-minimal" media effects (Bennett & Iyengar, 2009).

A more important matter regards the imperative of according classical media research with the current social conditions. More and more authors (Dahlgren, 2000; Schudson, 2003; Bennett & Iyengar, 2009) believe that the future of political communication should proliferate explanatory models that incorporate the new socio-technical elements and avoid unnecessary controversies such as the dispute over minimal, limited or maximal media effects.

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The Impact of Economic Indicators on Voting Behavior in the the 2004 and 2009 Romanian Presidential Elections

Abstract

Economic developments impact on voting behavior assumes multiple meanings in the context of presidential elections in Romania. After 1989, the Romanian society has undergone profound structural changes, which later resulted in either social imbalances or contributed to the polarization of voting options. The hypothesis we want to test is that the positive evolution of the economic indicators contributes to the modification of electoral choice, from left party candidates to right party candidates. The second round of presidential elections is, in our opinion, the highest point of intense rivalry and political emulation of the electorate. This is one of the reasons which have contributed to choosing this type of election process as a temporal analysis. Another aspect that led to the choice of this theme is that the polarization of the electorate becomes especially clear in 2004 and 2009. Both in 2004 and 2009, Basescu was one of the presidential candidates; this is way we were interested in discovering the traditional voter loyalties of the right party candidate. In terms of economic factors, we found that the standard of living is dependent on a number of indicators that are felt directly or indirectly by the voters. The analysis revealed that the indicator with the greatest impact on voting behavior is GDP/resident, this is the expression of the recognition of economic developments both in the occupied and unoccupied population. Surprisingly, the GDP/resident has a greater impact in favor of the SDP candidate, which refutes the hypothesis of the paper.

Keywords: Romania, political sociology, economic indicators, presidential elections

1. Introduction

The history of political campaigning in Romania is characterized by a constant difference between parties located on the left and on the right part of the political scene. This distinction is not only visible in policies promoted, which can be classified as liberal policies (right) and social policy (left), but also in terms of the interest granted by the Romanian electorate for parties that, in a certain time are considered able to represent best their interests.

Between 1990 and 1991, Romanian politics was in a time of contouring, starting with 1992, Romanian politics has entered a normal path of democratic development. Thus, the first alternation in power was marked in 1996, when the Democratic Convention of Romania (CDR) won the parliamentary and presidential elections, against the Social Democracy Party of Romania (SDPR) and its candidate, Ion Iliescu. Another important struggle for power between political forces representing the political left and right took place in 2000, when Ion Iliescu

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and SDPR won the parliamentary and presidential elections, despite Vadim Tudor who probably received the maximum votes for the Great Romania Party (PRM). Alternation in power has continued with the next electoral cycle in 2004 when Justice and Truth Alliance (ADA) and Traian Basescu won in a disputed manner the parliamentary and presidential elections.

In other words, between 1990 and 2009, Romania has seen at least three political moments of alternation between political forces of left and right. We believe that identifying the main reasons that gave rise to the choices that Romanians have done over the electoral cycle is a starting point for understanding the social mechanisms that affect the electorate voting process in Romania. This paper aims to identify, based on statistical data, the main correlations between the indicators of living standard and voting options in Romania.

2. The Analysis of Voting Behavior

2.1 Theoretical Models

Jocelyn A.J. Evans, in her work “Voters and Voting: An Introduction”, describes the vote as follows: “Certainly a personal choice. But is vote like any other choice? Clearly, motivational speaking, electoral option is very similar to any other choice which people do in their everyday life. People choose parties and candidates on the basis of benefits that they believe that the parties or candidates can offer. The nature of these benefits varies according to different theoretical approaches – benefits can be declaratory in nature or identity, direct material benefits – but like any other choice that a person does, voters have one set of criteria to be met by the choice they do” (Evans, 2004: 3).

The author of this paper believes that people vote rationally and selfishly. Thus, they make their choice on what they believe it will bring the most benefits and will respond to almost all expectations they have from that party or candidate. However, Jocelyn Evans nuances the previous idea, saying that when people vote, they do it in terms of the best choices for themselves and for others “but that choice is based on a statement of values that implies what an individual believes it is good for the rest of the citizens” (Evans, 2004: 3).

British author’s work highlights the need for social group to be represented and be governed in a way that a citizen sees as not only good for him, in particular, but for the rest of society. “Voting is a collective activity, unlike other choices that people make in their everyday life” (Evans, 2004: 5). When it comes to voting, people are far from sure of getting what they want. An individual may vote for a candidate, but when a majority of voters express an option for another candidate, the individual wish to purchase the candidate’s product fails. What underlines the author of this paper is the similarity between the psychological mechanisms underlying the choice of trade, for example, and the underlying political process by voting. The difference is that when someone wants to buy a product in order to fulfill immediate needs and the resources are available, that person can satisfy the need directly and without further obligation. Referring to the vote as a political currency of purchase, things are quite different. Personal will and availability for voting a candidate or political party are not sufficient for the need to be satisfied.

But what are the factors that influence individuals vote? The same author believes that the electorate vote is granted to a particular political actor when the electorate believes that “voting a political entity, they may achieve group benefits, material gain (tax cuts, wage increases), managerial competence (success of government), the importance given to specific

problems important to society, defeat another party in the last elections (one vote given to the smaller evil)” (Evans, 2004: 5).

The vote is therefore an expression of complex psychological feelings of the electorate. This is not an automatic and selfish process, but selfless and structured process based on criteria that can help us to predict how certain social groups are voting. These criteria are “age, sex, social position, participation in a religious, ideological group membership” (Evans, 2004: 6). In testing our hypotheses regarding the relationship between voting and social profiles and individual attitudes in a given political and economic context, we place these different elements in a causal relationship. In other words, we are looking for an effect and a number of causes, which can be dependent and independent. In one voting model, we will identify a single dependent variable and several independent variables. The dependent variable is about the vote itself, which can be for a person or for a political party. Independent variables are actually attitudinal variables. Thus, we can verify after expressing the vote what are the characteristics of the individual that vote in a certain way and what are the reasons to vote so.

Studies in political sociology investigated a wide range of social indicators such as age, sex, occupation, religion and ethnic group membership, and sought to associate them with predisposition to vote for the Democratic Party or for the Republicans. Columbia School uses the concept of *social transmission of political choice*, the authors emphasizing three fundamental processes by which certain indicators – socio-economic classes, defined by education, occupation and income, religion and ethnicity – that retain certain voting preferences. These are *differentiating, contact and transmission*.

“The first and perhaps the most visible form of change in voting behavior in recent years, results in society’s structural changes” (Mair, Müller & Plasser, 2004: 3). Best example at hand is the historical ratio of voter loyalty to political parties. A large number of workers, farmers and low income persons involved the need of these social groups to have their interest best represented by a party that promotes better living standards for the above groups, socialist political parties, agrarian parties, etc. “Economic development is what led to the emergence of these social groups and all social development is the underlying change in voting choices among individuals forming these groups” (Mair, Müller & Plasser, 2004: 3). After the 1989 revolution, Romania has seen a succession of stages of economic development. Transition period and then the preparatory period for the EU and the NATO were the only moments in which the Romanian economy has shown signs of growth. The real economy has experienced a real revival between 1994 and 1995, while inflation reached historical peaks in 1993 and 1997. After 1990 the Romanian economy has contracted. Labor productivity fell by reducing the working week and by retiring a large number of workers. The period between 1993 and 1996 revealed the restore of the economic environment, based on the privatization process. This recovery has meant a revival of Romania’s GDP. Change in economic policy options (after 1996 elections) entailed a reduction in real terms of GDP. After 2000, the economic situation in Romania is developing new points, under international financial organizations pressure. We have chosen to refer to the economic situation of Romania at this stage of the work to emphasize the idea that in our country, classical social groups have experienced structural changes. Classes of workers, farmers, and intellectuals or pensioners suffered changes of structure, composition and representation on social scale, following economic developments. “More specifically, changes in voting behavior are easily visible in the societies in which the number of those belonging to certain social groups has fluctuated significantly and the middle class starts to take shape. Benefits are in favor of political parties which have not previously benefited from considerable support from social groups who now feel the need

to be represented by other political forces, but these changes in voting behavior does not mean the disappearance of election related parties with social groups which are now rethinking their voting options” (Mair, Müller & Plasser, 2004: 3).

Although mostly stable, traditional electorate is incapable to ensure these political parties to fulfill their political ambitions. Another factor to be considered from the perspective of resizing the hard core of voters of a political party in Romania, is the quality of life. In the twenty years of democracy, political parties in Romania have failed to keep their credibility in their relation with voters. The resize of the social groups also contributed to changing the structure of hard core of voters. “Traditional voters decrease, the resizing of social groups that voted to a point a political party, can represent a key element by which political parties are turning to other categories of voters, to satisfy their own political interests” (Mair, Müller & Plasser, 2004: 3).

Over time, the Western democracies supported the idea that parties belonging to the government sphere have a number of advantages over the opposition. Government parties have access to distribution of resources; they have the first word in the establishment and the organization of elections, while opposition parties do not have any of the levers of power. Also, the ruling parties are able to adopt certain measures to gain the trust of voters, even of those who did not vote for that party. We can also discuss about unpopular measures and a collapse in preferences among the electorate. In Romania, as elsewhere in the world, began to show a phenomenon that is treated by specialists. The crisis of political parties is a relatively new concept in politic literature. This crisis is manifested by the inability of voters to choose among political parties in a democratic political system. Voters face this crisis of political values probably because of the lack of consistency and voters disappointment regarding politicians. This crisis is seen as a psychological phenomenon closely related to social reality. From the perspective of theories on the vote must be given sociological approaches, which argue that social structure is influencing how people vote. These approaches focus on structures and on the idea that people vote in line with the ideas espoused by most members of the group. Another approach is psychological, especially known as the Michigan model, where the electorate votes mainly because it is identified with a particular political party. Basically, voters are attached to the values promoted by a political party and vote consistently with it. The idea presented in the economic approach is that people make rational choices and “consider the costs and benefits associated with voting for a particular party and vote accordingly”.¹

2.2. The Importance of Economic Factors in Voting Behavior

*If I were told I could only have one variable
to determine the outcome of the [2000 US presidential]
election it would be economic growth.
Then I would take presidential popularity.*

(Prof. Michael Lewis-Beck, ENN, 17 May 2000)

Understanding the specific election results raises the need to study them in comparative framework. To achieve the objective, we have identified the need for the study of individual perceptions on the general economic situation in comparison with the evolution of voting intention in 2004-2009 elections. Studies conducted in Germany and Italy have shown that voting intentions were shaped by perceptions of economic indicators in a decisive manner, both at personally and nationally level.

Most of the literature considers voters as rational actors. “Downs (1957) introduced the idea that voters vote based on utilitarian comparisons between political parties or candidates. The notion of voters as consumers, voting to maximize benefits contradicts the definition borrowed from social psychology that people vote just to exercise their right to make a choice” (Dutch & Stevenson, 2008: 9). How the electorate votes has a psychological dimension and rational dimension. The electorate becomes an active and rational mass, and is not perceived as an amorphous mass of individuals who are called to the polls to choose their leaders at every election cycle.

3. Methodology

This case study is based on statistical analysis method, “research mode phenomena, based on quantitative expressions using a specific system of rules, principles, knowledge and transformation of objective reality”.² In general, statistics is considered an exact science whose aim is to obtain information based on a representative sample. From this perspective we can discuss about a descriptive approach to this area, which explains the existing data, and an area of inference, from which we can obtain correlations between the information analyzed. We believe that this paper focuses on two levels of the domain, the descriptive level and the inferential level.

We consider this method as being appropriate in the context of the phenomenon treated in this paper, the evolution of voting from left party candidates to right party candidates, is inextricably linked to economic principles that shape perceptions and mode of action of individuals, in certain intervals. In other words, this paper focuses on the study of a mass phenomenon, which is described in the literature as “complex and atypical, resulted from the combination of a large number of influencing factors. Defining as the science of mass phenomena, statistics favor inductive type of reasoning”.³

Thus, according to statistical legalities we are required to identify all cases separate in order to broaden the base of analysis and increase the viability of the reference system. In other words, it requires abstractization and a waiver of unessential elements or incidental arising from the event (in this case, we will refer to outlier elements). In other words, we deal with a quantitative dimension of statistics.

4. The Case Study

4.1. Hypotheses

The motivation for choosing this theme is based on the electorate polarization mainly after 2004. Undoubtedly, the economic status of communities in general and individuals in particular, are indicators that should be taken into account when discussing the voting options. By overlaying these economic factors with the electoral factors, we are trying to identify the relationship between living standards and the evolutions in voting behavior. Our hypothesis is that positive developments and economic indicators of living standards change the voting intention of the Romanian electorate, from left wing parties or candidates to right-wing parties and candidates. Also, a secondary hypothesis is that living conditions influence voting behavior and that between 2004 and 2009, changes in living standards have been critical to

the voting intentions of the Romanians. We believe that overlapping economic factors with the electoral factors we will provide answers to identify the causes of increasing right party votes and left parties decrease in voter preferences, based on developments of living standards and its indicators.

4.2. Justification for Focusing on Presidential Elections

We considered that the presidential elections are the highest point of interest to voters. Election of the President of Romania has led to polarization of the Romanian society, especially in the second round, when the race was between only two candidates. Therefore, we will refer to the last two rounds of elections for the election of the President of Romania, in 2004 and 2009. We chose to analyze the second round of these elections because they present similar features. In both rounds, we have a candidate of a left party (2004 – Adrian Nastase, 2009 – Mircea Geoana) and a candidate of a right party (2004 and 2009 – Traian Basescu) and in both presidential elections, the right candidate won. Besides the candidates' oratorical skills and charisma, we consider that the choice made by the Romanian electorate is based on economic mechanisms and an utilitarian type of thinking.

Given the detailed structure of the political conduct of voting in the presidential elections provided by the BEC offices in both 2004 and 2009, even at the polling station level, we wanted to choose the basic unit not the county, but the *comuna*. Unfortunately, we failed to obtain economic data on an administrative level so detailed. Consequently, we had to climb a rung administrative-territorial aggregation and make the analysis at the county level, the most detailed level that we have access to economic data from the period 2005-2009.

4.3. Analysis of the Indicators: Economic and Electoral

After the centralization of the electoral results from the second round of presidential elections in 2004 and in 2009, we have identified several election indicators that would allow us a comparison between the SDP candidate and vote for the liberal candidate in the two rounds of elections.

Electoral indicators

In addition to indicators of voting behavior: vote for the SDP candidate and vote for ADA/LDP candidate, in two separate moments: it is important to talk about percentage of total population and percentage of valid votes, another indicator that we considered significant in our analysis is turnout. If in 2004, turnout was 56.38% nationally in 2009, turnout was 57.21%, which demonstrates an increased awareness of the population voting for the presidential election.

Economic indicators

Districts where turnout has fluctuated have to be studied in contrast with the economic indicators, trying to provide explanations for the decrease or the increase of turnout. Thus, we held that a county's welfare is given by the level of unemployment. This indicator shows the percentage of those who, at the county level, are working people but are not involved in any such activity. Secondly, we consider that unemployment rate is a good indicator of real growth of economy, and we base our statement on the fact that an emerging economy that actually creates jobs, contributes to lower unemployment rate. Also, we have chosen the distribution of economic indicator GDP per person, which implies that the economy is seen not only in terms of working population, but from the perspective of the entire population. What

is important is that the distribution of GDP per person reaches both professional and inactive population, like pensioners, which is a disciplined and active electorate. Another indicator that we considered necessary in our analysis is that real GDP growth, an indicator which shows the trend from previous years in economic development. Finally, we believe that we should treat net average monthly earnings as an indicator, which we weighted with the inflation rate in 2005 and 2009. The evolution of net average earning per month is also an indicator that we have been looking at, considering that a significant increase in wages is an indubitable increase of living standards.

Figure 1. Example of graphic expression of the relationship between an economic variation (net salary) and a political (voter participation, % of total population).

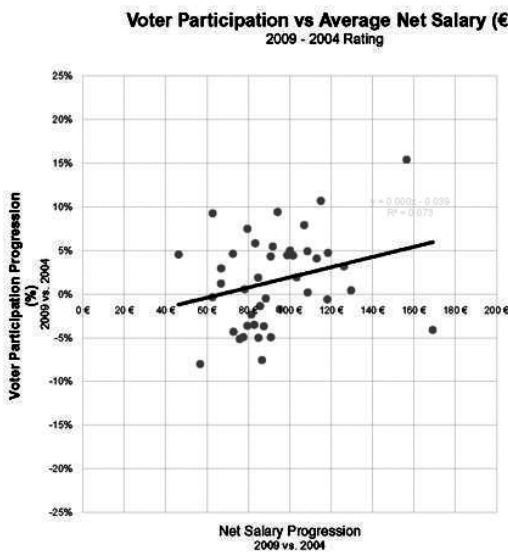


Figure 2. Graphic expression (scatterplot) of the relationship between the evolution of net salary and the evolution for the SDP candidate vote. Absolute values (non-standard).

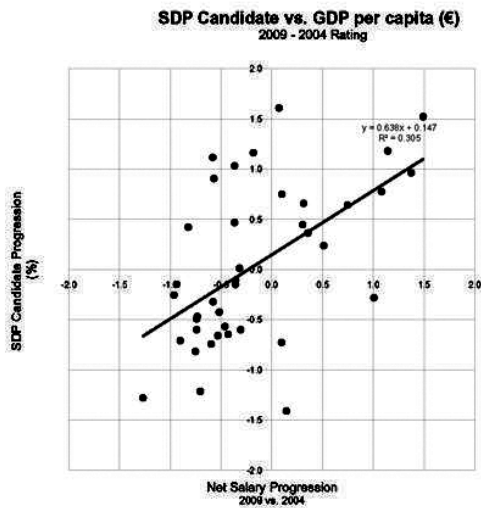
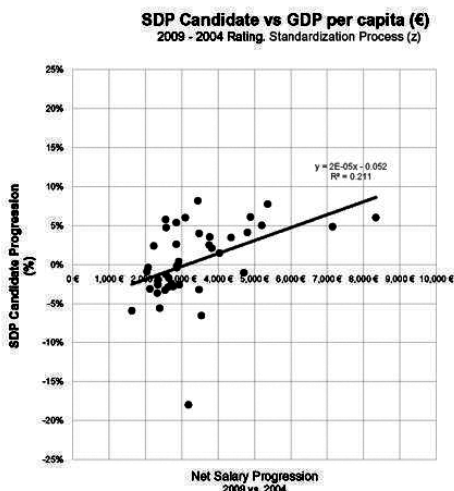


Figure 3. Graphic expression (scatterplot) of the relationship between the net salary evolution and the evolution for the SDP candidate vote. Standardized values, including outlier.



For a better understanding of the standardization process we should refer to the concept of normal distribution of data. Thus, a normal distribution of data means that most examples in a dataset are close to average while relatively few examples tend to one extreme or another. Standard deviation is a statistic element that tells us how grouped together is the examples of a data set.

The next step was to identify the largest deviations from the average development indicators. Thus, counties that have made great differences as opposed to other counties were identified by generating graphs of variation and were removed from the analysis, the reason being that their relevance compared with other counties is minimal. We have to point out that in most cases, the counties that have been removed from the analysis were Ilfov, Bucharest and Harghita. As we know, Ilfov and Bucharest are the main contributors to GDP, known for significantly higher growth than other counties of Romania. Harghita was removed from the analysis because a large decrease of the SDP candidate (-18%), voters in the county is also difficult to compare with that of other counties. After generating the graphs, we have identified these counties as outlier type of units, understanding by this an observation that is numerically distant from the rest of the data or “a peripheral observation, or outlier, is one that seems to deviate substantially from sample in relation with other indicators” (Lewis, 1994: 56).

4.4. Results

The next step of analysis was to check to what extent economic indicators have contributed to the change of independent variables (voter turnout, changes in SDP and LDP vote of the voting population, the development of the SDP and LDP vote of valid votes cast). As seen, the impact of GDP growth, changes in unemployment rate and increased average net monthly salary on voting behavior was irrelevant.

We have identified an explanatory power (as the correlation coefficient R^2) of 6.5 % on the influence of salary on votes for the SDP candidate in the voting population. The impact of the same indicator on votes for the LDP candidate was about 1.7% (R^2). We have noted

the influence that the salary level has on the voter turnout, economic growth having a positive impact in terms of persons exercising their right to vote. The analysis revealed that salary does not have a significant explanatory power for any of the candidates in round 2, SDP or LDP, positive developments in average net monthly salary explain only residual weight in vote changes for the candidate LDP and SDP (2.3% and 1.8%). In terms of significance, when the explanatory power exceeds a threshold of 10%-15%, we can recognize significant influences of independent variables (in our case, change in economic indicators) on the dependent variables (in our case, change in voting behavior). As seen, in our cases all identified R2 coefficients are well below this value, somewhere around 1%-2%, maximum 7% in one case.

Table 1. Explanatory power (coefficient of determination R2) of various economic indicators at various indicators of voting behavior.

	All values						Values without outliers					
	Turnout	Vote for SDP candidate	Vote for LDP candidate	Vote for SDP candidate valid	Vote for LDP candidate valid	AVERAGE	Turnout	Vote for SDP candidate	Vote for LDP candidate	Vote for SDP candidate valid	Vote for LDP candidate valid	AVERAGE
Rate of unemployment	2%	0%	2%	0%		1%	0%	4%	4%	8%		4%
Salary	7%	18%	2%	12%		10%	7%	7%	2%	3%		4%
GDP / person	4%	21%	7%	16%		12%	4%	31%	10%	29%		18%
AverageE	4%	13%	4%	9%		8%	4%	14%	5%	13%		9%

Figure 4. The most intense relationship identified between economic independent variables and dependent variables on voting behavior: GDP/resident vs. SDP candidate vote (coefficient of determination R2 = 29%).

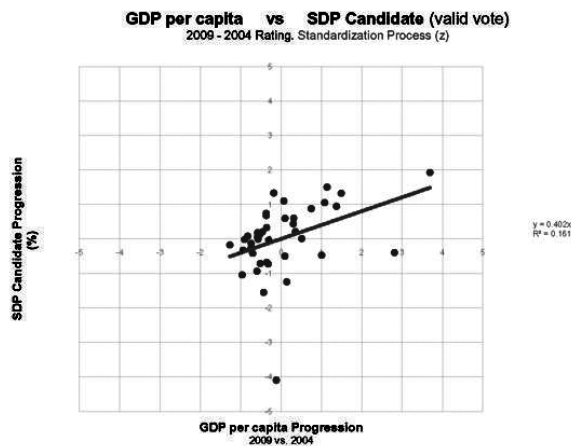
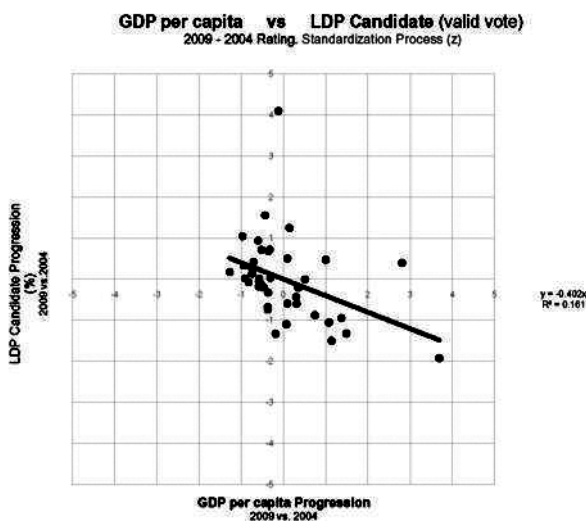


Figure 5. The most intense relationship identified between economic independent variables and dependent variables on voting behavior: GDP/resident vs. LDP candidate vote (mirror image with SDP candidate vote) (coefficient of determination $R^2 = 29\%$).



The only case in which we could establish a sufficiently high explanatory power of economic indicator on the voting behavior was for the impact of the positive evolution of the GDP/resident on the vote in round two (the SDP candidate, respectively LDP). Thus, relying on results achieved at the vote in 2009 compared to 2004, the positive and negative differences scored by the two candidates can be explained by the growth of the GDP/resident indicator. The reason is that reported to the entire voting population, economic growth is felt differently in the various election segments. In other words, an active person in the labor market feels different the economic growth as opposed to a pensioner, an unemployed person or a young person of 18 years. In the chart that overlaps the SDP candidate vote with the GDP/resident, the statistical coefficient of determination R^2 of the two indicators is 30.5%, while the correlation coefficient of the LDP candidate vote with GDP/resident is 9.7%. Studying the two charts demonstrates a major change in the preference distribution of voters in the counties in which GDP/resident is higher than in counties with lower distribution. Thus, counties in which GDP grew, the SDP candidate scored significantly increases, unlike the LDP candidate, who won more votes in counties where the distribution of economic value per resident was lower. This must be seen as a change in voter preference from poorer regions for a strong political leader who promises wealth and welfare. The chart shows that Traian Basescu won in 2009 the core voters of Ion Iliescu, acquired in 2004 by Adrian Nastase, namely the voters in poor areas, with welfare needs, whose aspirations held for improved living standards. In terms of candidate LDP is clearly visible the decrease in the core electorate, to whom he addressed even from 1996-2000. On the one hand, this finds its explanation by grabbing these voters by Crin Antonescu, by promoting a radical right message; these votes are registered in the chart of the vote growth for SDP candidate, after a post-round 1 alliance in presidential elections, with PNL.

On the other hand we can explain the increased preference for the President Traian Basescu of the voters from counties with lower than average growth by the political power sphere.

During 2004-2008, the LDP was one of the ruling parties, managed to occupy key positions in the ministerial and territorial structures. As discussed in the theoretical chapter, political parties in government have more chances to win elections than the opposition parties. In Romania, access to resources must be matched by a factor often encountered during the election campaign, namely the electoral bribery.

In another train of thoughts, the SDP candidate increase must be seen in the light of two main components. Persons from counties with growth higher than the national average have checked a substantial increase of the motivational factor. Economic growth, although it was found in the standard of living, was felt to be fragile and emerged the idea of protection and propagation of future earnings and other measures to raise living standards. As both candidates have promoted economic measures, we appreciate that in counties where the SDP candidate has increased; the voters appreciate economic measures proposed by the leftist candidate more able to contribute to the desired standard of living. In other ways, the increased votes for SDP candidate must be assessed in terms of eroding confidence in LDP candidate, who served as president in the previous mandate. Unsettled promises, unresolved issues in the campaign undertaken in 2004 are more easily perceived among voters with higher income (implying here that people with higher incomes are mostly college graduates) and all of these contributed decisively to change the option to vote.

We will also detail the results obtained by the SDP candidate, respectively by the LDP candidate in two administrative units examined and removed from the analysis because of the asymmetrical character, emphasizing the development of votes for each candidate in the period 2004-2009. In Ilfov, where was recorded a turnout increase of 15.4% over 2004, the SDP candidate grew by 4.9% in terms of votes in 2009 compared to 2004, when Adrian Nastase won 33.3% to a 71.5% turnout. Candidate Traian Basescu won an increase of 10.1% in 2009 compared to 2004 when he managed to obtain 37.1% of votes. It should be noted that developments in electoral terms are dependent not only on economic indicators but also by other independent factors, which can not be scientifically quantified, namely to the organizational ability, personal example of community leaders, campaign intensity held in the county.

5. Conclusions

Following the centralization and analysis of statistical data and economic indicators at county level, we are able to say that the hypothesis is partially confirmed. In other words, we could not identify significant correlations between the positive evolution of economic indicators and the change in voting behavior of voters regarding the election of Romania in 2009. The most important indicator emerged from this analysis was the distributed value of GDP/resident, which was due to the evolution of voting for the SDP candidate (in 31%), while the same indicator influenced the vote for the right candidate by 10%. The impact of the GDP/resident indicator is obvious when we relate this indicator to the entire voting population, this population segment includes not only active persons in the labor market, but also pensioners, one of the most active categories of voters.

The hypothesis has been invalidated because of the fact that although each county has registered economic growth, there have been cases in which the increases scored by the candidate of the left were higher than those recorded for the right candidate. Moreover, in counties that recorded higher growth than the national average, the positive vote for the candidate

of the SDP was greater than the increase of LDP candidate. Specific cases can be seen in the counties of Constanta, Arges, Brasov, Timisoara. This hypothesis refutes mainly because there were no apparent correlations in the evolution of voting from candidate of the left to the candidate of the right. The hypothesis has also been refuted because of secondary factors which were not subject of our research, namely the influence of local leaders of both parties whose candidates have faced in the second round of presidential elections and special cases that have affected voting behavior (corruption, failure of local leaders – convincing example is found in Hunedoara county).

To sum up, the hypothesis has two levels of confirmation, respectively denial. The first level aims partial confirmation of the fact that the evolution of living standards influences in very small measure the voting behavior, while the second level is based on denial the fact that economic indicators play a decisive role in voter behavior change from left to right.

Notes

¹ <http://asis.ubbcluj.ro/cercetare/RPES/documents/Raportanual2009.LDPf>, accessed on 15.06.2010.

² <http://www.biblioteca-digitala.ase.ro/biblioteca/pagina2.asp?id=cap1> accessed on 22.06.2010, at 01:21.

³ <http://www.biblioteca-digitala.ase.ro/biblioteca/pagina2.asp?id=cap1> accessed on 22.06.2010, at 01:21.

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Blogs as Sources for Political News

Abstract

Blogs are on a continuously ascending trend. In the beginning, the bloggers took information (news) from the traditional media and commented it in their posts, but now the reversed tendency has appeared: journalists use blogs as news sources. Blogs seem to gain ground in their competition against traditional media regarding information. This article proves that blogs, as a news source for offline journalists remain bounded to their logic. In order for a blog post to become news, it needs to have the characteristics of any news. Furthermore, regular people have little chance of introducing their blog in the news flux, proving that this new communication instrument failed, at least for the moment, in the democratization of the media zone.

Keywords: blog, political blog, news source, new media

1. Introduction

In the field of contemporary media, the Internet seems to be a complex medium, conquering and including the previous ones. Despite this fact, the history of media proves that any medium takes care of different communicational needs; as these needs are perennial, the corresponding media survive. Enthusiasts consider the online environment as the trigger of social interaction with no boundaries. Some studies (Althaus & Tewksbury, 2000, *apud* Sweetser & Lee, 2008; Wellman, QuanHaase & Wute, 2001, *apud* Puig-I-Abril *et al*, 2009; Balaban *et al*, 2009) grant an important role to the Internet in raising civic and political involvement, leading to the desired democratization of the public sphere. As the Internet's popularity is increasing and all marketing, advertising and political communication strategies include an online component, it is vital to define the possibilities and limits of this instrument. For the enthusiasts there are limitless possibilities; for skeptics, the all powerful Internet is just an illusion; a contagious one for all passionate Internet users. Blogs are a good example of such a passion because their popularity has been constantly growing in last years.

The research on blogs argues that they managed to break all barriers and penetrate offline media as a valuable news source. Traditionally speaking, blog authors were interested in finding and commenting news that appeared in the offline media; recently, journalists turned to blogs as first-hand news sources. Taking the context into consideration, this paper aims at investigating the situations in which Romanian media have turned to blogs for fresh news and information. The main supposition is that not every blogger has the chance to be quoted

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and to be promoted by the offline media, unless his blog posts match the general characteristics of a news story.

It is important to identify the factors which turn a blog post into a news article for a number of reasons listed below. When quoting a blog post, offline media increase the blog's popularity to more than its readers and much more than the new media users. Consequently, the blogger has more opportunities to be "heard". Blogs, when used in an appropriate manner, can become planned communication instruments with a wider audience. Communication specialists can use the blog as a platform for launching statements and messages for the press, without being ostentatious in their intentions. Mainly politicians are favored: they have public visibility, their decisions are of great interest and their positions are influential; thus, it is highly probable that journalists read their blogs in search of subjects. Some posts will become news, incorporating the blogger's deliberate messages.

The first part of the article presents the main theoretical approaches in the field of new media, blogs and news theory, while the second part focuses on the research done, in terms of methodology, results and conclusions.

2. The Context

As it is proven by the history of mass media, different media used by a society are in a competition for popularity, users and, last but not least, for survival. As the history of mass media and research shows us, every medium competes against each other for attention, audience and survival. Once the Internet appeared, all previous media had to include an online component to their strategy, fuelling discussions on Internet's triumph. In this context, the blog, as a new media instrument, entered the competition of making, transmitting and commenting news. Some research shows that blogs are changing journalism completely, threatening traditional journalists by having specific advantages (offering first hand testimonies from event witnesses, exposing different opinions, making open analysis, comparing news and information). Nowadays, bloggers make the news by searching actively for information and by telling their story to the world. They often attract more readers than local newspapers and magazines. Journalists consider blogs as sources of inside information. Blogs also generate subjects and make them very popular, very fast. Scholars emphasize the downsides of blogs: the lack of credibility, masked identity of the author, libel accusations, the lack of ethic code, breaking the rule of confidentiality, author's subjectivity, the lack of filters and the lack of journalistic norms.

Nevertheless, blogs are increasingly popular, numerous, attracting a larger audience. For journalists, blogs have become a news source. For some, blogs are a way for regular individuals to express themselves. For an even larger audience, blogs need the support of traditional media. A blog post is usually read by a limited number of people, the blogosphere members. But if it is quoted by newspapers and televisions, the post appeals to a more numerous public. For a professional in public communication, an important question emerges: what makes a blog post a news subject? The answer will show that, despite continuously increasing popularity, blogs stick to the offline media logic. Therefore, are we allowed to speak about competition or symbiosis?

3. A Historical Competition

Cultural studies indicate that when a new communication medium appears, the previous ones do not disappear completely; the old and the new coexist and compete until a new, functional balance is established (Briggs & Burke, 2005: 49). Competition takes place in different directions, but mainly in what concerns entertainment possibilities and, the most important feature, the role played in transmitting information and in the circulation of news. The result of this competition is that previous media survive by adapting and renewing themselves.

When one uses the term of “new media”, one thinks mainly about the Internet and recent technologies, but B. Peters brings into attention the fact that any medium was new in the beginning, then widely spread, afterwards becoming ordinary. The author identifies five stages of life for any medium: technical invention (by adapting an older invention to new use), cultural innovation (the medium develops new social use), the legal regulation (obtained by negotiation of different interested parties), entering the economic circuit (every communication medium is a business) and, finally, entering the social mainstream (Peters, 2009: 18). The media evolution does not stop there. Media renew themselves by the aid of other media, by refining their uses and opening new possibilities: for example, television is renewed by digital media, such as YouTube or mobile phones with video functions. The media institutions and actors embrace the ever-changing features (Peters, 2009: 22).

Media compete in order to fulfill some functions in society. But what are these functions? R. Qvortrup (2006) argues that the key function is managing society by communicational means. Complexity is the key: every new medium appeared as the result of a more complex society, in need of more complex communication instruments (Qvortrup, 2006: 350). For example: oral media cannot manage vast social systems, covering great geographical surfaces; words just cannot travel long distances. As a consequence, only small societies, having a simple structure can manage themselves exclusively by oral means (Qvortrup, 2006: 350). Modern society, very differentiated and globalized, is manageable only by the use of the Internet. Its main quality is that it “integrates all known media in a convergent multimedia system” (Qvortrup, 2006: 350).

The competition is very visible on the level of news collecting and transmitting. The verbal communication of news, which was the primal manner of informing the others, has been undertaken by the written word. Starting with the XVIIIth century only printed news was credible. The print was chosen because it could travel faster and better to a larger audience, through great distances (Bârgăoanu, 2006: 49). When the radio was invented, the press felt pressured by the new competitor. Changes affected the media offer, the number of readers, the quality and accuracy of the information. The radio was all about minute to minute news. News selection became more rigorous: easy-to-tell events were preferred. (Bârgăoanu, 2006: 81).

Television fundamentally changed the way news was considered: “the only reality that television admits is the visual one; as a consequence, we are able to see only what television is showing” (Bârgăoanu, 2006: 186). Fiske (1987, *apud* Bârgăoanu, 2006: 186) mentions the transparency sophism: what is visible is undistorted; what is visible is important; what is important is visible. The Internet, the newcomer, favors ways of communication the other media do not. Its advantages are: media convergence (sound, image, written text), easy to access archives, diversity, interactivity, personalized content (Bârgăoanu, 2006: 120).

Efforts made by offline media to adapt to the new digital technologies show that the popularity of the Internet matters to them. Competition is fierce. Nevertheless, we believe that the new media are not a real threat. Actually, the new media counts on offline media for infor-

mation, sources of inspiration and visibility, mostly in the news field and in public debates. Can we talk about a symbiosis between new and old media?

4. Offline Media and Blogs: Towards a Symbiosis?

A blog is a personal web page, sometimes written similar to a journal, sometimes keeping only an inverted chronological order of the posts. The blog uses software which places the new entries (called “posts”) in the upper part of the page and then saves them into archives. In 2008, the report made by Technorati, mentioned 133 million blogs (Winn, 2009). The latest statistics identify some main trends: the blogosphere is dominated by educated males, with good income. Blogging is becoming influent, but does not replace traditional media, especially as 72% of the bloggers practice this activity as a hobby and are driven by passion (Braham, 2009).

In the US, blogs and bloggers were widely promoted on the cover of the New York Times Magazine and the Times newspaper named the political Power Line blog (<http://www.powerlineblog.com>) as being “the blog of the year” in 2004. The word “blog” itself is named “the word of the year” (McIntosh, 2005: 285). Apparently, Times journalists had had a good intuition, because by the end of 2004 and the beginning of 2005 blogs turned into a hot issue. Unfortunately, it was a tragedy that placed blogs under the spotlight: the South East Asia tsunami. Lacking consistent information from the scene of the disaster, some bloggers acted as journalists and provided: media coverage, direct accounts, photographs and vivid descriptions of the situation (McIntosh, 2005: 385).

However, the signs of the blogs’ ascent already existed. After the September 11th terrorist attack, blogs turned into an alternative to official information channels, responding to a pressing need of the whole world. Ordinary people, witnesses of the tragic events, published on the Internet additional information regarding the attacks. In the mean time, the blogs were a debate environment concerning the causes and the ones responsible for the tragedy (Guțu, 2007: 35). In the year 2003, the war between USA and Iraq offered new visibility for bloggers (Wall, 2005: 153). Also, information from blogs were used by offline media in less dramatic, but controversial situations (Guțu, 2007: 40).

Here we find the power and potential of blogs: the capacity to set, in certain conditions, the media agenda. For example, during the 2004 American presidential elections, the notoriety of blogs ascended once again, due to their ability to draw attention or to divert attention from the subjects covered by traditional media. The obvious bias of bloggers was an intriguing alternative to the sterile objectivity of other mass media (McIntosh, 2005: 386).

Blogs are capable of generate subjects for offline media. The news is easily made popular in the blogosphere. It spreads easily, due to blogs’ connectivity and due to the way search engines show search results. Journalists working for the nonconventional media use blogs as sources, often quoting them. Blogs generate more content than other media channels because: they have no editorial constraints, they are very numerous, they are not affiliated to any media trust (and needn’t respect a certain policy) and their authors do not loose time with extended research (Balaban *et al.*, 2009: 42). There is a downside, though. The information affluence is only apparent. Blogs contain more opinions than facts. Information is hard to check therefore the author’s credibility is very low. The existence of a virtual identity eludes responsibility. The complete lack of editing stimulates the use of vulgar language and unfair verbal attacks. In conclusion, a great part of this large amount of information is not useful.

5. News Blogs: the New Journalism?

Should traditional media feel threatened by blogs as news sources? At least a part of all blogs could fall under the category of participative journalism: “those who traditionally were news consumers are willing to produce their own content.” (Thurman, 2008: 140). Blogging and news reportage walk hand in hand: newspapers such as Washington Post have embraced blogging as a source of public comment or even news (Graves, 2007: 338). But prejudice does exist. Professional journalists feel threatened, because blogging raises unpleasant questions regarding “what a journalist is and who can call himself a journalist.” (McIntosh, 2005: 386). Bloggers post news, search for information and attract many readers. The blogosphere is a threat to professional journalism because it represents a place where the facts and their accuracy can be questioned without limits in what concerns correctitude and impartiality (McIntosh, 2005: 387).

The relation between blogs and traditional mass media brought controversy in Romania too. Some bloggers make the difference between their writings and other journalistic products, while others see blogs as a new type of mass media (Balaban *et al.*, 2009: 58). The boundaries are unclear: some journalists have blogs, despite the disapproval of some of their colleagues (Cristian Tudor Popescu, for example) (Balaban *et al.*, 2009: 58). Generally speaking, Romanian media react to blogs in a positive manner. A number of television stations, press agencies, radios and newspapers started hosting blogs (those of their own journalists or readers) (Balaban *et al.*, 2009: 58).

In Grave’s opinion (2007: 341), blogs have two qualities that are not common to offline media: fixity and juxtaposition. Television and printed news are ephemeral, in the sense that the pieces of information that do not receive great attention by the public eye are quickly replaced by fresh news. Blogs and sites in general fix information, even speeches and public discourses and these pieces of information are not lost, but can be accessed after a while just by a mouse click. Juxtaposition refers to a special kind of analysis, characteristic to news blogs. This analysis places side by side arguments, statements and news reports in order to show connections between them, without the typical constraints that a regular journalist has: “deadlines, the rule of objectivity, limited editorial space” (Graves, 2007: 341).

Melissa Wall (2005) argues that blogging is changing journalism forever. Traditional journalism was a reflection of modernity’s main beliefs (reality can be observed and reported in an objective manner, change, linear evolution in time, the possibility to accurately depict reality). In the 1960’s, the New Journalism showed a style more similar to fiction (characters, scene and dialogues) and abandoned objectivity and false detachment. In the end of the XXth century, other changes and challenges appeared: the emerging media corporations, news as entertainment, tabloids, and politics as a spectacle (Wall, 2005: 154-155). Taking the context into consideration, Wall believes that blogs are part of a new transformation of journalism, one based on postmodernism: the erase of all boundaries between news and entertainment, the celebration of all commercial aspects, the abundance of local stories, rejection of meta-narrations, pluralistic versions of singular events and more engagement instead of detachment (Wall, 2005: 158).

In author’s opinion, news blogs illustrate the characteristics listed above. Regarding the narrative style, blogs are very personal, generating a feeling of intimacy with the readers and raising the author’s credibility. Readers sense him as one of their own and not a manipulated journalist (Wall, 2005: 165). Bloggers do not relate to their audience as a passive consumer,

but as a valuable partner in writing. Blogs offer readers the possibility of generating content side by side with the author (Wall, 2005: 165).

To conclude, blogs contain all postmodern contradictions. They emphasize group interests but “also encourage the emergence of virtual communities where ordinary people are free to participate and discover their political voice” (Wall, 2005: 167).

Although blogs influence and transform journalism, they remain bounded to the offline media logic. If the blog posts ignore the journalist’s interests, the former will remain known only to a reduced number of readers, members of the blogosphere. Without the support of the offline media, blogs will never reach a broader audience. For example, in the field of political communication, the blog is an efficient instrument only if the posts are quoted in the offline media. The blog is used in the logic of what T. Sălcudeanu names “the media democracy” (Aparaschivei, Sălcudeanu & Toader, 2009: 21): the public scene witnesses only those political events that can penetrate the filters of the news media, after a rigorous selection. The political process chooses the media logic over long-term projects (Aparaschivei, Sălcudeanu & Toader, 2009: 21).

All in all, it is important to know what news is, in order to see if blog posts have the characteristics needed to become real news.

6. News: an Imperative for Bloggers and Journalists

Nowadays, news is transmitted without pause, it is always “fresh”, but not everything that happens becomes news. An event that is relevant for journalists needs to have the following features: actuality (people want to know recent events, which explains the interest shown regarding radio and television news), proximity (information closest to people is of greater interest, because it has a significant impact), consequences (events that affect people), conflicts (war, fights, law suites, elections, sport events, crimes), everything that is bizarre (unusual, strange, comic), sex (sex crimes, women’s emancipation, the battle of the sexes), emotions (sympathy, love, hate, sadness, jealousy) prominence (information on stars, VIP’s), suspense (kidnapped and missing persons, lost tourists), progress (inventions, discoveries, new technologies) (Mircea, 2006: pp. 9-12).

The main features of news are related to one concept: deviance. News is everything that is unusual, strange and sensational. Deviance receives a lot of attention from the audience and it is kept in mind for a long time (Bârgăoanu, 2006: 55).

Events do not select themselves. Only the ones selected by both journalists and audience become news. This is an obvious fact, because mass media cannot record everything that is happening in the world. Referring to the selectivity issue, A. Bârgăoanu makes a classification of the related theoretical approaches. From an empirical perspective, selectivity implies a set of criteria that an event has to follow in order to become news. According to these criteria, one shows a greater or smaller interest in a specific event. Cultural studies focus on the constraints that cultural norms and stereotypes impose on the news content. Finally, the critical perspective focuses on the relation between ideology, power, hegemony, approval and the way in which the selection grid refuses public access to certain subjects. From this point of view, news articulates and maintains power (Bârgăoanu, 2006: 160).

Robert E. Park makes a list of criteria that turn an event into news. The event has to be: recent, unexpected and able to direct attention on itself (Park, 1922, *apud* Bârgăoanu, 2006:

163). “It is obvious that some events are of greater interest than others, and these events have a greater potential of becoming news” (McQuail & Windahl, 2004: 68). The press publishes news of interest to a significant percentage of the general audience; regional press relates to national events from a local point of view (Bland, Theaker & Wragg, 2003: 82). The interest for a certain news story is relative and can change over time: “A following event can diminish the importance of the previous one” (Bărgăoanu, 2006: 164).

The events recorded by media can be divided into three categories. The first category consists of events of little importance that are essential only for a small group of people. These events are not of great interest for the media (example: national exams). The second category consists of the events of the day; the media pays a moderate attention to them and so does most of the audience. It is the case of major strikes, important political changes, armed robberies and many others. Last but not least, there are pressing and dramatic events, known by everyone, gathering the prompt attention of all mass media: famous assassinations, for example (Greenberg, 1964, *apud* McQuail & Windahl, 2004: 70).

It was shown earlier in our presentation that in certain situations blog posts can be quoted in the offline media. In order for this to happen the content of the post needs to have news potential. From the perspective of blogging as a hobby, it is of little importance if the blog becomes a news source. If that blog is integrated in a public relations strategy or becomes part of the political communication, the form of the post is of more relevance. The “professional” blogger needs to know how to influence the public agenda which is still made by offline journalists. The blogger has to appeal to them therefore it is important for us to identify the common features of blog posts that are frequently quoted by offline media. Is there a “recipe” for media success?

7. Methodology

My research is based on four main areas: the source of the news, the field in which the news can be placed, the persons that are involved (other than the author of the blog post) and the message. Thus the following questions are raised:

1. Which are the characteristics of the blog post author that make him a worthy news source?
2. Which are fields the news story can be integrated in?
3. Are other people involved, besides the author of the blog post? Who are these?
4. What are the characteristics of the message that make it of interest as a news story for offline media?

In order to answer these questions, I have selected three Romanian newspapers distributed at a national level: *Evenimentul Zilei*, *Gândul* and *Jurnalul Național*. I have chosen them due to their content and to the fact that they publish news from different fields: economic, politic, social and sports. These newspapers avoid tabloid-like subjects. I have chosen to monitor all press articles which respect the following criteria: they refer to national events, they quote blog posts and their quoted post becomes a subject by itself or part of a larger issue. External events, editorials, reviews and articles referring to blogs without quoting blog posts are excluded. Between January the 1st and the April the 15, 2010 we have found a total of 114 newspaper articles that respect the above mentioned criteria. The search for the articles was done in online archives, at the following web addresses: www.jurnalul.ro, www.gandul.info and www.evz.ro. The search was made by the key word “blog”.

The results have been analyzed using content analysis. I have chosen the press article as a unit of analysis. The category coding scheme used has four different sections. The first one gathers the characteristics of the news source (the blog author). The following section refers to the field in which the news can be included. In what concerns the “mass media” field, we have included here news about journalists, changes inside media corporations and other similar stories. I have also included a third section, referring to people involved in the news, others than the blog post author. The last section gathers the list of characteristics the message should have in order to be of interest to journalists. Here is the coding scheme:

I. Source:	1. Politician (Coding: A) 2. Journalist (Coding: B) 3. Public figure (Coding: C) 4. Ordinary man (Coding: D)
II. Field:	1. Politics (Coding: E) 2. Mass media (Coding: F) 3. Social (Coding: G) 4. Other (Coding: H)
III. Persons involved (other than the blog post author):	1. Politician (Coding: I) 2. Journalist (Coding: J) 3. Public figure (Coding: K) 4. Ordinary man (Coding: L)
IV. Message:	1. Actuality (Coding: M) 2. Proximity (Coding: N) 3. Consequences (Coding: O) 4. Conflict (Coding: P) 5. Unusual events (Coding: Q) 6. Sex (Coding: R) 7. Emotions (Coding: S) 8. Suspense (Coding: T) 9. Controversy (Coding: U) 10. Sensational (Coding: V) 11. General interest (Coding: W) 12. Unexpected events (Coding: X) 13. Negative issues (Coding: Y) 14. VIP's opinion (Coding: Z)

The above categories have been coded with letters from A to Z.

First of all, I have designed an analysis matrix, having as columns the coded categories from the category coding form and as rows, the ID number of every article taken into consideration. For each article, I have marked with a “+”, the presence of one or more characteristics from the coding form. Afterwards, I have calculated the percentage in which every category appears.

8. Results

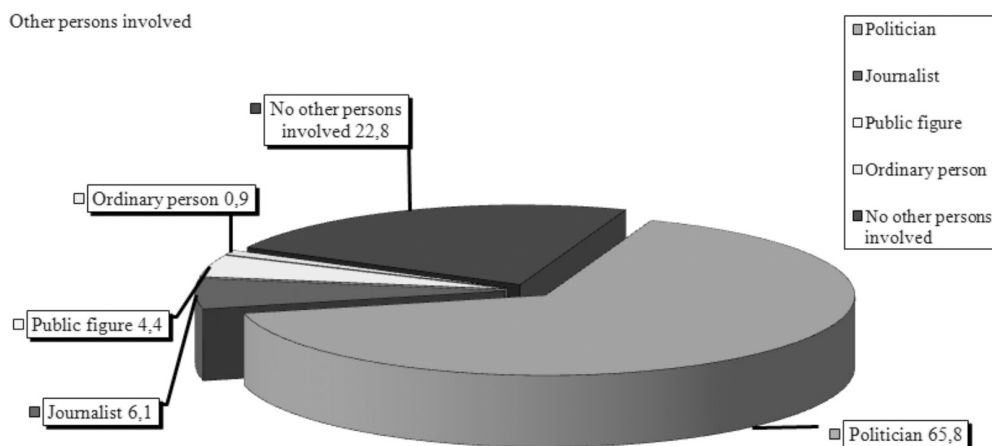
I have found a total of 114 articles matching the criteria: 63 in *Evenimentul Zilei*, 26 in *Gândul* and 25 in *Jurnalul Național*. In order to calculate the percentage in which every category appears, we used the following values (indicating the number of appearances of a category in

the matrix): source – 88 for *politician*, 14 for *journalist*, 8 for *public figure* și 4 for *ordinary people*; field – 89 for *politics*, 12 for *other*, 9 for *mass media* and 4 for *social*; persons involved – 75 for *politician*, 7 for *journalist*, 5 for *public figure*, 1 for *ordinary people*; message – 103 for *actuality*, 101 for *proximity*, 89 for *VIP's opinion*, 33 for *negative issues*, 30 for *conflict*, 29 for *controversy*, 22 for *general interest*, 14 for *emotions*, 14 for *unusual*, 8 for *unexpected*, 6 for *suspense*, 2 for *consequences*, 2 for *sensational*, 1 for *sex*.

By calculating the number of appearances, the following percentages have been recorded: source – 77.2% for *politician*, 12.3% for *journalist*, 7% for *public figure* and 4% for *ordinary people*; field – 78.1% for *politics*, 10.5% for *other*; 7.9% for *mass media* și 3.5% for *social*; people involved – 65.8% for *politician*, 6.1% for *journalist*, 4.4% for *public figure*, 0.9% for *ordinary people*. The sum of percentages does not equal 100%, because these percentages were calculated from the total records and not all of them involve other persons. Concerning the characteristics of the message, the following percentages have been calculated: – 90.3% for *actuality*, 88.6% for *proximity*, 78.1% for *VIP's opinion*, 28.9% for *negative issues*, 26.3% for *conflict*, 25.4% for *controversy*, 19.3% for *general interest*, 12.3% for *emotions*, 12.3% for *unusual*, 7% for *unexpected*, 5.3% for *suspense*, 1.8% for *consequences*, 1.8% for *sensational*, 0.9% for *sex*.

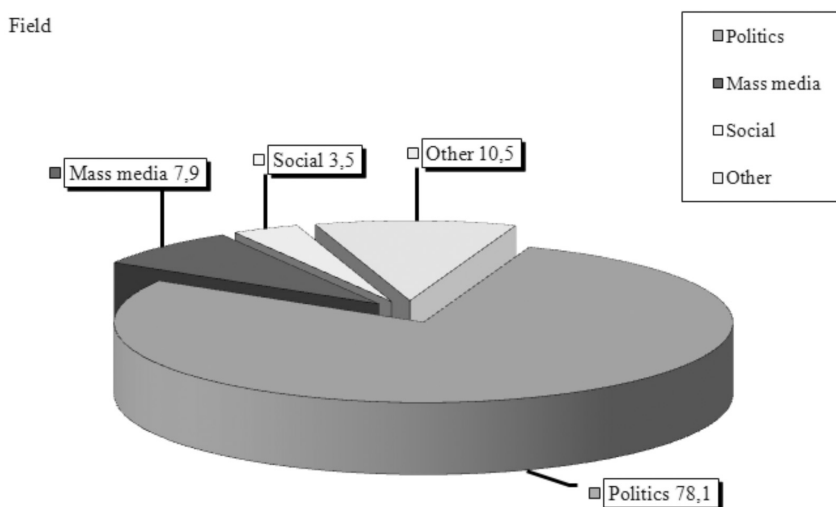
In what follows, I discuss the results, focusing on the four main areas: author's characteristics, field, persons involved and message characteristics. As the collected values show, the news source is mainly a political one (Fig. 1). In other words, journalists frequently turn to politicians' blogs in their search for subjects. The latter's messages are more successful in the offline media, as 77.2 % of the bloggers whose posts became news stories are actually politicians. Occupying second place are journalists, with a percentage of 12.3%. The 65% difference proves that comments and information given by online journalists seldom migrate to the offline media. Public figures and ordinary people scarcely become news sources (in only 7% and 3.5% of the cases).

Figure 1. News repartition based on the news source (blog author).



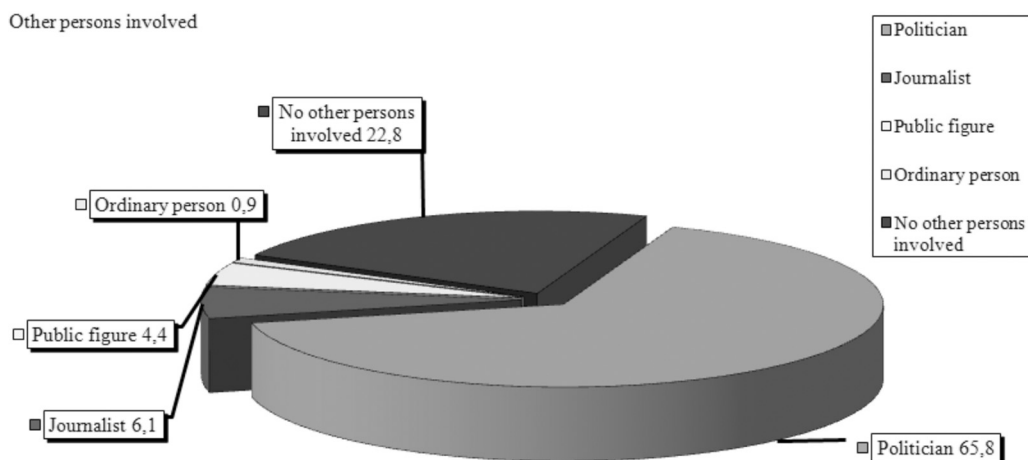
As far as the field in which the post can be included is concerned, politics are, again, the main source of news: 78.1% of the articles focus on the political scene, followed at a great distance by the mass media field (7.9%) and the social one (3.5%). The rest of 10.5 percent can be found in other fields (Fig. 2).

Figure 2. News distribution based on the field in which the news can be included.



A part of the news included in this research involved other persons besides the blog post author (Fig. 3). These persons were, mainly, politicians (in 65.8% cases), opposed to journalists (6.1 %) and public figures (4.4%). Ordinary people were involved only once (0.9 %). By adding up these values, we must emphasize that 77% of the total articles involved other people, besides the blogger who posted the news, which shows us that journalists focused on news with the potential of being developed later.

Figure 3. News distribution based on the involvement of other persons, besides the blog post author.



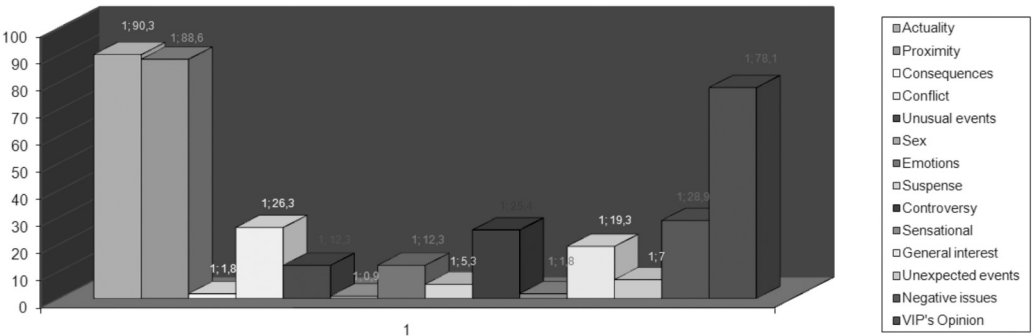
One of the most important sections is the one concerning the message. The data collected here creates a clear image of the blog post with news story potential. Not surprisingly, most articles are characterized by two features: actuality 90.3 % and proximity 88.6%. This result is rather obvious: only recent events are news. The notion of actuality has changed during the ages, though: from the one-week “old” news in the XVth century, to the one-day old news

and even daily broadcasts on radio and television. In the Internet era, news circulation is almost instant, reducing actuality to only a few minutes. Regarding proximity, it is natural for journalists to favor national news, because it is more likely for them to be of interest to all readers. The third important feature is VIP's opinion: 78.1% of all quoted blog posts expressed an opinion. These types of posts can be considered for journalists a way of obtaining fresh statements from public figures and politicians.

Another “trio” which catches the journalists’ attention is formed by the following: negative issues (28.9%), conflict (26.3%), and controversy (25.4%). Therefore, critique, disputes and controversies are a part of the success recipe for any blogger who wants to draw the attention of offline media. Journalists strive on news that shocks the readers and the truth is that the above mentioned elements are of greater interest to the audience rather than: harmony or positive aspects.

The least frequently met features of the message are: unexpected events (7%), suspense (5.3%), consequences (1.8%), sensational (1.8%), and sex (0.9%).

Figure 4. News distribution based on message characteristics.



The blog posts of ordinary people have almost no chances of becoming news stories. This suggests that people who are not VIP's or public figures cannot actually contribute to the public debates shown by the mainstream media. If journalists do not quote the blogs of ordinary people, the latter's point of view remains visible only to their acquaintances, families, friends or occasional readers.

The most frequent association shown is this: politician (as author), focusing on political subjects, involving in his posts other politicians involved and expressing his opinions. His messages are characterized by: actuality and proximity, which can be found in 65 cases, meaning 57% of the situations. The ideal blog post which becomes a real news story is written by a privileged blogger (a politician), who is expressing his opinions and is focusing on political subjects. A politician is a credible source when referring to political issues; the power he has guarantees that he will draw the attention of offline journalists. The ideal message follows other features too: controversy, negative aspects, subjects of general interest and conflict.

In what the general interest is concerned, politicians cover it in their posts without effort. They have the power of decision and of creating laws by being members of the Executive, therefore their opinions matter to the whole society. More than this, the simple mention of certain names is enough to draw attention. It is the case of the state president, the prime-minister, important members of the Parliament and members of the Government. The politician holds all the cards needed in order to raise the interest of the mass media, even as a blogger.

The data gathered provides answers to the questions we have expressed previously. For example, the answer to the question: “Which are the characteristics of the blog author that make him a credible news source?” is that credible news sources are politicians, scarcely journalists and public figures and, almost never, ordinary people. Referring to the question “In what fields can the news be integrated?” the data proves that the main field of interest is politics, followed by mass media and social subjects. The answer to the questions: “Are other people involved, besides the author of the blog post? Who are these?” is “yes”; the majority of news stories involve mainly politicians, but also journalists, public figures and ordinary people. The last question would be “What are the characteristics of the message that make it an attractive news story for the offline media?” Results show that the most important features are (from the most frequent to the least): actuality, proximity, VIP’s opinion, negative issues, conflict, controversy, general interest, emotions, unusual events, unexpected events, suspense, consequences, sensational and sex.

9. Conclusions

The informational affluence of our society (McQuail, Windahl, 2004) is linked to a constant need for news. Mass media feeds this appetite by an endless news flux, packed and presented to the public. A double dependency emerges: the one regarding media consumers on fresh news and the dependency of journalists on news sources. The competition is fierce, as the Internet produces an endless stream of news. The Internet is been taken into consideration by all offline media, that integrate in their strategy an online component.

In this context, the Internet in general and blogs in particular become an alternative news source for offline journalists. Although blogs are very popular and seem to be a threat for traditional journalism, our research indicates that blogs are still bounded to the logic of the offline media. Any blogger wants his “voice” to be heard and to have a broad audience. Visibility is the new trend of Internet users, especially those who generate content. Bloggers could profit from the offline media’s interest in them, with the condition that journalists quote the blog posts as news sources. For this to happen, the posts need to meet the selection criteria of offline journalists. The most successful bloggers are politicians, as they represent the main news source.

However, not even politicians have total freedom. If they want their blogs to be quoted, they need to have a certain type of message. Offline journalists prefer political subjects and personal opinions. A very important aspect is that journalists do not expect the bloggers to be unbiased: they look for subjectivism and for messages with multiple meanings. Offline journalists choose, from the multitude of blog posts written daily, the polemic ones, that denote criticism. Also, the message needs to meet the essential criteria of actuality and proximity. We cannot consider a post as being a news story without these criteria.

Surprisingly, data showed that journalists, as bloggers, are not successful in making the best news stories. As opposed to politicians’ posts, journalists’ posts include, besides political subjects, other elements such as emotion, unusual subjects, unexpected events, probably due to the professional habitude of searching these features in news stories.

The public concern regarding the persons involved in news stories increase the possibility for it to be published. In this research, though, the blogs of public figures (excepting politicians) failed in becoming a news source; when this happened, the quality of the posts was not

given only by the source's notoriety, but also by actuality, proximity, unusual facts, opinions, conflict and controversy. The blogs of ordinary people were quoted by mass media occasionally, due to features such as unusual subjects or events, emotional content and the general information contained by the posts. The results shown are similar those obtained in the USA, where ordinary people became news sources mostly when tragic events occur. These emotional bloggers' testimonies as witnesses of the events were of general interest for the mass media.

My research is relevant in the context of the current trend: blogs turn from debating subjects imposed by the offline media to being a prime source of news. Communication specialists could use this trend in their advantage, by making blogs an alternative instrument in sending deliberate messages to the offline media. The main condition for success is to follow the selection criteria, as shown by this research. As blogs still need to obey the logic of the offline media, I conclude that the revolution expected from the Internet and web 2.0 is not about to start very soon. Some scholars argue that the Internet will contribute decisively to the democratization of the public sphere. The research does not support this point of view, as access to public debates is available mainly for politicians who follow the classic criteria of news selection. Even on the Internet, ordinary people have a low visibility, within the boundaries of their social groups.

The research regarding blogs as news sources has some limitations. First of all, my research covers a short period of time, between the months of January and April 2010. Secondly, it focuses on three examples of newspapers, which represent only a small fraction of all Romanian media. Finally, the data collection period covers a number of political transformations, including the presidential elections; in this context, it is natural for politicians to express their opinions on their personal blogs and it is also natural for journalists to collect more political news than they usually do. This could partially explain the frequency of political news sources in our analysis. Future research should cover an extended period of time and should include other media channels. A comparative approach, taking into consideration other countries and cultures could provide interesting results.

To conclude, blogs are close to reaching their maximum potential, in the field of planned communication. Also blogs are useful for political communication purposes. As I have shown, the blogs of politicians are preferred by offline journalists who look for news sources. By including blogs in the public relations strategy, politicians have the advantage of being more often quoted by offline media. Blogs are an efficient tool in expressing ones' opinion or disagreement, in announcing changes and in creating news for the press; the message can travel past the limits of the blogosphere.

At the same time, journalists also profit from the popularity of blogs. They are an accessible news source and create the illusion of direct communication with the blog's author. The blog posts of politicians are often similar to other press statements, but have the advantage of being coherent and easy to find. A symbiosis between bloggers and journalists is about to arise: the former need visibility while the latter are in a constant search of subjects. Used appropriately, the blog can be a useful tool for both public relations and political communication specialists.

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Simona SZAKÁCS*

The Making of the ‘Soft Villain’ in a *Time* Magazine Headline

Abstract

On March 16, 2009, the American magazine “Time” published an article entitled “The Making of a Terrorist. How the lone surviving gunman of the Mumbai massacre made the long journey from a Pakistani village to a bloodstained railroad station.”¹ Drawing on an interpretative approach to text (as particular instance of written interaction), the purpose of my contribution is to explore some of the sense-making devices used in the headline of this article by using the method of “membership categorization devices analysis” stemming from the tradition of ethnomethodological conversation analysis. The specific focus is on the ways in which the authors of the text achieve an unstated² communicative goal along with their explicitly stated aim to make a point about the Kashmiri conflict by telling the story of one man and deeming it emblematic for the whole terrorism phenomenon in Pakistan. What I wish to show is not whether the explicit goal is reached or not, but rather that another, equally interesting communicative achievement is made. The actor of the story – a “terrorist” usually vilified in post 9/11 American media – is offered extenuating circumstances by portraying his actions as morally accountable: he has become involved in mass terrorism not because of ‘pure evil’ or ‘hatred’ but simply because he found himself at the wrong place and the wrong time and became the instrument of larger political interests, while following his, otherwise perfectly acceptable, personal goals (e.g. the desire to find an end to his enduring economic misery and escape his poverty-struck social milieu). He emerges thus as a “softened” version of the classical villain. The question that becomes relevant in this context and that I wish to answer is what mechanisms are used in the text to reflect this particular version of reality?³ More specifically, what are the devices this text uses to make the moral scaling-down of the “terrorist” act *work*?

Keywords: journalistic text, conversation analysis, membership categorization devices, headlines, talk-in-interaction

1. A Word on Methodology

While initially met with suspicions of “unscientificity,” ethnomethodology and phenomenological approaches to social order have now managed to cease embodying the black sheep of sociology and entered the sociological mainstream proper. The later-developed prominence of ethnomethodology has particularly taken shape in the late 1970’s when, inspired by Harold Garfinkel’s work (1967), some areas of American sociology have virtually boomed.

One of the developments that witnessed a significant upsurge in recent years has been the line of inquiry referred to as Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA), coined in the 1970’s by sociologist Harvey Sacks (1935-1975). This body of work has been substantially developed

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after Sacks' early death by his long-term collaborators Emanuel Schegloff and Gail Jefferson who arguably had the same seminal influence in establishing the field as Sacks had. One strand of CA that deserves attention is what Sacks called "membership categorization devices" analysis (henceforth MCDA), a method of inquiry that, according to Titscher et al. (2000), has been nothing less (and nothing more, according to others, e.g. Schegloff) than the starting point of Sacks' later work exposed in his posthumously published "Lectures on Conversation" (a 2-volume set in 1992 and a republication in the form of one-volume book in 1995). While CA and MCD analysts base their inquiry on the same principles of ethnomethodology that animated Garfinkel,⁴ they limit their body of data to naturally occurring conversations or, what is referred to in CA as *talk-in-interaction*. Most of CA work involves revealing the quasi-universal orderliness of naturally occurring talk reflected, for instance, in the turn-taking system and the sequential organisation of talk (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974), repair structures (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks, 1977), the orientation of participants towards agreement and the organization of talk according to preferred and dispreferred responses (Pomerantz, 1984), etc. Although Sacks was chiefly preoccupied by largely invariable features of conversation, more recent followers of CA have increasingly started to factor in the importance of context by exploring the particularities of talk in specific institutional settings (such as the courtroom, the medical practice, the classroom etc.⁵). MCDA has thus lost some ground while attention in CA was focused on other emerging directions of inquiry.

But even though it did not develop as extensively as other branches of CA, MCDA did not fall short of its own recent developments. Most notable of these is the application of MCDA to *text-in-interaction* rather than *talk-in-interaction*. As Titscher et al. (2000:115) suggest, there is no particular reason why MCDA should not be applied to text. Sacks himself used a few examples in his lectures to illustrate MCD's which drew from short pieces of text and not from naturally occurring talk⁶. But a thorough justification of why and how it should be applied to text is conspicuously ignored in the literature, if not downright non-existing.

In my view, text could be read *interactionally*, as an instance of conversation between author and reader *in absentia*, with its own particularities worth analysing. What is important to the researcher in this case is the implied presence of the reader and the fact that the author writes the text *as if* the reader was there. With very few exceptions, the fact that the text is actually addressed to at least one reader suffices to consider it an instance of interaction, given that the author will invariably *orient* her text to a presumed audience (what in CA would be called *recipient-design*⁷). What makes a text analysable under the CA/MCDA lens is the fact that the author's orientation towards a supposed readership draws on shared rules applying to the interaction that binds them together (in whatever form it may be) and on the assumption of an existing common understanding of the social world. What is, however, lost in such analysis is the possibility of analysing a sequence of interventions going back and forth between author and reader (unless, of course, analysing very specific interaction texts, such as a letter exchange, for example) and the influence of this sequencing on the meaning constructed in the interaction itself. The following three examples serve to illustrate a few of the ways in which CA and MCDA have been previously applied to text to reveal some of the specific rules governing textual interactions.

First, an example from a prominent textbook on qualitative research focused specifically on methods of interaction analysis by a leading scholar of the field, David Silverman (1993). After presenting the main tenets of Sacks's method of MCDA (e.g. *economy rule*, *consistency rule*, *duplicative organization*, the *hearer's maxim*, *category-bound activities*, *viewer's maxim*

etc.),⁸ Silverman analyses the newspaper headline "Father and Daughter in Snow Ordeal" to illustrate the devices used to make sense of the text (Silverman, 1993/2006:191). He highlights the sense-making work reflected in the content of the *categories* invoked (i.e. 'father' and 'daughter'), the *collections* they belong to (i.e. 'family'), the *activities* these were bound to ('snow ordeal' is not routinely bound to categories 'father' and 'daughter' thus flagging the headline as newsworthy), the standardized ways implied by the invoked categorization membership (i.e. 'caring' and 'support' routinely implied by collection 'family') etc. The underlying assumption here is that texts *do make* interactional work. First, because they presuppose a reader and they refer to intersubjectively-shared categories of meaning, and second because they follow certain recognizable rules which are also shared by the participants and serve to make the text understandable in a certain way (e.g. read *this* way, and not differently). The telling of a story wouldn't make sense if it didn't make implicit reference to societal and cultural norms shared between writer and reader; this will become clearer in the next sections of this article.

The second example I wish to bring up is a book chapter by a known CA analyst, Paul Drew (2006), cogently entitled "When Documents 'Speak': Documents, Language and Interaction." Although not specifically concerned with MCD analysis, the chapter presents convincing arguments for the analytic appropriateness of research on "the *language* of texts" (Drew, 2006:67). Drew provides a brief, yet vivid, illustration of CA applied to text by analysing the use of language in a suicide note. He demonstrates the orientation of the writer towards a socially acceptable version of reality, in which her actions become rational to herself and accountable to (significant) others. The author constructs her note in a way that is by no means irrelevant to what she is trying to achieve, namely to lend moral support to her choice to end her life *as if* it was, in fact, a *lack* of choice, a pre-determined course of action given the circumstances. To do this, she employs a set of categories from the collection 'family,' to show that there was no one else to turn to, and that her decision was the only way *out* from her internal turmoil. What is particularly salient in her note is her selection of her audience by specifically naming her father, her mother and her partner as the (only) recipients to whom she wishes to justify her action and the only ones who could have prevented this course of events. Other language characteristics, such as the use of spatial metaphors and of paradox, serve as devices towards the achievement of 'successful' interaction (i.e. the communication of the author's reasons to commit suicide).

Finally, the third and most extensive example is a contribution by Jennifer Summerville and Barbara Adkins (2007) drawing from original research that effectively applied MCD on policy texts aiming to inform a broader explanatory framework grounded in the Foucauldian notion of "governmentality." Summerville and Adkins analysed a sustainable regional planning document put forward for public consultation by an Australian local government. They showed that the identity of a specific kind of citizen (namely, one that is actively engaged in civic participation) is accomplished through the use of MCD's. The categorisation mechanisms achieved through the text (e.g. place-identity categorization such as "the residents of..."; political categories such as "government" and "citizens"; their associated category-bound activity of "working together" instead of "challenge" or "oppose"; the occasioned/ shifting use of the indexicals "we" and "you" to create either a sense of co-incumbency within the same category or a sense of differentiated membership etc.) all create a shared moral world between authors and readers and serve to orient the reception of the text in a particular way (i.e. to agree with the policy proposals) ultimately serving the interests of the text's author (i.e. the government).

Despite these notable examples, extensive and systematic work using CA and MCDA on text is yet to be undertaken. Noting this lack as unfortunate and following Silverman's lead, in this short contribution I intend to explore the empirical possibility of applying MCD analysis on a Times magazine headline. My specific aim is to reveal the headline's interactional accomplishments contributing to the construction of a certain type of identity (i.e. the identity of a "soft villain", in opposition to that of a "classic villain") by developing three sets of interrogations. These interrogations refer to: (1) the actor of the story; (2) the actions he undertakes; and (3) the process he undergoes.

In the following sections I will summarise the particularities of using MCDA on a journalistic headline and highlight the importance of different understandings of context in MCDA. Next, I shall contextualise the particular magazine article whose headline will be analysed (the "communicative act"⁹), spell out my initial assumptions and move on to the analysis of the headline as guided by the aforementioned interrogations. I will conclude by summing up the accomplishments of this headline as revealed by the use of MCDA and argue that MCDA on text should be further developed as it provides, in my view, fertile terrain for analysis.

2. Applying MCDA on Media Headlines

One of the basic assumptions of classical CA is that participants in interaction should be able to make sense of what is being said without need for context outside of that particular communicative act¹⁰. Context is narrowed down to refer only to the sequencing of the interaction or to some intrinsic features of the communicative act. This restricted understanding of context by CA analysts has been disputed and critiqued (see critical discussion in Titscher et al, 2000:113) while others argued that in fact CA paradoxically reflects both context-free and context-sensitive features¹¹. MCD's, in particular, should be salient in the shaping of this relationship, because they provide both context-free sense-making mechanisms that are immediately readable by participants (leading to successful interaction, as per Sacks's understanding of context) and, at the same time, rely on a *wider* set of shared rules and norms (cultural values included) to account for interactional accomplishment (as per the later developments of MCD's – for example by Summerville and Adkins, 2007).

The magazine headline should prove useful for exploring the complex relationship between communicative acts and their wider context as well as for highlighting the role of MCD's. One of the reasons is that common-sense exigencies of headline-writing require that a reader be able to distinguish the main message of the piece of news simply by reading its headline; the main body of the text would provide the details, by adding depth and nuance to the main message, but not variation or extra information.¹² But headlines need also refer to wider contexts of meaning in order to be effective and to elicit attention.¹³ Thus, it is likely that journalists will employ a great deal of MCD's to capture a complex message in a few lines while at the same time drawing on wider contexts of comprehension. Articles in magazines such as the one chosen for analysis here (the American version of the Time news-magazine) aim to offer to their readers not only "what happened" and "how it happened" (as regular daily newspaper articles would) but also "why it happened" and "under what circumstances" it did. Headlines for weekly or bi-monthly magazine articles are more likely to be illustrative of the use of MCD's because they are also bound to communicate interpretation beyond the communication of facts, and interpretation regularly requires a wider understanding of context than what Sacks had in mind.

3. The Contexts of Production, Consumption and Analysis of a Text

I start by spelling out some assumptions. First, there is an acknowledgement of the fact that, in order to reach mutual understanding, protagonists of interaction must share inter-subjective knowledge of the same discourses, categories, stories and so on, all of which (may) form parts of a culture. This stems from an ethnomethodological view of social order. The communication act takes place in a particular interactional context (which is of course part of a wider cultural context¹⁴), given by the specificity of the text itself: an article from *Times* magazine. In this case, the wider cultural context is the American post-9/11 world and its mediatic construction of the “war on terror.”

The second assumption is that the analysis of a headline cannot preclude the conditions under which this text was produced and consumed. What I refer to as contexts of text-production and of text-consumption are relevant to this instance of interaction because they define the limits within which author(s) and reader(s) meet: for example, the authors write the text in a certain way because of constraints stemming from the type of text they write (i.e. journalistic text and not any other kind of text such as for instance a novel or a testament), from the fact that this text is written for the *Time* magazine and not for a sports magazine or for one of *Time*'s ideological or commercial competitors. Also, they write it in a certain way because they know what their audience must be like, what their likely political convictions and values are, when, where and why they would read this magazine and this particular article and so on. The readers also consume this text knowing what kind of a magazine *Time* is and what kinds of opinions or stories are most likely to be found there. They know what to expect and this is why they frame their act of consumption within the same (types of) narratives as the authors did. Inter-subjectivity (in terms of expectations and values) is, again, a prerequisite, and constitutes the key to understanding what makes authors and readers come together, as I will try to show in the following.

Third, and avowedly most problematically, I assume that the protagonists of the interactive act I am analysing are only of two kinds: author(s) and reader(s). While the presence of a third protagonist, the researcher (me), is crucial and should not be disavowed (ever since Heisenberg formulated his famous uncertainty principle¹⁵), for the purpose of this article I am compelled to consider the analytical eye as merely external to the interaction itself. It is true that one cannot escape the interpretive lens given by the act and tools of looking at a text, but it is only in the context of analysis that this effect becomes relevant. For the particular ‘communicative act’ hereby scrutinised, I choose to only acknowledge my own interpretation, and to forcefully leave it outside of the analysis proper.

4. The Story

The *Time* article explicitly aims at offering a counter-narrative to the prevailing media story of the terrorist *qua* religious extremist *qua* jihadist¹⁶ by offering both a humanising and a deterministic outlook to its reading. The ‘terrorist’ – usually depicted as an unscrupulous villain in popular culture – is here portrayed as an ordinary man, vulnerable to external influences, prone to making the wrong decisions at the wrong time for various mundane reasons having nothing to do with the reasons routinely given as explanations to terrorist behaviour, such as: violence, religious fanaticism, inborn inclination to crime etc.

By taking the main actor's own confession as primary source, the article presents the readers with the story of a Pakistani man, Qasab *as* he would have told it, *albeit* he actually did in the circumstances of a police interrogation. There is no interest in the 'truth' status of his confession. What the authors maintain to be their interest is the possibility and, more importantly, the plausibility of Qasab's story – the fact that it is believable and usable to typify countless other men who may have experienced similar trajectories.

Qasab's story presented by the Time neatly falls into the steps of the narrative genre of the tale. It shows him on a journey going from the poor village of Farikdot (Pakistan) where he was born, to leaving his parental home at age 13 to live with his brother in Lahore, then fleeing to live off petty robbery with a friend in the city of Rawalpindi, where, one day, in search for weapons to sustain his house-robbery plans, he finds himself in a Bazaar where an extremist organization kept a stall and promised to provide him with weapons and training if he joined their group. The story ends with a factual description of the day of the massacre in Mumbai (India) but from the point of view of Qasab and his robot-like accomplishment of orders. The bulk of the story is focused on descriptions of the various stages of his training in the extremist group's camps at various locations, the logistic and geographic details of the mission he was handed with etc. The main message transpiring from the article with regard to his intentions is that while he was never particularly religious, his joining of an extremist group was purely coincidental. He did not aim for reaching paradise through martyrdom, as others (presumably) did; he simply strived for a personal and social redemption here on Earth.

The counter-narrative of the terrorist as constructed here to the readers of Time magazine is, however, not counter-intuitive: it follows the logic of Western civilisation, starting with the Greek tragedy up to contemporary pop culture. It is a narrative whereby the main actor is portrayed as the 'hero' of the story caught in a path-dependent model of reality, a deterministic world in which contingency starts off a line of events at a given turning point from where onwards the tale unfolds in much (if not *exactly*) the same way as it would have for anyone else in the same circumstances. There is nothing unique about Qasab's story, it is as repeatable as any reliable lab experiment, provided that the same conditions are kept and the variables are given the same values. It is a credible (because replicable) story *par excellence* and this is what gives the readers the *explanans* of a highly unexplainable, shocking (because irrational) act: the massacre at the Mumbai railway station's Victoria terminal. But there is something tragic in it, and the emphasis here is not on the tragedy of the victims of this carnage (well above 100 people), it is rather on the tragedy of the 'hero' himself: the fact that no matter how hard one tries, one cannot escape one's own condition¹⁷. And such tragedy is inherently based on a dual model of reality: the real-self (caught in one's own condition) and the desired self, the one that could, in an ideal world, be able to transcend it.

5. The Headline

The headline title of the article reflects Qasab's story in a very precise way. But more than that, it achieves the inter-related communicative goals of being at the same time informative, interpretative, intriguing, newsworthy, attractive to a reader who expects a "story" etc. It uses specific devices to attain these more or less explicit goals which I shall try to explore in the following sections. I am rewriting the title exactly as published in the printed version

of the article (which differs slightly from the later published online version) to have a clear break-down of its constituent parts and allow for the analysis of the MCD's focusing on: actor, action and process.

- 1: The Making of a
- 2: Terrorist. How
- 3: the lone surviving
- 4: gunman of
- 5: the Mumbai
- 6: massacre
- 7: made the
- 8: long journey from
- 9: a Pakistani village
- 10: to a bloodstained
- 11: railroad station

6. The Actor: The 'Soft' Villain

MCD analysis involves identifying those key components of the communicative act that are part of the so-called "apparatus" (or "machinery") responsible for doing the categorisation work, along with their rules of application. Harvey Sacks (1972:332-338) introduced the notions of "category" and "collection" to refer to the components of this apparatus and the notion of "membership categorization device" to refer to the mechanisms whereby they work together to convey a specific reading (more about rules of application in the next sub-section).¹⁸

The classic example used by Sacks to exemplify this apparatus deserves some attention. This is a quote from a child's story.

"The baby cried. The mommy picked it up." (Sacks, 1972: 330)

The categories invoked here are "baby" and "mommy" and the collection that they are members of is that of "family." The reason why readers would routinely consider "baby" and "mommy" as parts of the collection "family" instead of other collections that could have contained these categories (say "school play" or "sex game") is that these are the categories and collections *available* to the members' of this particular instance of interaction (in this case, a child telling the story to other children, who would be oblivious of the other two collections and for whom the collection of "family" is particularly salient¹⁹). Sacks discusses the particular rules that connect the categories to the collections and how they affect the reading of this utterance, but more of this later. Suffices for now to identify the categories and collections for our analytical case.

In the *Time* headline, the actor of the story (Qasab) is referred to both as "terrorist" and "lone surviving gunman" (lines 1, 3 and 4); these characterisations, while resonating in the intertext with the Hollywoodian Western film typology of the Sheriff, the Cowboy or the Assassin, also delineate a division: by calling the same person²⁰ both "terrorist" and "lone surviving gunman", particular membership categorisation devices are at work which invoke different, if not opposing, sets of collections. "Terrorist" would belong to a collection of "villains" in American culture (particularly after 9/11) while "(lone surviving) gunman" to a collection of

“heroes.”²¹ The category “gunman” as it is used here differs from the classic “villain” because it presents mitigating features such as those expressed by the adjectives “lone” and “surviving,” which, when used, are more likely to elicit positive feelings towards a person, and acceptance rather than rejection. These two mitigating adjectives also personify values that are hailed in American culture marked by a certain degree of individualism. Moreover, we can note the use of an indefinite article for “terrorist” (i.e. “making of *a* terrorist” – lines 1,2, my emphasis) and of a definite one for “gunman” (i.e. “*the* lone surviving gunman” – lines 3,4, my emphasis). This too serves to accentuate the membership of “terrorist” to a generic category, while that of “gunman” to a specific individual, with particular circumstances.

In the classic Western film, vicious acts of massacre were vilified as long as there were no alleviating circumstances, as long as actions were the outcomes of pure evil. There is hardly any contextualisation of the villain’s circumstances or personal life trajectory. What makes the Western film’s anti-hero a member of the “villains” group is that of unmitigated (because unreasonable) carnage. In Qasab’s case, the carnage element is played down while the alleviating circumstances are emphasized by the presence of many adjectives surrounding the noun ‘gunman.’²² This is an indication of the counter-narrative character of the story: a story that, although plausible, has hardly been presented so far. It is definitely not the ‘default’ story told and further account-work must be done to qualify it.

The reason why this mitigation of the “villain” status works (i.e. what I would call a “soft villain”) is that it provides a compelling reading to the audience: the actor is presented as a hero rather than as an anti-hero through the mediation of mitigating adjectives and the use of an imagery that becomes strikingly meaningful in the context of American culture.

7. The Action: The ‘Soft’ Massacre

Here I will dwell more on what Harvey Sacks called *category-bound activities* (i.e. activities that are understood as deriving from membership to a category and thus imply a certain identity associated with that category – henceforth, CBA’s). Let us turn back to Sacks’s classic example for the use of MCD’s in talk-in-interaction:

“The baby cried. The mommy picked it up.” (Sacks, 1972: 330)

Sacks’ analysis of how this utterance *works* shows that there are certain recognizable rules that fill in the gaps in information which would explicitly link ‘this baby’ to ‘this mommy’ through a parental relationship. Sacks shows that it is very likely that members²³ would read the text as “the mommy *of* the baby picked it up”, even if the utterance does not mention whose baby it was. It is also likely that members would read the text as “the mommy picked the baby up *because* it was crying” even if the text does not make the reason for the picking up explicit either. Some of the rules systematically described by Sacks as making this utterance be read in this way refer to:

- (1) the fact that more descriptors than one single category are not necessary to make adequate references (*Economy rule*); thus, there is no need to give any other qualifiers (such as age, gender or hair color) to each category for readers to make sense of what was said;
- (2) the fact that once a membership category from a collection has been invoked for one member of the population, another one from the same collection may be used and it is likely

that it will be used, so hearers should hear it that way (*Consistency rule* and its corollary – the '*hearing rule*'); thus, there is no need for the utterance to make explicit that these two (mommy and baby) are members of the same family, because this will already be implied by the use of the categories, their belonging to a collection and the application of the consistency and hearer's rule;

(3) the fact that certain sets of categories can be heard/read as "units" when invoked and assigned to the same collection; the categories involved are seen as part of the same 'team', as 'co-incumbents' and consequently will be likely to act according to mutual interest (*Duplicative organisation* and its corollary "hearer's maxim"); thus, there is no need for the utterance to make explicit that the mommy is the mommy of this particular baby and viceversa, as this is implied in their association under the same 'unit' of 'family';

(4) the fact that certain categories are routinely associated to certain activities (*Category-Bound Activities*, or CBA's); membership to a category makes a member likely to act in a certain way; thus, because membership to the category "mommy" implies activities such as "caring", "nurturing", "picking up (crying) baby" etc., it is unnecessary for the utterance to make explicit who is the mommy and who is the baby; this is why, for example, having said simply "The X cried. The Y picked it up" would have been unlikely to yield an understanding that "The mommy cried. The baby picked it up."

Similar rules of reading may be applied to the headline under analysis, *albeit* in quite a different way, as this text employs both expected and unexpected category-bound activities associated with "terrorist." This, I find, is a particularity of the type of text used, i.e. a journalistic text constrained by its form to have a certain impact on its audience. The CBA's used here are: "to make" (as opposed to, say, "to be born") in relation to "terrorist" and "to make a journey" (as opposed to, say, "to go on a shooting") in relation to "lone gunman." Silverman's (1993/2006) analysis of the headline "Father and Daughter in Snow Ordeal" could be recalled here to make sense of the reasons why unexpected CBA's may be used in a journalistic text. Silverman explained that using an unlikely activity ("caught in snow ordeal") of the relationship between "father" and "daughter" within the collection "family" displays the requirement of headlines' newsworthiness (Silverman 1993/2006, pp 191-192).

The agent referred to in the *Time* headline ('the "terrorist" *qua* "lone surviving gunman"') whose expected belonging to the "villain" collection had been unexpectedly softened through the use of mitigating adjectives is further associated with a "softer" version of its CBA. The verb used to predicate the action of the "lone gunman" is not, as would be expected of a villain, "to massacre" (which is instead presented as a noun) but "to make a journey": "the [...] made the long journey" (lines 7-8). He did not 'make' a massacre, he 'made a journey' that instead 'made' him end up in "a bloodstained railroad station" (lines 10-11). It is as if the whole agency had been stripped off the "villain" in terms of his category-bound activity. This is unexpected because "making a journey" would typically be the CBA of a member of, say, the category "tourist" (or, indeed, presumably of a "lone gunman," if this was a Western film) but definitely not that of a "terrorist." Moreover, the phrasing of the headline suggests that the actor is not, at the same time, the agent orchestrating this activity; he was 'made' to 'end up' in that situation. The actual 'maker' is not even hinted at in the title, although details are given in the body of the article suggesting a rather abstract 'villain': the Islamist extremist group that co-opted Qasab at a Bazaar, trained him into weapon usage and then handed him orders to accomplish an assassin's mission (all of these being ultimately presented as symptomatic for Pakistani politics condoning the continuation of terrorist activities).²⁴

All of these devices of associating actions to actors in both expected and unexpected ways are, in my view, relevant to the construction of a “softened villain” who is no longer portrayed simply as a calculated, dominant, all-evil individual, but increasingly as a human being (among others) caught in a web of ‘bad’ circumstances.

8. The Process: A Journey through a Binary World²⁵

Finally, the “villains” collection with which Qasab is associated is softened as he is portrayed to have been caught up in a liminal space. This idea is supported later in the article’s body text by passages such as: “existing in a shadow land between aspiration and extremism” (p. 16, paragraph 2). The headline also juxtaposes two apparently incompatible worlds represented by “a Pakistani village” and “a bloodstained railway station” (lines 9-11). The first is associated with the image of a peaceful, pure and idyllic space (an expression of *stasis* and, as later shown in the article, of backwardness), while the second is the expression of violence and conflict, or movement and despair, a state of impurity (‘bloodstained’).

The membership categories that this binary type of device point to are inter-related and multi-layered. They are part of a coherent set of categories that coagulate around two opposing poles: the ‘good’ and the ‘evil’ sides. The dividing line between these abstract categories further justifies the positioning of the ‘softened villain’ somewhere on the middle grounds between the ‘good’ side and the ‘bad’ side: the world is divided into ‘poor’ and ‘rich’, into ‘backward villages’ and ‘cities full of opportunities’, where people live ‘ordinary’ or ‘extraordinary’ lives, where they are being ‘educated’ or become ‘prone to fanaticism’, expressing ‘religious’ or ‘liberal’ options etc. These antagonistic categories used throughout the article cluster around each other in ways that are clearly scripted in the individualistic, Western liberal and secular scenario resonating with the ideals of the Enlightenment. This is why they make sense to a reader who is socialised into these ideas; this is why it is easy for a reader to place Qasab on one side or the other, or, as is the case, on the midway between them: as he aspires to overcome his ‘poor’ condition of a ‘country-boy’, he will be lured into becoming a ‘jihadist’ (p. 16 paragraph 3); ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are not clear-cut. Being a poor, young, country boy (the characteristics of vulnerability eliciting compassion from the readers rather than vilification) is nothing inherently ‘bad’; shifting to the other side of the dividing line is seen as the journey of a hero following his own aspirations at all costs, a legitimate process in the West glorified as an expression of courage, determination and confidence.

The ‘softening of the villain’ occurs precisely where this dividing line is blurred and crossed. The fact that the text and its headline emphasize the metaphor of the journey, referring to the process leading to Qasab’s actions in Mumbai as a story of ‘transformation’, ‘conversion’ etc. (emblematic for the storyline of the risky, yet potentially rewarding, pursuit of an “American dream”) shows the power of MCD’s as sense-making devices within a particular cultural context. The title even qualifies it as ‘the *long* journey’ (line 8; my emphasis) thus stressing the incompatibility of the two connecting points of reference: the village and the station, representing the beginning and the end. Interestingly enough to the tragic narrative structure, the hero, at the end of the story, finds himself ‘back to the village’ (see last sub-heading on page 21), thus making the story cycle complete.

9. To Conclude

This article attempted to give an account of the membership categorisation devices used in a journalistic text, more specifically in a headline of the American *Time* magazine, to create a counter-narrative to the prevalent 'terrorist-as-villain' discourse in the post 9/11 world. I used Membership Categorisation Device Analysis (MCDA) stemming from Harvey Sacks' conversation analysis (CA) tradition to examine the ways in which the main actor of the narrative was referred to, the use of verbs describing activities he had undertaken and the overall presentation of the process he underwent in the story told in the article.

The devices used to portray the terrorist as a 'soft villain' rather than a 'classic villain' included: the attenuating circumstances given to the main protagonist by attaching mitigating adjectives to account for the unexpected attributes to the category invoked (i.e. "terrorist" qua "lone surviving gunman"), the played down usage of the violent category-bound activities (CBA)'s associated to the 'classic villain' and the portrayal of the process leading to the climax of the story (i.e. the carnage act) as a journey between the two sides of a binary world of 'good' and 'evil.'

Finally, and most importantly, this analysis has aimed to show that MCDA can be fruitfully used to examine *text-in-interaction* as an extension of the classical CA programme focusing on *talk-in-interaction* and more recently on interactions within institutional settings. Media texts in particular, as exemplified by the case of journalistic headlines, indicate an under-explored, yet potentially revealing avenue of future research.

Notes

¹ See a printable online version of this article here: <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,1883334,00.html>.

² I purposely refrain from making any claim on whether the unstated goal was intended or not only because it would be impossible to test, but also because this is not my interest here. I do not want to reflect on unintended consequences but pinpoint different achievements of a text which may not be straightforward to either the author or the reader in their interaction convention.

³ Given that any text is ultimately a perception/ interpretation of reality and not a simple reflection of it.

⁴ Whose aim is to uncover the general methods, rules and mechanisms underpinning everyday life that lead to social order as locally understood and produced by participants.

⁵ See, for example, Heritage (1998) on turn-taking systems, Macbeth (2006) on repair mechanisms applied to classroom interactions etc.

⁶ See Silverman 1998:91 and Silverman 1998:152 for discussion of Sacks' use of text to demonstrate MCD's and the fact that this is usually overlooked.

⁷ A concept first introduced by Garfinkel (1967) but later used in CA by Sacks (1992/1995) on numerous occasions and taken up by his followers (see also Silverman 1998).

⁸ The central principles and concepts of MCDA are referred to in Sacks' (1992/1995) "Lectures on Conversation" on numerous occasions. Sacks substantiated his understanding of "membership categorisation" in more than one lecture and in more or less developed form. One of the first published works detailing MCD on the example of a child's story can be found in Sacks (1972). Particular lectures that address widely MCD's are Lectures 1&2 from Spring 1966 (Sacks 1992/1995:236-259) and Lectures 12-15 from Spring 1967 (Sacks 1992/1995:578:600). See Silverman (1998:199) for a detailed list of Membership Categorization – relevant lectures and their location in the 2 volume 1992 edition of Sacks' book. More on Sacks' MCD's to follow in a sub-section of this article.

⁹ I shall refer to the kind of interaction analysed here (i.e. the meeting between an author and a reader through the mediation of the magazine article) as a “communicative act” because this expression is wide enough to cover both the situatedness in a time and place and the one-way feature of this particular instance of written interaction.

¹⁰ In the case of classical CA, a communicative act is an instance of naturally occurring verbal interaction; however, as suggested earlier, I am interested here in a different type of “communicative act” that concerns written interaction between an author and a multiplicity of presumed readers.

¹¹ See for e.g. Silverman’s (1998:131) account of Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974) who first introduced the idea of the duality of context understanding in Sacks’ work.

¹² For cognitive approaches to headline-writing inspired by Sperber and Wilson (1986)’s theory of relevance to the study of human communication see recent studies by Dor (2003) and Ifantidou (2009).

¹³ For more details on semantic and pragmatic functions of headline writing see a compelling contribution by Iarovici and Amel (1989); important to note here is the acknowledgement that headlines would not be able to fulfil their pragmatic function if they did not establish complicity and cooperation between author and reader; this complicity is made possible by the “existence of a universe of shared knowledge” (Iarovici and Amel, 1989: 444)

¹⁴ See Norman Fairclough’s (1992:73, Fig. 3.1) schema revealing the multi-layered nature of contexts in which a text is placed – including discursive practices of production, distribution and consumption, as well as wider social practices.

¹⁵ See, for example, Sposito (1969) for details of how this principle from physics has been applied to interpretive inquiry in the social sciences.

¹⁶ These labels are by no means arbitrary and they stem from the text as much as from prevalent media characterisations.

¹⁷ See the ‘moral’ of the story in the way the article ends: “Qasab may have escaped Farikdot and Rawalpindi. But he’s no closer to the other side of the fence than when he started” – p. 21; the tragic reading of this is: after the hero’s *failed* attempt at social mobility by means of an extraordinary act, the initial state of ‘order’ had been restored;

¹⁸ For step-by-step tutorials of MCD analysis based on Sacks’ initial description (Sacks, 1972; 1989; 1992/1995) see Schegloff (2007a; 2007b).

¹⁹ Here we see the ethnomethodological tradition most vividly in Sacks’ work.

²⁰ Although it is not explicit in the text itself that this is the *same person*, we read it that way; more on why we read it that way in the next section detailing MCD rules of application.

²¹ When assigning categories to the collections of “villains” and “heroes” I make specific reference to Western culture embodied in ‘evil’ and ‘good’ characters typified in classical narrative structures such as tales, myths, Greek tragedy etc. These are relevant to the reading of this headline because the target audience of the *Time* magazine is, at most American, Western or at least Westernized.

²² In a classical CA reading, this would indicate the dispreferred nature of the utterance; when people give responses that are not the ‘default’ ones (for example, rejection instead of acceptance of an invitation etc.), they tend to display hesitation and an increased number of words surrounding the refusal to justify the dispreferred response (see Pomeranz 1984; Sacks 1992/1995).

²³ This is how Sacks refers to participants in interaction.

²⁴ Similar ways of referring to actions performed by the actor are found later in the article text. In the account of the massacre there are no verbs linking the actor directly to the CBA ‘killing’. The readers are not told that Qasab ‘killed’ or ‘massacred,’ but that he “landed”, “found himself”, “hailed a taxi”, “left..using the footbridge”, “spotted the[ir] next target”, “drove”, “put up his hands” etc. The only instances where the activity of killing is invoked are usually given passive voice so as to show a higher agent orchestrating the whole activity with Qasab as a pawn (e.g. “the 58 people who were killed”, “Qasab’s only instructions were to find a building...”, Baker and Tottham, 2009:21).

²⁵ In this section I will not limit myself to analysing the headline but also bring examples from the wider text to exemplify the idea of ‘journey.’

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Studii și articole

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The Building of a European Identity and Its Challenges***

Abstract

Today, the older territorial and national boundaries of a world continuously changed by globalization, migration, the expansion and further integration of the European Union, and similar wide processes, are constantly redefined. As a recent phenomenon, and in relation to the transformations involved by those processes referred at, the quest for national and transnational identity has intensified. Given the successive enlargement waves and the requirements of the integration process within the European Union, citizens of the member states are confronted with an increasing need of legitimization, of redefining their identity as well as their position, within the process of reconfiguration of the political, social and economic surrounding.

Keywords: national and transnational identity, European identity, legitimization, integration process

1. Introduction

The issue of the “European identity” has become a central subject for different academic disciplines. Wherever we look for European identity, its form and meanings vary significantly across different social, geographic, and national domains. In the literature, there is no consensus yet on where to locate or how to measure European identity. Some scholars argue it is to be found in European institutions, as they have the ability to foster and construct a sense of what it means to be European; others consider it should be searched for in a variety of everyday social practices, among which: joint political action, discourses, co-ownership or shared consumption practice. However, others talk about analyzing the perceptions of boundaries between the component states of Europe, as one way to capture the evolution of European identity, while recent studies signal the fact that important data relating the concept in discussion could be revealed by observing people’s actions, rather than by the opinions directly expressed.

Likewise, there is no common point among scholars in terms of the presence or the absence of such a phenomenon, called “European identity”. To our reading, there can be distinguished three different trends in the literature: the one concerned with proving that “European identity”

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is a well established presence, a continuous process, its existence being proven and supported by different phenomena such as migration or media coverage of the European issues; the other arguing that “European identity” is nothing else but a theoretical concept, “an empty shell” or, at best, “a desired ideal” that may never be accomplished, and, finally, and most recently, the trend according to which the intellectual debate should focus on “European identities” that exist in the plural.

In this paper, we explore European identity by adopting a multidisciplinary perspective, turning to anthropology, sociology and history, while also considering the work of political scientists and the survey techniques they rely upon. Therefore, we will get a more complete picture of the politics of European identity construction. Placing the academic debate on “European issues” (such as “European identity”, “European integration”, “European Union”), within the broader context of globalization and the formation of a European society that, since the World War II, has been led by institutional projects, our aim here is not the attempt to solve any of Europe’s current dilemmas. This presupposes a solid familiarity with large amounts of information in the field of sociology, anthropology, geography, history, psychology, political and economic sciences etc., doubled by relevant empirical research. As this is not the case, our purpose is much more limited, and it can be translated as an attempt to adding few opinions to a discussion that has been going on for several decades, being intensified nowadays both within and outside Europe.

Starting with some theoretical considerations on the “integration”, and “identity” concepts, our discourse builds around the issues that have continually surfaced in the intellectual debates up to this day. Actually, we try to find out if there is evidence of an embryonic “European identity” growing up, and if so, how does this identity work in relation to other identities. Moreover, we intend to see if is not it more appropriate to talk about European identities, in the plural. At the same time, in the light of the latest writings in the literature, we hope to open new lines of inquiry and to raise novel questions for further research.

2. From “Integration” to “Identity” within Europe. A Historical Approach

The “enigma” of “European identity” is surrounded by multiple links between geography, culture and nationality. We say enigma, because each term in this phrase associates with many variables and any comprehensive analysis of identity across Europe involves many difficulties. The term Europe itself is vague. It can be used, as Timothy Baycroft suggests, in at least two different ways: “to describe the continent in general, [...] or to refer more specifically to the territory which has developed the institutional structure known as the European Union” (2004: 145). But, either Europe is defined as a distinct civilization of its own or, since the beginnings of the European integration process, as a group of countries with common traditions, values and aspirations, in other words, even after establishing which Europe is being discussed, the concept of “European identity” remains unclear. This happens because “identity” also is a “hopelessly ambiguous” term (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 6).

Over the last few decades, Europe has enormously changed. A continent “divided by national hatred, ravaged by war, and bereft of a firm psychological basis” (Chechel & Katzenstein, 2009: 4), “challenged economically by more powerful blocks, open to both post-colonial and post-communist migratory movements” (Jenkins & Sofos, 1996: 1), Europe has evolved and became “an increasingly peaceful, prosperous, and confident polity in which various nation-states are

experimenting with a novel kind of international relations” (Chechel & Katzenstein, 2009: 4). As the authors cited above put it, that change is well reflected by the world of scholarship, which has moved from the discussion of European integration theory in the 1950s and 1960s to analyses of multilevel governance and Europeanization since the early 1990s.

In the contemporary discourse on Europe, both in social and human sciences, scholars distinguish two phases: a classic one, beginning from the end of the World War II and lasting to the early 1960s, and the one of “renewed interest”, starting at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, and continuing up to now. While sharing some themes of common interest (the “future” and the “identity” of Europe), these phases are separated by almost twenty years of relative silence or disinterest, but also, and much more significantly, by important changes that have occurred meanwhile, at the institutional level (for an overview see Sassatelli, 2009: 20-25). Back in the 1960s, debates in international relations focused mainly on the future of Europe, as well as on the evolution of European identity, in the context of the “integration” process. At its origin, the concept of “integration” meant “to make a whole, an entirety”, to bring together elements viewed as parts of a larger whole. After the early use of the concept in classical sociology, “integration reemerged after the Second World War, as a key social science concept in the federalist, functionalist and neo-functionalist discourses on Europe” (Stråth, 2006: 430). It was used to describe the transformation of Western European societies after the World War II as well as in the wake of the Cold War. More exactly, the concept claimed to describe both, “the institutionalization of intra-governmental co-operation, in which the point of departure was the nation-state, reinforced through welfare strategies”, and “the simultaneous condensation of transnational networks of communication and organized interests in Western Europe” (Stråth, 2006: 431). The idea of European integration was, according to Stråth, “a child” of World War II and the Cold War. European unity was imperative in order to eliminate any possibility for future European wars, to create a third power between East and West and to secure a prosperous future for Europe’s peoples (Smith, 1992). As such, the concept became relevant for politics too, hence its ambiguity and openness to multiple interpretations. From the old concept in the social sciences referring to “co-operation”, “integration” was re-launched in the scientific theorizing to describe a new phenomenon in Western Europe, namely the construction of a new entity, representing “something more” than “the sum of its parts”. In this context, “integration” involved more processual and transformative connotations.

In its European context, the concept of “integration” became a functionalist one, implying “a smooth, linear evolutionary development towards ever higher or more condensed levels of co-existence” (Stråth, 2006: 432). “Integration” was meant to prevent war and to promote peace. This goal was to be accomplished through the intensification of communication and free trade, of economic and political networks within and between industrial societies.

The central protagonists who articulated two very different theories of European integration were Ernst W. Haas and Karl W. Deutsch. The first author’s “neo-functional theory” (neo-functionalism originated as a theory explaining the process of European integration) had as a main focus the elite and group-centered politics of a newly emerging European polity. More specifically, he referred to the functional imperatives that were able to propel the European integration process forward. Haas assumed that political elites in various nation-states, as they were pushed by the functional dynamics of integration, would learn new interests and adopt new policies. So, the redefinition of actor interests together with functional pressures drove the process of integration. Put differently, Haas expected that European integration would gradually lead to the transfer of loyalties to the European level, particularly among those elite

members involved in the European policy-making process. The second author referred at above, Karl W. Deutsch, developed an approach to regional integration, insisting mainly on the flow of information, goods and services as proxies for the growth of a European community. On the question of European identity, Deutsch remained skeptical about a possible shift of mass loyalties from the national to the supranational level (see Haas, 1961, Deutsch, 1953, Caporaso, 1971).

The analyses elaborated between the 1950 and 1960 “were the expression of a context in which European institutions were still more an ideal than a reality” (Sassatelli, 2009: 23). Since the 1980s to our days, as the politico-institutional situation has changed, and institutions became real entities, the studies are both nearer to the institutions, and more distant because, as Sassatelli explains, “the narrative is no longer linked to a dream that can be shaped at will, and that can summon uncritical devotion, but has to deal with what has become of that dream, as it became reality, prompting a certain critical distance” (Sassatelli, 2009: 23).

On the other hand, the debate on Europe became multidisciplinary, and now historical data (which so far dominated the scene) correlate with anthropological and socio-political information. When studying identity in Europe, it is no longer sufficient “to explore EU institutions and their effects on identity in isolation from broader social and political processes; nor it is sufficient to examine nationalist movements as if they exist separate from European institutions. Rather, the challenge is to connect these disparate political phenomena through research that crosses disciplinary boundaries” (Katzenstein & Chechel, 2009: 217). Whereas historians discuss the “long-term trends in the development of European commonalities, that have to date failed in shaping a distinctive social identity” (Kaelble, 2004: 278, *apud* Chechel and Katzenstein, 2009: 18), anthropologists bring their contribution as a result of direct contact with individuals, of asking ordinary people the “identity”-questions (whether they ever think of themselves as Europeans, whether being European comes behind the national identity, and so forth); additionally, sociologists offer equally revealing insights in the identity of Europe, sometimes taking the vantage point of “Eurostars”, as Adrian Favell names the young and mobile Europeans “who are at the heart of the EU Commission’s efforts to build Europe through dynamic mobility policies” (Favell, 2009: 178). The “Eurostars”, as professionals, skilled and educated people living in “Eurocities” – big, cosmopolitan cities – offer their talent in a “knowledge economy”. Exploiting their European citizenship rights to move under the most favorable economic and political conditions, they also have to be taken into account when referring to the notion of “European identity”.

Although, as we mentioned before, the contemporary studies in the field of “European issues” cover a multiplicity of disciplines, approaches and perspectives, there can be distinguished one feature that is common to all these studies, and that separates them from the previous ones. It is the shift from “integration” to “identity”, which becomes the new key-word to deal with. For a variety of reasons, the term identity proves highly resonant, “diffusing quickly across disciplinary and national boundaries, establishing itself in the journalistic as well as the academic lexicon, and permeating the language of social and political practice as well as that of social and political analysis” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 3).

Since the early 1990s, questions of European identity have repeatedly, and much more insistently, been brought to the fore. This happened as a direct consequence of the changes that took place within the European political landscape in the wake of 1989/1990, and due to the ongoing process of European enlargement. It now seems that everybody, from sociologists, anthropologists and psychologists to historians, geographers, politicians, and philosophers, has

something to say about this concept. However, it is little wonder that things are as such, since the rapid and constant global changes produce uncertainties, anxieties, and an ever increasing need of legitimizing the European identity as a common ground of European citizens and as a unifying principle of a great variety of cultural heritages. “Identity” has, somehow, unified the intellectual debate from the 1990s until today.

3. Searching for Identity. Self vs. Other

Speaking about “identity” is as common as it is ambiguous. This is to say that “identity talk – inside and outside academia – continues to proliferate today” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 3). The concept covers “such a variety of things that it makes no sense to ask what it really means” (Kamphausen, 2006: 24). Even if we are aware of the fact that “identity is not a pure fact, nor a simple phenomenon” (Ferencova, 2006: 5), that it “bears a multivalent, even contradictory theoretical burden” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 8) and that, in general, the debate on “identity” has been “varied” and, sometimes, “analytically frustrating” (Sassatelli, 2009: 25), few theoretical remarks prove their importance for the general purpose of this paper. Defined as “a social construct that affects how people behave and communicate” (Shin & Jackson, 2003: 212), identity can be grouped under three categories: human, social, and personal. Human identity refers to the way people see themselves and others, view supposed to be shared by all human beings. Personal identity can be said to be the one particular view of people that differentiates one person of the in-group of another (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997), while social identity represents the common (shared) views about in-groups. In the same time, people articulate local, regional, and national senses of self that define three different but co-existing identities, as well as a social class identity or religious, professional, and educational identity etc. (Straubhaar, 2008). These layers of human self concept cross each other and coexist in a sort of equilibrium. They become important and therefore manifest in specific contexts, some of them being then highlighted, while others left in shadow.

Identity needs to be understood in the wider context of something called “the self”, and both “self” and “identity” have important psychological (not discussed here) and sociological dimensions. They are not simple social products, rather they are “areas of individual and collective freedom”, constantly threatened by the structures and ideologies of the wider society (Craib, 1998: 176). Or, as Anthony Giddens puts it, “in forging their self-identities (no matter how local their specific context of action), individuals contribute to and directly promote *social* influences that are global in their consequences and implications” (1991: 2). So, until now, our equation contains three main concepts: *identity*, *self*, *society*. Later in this text, we will add one more concept, “the other”, in order to narrow down the field of analysis.

In his book, *Social identity*, Richard Jenkins uses the terms “identity” and “social identity” interchangeably to mean the latter, since, “all human identities are in some sense social identities” (2000: 11). According to Jenkins, within our social world, we all have a number of social identities which organize our relationships to *other* individuals and groups. He points out to the Oxford English Dictionary, where identity is defined as having two basic meanings: one involving absolute sameness, and the other a lasting distinctiveness. The author goes on to say that identity does not exist as such, as a simple, static “thing”; it has to be seen as a process open to change, a process of constant negotiation with those around us, “the product of agreement and disagreement” (Jenkins, 2000: 12). Identity is mainly “constructed”

through interaction and institutionalization, and very often identity construction begets a process of “othering”.

During the last two decades, there has been written a lot about the concept of “identity” as a perception of self in relation to the *others* (Shore, 1993, Craib, 1998, Jenkins, 2000, Arts & Halman, 2006, Tiriyaki, 2006, Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009). A common point in all these writings is that identity can be viewed as a process of classification, involving boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. (I am a *woman* and I am not a *man*, I classify the world into groups and associate myself with one social/political/philosophical group rather than another). As Chris Shore argues in one of his articles, identity “is essentially a dualistic concept: in order to define ‘us’, there must be a corresponding ‘them’, against which we come to recognize ourselves as different” (1993: 782). In other words, identity defines not only an in-group but also one or several out-groups. That is, the sense of community among members of a social group is accentuated by a sense of distinctiveness with regard to “other” social groups. Shortly, “our idea of who we are is usually framed as a response to some ‘other’ group” (Fligstein, 2009: 135). Few examples within Europe, our unit of analysis, are relevant for the discussion: during the Cold War the “other” collectively shared was Communism, Marxism, and the Soviet Union; also, British political elites have continuously seen Europe as an “out-group”, while German elites have considered the country’s own devastating past as the “other”, and French political elites have traditionally added the US to their list of “others”. Being understood as the way a group or collectivity sees itself and how “others” see that group, identity is a question of self-image as well as a question of stereotyping by others. It defines “the societal boundaries allowing individual members as well as groups and collectivities, in actual or desired, existing or imaginary communities, to make sense of ‘us’ versus ‘them’” (Moore & Kimmerling, 1995: 387 *apud* Arts & Halman, 2006: 181). Hence, identities are said to be forged out of shared experiences, traditions, memories and myths, in relation to those of other collective identities. They are in fact often forged through opposition to the identities of significant others. Briefly, the formation of all social and cultural identities necessarily involves “a process of differentiation and demarcation”, and group identity is often “reinforced by the stigmatization of the ‘other’” (Jenkins & Sofos, 1996). And Europe makes no exception from this “rule”.

What we call Europe today has been constituted “by an ongoing construction of difference with regard to a respective other” (Kamphausen, 2006: 25). In different words, the construction of Europe has depended on the parallel construction of “others” (Christiansen, Jorgensen & Wiener, 2001, Baycroft, 2004, Katzenstein & Checkel, 2009), against which a separate European identity is seen as being built, invented, created or simply taken for granted. In the twentieth century, between and after the wars, the concept of “us and them” was present in most of the projects concerning the future of Europe that were launched in this period. “Europe’s ‘other’ was, in fact, a variety of others”, “representing an entire range of degrees or types of difference according to the circumstances” (Baycroft, 2004: 157). In addition to the Cold War protagonists, the “disaggregated Third World” was a possible candidate to oppose a “uniting” Europe (Smith, 1992: 75-6). Also, in the past, the “other” has traditionally been located to the East and has taken on either religious or civilizational forms” (Katzenstein & Checkel, 2009: 224). Historically, both Turkey and Russia were seen as “barbarian others”, serving for centuries as European identity builders. Even today, Europe’s relations to both of them remain deeply contested.

Though, most of the times, Europeans may not have known who they were and with which Europe to identify, they did know very well who they were not, and with whom not to iden-

tify – the Ottoman and Muscovite empires to the East. This leads us to Shore's conclusion that, very often, "people affirm their identity by defining who they are not" (Shore, 1993: 782). Therefore, in a Europe unable to generate (at least for the time being) a strong sense of collective self, one source of its identity lies in its relations with other international actors.

4. The Idea of a European Identity

We have already stated that since the early 1990s both scholarship and the official discourse (as recorded in declarations, treaties, conventions, speeches and the like) have brought identity into full light. Before reminding the three main views on European identity, the most often talked about in the literature, discussing the context in which this concept appeared will come firstly.

The concept of European identity was launched at the European Community summit in Copenhagen, in 1973, soon after the first enlargement, as a counterpart to the lack of identity visible in the interpretative framework existent at the time, in a situation of "profound crisis in national economic government" (Stråth, 2006: 433). The preceding period was characterized by a diminishing role of both labor market and the capacity of national economies for political government. Also, by the beginning of the 1970s "integration" was no longer a mobilizing concept, as the process of integration started to stagnate. This was the result of its "increasingly obvious lack of democratic legitimization" (Sassatelli, 2009: 39), and of the negative economic conjuncture as well. The end of the years of booming economies that had been constantly grown since the post-war reconstruction was near, the new phase featuring unemployment and stagnation. Therefore, the collapse of the old order provoked the search for new meaning and new interpretation. In this context, identity was launched by the European Council as a key-concept, "in order to infuse new confidence in the project of unification [...], at a time when the project was experiencing severe strains" (Stråth, 2006: 430), and when the problem of popular support for the European project started to be felt.

The Declaration on European identity also known as The Declaration on Copenhagen, signed by the then nine European Community member states, "marks the beginning of the public career of 'European identity' as the officially adopted legitimizing tool" (Sassatelli, 2009: 39). The idea of identity "was based on the principle of the unity of the Nine, on their responsibility towards the rest of the World, and on the dynamic nature of the European construction" (Stråth, 2006: 433). That is, the Declaration promotes the idea of a "civilizational identity", where unity is emphasized over plurality or diversity, over national and cultural differences. The identity to deal with is, above all, a collective identity shaped on the national type, and which should work as a "place-marker in the world order" (Sassatelli, 2009: 40). Concerning the meaning of "responsibility towards the rest of the World" it was expressed in a hierarchical way, extending from prioritized relations with the rest of Europe and the countries of the Mediterranean, Africa and the Middle East to less prioritized ones with USA, Japan, Canada, the Soviet Union, China and Asia to conclude with Latin America. Finally, a reference was made to the prominence of the struggle against underdevelopment in general (Stråth, 2006: 433-434, Sassatelli, 2009: 40). This hierarchical vision of the relationship among countries, involving processes of inclusion and exclusion, demonstrates that the ideological charge built into the identity concept can be quite risky. Being more or less an isolated case, the Declaration on Copenhagen, "with its explicit calls for identity", remains a rarity.

In the 1980s, there is an obvious shift from collective to individual identity, and “civilization” is not mentioned anymore. Moreover, unity and diversity are both emphasized, unlike the previous decade when “unity” was in the dominating position. It is “culture” now, with its plurality that is explicitly linked to identity. An important moment for this period was the event in 1984, when the European Council gathered in Fontainebleu and launched, under the lead of the Italian lawyer Pietro Adonnino, a campaign called “A people’s Europe”, which aimed at building and further fortifying the European identity” (Tyriaki, 2006: 42).

In the light of Străth’s historical account, we can conclude that, after the collective identity promoted during the 1970s, emphasizing unity, and the individual identity of the 1980s, accentuating diversity, there followed a phase that tried to combine the two concepts in a formula elevated to the rank of official motto of the European Union: “united in diversity”. Although the focus remains on individual identities, the social dimension is also integrated, and, at the same time, local, regional and national identities become “building blocks” of the European dimension. At this point, a distinction should be made between the collective and the individual levels of identity. For most individuals, identity is “usually situational, if not always optional” (Smith, 1992: 59). That is to say, the various situations in which the individuals find themselves are relevant in the process of identification. Collective identities, on the other hand, tend to be more persistent and more intense. They are less affected by rapid changes, and less dependent on the situational context. The distinction above is very important to be taken into account when “making inferences about collective sentiments and communal identifications on the basis of individual attitudes and behavior” (Smith, 1992: 60).

5. European Identity versus European Identities

The construction of the European Union, “the most exciting and profound development in European politics and society of the twentieth century” (Shore, 2000: xi), and the progressive integration of the European states have questioned the existence of a distinctive supra-national common identity, which is frequently perceived as the desired ideal of the European project. As previously mentioned, in discussing the identity of Europe there can be identified three different trends. On the one hand, some scholars argue that European identity is “a well established, alive and more desirable than ever presence” (Trandafiroiu, 2006), its existence being revealed by important phenomena and characteristics; others are more reserved, saying that a sense of European identity had begun to develop (Baycroft, 2004), hence measuring its extent and growth is not completely impossible.

On the other hand, many scholars agree that European identity is “neither a real entity waiting to be explored, nor a feature firmly attached to individuals” (Ferencova, 2006: 4), but a theoretical construct, a form lacking content, an empty shell, “an illusion, at best”, a desired ideal, far away from being accomplished. Like all identities, “it is a construction, an elaborate palimpsest of stories, images, resonances, collective memories, invented and carefully nurtured traditions” (Pagden, 2002: 33). Locating such an identity, “is supposed to lend legitimacy to the project of a unified Europe with a viable ‘demos’ or people who feel that they share a common European citizenship” (Kamphausen, 2006: 24). And contemporary empirical studies have repeatedly showed that, for the time being, this is not the case. Moreover, if the European identity was something else but a concept theoretically built, then the identity of Romanians or that of any other individuals having a national identity within the

EU should feel at ease in any European country (cultural environment). Under these conditions, European identity should not be challenged (or, at least, should be just a little challenged, the equivalent of an adaptive effort of moving from one side of the country to another), as long as individuals stay within its borders. And this, again, is not happening since, whenever individuals move to a new cultural environment (either for a short or for a long period of time) they do not come across familiar patterns, stereotypes or rules to which they are accustomed; rather, they make adaptive efforts to integrate in the new environment.

The two different views on European identity presented above do not represent the focus of this paper; as a consequence we shall not devote here a great deal of space to presenting the arguments forwarded by scholars in their analyses; instead, the following pages are built around the concept of “European identities”.

The latest writings in the field refer to Europe’s identities which scholars say “exist in the plural”. It seems that “there is no one European identity, just as there is no one Europe” (Katzenstein & Checkel, 2009: 213). Moreover, as studies have often revealed, Europeans are perfectly happy with “multiple identities” (Smith, 1992, 1993, Christiansen, Jorgensen & Wiener, 2001, Arts, Halman, 2006, Dufek, 2009). But who are the Europeans and what does it mean to be a European? Answering these questions gets us closer to the issue of identities construction within contemporary Europe.

6. What Does it Mean to Be European?

Europe is, doubtless, a complex continent, with plenty of histories and myths, dynamic, and diverse so, being European is, after all, “not a simple or an obvious matter” (Arts & Halman, 2006: 195). Moreover, because Europe can be conceived as both the continent as a whole and the politico-economic structure known as the European Union, things get even more complicated. Very often, when asked the identity-questions people don’t know whether the identification is with the continent or more specifically with the institutions of the EU.

In the following pages we try to find out if there is something that distinguishes all Europeans, regardless of their national or local differences. And if so, what exactly are those characteristics and qualities that differentiate Europe and Europeans from anything else? In Anthony Smith’s words, “Can we find in the history and cultures of this continent some things that are not replicated elsewhere, and that shaped what might be called specifically ‘European experiences’?” (1992: 68). Trying to answer this question, scholars indicated some areas in which there can be found specifically European features. The list includes language, religion, cultural geography and territorial symbolism, migration (immigration and free movement), history, and more recently mass media and the public education system. In what follows, we will briefly point out few considerations upon all of them.

The majority of Europe’s languages belong to the Indo-European family hence their important linguistic common features. Moreover, despite the relevant distinctions between Latin, Germanic and Slav subfamilies, we can speak about “a tenuous interrelationship” between them, which emerged due to the “sufficient movement across these lines” (Smith, 1992: 68). The second area of inquiry, religion provides “a test of European inclusion and exclusion”. Europeans often affirmed their identity by defining who they were not (Shore, 1993); that is, we add, non-Muslims and non-Jews. But, religion as a criterion of identity is open to, at least, dual interpretations. On one hand it defines the unitary Christian Europe against Islam and,

on the other hand, it separates the states of Europe which belong either to Western Christendom (Catholic and Protestant) or to Eastern Orthodoxy. Lately, the connection between religion and European identity gained “renewed political importance” due to the European enlargement process (Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009: 14-15). The common territory, “ostensibly the simplest and most straightforward of symbols” (Baycroft, 2004: 149) becomes complicated when supposed to reveal common European features. If the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean are important elements in trying to define Europe’s frontiers, as a “geographic expression”, Europe’s eastern borders “are fuzzy at best”.

Another area to search for European characteristics is the wide process of migration which had a crucial impact on European identity construction. Historically, Europe “has been made, unmade and remade through the movements of people” (Favell, 2009: 167). There are three kinds of migration that Adrian Favell identifies today as the most salient to the European continent and its transformation: the ongoing “ethnic” immigration of non-Europeans into European nation-states, the new intra-European “elite” migrations, and the influx into West Europe of migrants from the East (connected to the EU enlargement processes). Especially after the enlargements of 2004 and 2007, many East-Europeans have become EU citizens. Their ambivalent status (as both Europeans and foreigners) produced a new set of identity dynamics. Are they free movers, like the “privileged” West Europeans or just immigrants? Whether their movement strengthens or undermines the construction of an integrated Europe is still in question (Favell, 2009).

History, and specifically cultural heritages and symbolisms together with legal and political traditions provide “common reference points for the peoples of Europe” (Smith, 1992: 70). This is an area where collective memories and experiences that distinguish Europeans from non-Europeans are certainly to be found, although these traditions and myths and values or experiences may be just partially shared or they may involve different meanings for different people across Europe. They remain important even if not all Europeans share in all of them. With respect to mass media, researchers agree that the information they provide is various, concerning both national and European issues. Though, national priorities are more emphasized and news stories are usually interpreted from a national standpoint. But even if “European messages” are increasingly present in mass media, a crucial aspect is their receiving and reinterpretation by the large public that often proves to be in ethnic and national terms. Finally, some scholars point to the standardized public education system as another area to derive a sense of European identity from (especially in the case of ordinary people, having few possibilities to interact with their counterparts in other countries). “No one should forget the importance of the school in the formation of European awareness”, writes Kamphausen in his article (2006: 31). The opposite point of view argues that as long as there is no pan-European education system the European priorities won’t be brought to the fore. The national education systems “are run by and for national states” (Smith, 1992: 72). Empirical studies confirmed that texts in history, civics and literature have national content and intent (even when they include positive reference to contemporary Europe). However, we should remember that today, programs like Erasmus, Socrates, Marie Curie and the like can be very helpful in establishing a sense of shared community. Certainly, all these areas exposed above were and continue to be domains for detailed and intensive research, especially at the empirical level.

So, what is common to all Europeans and what differentiates them from non-Europeans? These questions were never given satisfactory answers, although, both scholars and politicians were engaged in the “never-ending” redefinition of what it means to feel and be a Euro-

pean. Anyway, there are traditions (legal and political), and heritages (religious and cultural) which Europeans share, in a greater or lesser degree. The list of traditions at least partially shared includes: Roman law, Greek philosophy and science, parliamentary institutions, political democracy, Hebraic ethics and Christian theology; the cultural heritages which have permeated large parts of the European continent are: Renaissance humanism, rationalism and empiricism, romanticism and classicism. Together they constitute what Anthony Smith calls “a family of cultures” (1992: 70; 1993: 133), a family of overlapping elements, which have been adapted to the circumstances of each community and state in Europe. Although, as already underlined above, European states may reveal only some of the traditions or heritages referred at, and only to a certain degree, “the sum total of all Europe’s states and communities has historically revealed a gamut of overlapping and boundary-transcending political traditions and cultural heritages, which together make up what we may call the European experience and the European family of cultures” (Smith, 1992: 71).

At this point, a logical question would be if such a family of cultures can induce in the great majority of Europe’s populations a sense of commitment towards a European identity? Smith argues that, for the time being, such a commitment cannot be generated, despite the many cultural and historical traditions that unite (in varying degrees) the peoples and states of Europe. The problem is that “Europe lacks a secure ethnic base with a clear-cut set of common historical memories, myths, symbols, values and the like” (Smith, 1993: 134). The ones it already possesses became increasingly irrelevant and are unusable for lots of people within contemporary Europe (as the Catholic or Orthodox Christendom in a world of growing secularism).

What is clear so far is that the areas supposed to reveal unifying European characteristics also proved to separate the peoples within Europe. That is to say Europeans differ among themselves as much as from non-Europeans in respect to language, religion, law, education, territory, economic and political system; they also differ in terms of ethnicity and culture. Despite their shared traditions and heritages and despite their “shared history of antagonisms” (Pagden, 2002: 20) there are yet important cultural differences between the nations of Europe. These differences persist, as Smith argues, “because of the lack of a strong central authority able to unify and homogenize the peoples of Europe” (1993: 133). Similarly, the lack of such a centralized and unifying authority can be largely motivated by the plurality and depth of all these cross-national differences.

The European integration process added new meanings to the existent answers of who the Europeans are. Focusing on European Union member states, recent studies have also tried to understand why some people across Europe are likely to adopt a European identity while others are not. They pointed to social interaction, as a main source of such an identity. European economic integration has changed the patterns of interpersonal interaction, and today large numbers of Europeans travel across borders every year, either for business and school or for having a good time. By means of traveling and getting to know foreigners, people learned that they have many things in common with their counterparts in other countries. The positive interactions have caused some people to identify themselves as Europeans. Unfortunately, their number is still small. The question is why, after more than half a century of European integration only few people around Europe view themselves as Europeans?

In his recent article, Neil Fligstein argues that integration, which has acted unevenly in bringing individuals together, is the answer. That is, the main beneficiaries of European integration have been people from the privileged strata of society, speaking one or more foreign languages, having higher incomes or the opportunity to travel and interact with similar indi-

viduals across borders. Being especially young, educated people, and sharing common interests with their counterparts around Europe, the people who tend to think of themselves as Europeans are managers, owners of business, professionals, white-collar workers (2009: 133-145). A new sense of what it means to be European is, thus, slowly emerging, and in contemporary Europe men, the young and non-religious, those with higher income, and higher education “identify with a broader geographical unit” (Arts & Halman, 2006: 179). By contrast, the older people, and the less educated, with few or no possibilities to travel abroad are the prouder of their country or region, and seldom or never think of themselves as Europeans. At another level, there are arguments supporting the idea that “attitudes expressed about the EU by EU citizens are sometimes treated as expressions of European identity and sometimes fundamentally distinguished from attitudes expressed about the EU by external actors.” (Slocum-Bradley, 2010: 9)

One conclusion can be, nevertheless, drawn. It is extremely difficult to find an appropriate formula for describing the Europeans. It is not easy to say what they are or what they are not. As previously argued, Europe’s people differ among themselves, in terms of ethnicity, culture, language, religious fractionalization, and so on. Moreover, many criteria used in the past to provide common European characteristics have become increasingly irrelevant and unhelpful for plenty of individuals in the context of a rapidly evolving world, where secularism, and the oblivion of shared trans-national and European history, traditions or heritages are common, and where “symbolic representations of collective memories run empty” (Kamphausen, 2006: 25). This is happening today and it has direct consequences for political and economic orientations.

Recent studies emphasize the necessity of empirical research. If we want to know more about everyday experiences of everyday people, if we are interested in what people really do in the integrated Europe, we should pay attention to people’s actions rather than to the opinions directly expressed. As a sociologist puts it, being European nowadays “is just as much about shopping across borders, buying property abroad, handling a common currency, looking for work in a foreign city, taking holidays in new countries, joining cross-national associations and a thousand other actions facilitated by the European free movement accords” (Kamphausen, 2006: 28). In the same time these ways of being European are also enjoyed by many Euro-skeptics and critics of the enlargement process.

Another important aspect that might be taken into consideration when discussing a common sense of identity among Europeans is related to national and/or international security. Perceived as one of the key promoters of the process of European integration (Dib, 2010: 24), security actually emphasizes a sense of belonging, of being together, it deepens the gap between “us” and “them”, thus helping building a stronger feeling of connection, of empathy with fellow Europeans.

7. The European Project and the European Identities

European identities today are open to multiple interpretations. They are “neither defined primordially from within, nor simply imposed politically from without” (Katzenstein & Checkel, 2009: 226). Certainly, they could be understood, academics prove, as both social process and political project, involving publics and elites. Put differently, ongoing social processes, related to the lived experiences of Europeans as well as the elites and their polit-

ical projects play key-roles in crafting Europe's identities. Therefore, entrepreneurs and elites working in Brussels, Strasbourg and other national settings, together with anti-globalization Euro-skeptics or acerbic critics of the enlargement process, pro-European academics, politicians and journalists, xenophobic nationalists, and the wide European public, they are all involved in shaping European identities which are "in a constant process of modernization and updating" (Trandafiroiu, 2006: 92).

As stated in the beginning of this paper, when trying to understand the dynamics creating the European identities it is necessary to rely on multiple disciplinary traditions, to keep in mind that the EU plays a central role in shaping them, and to also consider the data revealed by empirical research that, by means of sophisticated surveys and other similar techniques, provide important and, sometimes, unexpected insights on "who we are in today's Europe" (Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009: 19). Hence, our sequent analysis crosses disciplinary boundaries, pointing at the main findings on the construction of identities in contemporary Europe, as illustrated by scholarship. One mention is required: our focus remains research on European identities centered especially on the European Union. Thus, this paper emphasizes primarily the Western viewpoint, although we are aware that it is not the only perspective to understand European identities. Before proceeding, a number of considerations about the EU are in order.

Five decades ago there were made the first steps for an old dream to come true. The European project, promoting peace, prosperity and friendship became a very attractive entity for every European nonmember state. Starting with six member states, the European Union has expanded up to date to twenty-seven countries and today it embraces hundreds of (linguistically and culturally) different people. Additional states aspire to EU membership, its end-point being left intentionally vague and very well "encapsulated by the ambiguous phrase – toward an ever closer union" (Fligstein, 2009: 132). The European Union involves a myriad of agreements, treaties and organizations that guided political and economic interactions of countries across Europe. Due to economic integration, social interaction around Europe increased significantly, and nowadays EU citizens are free to travel across national borders as they like, either for pleasure or for business, for school or working abroad. They can settle wherever they want in Europe, "whenever and however", they don't need visas and, sometimes, they don't need residency to live or work where they choose to.

Despite its unique history of success, the EU "is still far from its citizens" (Pawel Karolewsky & Kaina, 2006: 11). This lack of public identification with the EU is essentially bound up, scholars say, with communication and the lack of discursive structures, which make political community possible (Trandafiroiu, 2006), on the one hand, and with "the lack of transparency in its procedures and in its accountability to a larger democratic people" (Fligstein, 2009: 132), on the other hand. Although many of its early leaders may have hoped to unify the "hearts and minds" of the Europeans, after more than fifty years since the European unification project begin, there is little evidence of public solidarity across Europe, and there are mixed feelings about being European. Put differently, the development of a genuine European identity is still questionable. One explanation lays in the fact that, though one may find important traditions and heritages that Europeans share, there are equally relevant cultural differences between the nations and the populations of Europe. These differences persist and, in the course of time, they might get even deeper because there is no central authority efficient in unifying the peoples of Europe. Corresponding, the absence of such an authority can be viewed as a direct consequence of the variety and plurality of all the cultural and historical differences.

The European Union now exists as an economic and increasingly political entity. But this does not involve any wider cultural or affective meaning. For the time being, the Union is not capable of arousing popular attachment, unlike the state which “remains the final term of reference” (Pagden, 2002: 2). The ethnic and national levels of identification take priority, and remain much more vivid and accessible to the mass of the population than more abstract identities like that of Europe (Smith, 1993, Risse, 2001).

People within EU still wonder whether the new type of social order, the new structures and identities that may be forged will fit their needs and interests in the same way as the familiar ones did. In the midst of the shifting political and institutional landscape, the great majority of Europe’s people “are participants in a vast and far-ranging political, economic and cultural experiment” (Pagden, 2002: 3).

8. Multiple Identities

Human beings have multiple identities and can move between them according to context and situation. Put differently, “self- and other-identification are fundamentally situational and contextual” (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 14). In postmodern times of industrial capitalism and bureaucracy, of globalism and mass communications, the number of possible cultural identities has significantly increased. This is for gender, age, class and religious loyalties continue to be influential, while “professional, civic and ethnic allegiances have proliferated, involving ever larger populations across the globe” (Smith, 1992: 58). The same author also argues that national identification transcends all the others loyalties, in scope and power, becoming the cultural and political norm. Still, no matter how strong the national identification could be, people accumulate many allegiances in today’s world. That is, “they hold multiple identities” (Marcussen, Risse, Engelmann-Martin, Knopf & Roscher, 2001: 103) which are rather converging than conflicting. These identities are said to be fluid and flexible because, nowadays, more and more people are exposed to various situations as a direct consequence of traveling, mass communications, and state interference in the lives of “previously isolated communities” (Smith, 1993: 129). The state, as Brubaker and Cooper underline, becomes “a powerful ‘identifier’, not because it can create identities in the strong sense – in general, it cannot – but because it has the material and symbolic resources to impose the categories, classificatory schemes, and modes of social counting and accounting with which bureaucrats, judges, teachers, and doctors must work and to which non-state actors must refer” (2000: 16).

Multiculturalism is highly recognized as a “new chapter in Europe’s evolution” (Katzenstein & Checkel, 2009: 224-5). There is no doubt that individuals possess several identities. That means they can be members of both, a nation, and a wider European Union. New empirical findings centered on Europe with EU at its core suggested that people are proud to be citizens of their countries and to be Europeans, at the same time. That is to say “identities do not wax or wane at each other’s expense” (Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009: 9-10); one can be French or Spanish or Romanian and European at one time. Put differently, the European identity may be defined as a “multilevel identity” which “does not exclude other “identities”, other “loyalties”, from local ones to national ones, from the “Western” one to the “Atlantic” one” (Varsori & Petricioli, 2004: 90). “United in diversity”, the words in the preamble of the constitutional treaty, could be interpreted as describing the double, national and common identity of Europe which, as recent research emphasize, should complement each other like “two sides of the same coin”.

As stated before, European identities emerge from the “confluence and blending” of a variety of processes and projects. This means that domains of identity construction can be found equally in social processes (like discourses, daily practice, institutions) and in the projects of political and business entrepreneurs. Understood as process, “identities flow through multiple networks and create new patterns of identification” (Katzenstein & Checkel, 2009: 213). They are shaped by the lived experiences of Europeans, which may include participating in shared sporting occasions, watching song contests (as the annual Eurovision) or football championships, shopping in supermarket chains, meeting in Europe-wide social and business networks, mobilizing at the national level to protest or celebrate Europe (as on the first of January 2002 when over 300 million culturally and linguistically diverse citizens celebrated the successful launch of the Euro). Viewed as political project, the construction of European identities concerns political, economic and academic elites. The problem here is that it is not sufficient for political and business elites “to commit themselves and lead the way; [...] a much greater groundswell of commitment, of passionate sentiment, such as nationalism has always succeeded in evoking, must emerge” (Smith, 1993: 133–4). Because, as the same author asserts, it is one thing for elites in Brussels, Strasbourg and other European capitals to work for and identify with a united Europe while it is totally different to attribute such sentiments and beliefs to the great mass of people (the middle and working classes, not to mention the peasantries of Southern and Eastern Europe).

A very pertinent perspective that demonstrates the multiplicity of identities within Europe is offered in a recent book, *European Identity*, edited by Jeffrey T. Checkel and Peter J. Katzenstein. The authors of this volume (sociologists, historians, anthropologists) understand identities “to be revealed by social practices as well as by political attitudes, shaped by social and geographical structures and national contexts” (Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009: 4). They cross disciplinary boundaries and encourage a plurality of perspectives on European identity formation.

One of the most significant claims of the volume mentioned above is that, in recent years, European identity has become inevitably politicized and contested. The authors point to the debates over the EU constitution in France and the Netherlands (2005) which, they say revealed two very different European identity projects. The first one was the “outward looking, cosmopolitan European identity project”, and the second one was the “inward looking, national-populist European identity project”. Furthermore, cosmopolitan conceptions of identity differ from the populist conceptions in terms of both the form and the content of politicization (a process that makes issues part of politics and involves a number of different actors and processes). The first ones’ focus is political citizenship and rights, while the latter emphasizes social citizenship and cultural authenticity. Cosmopolitan conceptions are motivated by and respond to elite-level politics whereas populist conceptions of identity reflect the mass-level politics. Cosmopolitan conceptions of European identity have political content. They are partially shaped by the liberalization and development of national markets, and involve an increasing acceptance of cross-border exchanges, not only of goods, services, and capital but also of Europeans. Populist European identities have rather cultural and ethnic content. They “draw boundaries” between Europe and a relevant or threatening “other”, be it represented by “Islamic fundamentalism”, “US unilateralism” or “East Asian competition” (Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009: 11–13, 213).

Another important aspect is that the politicization of European identities suggests more and different forms of analyses than those provided so far. It is important to remember that European identity construction is occurring “at the multiple intersections of elite projects and

social processes; at both supra-national and national-regional levels; within EU institutions but also outside them; in daily practice and lived experience; driven by the economic logic of an aging continent that needs migrants but simultaneously fears them” (Katzenstein & Checkel, 2009: 226). In order to enrich our understanding of the politics of European identity building we thus need to rely on various disciplinary traditions; however, for the sake of brevity, hereinafter we will only turn to anthropology (everyday practice), and sociology (lived experience), on purpose to expose few major ideas on identities construction within contemporary Europe.

Douglas Holmes attests to the value of the anthropological approach upon European identity. At the outset of the twenty-first century, the author argues, the people of Europe “are negotiating among liberal and illiberal registers of consciousness” (2009: 52). Holmes says that the shifting configurations of consciousness typically do not succumb to a single, stable, and unambiguous expression. At present, there are countless experiments with identity unfolding across Europe, and almost all of them are in some way or another related to the process of integration, though not necessarily the outcome of any EU policy initiative per se (Holmes, 2009: 52, 78, Checkel & Katzenstein, 2009: 20).

Holmes suggests that what we term “identity” today has acquired a twofold nature. On the one hand it is past-oriented (being contingent on convention, history, and tradition) while, at the same time, it has assumed a future-oriented purview and experimental dynamic. On the other hand, people within the EU, as they participate in the creation of a multicultural and multiracial Europe, are continually analyzing the nature of cultural affinity and difference. Though neither of the exposed characteristics is completely new, after the adoption of the Maastricht Treaty in the early 1990s, the nature and trajectory of identity projects have shifted decisively. From this turning point the EU “imparts to its citizens the distinctive challenge [...] to negotiate continually the cognitive meanings and political exigencies of a pluralist Europe” (Holmes, 2009: 52-3). For Holmes, in today’s Europe, identity has become increasingly disconnected from the influence and control of the nation-state. As Checkel and Katzenstein put it, identity in Europe has, nowadays, “assumed a volatile dynamic able to impel a supranational politics that speaks powerfully to the predicaments of a new generation of Europeans” (2009: 21), a generation that is challenged to negotiate among liberal and illiberal imperatives which “can inform and underwrite a pluralist Europe” (Holmes, 2009: 79).

Anthropologists explore the politicization of identity construction within Europe by means of direct contact with people. In the last two decades, numerous studies of opinion across Europe have investigated the level of European identity among the population, and tried to reflect its place relative to other identities. There were used different types of surveys – from asking citizens to rank a series of identities as they apply to themselves (and then checking to see how many individuals put European identity in the top of the list) to asking people whether they think of themselves as European often, sometimes, seldom or never. Other types of surveys focused on whether “European” and “national” identities were perceived as compatible or contradictory (Baycroft, 2004: 152-3). A common point for all the surveys mentioned above is that they revealed mixed and limited results. Although these surveys allow for a quantitative measurement of “European identity”, supplementary qualitative evidence is needed in order to test the presence and the extent of European identity within EU. However, Europeanness is difficult to measure, despite the sophisticated surveys and techniques used for that purpose. It can only be understood, as recent empirical research emphasizes, as one among a multitude of identities for those who possess it, and almost invariably not the primary one.

The work of sociologists offers equally revealing insights into the construction and politicization of European identity. Adrian Favell, for instance, looks at the politicization of identity, taking the vantage point of what he calls the “Eurostars”. They are young and mobile Europeans, “enjoying the fruits of their EU free movement rights” (Favell, 2009: 167). Telling a different story about Europe today, the “Eurostars” fulfill a new idea of European identity or citizenship. They live in “Eurocities – a network of cosmopolitan places” (Favell, 2009: 178), and reflect a Europe “at its most enthusiastically cosmopolitan and post-national” (Favell, 2009: 172), being considered key-elements in the process of building the European identity through dynamic mobility policies, and cross-borders interactions. Skilled, educated, and well-paid professionals in London, Brussels, Amsterdam, and other big, cosmopolitan cities, they encourage the circulation of “talent” in a “knowledge economy”. These “elite” professional free movers, hard-working and ambitious, moving under the most favorable economic and political conditions, belong to the generation of new Europeans and have to be taken into account when discussing the dynamics creating European identities in contemporary Europe.

Another sociologist, Neil Fligstein (2009), tries to find out why, after more than fifty years of European integration, some people across Europe are likely to adopt a European identity while others are not. He argues that “social interaction” is the main source of European identity, and that people who have the possibility of traveling across borders (either for business or for pleasure) get to know their counterparts in other countries and learn that they might have certain things in common. This way, the positive interactions cause some people to identify themselves as Europeans. The only problem is that the process of integration has acted very unevenly in bringing individuals together, and the opportunity to positively interact with people from other European countries is still restricted to a certain part of the population. That is the main beneficiaries of European integration have been the young people from the privileged strata of society (managers, professionals, owners of business, white-collar workers), with higher education and higher incomes, speaking foreign languages and being members of European-wide organizations. Those who have not benefited from the facilities previously exposed, the older, the less educated and less financially well-off people, with few or no possibilities to travel abroad and engage in long term social relationships – they are all less likely to ever view themselves as having a European identity. Therefore, in contemporary Europe, the individuals with higher levels of education, cosmopolitanism and greater wealth, directly benefiting from increased integration and cross-border interactions, tend to have a more developed sense of European identity. As numerous studies emphasize, most of them have at least a secondary “European identity” to complement their national identities.

Everyday “identity talk” and “identity politics” are real and important phenomena. Identity is implicated both in “everyday life” and in “identity politics” in its various forms (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000). It is used by social actors in some everyday settings to make sense of themselves, of their activities, of what they share with, and how they differ from others. It is also used by political actors to persuade people that they are (at least for certain purposes) “identical” with one another and at the same time different from others, and to organize and justify collective action along certain lines. In order to gain power or remain in government, political entrepreneurs need to sell their political ideas to a larger public opinion. Political power is, at the same time, the precondition for them to be able to pursue other, including ideational, goals. One can, therefore, assume that political elites try to promote ideas (including identity constructions) with an eye on gaining power or remaining in government. A strong evidence of this fact lies in many of the internal programmatic controversies that center on

the question of which ideas are more likely to win elections than others. Thus, political elites select those identity constructions that suit their perceived instrumental interests (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000: 4-5, Risse, 2001: 202).

The present European nations and the future European super-nation (if such an entity will ever exist) are, as literature emphasizes, “modern and massive” collectives of strangers. If European identity is “the disposition of numerous separate nationals to consider themselves, their compatriots and their fellow Europeans equal members of the European community – intellectually, emotionally and willfully”, if European identity refers to “a sense of distinctive and authentic community based on equal dignity and solidarity” (De Beus, 2001: 292-3) then only the passage of time might decide and create the conditions of Euro-genesis.

To date, one thing seems to be clear, namely the European project traditionally seen as a progressive enterprise “towards ever higher stages of integration” (Stråth, 2006: 443), “towards an ever closer union” (Fligstein, 2009: 132) is not very credible anymore.

The problem the European Union is facing today is that of having too many members to be unified into a centralized power, into one bigger entity. Europeans differ among themselves as much as from non-Europeans in respect of language, territory, religion, law, economic and political system; they also differ in terms of ethnicity and culture. So, instead of trying to construct a European social model, it would be more appropriate to create connections between the national models, between the various histories, traditions and cultures each society within Europe is built upon. Furthermore, instead of thinking of the EU as having one “overarching” public sphere it is better to imagine this complex institutional structure as constituted by a multiplicity of overlapping communicative spaces.

Another aspect is of crucial importance: although up to date, the “Europe” being discussed is, actually, the European Union and its political and institutional structure, but this is hardly the whole picture. A sense of European identity can be found in the non-EU countries within the European continent too. They also participate in the construction of a renewed idea of Europe through new networks of communication supported by new media technologies. So, the question of identity in the rest of Europe, namely the Eastern Europe should be raised and answered. At the same time, perceptions of Europe by non-Europeans might bring important information concerning the European identity issue. It would be interesting to see whether in the view of non-Europeans Europe is perceived as a single entity despite the differences among the various nations and populations within the continent.

9. Conclusion

During the last few years, a growing number of historians, sociologists, anthropologists, political scientists, etc., have shown a deep interest in the issue of European identity; and the broader the field of analysis the more vague the results forwarded. Scholars seem to point out continuing problems and doubts rather than clear answers to the questions raised by Europe’s identities.

The identity of Europe has always been uncertain and imprecise and today, after many decades of theoretical and empirical research, there is still no consensus among scholars in terms of the existence of the so-called “European identity”. The field seems to be split between several competing claims: part of the scholarship argues that the concept denominates a real entity (although it is difficult to find wide agreement on the main characteristics of such an

identity), while many academics state that “European identity” is just a theoretically built concept, the question of its presence being no longer relevant. At the same time, in the light of the latest writings, we can conclude that in contemporary Europe, instead of one strong European identity we come across a multiplicity of European identities. Without being rivals (as usually supposed), they complement each other very well, like two sides of the same coin.

It is for sure that a convergence toward a unified European identity is not to be expected, at least for the foreseeable future. Social groups are unlikely to give up their nation-state identity in favor of a collective European identity. More than once the empirical studies confirmed that the nation-state identities are “sticky” and only slowly subject to change. Rather, “Europe” is incorporated in and coexists with given national identities. Depending on the specific context and the various roles that they play, individuals invoke different elements of their social identity in different situations. That is to say, they hold multiple identities, some of them being brought into full light or left in shadow according to context and situation.

In a continent where spatial and cultural borders become increasingly permeable, a full understanding of the construction of the evolving European identities lies at the intersection of competing European political projects and social processes. Understood as process, European identities are shaped by the lived experiences of Europeans. These may include shopping in supermarket chains, participating in shared sporting competitions, watching song contests or football championships, meeting in Europe-wide social and business networks, mobilizing at the national level to protest or celebrate Europe. Viewed as project, the construction of identities involves bureaucrats operating in Brussels, Strasbourg, or other various national settings. Therefore, pro-Europeans as well as Euro-skeptics, elites and ordinary citizens, academics, journalists and so forth – they are all involved in the construction of the evolving European identities.

It is important that European identity remains a point of discussion, despite the fact that today, various forces and claims fragment the possibility of a strong cultural European sense of belonging. The intensive reflection on European identity is already a big step towards a positive future of Europe, and only the passage of time might create conditions for the emergence of a unified European identity. On the other hand, “debating Europe”, as scholars say, might prove the only or the most appropriate way to defend modern and cosmopolitan Europe against the increasingly forceful voices of Euro-skepticism.

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Iuliana Miron IOAN*

L'étude de l'interactivité sur les pages web roumaines pour les femmes

Résumé

Cet article propose d'identifier l'existence d'une corrélation directe entre la prédominance d'un certain type d'interactivité d'un site web et le nombre d'individus qui consultent le site sur une période donnée, autrement dit sa position dans un classement officiel.

Pour ce faire, j'ai analysé le concept d'interactivité selon deux perspectives – l'une comme trait technique du moyen et l'autre comme trait humain qu'on retrouve dans les perceptions des visiteurs qui prennent part au processus de communication. A partir des définitions de l'interactivité données par différents chercheurs j'ai identifié sept variables: la personnalisation du site web, le contrôle de l'utilisateur, la complexité sensorielle, l'implication sociale, les modalités d'abonnement au contenu du site, le divertissement et la collecte d'informations par l'utilisateur. Pour étudier la présence des deux types d'interactivité j'ai identifié 105 sites classifiés en trois catégories – femmes, style de vie et santé, pages web sélectionnés conformément au classement réalisé par trafic.ro, site roumain d'audience web. Ensuite, j'ai utilisé comme méthode de recherche l'analyse de contenu et pour chaque catégorie j'ai analysé les 35 premiers sites web. Les conclusions nous indiquent que le nombre de visiteurs, c'est-à-dire, la position d'un site web dans le classement officiel, n'est déterminé ni par un certain type d'interactivité, ni par le degré d'interactivité de site en général.

Mots clé: interactivité, indicateurs de l'interactivité, sites web.

1. Introduction

L'apparition des nouveaux moyens d'information et de la communication a révolutionné la société entière aussi bien au niveau social, qu'au niveau communicationnel. Les nouveaux medias ont non seulement définitivement transformé les modalités relationnelles mais ont également modifié la signification de l'espace, du temps et des barrières physiques comme étant des variables de la communication (Meyrowitz, 1985 : 13). Les études sur l'interactivité font partie de l'évolution ontologique et épistémologique des nouvelles technologies de la communication en général mais plus précisément des ordinateurs (Rafaeli, 1988 : 113). L'interactivité est caractéristique des nouveaux medias (Steuer, 1995) et notamment des pages web. C'est le moyen de communication et d'information le plus représentatif de notre époque. Cet article étudie cette particularité qui a conduit à un changement de paradigme. En effet,

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avec les médias traditionnels, la communication était uniquement unidirectionnel mais depuis la création d'internet et des moyens qui lui sont tributaires, la communication est devenue bidirectionnelle voire multidirectionnelle.

Le thème central de cette étude est l'interactivité des pages web, c'est-à-dire, exclusivement sur les nouveaux moyens de l'information et de la communication. La recherche empirique s'est concentré sur l'étude de 105 pages web intéressants essentiellement les femmes. Puis, en s'inspirant du classement réalisé par trafic.ro (site d'audit web roumain), ces sites ont été classifiés en trois catégories : les pages web destinées aux femmes, santé, style de vie. Les pages web ont été choisies par des motifs pratiques. Afin de menée une analyse objective, s'imposait l'étude d'une catégorie diverse des pages web (par la thématique et l'interprétation), mais qu'ils ont la même publique clef déclarée. Le but central de la recherche est de déterminer quel est le type d'interactivité prédominant sur les sites analysés et d'identifier un lien entre le type d'interactivité dominant et le nombre de visiteurs uniques, respectif de la position du site dans un classement général.

Dans la première partie de l'analyse, après la révision de la littérature, j'ai pu identifier deux perspectives principales : l'interactivité perçue comme caractéristique technique et l'interactivité perçue comme processus qui réside dans les perceptions de ceux qui prennent part à l'acte de communication et qui se produit entre l'individu et la technologie de communication.

Ainsi, après l'étude des définitions et des dimensions de l'interactivité établis par des différents chercheurs, j'ai identifié sept variables: la personnalisation de la page web, le contrôle de l'utilisateur, la complexité sensorielle, l'implication sociale, les moyens de souscription au contenu du site, le divertissement et la collection des informations sur l'utilisateur. Dans la deuxième partie de l'article et à partir de ces variables, j'ai réalisé une recherche empirique au cours de laquelle j'ai analysé les éléments interactifs présents sur les premières 35 pages web de chaque catégorie susmentionnées.

2. L'interactivité – la définition d'un concept

A l'époque de l'émergence des nouveaux instruments de communication, et plus particulièrement pendant celle de *world wide web*, l'interactivité était la nouveauté dans le domaine de la communication et de l'information car elle représentait un facteur innovant dans le domaine. En effet, ce nouveau concept intéresse les chercheurs car il est considéré comme la caractéristique principale des nouveaux médias de la communication et/ou de l'information.

Même si de nombreux chercheurs ont orienté leurs études dans la même direction, les définitions de l'interactivité qui en résulte diffèrent. Ainsi, pour W. Russell Neuman l'interactivité est le degré dans lequel les utilisateurs d'un nouveau moyen de communication peuvent influencer sa forme et son contenu (1995), tandis que pour Jens F. Jensen c'est un concept «multi-discursif» qui peut être rencontré dans plusieurs domaines d'activités et ayant des significations différentes en fonction du domaine. Toujours selon Jens F., l'interactivité caractérise l'instrument de communication et/ou information et permet à l'utilisateur d'influencer le contenu ou la forme des messages transmis (2003). Pour Steuer, l'interactivité est l'un des facteurs qui déterminent l'apparition de la télé-présence. Télé-présence qu'il définit comme la présence d'un individu dans un milieu virtuel, et ce facilité par un moyen de communication (Steuer, 1995 : 74). Pour Carrie Heeter l'interactivité est un concept multidimensionnel fondé sur les fonctions du moyen, qui caractérise les nouveaux medias en différents degrés,

et qui dépend du degré d'action de l'individu (2000). Eric P. Bucy identifie l'interactivité comme l'expérience qu'a l'utilisateur avec la technologie. Il critique les récentes études sur l'interactivité car elles n'apportent aucune originalité et aucune nouveauté (2004).

Selon une autre perspective, l'interactivité serait la perception des utilisateurs de leurs habilités à transmettre, à contrôler les messages et à participer activement au processus de communication (McMillan et Hwang, 2002). Ainsi, Sheizaf Rafaeli, l'un des chercheurs les plus prolifiques sur le concept de l'interactivité et à qui l'on doit la majorité des études et l'essentiel des analyses ultérieurs à 1988, considère que l'interactivité est le processus qui a lieu entre l'utilisateur et le system. L'interactivité est généralement considérée comme une caractéristique de la « conversation face à face », mais on la retrouve aussi bien dans la communication qui est ménagée par un moyen de communication (Rafaeli, 1988). Un autre chercheur soutient cette hypothèse, il s'agit de Sally J. McMillan pour qui les perceptions individuelles sont un indicateur important de l'interactivité (McMilan, 2000). Spiro Kiouisis s'appuie sur la conception de Chaffee et soutient, que l'interactivité est un facteur psychologique, mais qu'elle est aussi une caractéristique du media qui varie en fonction des technologies de communication, le contexte de la communication et les perceptions des individus (2002). D'autre part, John E. Newhagen considère que l'interactivité est un processus basé sur l'information qui a lieu au niveau psychologique des individus (2004).

Si l'on se réfère aux définitions énoncées, nous observons que l'interactivité intègre tous les composants faisant partie du modèle d'échange d'informations : expéditeur, récepteur, canal et messages. A partir des confrontations entre chercheurs, deux approches ont vu le jour :

- l'interactivité représente les capacités techniques du moyen de communication (Steuer (1995), Heeter (2000), Jensen (2003), Bucy (2004);
- l'interactivité représente les perceptions de ceux qui prennent part à l'acte de communication (Rafaeli (1988), McMillan (2000), Kiouisis (2002), Newhogen (2004).

3. Interactivité – caractéristique technique des nouveaux medias

L'une des approches majeures qui analyse l'interactivité est la perspective des caractéristiques techniques des nouveaux medias. Autrement dit, l'interactivité est interprétée comme une caractéristique des nouveaux moyens d'information qui assure la connexion entre l'environnement de communication et l'utilisateur. Elle intercède la communication, en favorisant la conversation et l'implication des utilisateurs. L'interactivité offre également la liberté de choisir le moyen de communication le plus pertinent et l'opportunité de sélectionner l'information plus rapidement.

De cette perspective, le concept de l'interactivité subordonne une série de caractéristiques spécifiques qui légitime le lien mutuel entre un nouveau moyen d'information et de la communication et l'utilisateur humain. La particularité principale de l'interactivité qui définit les nouveaux moyens de communication se réfère aux caractéristiques techniques qui permettent à l'utilisateur de recevoir et de transmettre des contenus sous divers formes : texte, photo, audio ou vidéo. Selon Jensen, la production d'information par l'entrée dans un système constitue l'une des formes de l'interactivité (Jensen, 2003 : 200). Pour l'auteur l'entrée dans un système signifie le processus de transmission et par conséquent il identifie des technologies de communication qui ont comme point commun ce processus (télétexte, les systèmes multi-channel, data-casting, multi-casting (Jensen, 2003 : 201). Pour Jensen, le terme «interactivité» a comme

point de départ le mot «interaction» qui signifie «influence réciproque». C'est une relation puissante, mutuelle et continue entre les individus et les nouveaux moyens de communication et non pas une relation de communication par l'intermédiaire de «machines». A partir de ce lien, le chercheur parle des plusieurs formes d'interactivité : la capacité des individus à sélectionner le contenu, la possibilité de produire de l'«information» en utilisant des «machines», c'est-à-dire les nouveaux moyens de communication et l'habilité des systèmes utilisés par ces «machines» à s'adapter et à répondre à l'utilisateur. Cependant pour Jensen quelque soit le type de l'interactivité, le concept comporte quatre dimensions clefs : la transmission, la consultation, la conversation et l'enregistrement. Chacune de ces dimensions caractérise la capacité du moyen de communication de se mettre en rapport avec l'utilisateur.

Dans la même perspective, le concept d'interactivité est analysé par Neuman (2005). Il définit l'interactivité comme «le phénomène d'adaptation réciproque, établit entre un moyen de communication comme Internet ou un jeu vidéo et l'utilisateur de ce moyen » (Neuman, R.W., *International Encyclopedia of Communication* : 2318). Neuman appelle cet aspect «la direction de la communication», et à la différence de Jensen, il insiste sur le caractère accessible et permisible des nouveaux moyens pour les personnes qui veulent communiquer.

D'autre part, pour Carrie Heeter l'interactivité a du sens seulement si l'utilisateur fait l'effort d'utiliser le moyen de communication choisi. Selon elle puisque les systèmes medias supposent des degrés d'interactivité différents, l'activité des utilisateurs varie aussi, certains étant plus actifs que d'autres (Heeter, 1998). De son point de vue, l'interactivité est caractérisée par deux traits : l'asynchronisme, c'est-à-dire, la possibilité de transmettre, de recevoir des messages et d'enregistrer des événements et l'espace – la capacité des nouvelles technologies à permettre aux utilisateurs d'expérimenter de nouveaux espaces, c'est-à-dire l'espace virtuel.

Ces deux caractéristiques semblent s'opposer mais si nous faisons appel aux différents niveaux de perceptions, nous pouvons constater qu'elles ne s'excluent pas, au contraire elles s'amplifient réciproquement. De plus, une autre dimension centrale de l'interactivité identifiée par Heeter fait spécifiquement référence aux caractéristiques techniques des medias, c'est-à-dire les caractéristiques interactives des media parmi lesquels l'utilisateur peut choisir (Heeter, 1998). Dans la même direction s'inscrit l'idée de sélection identifiée par Neuman, comme caractéristique de l'interactivité du moyen, qui offre à l'utilisateur la possibilité de choisir entre plusieurs sources d'information et divertissement (Neuman, 1995). Les observations de ces deux chercheurs sont susceptibles de renforcer l'idée, que plus un moyen fournit à l'utilisateur plusieurs possibilités de transmettre et recevoir des messages, plus le moyen est interactif.

Le niveau d'activité ou d'implication sont étroitement liées à l'intérêt manifesté pour obtenir un certain type d'information et pour obtenir des connaissances, satisfaction et efficacité, qui se trouvent parmi les effets positifs (supposées) qui caractérisent aussi l'interaction individuelle (Bucy, 2004 : 380). Aussi, le degré d'implication varie en fonction du caractère consultatif et communicationnel des medias. Certains instruments de communication peuvent être utilisées dans le but de publier de la documentation ou pour prouver la véracité d'une information tandis que d'autres intercedent et favorisent le dialogue. A partir de ces aspects, Jensen a identifié deux catégories d'instruments de communication: les services audio-vidéo sur demande, des services d'information online, encyclopédies sur CD-ROM, ftp, world wide web qui ont un caractère consultatif; les systèmes vidéo de conférence, les groupes de nouvelles, le courrier électronique, les bulletins d'information, qui favorise la communication (Jensen, 2003 : 201).

Le degré d'implication est étroitement lié à l'intérêt de l'utilisateur pour le contenu informationnel mais aussi est aussi lié à la capacité de vitesse de réponse du moyen d'information utilisé. Plus l'instrument de communication a un niveau de réponse rapide, plus le niveau d'implication de l'utilisateur sera plus élevé. Steuer (2004) considère le temps de réponse ou la vitesse d'interaction comme l'un des indicateurs pertinents de l'interactivité dans le processus de communication médiatique. Selon lui, la vitesse correspond à la rapidité à laquelle un utilisateur a assimilé une action par un moyen qui est intermédiaire pour le processus de la communication. En fait, Neuman donne la même définition de la réponse immédiate (Neuman, 1995). Pour ces deux auteurs, la vitesse de réaction de l'instrument de communication correspond à la vitesse à laquelle un moyen de communication et d'information répond aux actions initiés par l'utilisateur. Nous pouvons donc dire que le degré d'implication est lié à l'intérêt de l'utilisateur pour le contenu informationnel, mais est aussi lié à la vitesse de réponse du moyen d'information utilisé. Plus l'instrument de communication a un niveau de réponse élevé, plus que le niveau d'implication d'utilisateur sera plus élevé. Nous observons une grande variété de moyens de communication, avec des caractéristiques qui facilitent l'interactivité et qui assurent aux utilisateurs une certaine liberté et même la possibilité de choisir l'instrument de communication qui répond au mieux à leurs attentes.

4. L'interactivité – perception humaine

Tandis que certains chercheurs interprètent l'interactivité comme fonction technique des moyens de communication et/ou d'information, d'autres soutiennent que l'interactivité est une dimension spécifique du processus de communication ou qu'elle peut être identifiée en fonction des perceptions des individus impliqués dans l'acte de communication.

Dans cette approche, l'interactivité n'existe pas comme processus, elle est plutôt le résultat de certaines variables qui s'amplifient réciproquement. Les trois éléments majeures sont la structure technologique (Kiousis, 2002, Steuer, 1992), le processus de communication (Kiousis, 2002, McMillan, 2002a, Rafaeli, 1988) et la perception des individus (Newhagen, 2004, Kiousis, 2002).

Dans cette perspective, la structure technologique est analysée du point de vue de la capacité technique du moyen de communication d'intercéder le dialogue. Pour les défenseurs de cette idée, les nouvelles technologies de communications et d'informations sont d'importance seulement s'il y a une interaction entre les personnes qui les utilisent. A partir des opérations possibles avec un moyen de communication, l'utilisateur peut décider du degré d'interactivité de ce moyen de communication. Ainsi, Kiousis (2002) soutient l'idée que le nombre d'actions possibles d'un moyen de communication est un indicateur d'interactivité de ce moyen. Toutefois, cet indicateur n'a du sens seulement si le processus de communication comprend deux ou plusieurs individus. Par conséquent, plus le moyen de communication peut effectuer des actions plus il est interactif. Autrement dit, pour Kiousis la communication interactive exige trois conditions : la nécessité d'avoir au moins deux participants; l'obligation d'avoir un milieu de communication qui peut intercéder l'interaction entre les deux individus; l'exigence d'avoir deux ou plusieurs utilisateurs en mesure de modifier le moyen de communication.

L'attention du Steuer s'est également focalisée sur les propriétés interactives du moyen de communication et sur les relations des utilisateurs avec celui-ci (1992). Le chercheur analyse l'interactivité en fonction du degré dans lequel les utilisateurs d'un moyen de communication

peuvent lui influencer la forme ou le contenu. La vitesse, l'amplitude et la représentation sont les caractéristiques techniques qui conduisent à l'interactivité mais uniquement s'ils sont entrepris par des individus (Steuer, 1992). Ces caractéristiques sont significatives uniquement si elles sont en lien avec l'acte de communication spécifique aux individus. La vitesse est déterminée par l'action instantanée d'un utilisateur sur le moyen, l'amplitude est établie par la modification des paramètres (son, couleur, intensité, brillant etc.) du même utilisateur et la représentation est la possibilité du système à appliquer son contrôle sur les changements effectués par l'utilisateur.

L'interactivité analysée de la perspective de l'acte de communication initié par individu, a comme point de départ le feed-back. Dans un article paru en 1988, Rafaeli a insisté sur l'importance du feedback dans le processus de communication, en définissant l'interactivité comme l'expression d'une série d'échange de messages, tout le troisième message transmis, étant en relation avec un message antérieur (Rafaeli, 1988 : 111). A la base de sa théorie sur l'interactivité se trouve l'histoire d'une conversation, et pour que l'interactivité soit maximum, il est nécessaire que les rôles des participants soient interchangeable. Il est besoin donc de l'implication des participants dans le processus de communication pour que l'interaction advienne et qu'on peut donc en discuter. En même direction s'inscrit l'approche du Kiouisis (2002). Le chercheur considère que les rôles d'émetteur et de récepteur peuvent être transférés entre participants. En plus, il est nécessaire une certaine confiance. Les participants peuvent être aussi des personnes que des machines, et ils peuvent actionner à la fois comme émetteurs et récepteurs, mais les individus doivent être capable dans une certaine mesure de manipuler le contenu, la forme et la vitesse d'environnement (Kiouisis, 2002: 368).

La liaison indissoluble entre individus et l'acte de communication qui a comme finalité l'interactivité est aussi étudiée par Sally J. McMillan. Dans ses recherches (2000, 2002), l'auteur analyse la relation directe entre les perceptions de l'individu, la direction de communication et le control sur l'expérience de communication (McMillan, 2000) qui ont comme résultat l'interactivité. Dans le processus de communication, la présence de chacun des trois branches varie comme intensité. Ainsi, en départ de cette idée, McMillan propose quatre modèles de communication – le feedback (model de communication bidirectionnel, avec un degré élevé de contrôle du récepteur, mais qui lui permet une participation limité dans le processus de communication), le monologue (modèle de communication unidirectionnelle, avec un faible niveau de contrôle de l'utilisateur, dans le quel l'émetteur envoie uniquement les messages), le dialogue sélective (le model bidirectionnelle dans lequel l'émetteur détient le contrôle sur le processus de communication, le niveau du contrôle de l'utilisateur étant faible) et le discours mutuel (model bidirectionnelle dans lequel le récepteur est le même avec celui qui détient le contrôle sur l'expérience de communication (McMillan, 2002 :278-279).

Dans la littérature de spécialité, l'interactivité est analysée de la perspective de mettre en relation les perceptions des utilisateurs (proximité, activité sensoriale, la perception de la vitesse), l'environnement technologique et les expériences de communication (comprissent comme des échanges de messages qui ont lieu par l'intermédiaire des moyens de communication) (Kiouisis, 2002 : 374), mais est aussi une état psychologique, qui souviennent à la suite des perceptions individuelles sur le processus de communication (Newhagen, 1995). Kiouisis définit l'interactivité comme « le degré dans lequel une technologie de communication peut créer un environnement dans lequel les participants peuvent communiquer (l'un a l'un, l'un à plusieurs et plusieurs à plusieurs), à la fois synchrone et asynchrone et participent également à un échange réciproque des messages » (Kiouisis, 2002 : 372), en temps que de la perspective

de Newhagen les aspects interactifs se subordonnent à l'état psychologique de l'individu impliqué dans la communication. En soutenant son idée, Newhagen propose dans l'année 1995 une étude réalisée après l'analyse des 650 des courriers électroniques reçus par l'intermédiaire de l'Internet, par la rédaction de NBC, d'où résulte que les buts intentionnés des messages envoyées par un public donné, peut refléter les attentes de leurs auteurs sur le degré d'interactivité d'entre eux et l'audience. Autrement dit, la perception du processus d'interaction avec une personne ou plusieurs, se reflète dans le but des messages transmises (Newhagen, 1995). De la perspective de cet auteur, l'interactivité est un processus qui a lieu dans l'intérieur de l'individu mais en même temps, pour résoudre l'ambiguïté de cet concept il suggère une délimitation entre les processus psychologiques du niveau micro de l'individu et ceux du niveau macro de la société (Newhagen, 2004, 395). Dans la vision de Newhagen l'interactivité et son corollaire, l'interaction sociale, se trouvent au centre du processus de communication. La communication humaine se préoccupe sur la signification qui dérive du contenu, signification transposée dans des symboles transmis par l'intermédiaire des certains objets physiques qui ont besoin d'énergie pour «bâtir» et «transporter» les messages. Ces objets fixes sont les nouvelles technologies de communication qui transfèrent les informations entre les individus.

5. La recherche empirique

Cette recherche a comme support l'analyse de contenu de 105 page web roumaines et elle est concentrée exclusivement sur l'étude de l'interactivité. Les pages web roumaines investiguées ont comme public clef les femmes et sont classifiées en trois catégories – femmes, santé et lifestyle. Pour obtenir des informations plus pertinentes j'ai analysé les premières 35 pages web de chaque catégorie, sélectionnée selon le classement réalisé par trafic.ro, un site roumain d'audit web. En ce qui concerne l'interactivité du moyen de communication j'ai étudié les aspects techniques qui favorisent l'interactivité, et dans le cas de l'interactivité comme dimension humaine j'ai essayé à identifier les aspects interactifs inséparables du processus de communication des individus.

L'analyse est fondée sur le schème de catégories qui a été établis à partir des sept indicateurs identifiés après l'analyses et l'interprétation des aspects théorétiques mis en évidence ci-dessous et en fonction de ma propre expérience avec divers outils interactifs offerts par les pages web. Chaque indicateur est le résultat d'un cumul des items (qui ont été aussi l'unité de compte), présents sur les pages web analysées et caractérisées par des caractéristiques similaires (Table 1). Egalement, chaque page web est analysée en fonction de la présence ou de l'absence des indicateurs établis et des variables subordonnés.

6. Les indicateurs d'interactivité

La personnalisation de la page web (des banner publicitaires qui font références aux autres pages web, page web personnalisé avec de la publicité, des informations utiles, des adresses utiles, programme tv, horoscope, le météo, magasin online) est un indicateur de l'interactivité du moyen de communication. Par cette variable nous avons analysé dans quelle mesure les pages web classées dans des catégories différentes, mais qui s'adresse à un public commun,

les femmes, offre à l'utilisateur la possibilité de choisir de même type d'informations. La communication est unidirectionnelle, le moyen de communication en permettant à l'utilisateur de sélectionner l'information de plusieurs sources, mais sans être en mesure d'apporter des changements. Dans les études de Neuman (1995) et de Heeter (2000) on retrouve cet indicateur sur le nom «sélectivité», et au Jensen (2003) «consultation». Pour Rafaeli (1988) ce type de communication s'encadre dans la catégorie de la communication non interactive, tandis que Bucy (2004) inclut «l'obtention des connaissances» au chapitre des effets positifs que la technologie a sur l'utilisateur.

Le deuxième indicateur se réfère au *contrôle exclusif de l'utilisateur* sur différentes options offertes par la page web (share/recommande/imprime/envoie par Y!M, bouton de recherche à l'intérieur/extérieur de site, option de redimensionnement du texte, option contraste de l'écran). Cet indicateur analyse la mesure dans laquelle un site offre à l'utilisateur la liberté de contrôler la communication et la navigation. L'utilisateur choisit la page à visualiser, la forme et surtout le temps attribués à cette action. Aussi, l'utilisateur a la possibilité d'envoyer le contenu dans l'espace virtuel.

Indicateur par excellence de l'interactivité humaine, on le retrouve dans les études et les recherches du McMillan sous la formulation «la possibilité de l'utilisateur de choisir le media désiré» (2002 : 273). Toutefois, «le degré de control du récepteur vers le processus de communication» représente l'une des deux dimensions identifiés par l'auteur dans le model proposé en 2002 qui permette l'exploration de l'interactivité, en termes de perception de ceux qui utilisent le site comme un outil de communication, et en termes de caractéristiques du site.

Pour McMillan, le control inclut également le control de la navigation du site et le control sous les choix (2002 : 45). Cet indicateur s'inscrit dans la communication de type quasi-interactive (Rafaeli, 1988) le processus de communication entre utilisateur et le moyen en se passant après la transmission d'un premier message.

Un autre indicateur qui souligne l'interactivité d'environnement est *la complexité sensorielle*, par laquelle on veut mesurer le degré dans lequel les pages web permettent à l'utilisateur des expériences sensorielles – (des facilites audio, des facilites vidéo, des photos, animation). Cet indicateur est considéré par Kiouisi l'un des attributs de la structure technologique du moyen de communication.

L'indicateur *l'implication sociale* – (chat, forum, communauté, blog, twitter, facebook, option commentaires articles, conseils/demande le spécialiste) signale l'interactivité humaine. Cet indicateur analyse le degré dans lequel l'utilisateur s'implique dans le processus de communication interpersonnelle par l'intermédiaire des instruments offerts par la page web. Pour Kiouisis, l'échange réciproque des messages et la présence sociale dépendent par ce qu'il appelle le contexte de la communication (2002 : 371), tandis que Neuman étudie cet concept de la perspective «de la direction de la communication», qu'il considère toutefois un critère de l'interactivité spécifique aux systèmes digitales avancés, qui offre la possibilité à tout utilisateur d'envoyer et/ou de recevoir des matériaux type texte, audio ou vidéo à l'intermédiaire de l'Internet (1995 : 2318). Dans l'approche multidimensionnelle proposée par Heeter parmi les six dimensions de l'interactivité, trois se réfèrent à l'implication sociale de l'utilisateur via le moyen de communication utilisé – habilité de surveiller l'information, la facilité d'ajouter de l'information et la médiation de la communication interpersonnelle (1989). Pour Jensen l'implication sociale se traduise par conversation, plus exactement la production et l'échange d'information par l'intermédiaire des systèmes vidéo de conférence, les groupes des nouvelles, les courriers électroniques et les bulletins informatifs.

L'indicateur *modalité d'abonnement au contenu du site* (bulletin d'information, *feeds* RSS), quantifie les possibilités que l'utilisateur peut recevoir les dernières nouvelles du contenu. L'utilisateur établit un certain type de relation avec la page web, maintenue par l'intermédiaire de la communication continue, manquant des syncopes temporelles. Indicateur de l'interactivité comme perception humaine, les modalités d'abonnement au contenu du site représentent une liaison entre l'individu et la page web, et la transmission constante des informations sur les nouvelles du site étant une sorte de «reminder» qui rappelle de l'existence de site.

Tableau 1. Le sommaire des indicateurs de l'interactivité.

Indicateur	Item	Type d'interactivité
1) Personnalisation page web	Banner publicitaire	Medium
	Site personnalisée avec de la publicité	Medium
	Informations utiles	Medium
	Adresses utiles	Medium
	Program TV	Medium
	Horoscope	Medium
	Météo	Medium
	Magasin online	Humaine
2) Le contrôle de l'utilisateur	Share/recommande/imprime/envoie par Y!M	Humaine
	Bouton de recherche à l'intérieur/extérieur de site	Medium
	Option de redimensionnement du texte	Medium
	Option contraste de l'écran	Medium
3) Complexité sensorielle	Facilités audio	Medium
	Facilités vidéo	Medium
	Photos	Medium
	Animation	Medium
4) Implication sociale	Chat	Humaine
	Forum	Humaine
	Communauté	Humaine
	Blog	Humaine
	Twitter	Humaine
	Facebook	Humaine
	Option commentaires articles	Humaine
	Conseils/ Demande le spécialiste	Humaine
5) Modalités d'abonnement au contenu du site	Newsletter	Medium
	Feed RSS	Medium
6) Divertissement	Jeux/test online	Humaine
	Concours	Humaine
7) Collection d'information sur l'utilisateur	Option authentification/enregistrement page personnelle	Medium
	Sondages	Medium

L'indicateur *divertissement* (jeux/testes online, concours) mesure la proportion dans laquelle les sites offrent aux utilisateurs des instruments de divertissement et de loisirs. C'est un indicateur qui signale la présence de l'interactivité comme perception humaine et qui fait appel à la disponibilité de l'utilisateur d'utiliser les outils disponibles pour passer un moment de plaisir.

En utilisant l'indicateur *la collection des informations sur l'utilisateur* (option d'authentification/ enregistrement page personnelle, sondages) nous nous avons proposé à déterminer en quelle mesure les pages web utilisent divers moyens de collecter des informations sur les utilisateurs constants. La possession d'une base des données avec des informations sur l'âge, les goûts, les préférences et les intérêts de ceux qui, invariablement, visualisent les sites analysés, permette aux administrateurs à continuer ou, au contraire, à effectuer des changements et à se replier sur ce que les utilisateurs considèrent intéressant et divertissant. McMillan considère également qu'«il est plus important de connaître l'audience d'une page web et de savoir ce que le public considère être interactive, que de construire un site de dernier mode, utile à personne» (McMillan, 2000a : 77).

7. Questions de recherche et l'interprétation des résultats de la recherche

Cette recherche est concentrée sur quelques questions qui essayent d'apprendre quel est le type d'interactivité qui prédomine sur les pages web analysées, quelles sont les variables avec la fréquence la plus élevée des sites analysés en termes de nombre des visiteurs, s'il y a une liaison entre la personnalisation de la page web et le nombre des visiteurs uniques et s'il y a une liaison entre le type d'interactivité et le nombre des visiteurs uniques?

Egalement, l'étude examine la validité de l'hypothèse suivante – si une page web a plusieurs éléments interactifs, le nombre des visiteurs sera plus grand.

Après l'analyse des 105 pages web les résultats sont les suivantes : l'interactivité du moyen de communication à une valeur de 61,51%, et l'interactivité interprétée comme perception humaine seulement 38,49%. Dans le cas de l'interactivité du moyen de communication, les pourcentages les plus élevés ont été obtenus par les variables «bouton recherche dans l'intérieur/extérieur du site» avec un pourcentage de 87,15%, «option authentification/enregistrement page personnelle» – 77,7% et «banner publicitaires» avec un pourcentage de 71,4%. J'ai identifié aussi des items qui ont enregistré des valeurs nulles, les variables «option contraste de l'écran» et «animation» enregistrant 0%. Dans le cas de l'interactivité interprétée comme perception humaine, les éléments qui ont enregistré les pourcentages les plus élevés sont «option commentaires articles» – 70,35%, «share/recommande/imprime/envoie par Y!M» – 67,2%, «forum» – 58,8%, tandis que les scores les plus bas ont enregistré, surprenant, justement les variables type application qui intercede le processus de communication – «chat» – 10,5%, «twitter» – 13,65%, «facebook» – 18,9%.

Parmi les sept indicateurs, seulement deux ont obtenu plus de 20% – «personnalisation page web», identifié en 26,2% des sites analyses et «implication sociale», identifié en 23,23% des cas. Ainsi, nous voyons que sur les sites étudiés prédomine «l'interactivité d'environnement», secondé de près à une différence de moins de 3%, par l'indicateur principal de l'interactivité humaine.

Les variables subsumées à l'indicateur prédominant ont obtenu les valeurs suivantes : «banner publicitaires» – 71,4%, «site personnalise avec de la publicité» – 25,2%, «informations utiles» – 53,5%, «adresses utiles» – 39,9%, «programme TV» – 8,4%, «horoscope» – 43,05%,

«météo» – 9,45%, «magasin online» – 23,1%. A leur tour, les éléments liés au second indicateur ont enregistré les pourcentages suivantes : «chat» – 10,5%, «forum» – 58,8%, «communauté» – 28,35%, «blog» – 23,10%, «twitter» – 13,65%, «facebook» – 18,9%, «option commentaires articles» – 70,35%, «conseils/demande le spécialiste» – 21%.

Les autres indicateurs ont obtenu des pourcentages en ordre décroissant : «le contrôle de l'utilisateur» – 15,35%, «collection informations sur l'utilisateur» – 10,07%, «modalités d'abonnement au contenu du site» – 9,57%, «complexité sensoriale» – 8,77% et «divertissement» – 6,68%.

Le nombre de visiteurs uniques par mois représente l'indicateur principal de la position du site dans le classement réalisé par trafic.ro. Dans le cas des sites analysés, le nombre varie d'environ 1 million de visiteurs uniques, à peu près de 12.000. Pour faciliter l'étude, nous avons choisi de regrouper les sites analysés dans deux catégories d'analyse. La première catégorie comprend des sites qui ont plus de 50.000 visiteurs uniques (27 sites) et les sites de deuxième catégorie qui sont sous 50.000 visiteurs (78 sites).

A la suite de l'analyse, les éléments qui ont la fréquence la plus élevée parmi les sites de plus de 50.000 visiteurs uniques sont «banner publicitaires» dans 80,11% des cas, «bouton de recherche à l'intérieur / l'extérieur du site» – 92, 33%, «forum» – 90,91%, «newsletters» – 84,66% «option commentaires articles» – 96,87%, «option authentification/enregistrement page personnelle» – 84,66%. Dans le cas des sites avec moins de 50.000 visiteurs, les mêmes éléments ont obtenu les résultats suivants: «banner publicitaires» – 58,97%, «bouton de recherche à l'intérieur / l'extérieur du site» – 74,36%, «forum» – 90,91%, «newsletters» – 43,59%”, «option commentaires articles» – 52,56%, «option authentification/enregistrement page personnelle» – 65,38%.

La fréquence des indicateurs énumérés au-dessus entre les sites de plus de 50.000 visiteurs, s'explique par le fait que le rôle principal du bouton de recherche est de rendre rentable le processus de la navigation d'utilisateur sur le site: l'information recherchée est trouvée rapidement et le visiteur est susceptible passer plus de temps sur le site, pour revenir et même le recommander. L'option page personnelle indique l'existence d'une communauté et souligne la possibilité que l'utilisateur puisse devenir un membre d'un groupe qui a des mêmes intérêts et préoccupations, discute des sujets qui l'intéresse et interagit virtuellement. A d'autre part, le grand nombre des banner publicitaires existant sur une page web peut être déterminé par les deux variables sous-mentionnées. Le nombre élevé de visiteurs uniques peut être la raison principale pour un volume élevé de la publicité.

Le nombre de visiteurs uniques par mois est aussi le principal indicateur de la position du site dans le classement réalisé par trafic.ro. Dans le cas des 105 sites analysés, le nombre de visiteurs uniques varie de 1 million à environ 12.000. Donc, pour l'échantillon considéré est une relation positive significative entre la personnalisation d'une page Web et le nombre de visiteurs uniques, à un niveau nettement inférieur à $p < 0,001$ ($r = 0,288$, $N = 105$, Sig. = 0,003, $p < 0,001$). Dans ce cas, l'hypothèse qui soutient qu'une page est plus personnalisée et a plus des links qui conduisent vers un contenu plus divers, plus le nombre de visiteurs uniques est plus grande, se confirme.

Dans le cas de la liaison entre la variable «le contrôle utilisateur» et «le nombre variable de visiteurs uniques» pour l'échantillon considéré nous avons une corrélation à un niveau nettement inférieur à $p < 0,05$ ($r = 0,247$, $N = 105$, Sig. = 0,011, $p < 0, 05$). En d'autres termes, il y a une faible liaison entre l'indicateur le contrôle de l'utilisateur et le nombre de visiteurs uniques, la dernière variable ne dépendant pas de la première. Dans ce cas, l'hypothèse

qui soutient que plus un site propose à l'utilisateur une plus grande capacité de contrôle, plus il a un grand nombre de visiteurs uniques, ne se soutient pas.

Entre l'indicateur «la complexité sensoriel» et le nombre de visiteurs uniques, pour l'échantillon considéré on ne peut pas déterminer une corrélation, puisque $p > 0,05$ ($r = 0,065$, $N = 105$, $\text{Sig.} = 0,511$). Le manque de corrélation entre les deux variables, met l'accent sur l'absence d'un lien de conditionnalité entre les deux. Pas même dans ce cas l'hypothèse «un site complexe sensoriel, n'implique pas une augmentation du nombre de visiteurs uniques», n'est pas confirmé.

Pour l'échantillon considéré, nous identifions une forte relation positive, à un niveau significativement plus faible de $p < 0,001$ entre la participation sociale et l'indicateur nombre de visiteurs uniques ($r = 0,488$, $N = 105$, $\text{Sig.} = 0,000$, $p < 0,001$). Cette liaison suggère que plus un site a plusieurs variables que signale l'engagement social, plus il a des visiteurs. La forte corrélation entre les deux variables confirme pleinement cette hypothèse.

Ni entre l'indicateur «moyens de souscrire au contenu du site» et le nombre de visiteurs uniques on ne peut pas établir une corrélation, puisque $p > 0,05$ ($r = 0,019$, $N = 105$, $\text{Sig.} = 0,851$). Ainsi l'absence d'un lien entre les deux variables ne confirme pas l'hypothèse, en soulignant que les moyens des souscrire au contenu du site, ne détermine pas le nombre de visiteurs uniques.

Pour l'échantillon considéré nous identifions une forte relation positive entre les sources de divertissement disponibles sur le site et le nombre de visiteurs uniques, à un niveau nettement inférieur à $p < 0,01$ ($r = 0,326$, $N = 105$, $\text{Sig.} = 0,001$, $p < 0,001$). Cette forte corrélation indique un lien direct entre les deux variables et confirme en même temps l'hypothèse que soutient que, plus qu'une page web a de nombreuses sources de divertissement que les utilisateurs peuvent accéder, plus augmente le nombre de visiteurs.

On ne trouve pas aucun lien ni entre l'indicateur «collecte d'informations sur utilisateur» et le nombre de visiteurs uniques depuis que $p > 0,05$ ($r = 0,159$, $N = 105$, $\text{Sig.} = 0,106$). Les données obtenues montrent que le nombre de visiteurs d'un site dépend des options pour la collecte des informations fournies par les administrateurs du site, ce fait ne confirmant pas ni l'hypothèse «Plus qu'il a plusieurs options de collecte d'informations sur l'utilisateur, plus est plus grande le nombre des visiteurs uniques».

Les résultats montrent clairement qu'il n'y a pas une liaison forte entre l'interactivité de l'environnement (comme type d'interactivité dominante) et le nombre de visiteurs. À l'appui de cette observation il y a trois indicateurs de l'environnement – «complexité sensorielle», «les moyens de s'abonner au contenu du site Web» et «la collecte des informations sur l'utilisateur» qui ne se trouvent pas dans une aucune corrélation avec l'indicateur «nombre de visiteurs» auquel nous avons rapporté toutes les variables. Les deux autres indicateurs – «personnalisations du site» et «contrôle utilisateur» ne se trouvent pas en relation parfaite avec la variable centrale. Quant aux indicateurs d'interactivité comme perception humaine – «la participation sociale» et de «divertissement» sont en relation presque parfaite avec l'indicateur auquel nous avons rapporté l'analyse. Les résultats montrent que les variables subsumées aux deux indicateurs sont largement utilisés dans l'architecture donnant naissance à un site, mais sans déterminer le nombre des visiteurs. En d'autres termes, il n'est pas impératif nécessaire que le site qui a un grand nombre de fonctions interactives, doit bénéficier d'un grand nombre de visiteurs uniques.

8. Conclusions

L'interactivité des sites Web est un sujet qui provoque de nombreuses discussions et interprétations. Cette recherche n'a pas proposé de résoudre la controverse entre les chercheurs qui considèrent l'interactivité comme un attribut d'une technologie web et ceux qui croient qu'elle se réduit plutôt aux perceptions des utilisateurs. Cette étude a visé d'établir la prépondérance d'un certain type d'interactivité, ainsi qu'un lien entre le degré d'interactivité et le nombre de visiteurs uniques, en d'autres termes, a cherché à déterminer si les visites répétées du même utilisateur sur le même site sont déterminées par le niveau d'interactivité ou pour d'autres raisons comme par exemple du contenu. La recherche n'est pas destinée à être exhaustive et se limite exclusivement aux 105 sites analysés.

Ainsi, à la suite de la recherche, notre étude montre que, globalement, sur les sites examinés, prédominent les variables qui indiquent l'interaction d'environnement de communication. Ainsi, quel que soit le nombre des visiteurs, nous avons identifié sur plusieurs sites plus des variables d'interactivité de l'environnement, que des variables qui suggèrent l'interactivité comme perception humaine.

Dans le cas de la défalcation des pages web en fonction du nombre d'utilisateurs on ne voit pas l'existence d'un lien entre la prédominance d'un certain type d'interactivité et le nombre d'utilisateurs. Sur les sites qui ont plus de 50.000 visiteurs, on n'a pas identifié une fréquence plus élevée des indicateurs environnementaux, que sur les sites qui ont moins de 50.000 visiteurs. La même observation s'applique à l'interactivité comme perception humaine.

En échange, les variables avec la présence la plus répétée sont ceux qui permettent l'enregistrement de l'utilisateur dans une communauté, respectif ceux qui lui permettent d'accéder à diverses informations, et dans cette catégorie couvrent notamment des bulletins ou des forums. Par conséquent, note avec surprise que les variables qui facilitent l'accès et la diffusion de l'information sont celles qui prévalent au détriment des variables qui sont l'intermédiaire du dialogue. D'autre part, dans le cas des sites avec plus de 50.000 visiteurs, à l'exception des deux variables «régler contraste» et «animation» qu'on ne les trouvent sur aucun site quelle que soit sa position dans le classement, les autres variables sont toutes présentes en divers pourcentages. Egalement, ni le degré d'interactivité des sites analysent ne se diminue pas en même temps avec le nombre des visiteurs; on peut même identifier des sites avec seulement quelques visiteurs, mais sur lesquelles on constate la présence de la plupart des variables interrogées.

On peut donc dire que les attributs de l'interactivité sont une condition nécessaire, mais non suffisante pour qu'un site ait un grand nombre de visiteurs uniques, ce qui peut lui assurer une bonne place dans un classement officiel. Pour cette raison, de mon point de vue, le nombre de visiteurs est plutôt subordonné à la qualité et la quantité du contenu existant, ce qui explique aussi la différence entre le nombre de visiteurs uniques et la présence des indicateurs d'interactivité, sur les sites avec moins de 50.000 visiteurs. Dans le cas des pages web analysées, les utilisateurs recherchent l'utilité, ils sont intéressés plutôt au contenu diversifié et à la qualité ou aux informations utiles exprimées dans un langage accessible, mis à jour aussi souvent que possible, et moins par les aspects interactives.

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Women's Voices in Organizational Life in Romania. Using Interpersonal Skills to Lead

Abstract

Using fifteen in-depth interviews with women in top and middle management positions from Romanian private organizations, we argue about their leadership style and the impression management strategies they use in order to maintain legitimacy and to get social validation. Subjects' behavior as leaders was closer to transformational leadership style but the need to control – typical for transactional leadership – was shared by the participants. Additionally, we suggest a dramaturgical approach to underline their different stages of adjustment to the organizations they become part of. Results show that women are less willing to share the management responsibilities with a man, as a strategy to avoid delegitimization and lack of authority, and they use mixed anchors – personal and professional when leading.

Keywords: transformational leadership style, leadership effectiveness, impression management strategies, legitimacy

1. Introduction

Traditionally, women were seen as incapable to lead; they were perceived as having fewer qualities of leadership that were required, as being unpredictable, highly emotional and not strong enough to carry business responsibilities and undertake risks. Two years ago we witnessed the local election process in a small Romanian village, far away from urban civilization. The population was mainly over sixty and deeply embedded in ancient prejudices about the role of woman in society. It was the first time they had a woman candidate for the City Hall, running against the former mayor, obviously male. She had a new approach of interacting with people during the election campaign, by going door-to-door and trying to solve some of their daily problems including shopping for the elderly or supporting community meetings. Eventually she became extremely popular but on the Election Day only three people actually voted for her. In the end she was not considered able to occupy a formal leadership position in the community.

However, recent research on gender and leadership (see Shrader, Blackburn & Iles, 1997) argues that women are better adjusted to new leadership styles, which are not based anymore on command and control, but on social influence, collaboration and mentoring. Meta-analytic research (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2003) indicates that women are more

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democratic leaders, using empathy and social skills to persuade people to work for the organization's purposes. As recent scholars argue (Kanter, 1997; Antonakis, Avolio & Sivasubramanian, 2003), contemporary organizations are looking for a change in leadership style from the conventional *transactional leadership*, based on rewarding the achievements of the subordinates and punishing them when failing to fulfill the goals, to *transformational leadership* which "involves establishing oneself as a role model by gaining followers' trust and confidence" (Eagly, 2007: 2). Transformational leadership is seen as interactions between the leader and the led in which they "raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality" (Kouzes & Posner, 2002: 153). This new leadership style has been more effective in empowering and motivating the subordinates, especially in a global corporate world, where we face the technology growth, the diversity of labor force and an increased organizational interdependence and competitiveness. In other words, collaboration and nurturance are the attributes of transformational leadership as opposed to power and control assumed by transactional style (Robinson & Lipman-Blumen, 2003). Transformational leadership style, as described by Alice Eagly (2007: 3) refers to four components: *influence, motivation, intellectual stimulation and mentoring*. Good leadership is defined by proven qualities that inspire, motivate and make others proud, continuously communicating the purpose and the values of the organizations, being optimistic about the future, passionate and excited, being creative and liking to be intellectually challenged and being focused on others' needs and their willing to develop.

Researchers conducted by Eagly and collaborators (2003, 2007) proved that women share more transformational leadership style than their peer males who manifest more transactional leadership characteristics. However those studies are based on subjects' self-evaluation and one can wonder if indeed women are more effective than men when applying such leadership style in their organizations. We can answer such question by looking at financial performances comparatively within companies ruled by women respectively by men. Studies conducted in US and UK and Canada (Catalyst, 2004; Krishnan & Park, 2005) found that companies with higher percentage of women in the top management groups had better financial performance.

Another way to evaluate women's leadership effectiveness is by making appeal to their peers, subordinates or superiors' evaluations, even though they are subjectively biased. Those evaluations could be important because the meaning of leadership is to be accepted and inspire the groups of people you are working with. Meta-analytic studies (Carli, 1999, Eagly & Karau, 2002) showed that male leadership was more effectively evaluated than women leadership in roles and domains that are culturally defined as masculine, whereas women leaders were better evaluated in domains that are culturally defined as feminine or less masculine (human resources management, medical care, public relations). Women were consistently better evaluated in middle management positions relative to men, positions which actually require highly cooperative abilities and interpersonal skills women are perceived to be good at. Finding themselves in highly masculine domains, women could be confronted with criticisms that they lack the competitiveness and toughness, firmness and decisiveness in order to succeed (Silvestri, 2003). We believe that not only women leadership evaluations by peers, subordinates and superiors are highly biased in those domains defined by men, but women could perform less effectively as a result of being constantly under evaluation. The role of stereotype in defining the people's actual behavior has been recently researched in the social psychology literature, being called *stereotype threat* (Steele & Aronson, 1995; Seibt & Forster, 2004) – people performed significantly worse when negative stereotypes were activated in areas which are

relevant to them and women scored significantly lower on tasks they were perceived as being less effective than men, when the environment sent them indicators of evaluation and criticism according to negative stereotypes. Therefore, in such masculine defined areas we could find women who try to undertake more masculine roles and masculine approaches in order to avoid stereotype and gain credibility. They would eventually appeal to more transactional leadership strategies by showing a more directive approach and tendency to control others. However, women who are acting as assertive and controlling leaders in the absence of external validation are likely to meet social disapproval (Ridgeway, 2001). We believe that it is extremely difficult for a woman in a leadership position within a masculine defined area to get external validation especially in mixed leadership groups. Not only that men will tend to assume leadership in mixed sex groups, but they will also “work together to reinforce those gender based roles” (Bowles & McGinn, 2005: 193). In masculine defined areas, in order to lead, women will eventually choose to eliminate males to get external validation and they will lead following their own rules, and will tend to adopt a distinct leadership style. Thus, the preference for a new transformational leadership style is explained not only by their willingness to be different in order to get social validation but also by the fact that generally speaking, women who violate the norms associated with females, such as niceness and cooperation, are being sanctioned (Bowles & McGinn, 2005). The stereotypes tell us what behaviors to be expected and we tend to sanction the situations that contradict them. Thus, men are expected to be assertive, directive and forceful, while women are expected to be responsive, attentive to others, nurturing and kind (Ridgeway, 2001).

Researchers (Johnson, Fastula, Hysom & Khanna, 2006) have already proved that delegitimization of female leaders may trigger the relevance in gender stereotypes and the fact that “legitimacy is one key factor in predicting success of female (and male) leaders with their subordinates” (2006: 119), being accompanied by favorable evaluations by the subordinates. It seems more important for women than for men to get legitimate authority (Sellers, 2003; Johnson *et al* 2006) and the effects of delegitimization are more powerful for women. In this context, women will develop strategies to legitimate themselves especially in male dominated organizations, including the elimination of possible male candidates or playing by different leadership rules.

2. Methodology

We analyze audiotape and transcribed in-depth interviews with fifteen women having middle or top management positions in the Romanian private sector. Each of the women has been in the leading position for more than seven years and thirteen of them have been managers in more than one company. Seven of the interviewees activated in the culturally defined, masculine sector (phone and internet, financial businesses, respectively car industry), while the others were leading in sectors culturally defined as more feminine (publishing, education, human resource, health services). We use pseudonyms to protect the identities of the participants. The research is part of a larger project that includes also women from the public sector and especially public education management, where women are constantly underrepresented.

To discover more about how women depict themselves as leaders within the organization environment, in which way they look for legitimacy and what kind of leadership style they approach, a dramaturgical paradigm was employed and we were focused on the way subjects

create meanings of their own experience. Social dramaturgical approach, suggested by Goffman (1959) is focused on the way individuals present themselves in daily interactions influenced by the encounters and the need for maintaining a positive self-image. He claimed that social interactions are ruled by a system of role prescriptions, culturally defined and performed by individuals, in order to achieve efficiency in communication and to get legitimacy. The individuals are seen as performers using 'offered face' to create the impressions they want on the others (1959: 30). By 'face' Goffman meant subject's self-image in terms of social approval, the way individuals wanted to be socially valued and all the management impression strategies they are developing to meet social validation. He also distinguishes the 'given face' – the aspects that lack individual control and contribute also to the first impressions, because those 'involuntary' behaviors are given significance by the encounters in the interaction. When we use the term 'impression management', in goffmanian terms, we actually refer to the whole array of techniques and strategies used by the 'performer' to present himself/herself favorably and to be sure that the 'offered face' is consistent with the 'given face'. Thus, the social actor – becoming a performer on the social stage – will eventually aim at influencing others through interactions, so that they have a similar definition of the situation.

We believe that social dramaturgical theory, issued by Goffman, is useful in our particular research because we are trying to reveal aspects of transformational leadership in the way interviewees describe their leading actions, the strategies they are using to gain legitimacy and authority within the organizations and the way they are presenting and maintaining a positive self-image in interactions with others (men/women, subordinates/superiors, clients/partners). Furthermore, we are willing to depict the possible prejudices subjects are confronted with and the way they make sense of them, when we compare masculine defined domains with feminine defined ones.

Goffman (1959, 1969) talked about 'stages' where individual performers are playing their roles and are getting social validation and similarly, one can talk about 'organizational stage' where women and men are playing their leadership role, using management impression strategies to succeed.

3. Findings

Once a person occupies a management position, her behavior with shape automatically according to the role expectancy. This is probably why studies concerning leadership style (Eagly, Johannesen-Schmidt & van Engen, 2003; Antonakis *et al.*, 2004; Hyde, 2005) have produced contradictory results, proving differences between female managers and male managers in some research, and less differences in others (see Eagly, 2007). We believe that this is mainly due to the extensive use of scales and questionnaires to assess subjects' leadership styles which can not reveal women in interaction and the meaning they give to their strategies. However, several recent studies addressed those limits (Eddy & Cox, 2008) and use structured and in-depth interviews, but they were mainly focused on women in the educational environment or community college education. Feminine leadership in private sector was primarily analyzed (Coughlin, Wingard & Hollaihan, 2003) when scholars addressed the question of women leaders' successful stories. In this context, we believe that a dramaturgical approach could be an alternative to research on leadership style, especially when willing to discuss about patterns of interactions and ways to get legitimacy as the present research is

trying to do. Thus, in terms of role-playing, leadership positions require similar expectations but, above this, “leaders have some freedom to choose the particular ways they fulfill their roles [...]. Most leadership roles afford considerable discretion in certain directions – for example, to be friendly or more remote, to mentor or to pay little attention to subordinates, and so forth. Female-male differences in leadership behavior are most likely to occur in these discretionary aspects of leadership that are not closely regulated by leader roles” (Eddy & Cox, 2008: 4). As Goffman (1959: 55) also pointed out, when an individual undertakes a particular role he finds out that a peculiar ‘face’ has been already attributed to it and even when he wants to change the perspective to play a new role, he will eventually understand that there have already been established some available ‘faces’ he can choose from.

The way women are playing their leadership roles is particularly interesting because they face a double bind: they are expected to accommodate the conflicting demands of their roles as women and their roles as managers, they are expected to be both communal and agentic and this is difficult to accommodate on the organizational stage. It becomes interesting to analyze the way they perform such a conflicting role especially in the private sector, which is highly dynamic and competitive.

Following the dramaturgical approach we also depict some of the ‘stages’ which are particularly relevant for women when playing their leadership role within the organizations: offices, organization’s board and committees, cafeteria, the organization annual party. Our interviewees have actually mentioned those moments as relevant and the management impression strategies used marked their specificity. Besides *stages*, we can also talk about *moments* of leadership role playing: the moment of appointment, when the leader got the formal position, the moment of revolt and challenge, the moment of achieving success, when we can actually talk about *mature leadership* and maintenance moment, characterized by routine. One particular moment – motherhood experience – was constantly mentioned during the leadership role played, and the women we interviewed have mixed anchors of their careers both professionally and personally related. They mix their motherhood stories with the relevant moments of their career proving that we should not separate the leadership style they approach from their experience of becoming pregnant, giving birth and respectively raising children.

Being appointed. As the women we interviewed described the moment they first became managers, they used words as ‘recognition’ of their merits signaling that in such cases they were actually validated by the person who appointed them and their leadership skills were ‘finally’ recognized. Six of them, in both masculine and feminine defined sectors, mentioned in detail the moment they were first officially named either ‘managers’ of a department or of the entire company, either country managers, in case of corporations, proving that such a moment could be considered a ‘flash memory’ and it is highly emotional. Moreover, they referred to the quality and the prestige of the person who appointed them and the way he made the announcement, public recognition making them particularly proud. “I was 24 maybe 25 years of age and I was appointed advertiser manager and, most probably in the foreseeable future I was about to be recommended as a possible CEO. I felt honored. It was N... (*a famous Romanian journalist*) who appointed me and everyone knew him from TV. Plus, I was coming from Transylvania (*outside Bucharest*). I was especially honored when N... actually called me, so I didn’t apply myself for the job. Even later on, when I had already left the company, he got informed about my professional situation and he offered me a better position, for more money. Some people said because I was young and beautiful, that is why he called me, but I couldn’t think like this about myself at that time and then, he was an old

man, I don't think he had other reasons" (Mary, country manager of a British owned publishing company).

It seems like women leaders, especially young ones, when they are first 'named' in management positions, feel fully validated when appointed by a famous or at least well known figure that publicly admits their merits. Such a situation gives them trust and legitimacy in the eyes of others. They all wanted to be sure that the person who appointed them did not have any other reason than competence and merits. Any possible alternative explanation for their appointment made them especially stressed because they found themselves under the stereotype threat. That is why they mentioned three important validation acts: the prestige of the person who appoints, the fact that the job 'was offered to them and they were not asking for it, the public announcement of their gained position, which made them 'especially proud'.

"I was extremely proud. I was 26 to 27 years of age and I as 'named' manager not by a simple paper, as they usually do, but in a general meeting and he (*it is about a well known media producer*) announced it. I felt extremely proud but I expected this to happen – I had already done a lot of good things and I could have done more than those appointed before me. Actually their previous work revolted me. The company, which previously was non-profitable started to have 3 to 4 million \$ profit. But if he hadn't appointed me after that, I would have felt de-motivated and I would have probably left. I didn't have to prove anything to anybody because I was very well educated, I had finished my MBA studies and then A... (*the media producer*) appointed me and he was a very important person and people in the company practically worshiped him" (Maia, manager, phone company).

Women feel this appointment as in strict relation to their performances, the education they have been previously followed and their involvement in the organization and they will feel extremely frustrated, at this moment of their career, if the appointment does not follow the pattern they think they deserve.

Revolt and Challenge. Since all the women in the study were between 35 and 45, they have 7 to 12 years of management experience, being in leadership positions in more than one company. Some of them chose to move from an organizational environment to another looking for the 'organization that suits them'.

"I was looking for a break after a long period of working in a highly relational organizational environment, where the decisions were always taken by considering relationships and for one rule there were many exceptions and they lost a lot of time dealing with exceptions rather than dealing with rules. Here (*she talks about the company she moved to – a multinational, financial services company*) we had some very clear rules to follow, we had more contractual relationships, we were colleagues but not necessary close to each other, but we had business relationships" (Ana, human resource manager in a multinational financial services company).

Although looking for establishing relations in the companies they are working for, women seemed more in favor of fixed contractual rules, establishing procedures in order to evaluate peers, subordinates, superiors and they found uncomfortable within the organizational environments where rules were not defined in detail and the procedures were vague. It could be the fact that they tend to measure their performances against mutually agreed and well known standards so that they can validate their potential and strengthen their leadership positions. Surprisingly, the majority of women from our sample talk about their need to 'control things' and to act in organizational environments that suit them, also in a way they can easily control. The need to control, typical for the transactional leadership, is shared by the women we have

interviewed, even though the need to command – also associated to transactional style – has not been depicted.

“I left because I didn’t like the environment (*she talks about a large media group*) because I am always looking for change and I like to be myself the one who produces the change and who influences the people. This company was too large and too static. And then it seems like a public company, very old style. I moved to a smaller one; it suits me, I can control things” (Mary, country manager of a British owned publishing company).

Their need to control, especial in highly responsible positions (including the situations where the woman is one of the associates) could be also related to a preventive style of leadership in order to avoid the failure. Being continuously under microscope, women tend to develop more control keys in order to avoid subordinates’ mistakes. They could act more like entrepreneurs than managers and such entrepreneurial approach is closer to the way transformational leadership has been defined.

“Now, as a co-founder of the company, the responsibility and the involvement are higher. But I had the tendency to act as an entrepreneur also when I was manager to the other company. This is something typical for me. I want to be minutely involved in everything. A manager would say: Ok, I have people who are in charge of the departments, they are responsible, they will come and report their activity to me and I will give them some guidelines. A manager sees everything from above. I am not like this, I go inside, I check things, I want to see if the department managers are doing their jobs, I don’t want to end up saying: ‘it is not my job – you are responsible’, I act preventively and there were several situations that I saved only by being more preoccupied, careful and getting into details” (Oana, co-founder of an internet and phone company).

Willing to get legitimacy, women will hardly accept or feel comfortable in companies where they have to share their management positions with men. They will try either to look for the opportunities in companies where they can develop as unique leaders, or to undermine men’s authority. In a way, this strategy is meant to protect themselves especially in masculine defined domains, against the possibility of losing respect and credibility.

“If I had been associated with my husband in this firm or there had been another man in a similar position to mine, people would have said: ‘it is just a blonde woman doing something there’, but because there is no man in charge of the company, it is easier. I strongly believe that if there had been mixed management, I would have been in disadvantage. Actually, in the beginning, when the other partner (*from abroad*) was around there were moments when he got all the attention, although officially he was my subordinate. Some clients tended to address him rather than me, and that I didn’t like” (Oana, co-founder of an internet and phone company).

“In the beginning the company was ruled by a man. He was extremely misogynistic and he hired me as deputy manager just because he was not able to do the job. Later he was fired and the owner of the company nowadays says about him: the only good thing he actually did was to hire you” (Alina, manager, advertising company).

Maturity. All the interviewed women described the way they learned being leaders. Negotiating with others, signing contracts, and daily working interactions involved different impression management strategies, starting with the way they dress or the way they discovered the valid dressing code, and ending with the way they manage to signal their presence in leading committees. Talking about dressing codes and strategies to validate themselves as businesswomen, we noticed a tendency to use masculine artifacts in order to present themselves

as firm, serious, professional. Different patterns of dressing when meeting other businesswomen emerged comparative to the situation in which they met businessmen. Some of them even talk about strategies to hide their beauty or make them ugly when preparing for a meeting with a businesswoman and more talked about using less opulent items in such situations.

"I always think about what I should dress, a night before the meeting. I put on makeup because I do this even when I take the garbage out of the house and I follow a fixed pattern: I dress in black and white for the important meetings, with a coat and sometimes I also put on a tie. I don't know if I do this to look stronger than a man or I do it just instinctively. Sometimes I use a scarf, I like scarves a lot, but maybe they are some kind of replacement for the tie, aren't they? When I have to meet a businesswoman and I don't know her well I dress modestly and I put on less makeup, I don't take expensive bags, I am very careful. When I meet a man it doesn't matter if I dress expensively or modestly because they never notice but I want to inspire sobriety: shirts or blouses, buttoned up. However it depends on the role I want to play. If want to play the role of a very important person from a very important company I dress very expensively with famous brands and in other situations I dress modestly because I don't want women I meet with to envy me, I don't risk losing a contract because I wear a nicer bag" (Maia, manager, phone company).

"When I was appointed in the board, a colleague of mine (*man*) taught me what I should do. He used to say: 'black and bleu-marine and rarely gray – do you understand?' After I was invited to a national conference I understood I looked like a peacock in the middle of penguins, and I didn't want to be a penguin but in the end I thought I will not change inside if I change the way I dress so, when I got my paycheck, I bought black and bleu-marine suits with most of the money" (Ana, human resource manager in a multinational financial services company).

Being a motherly leader. Eventually all women are looking back to the progress they have made from the moment they were appointed managers to the current stage. Their stories are mixing personal elements: giving birth to children, marrying and getting a divorce to professional life elements. They are using words like 'home' and 'children' to describe the companies they are working for, or their subordinates and they are constantly comparing their experience as mothers with their experience as managers. While looking back at their stories they refined their negotiation style.

"At that time (*when she was newly appointed*) I just worked very much and I didn't care so much about the impression I made on others. I just gave all my best to it. When I remember that time there is only one thing coming back to me: tiredness, physical but not psychic tiredness. I don't know from where I had so much ambition. Now I am paying more attention to the impression I make on others and the fact that I have to get credibility for the organization I represent" (Maia, manager, phone company).

"I signed as co-founder of the company on the day before I gave birth. When looking back now, I felt like I was crazy and I didn't know what would come after. I just knew that I had to do this: to give birth and continue with the company" (Oana, co-founder of an internet and phone company).

"You work like crazy and then one day you are looking back and you are close to forty and there is nothing near you and you try faster to build something in your personal life" (Mary, country manager of a British owned publishing company).

We can talk about motherly leadership developed by some of those women who are treating organizations as their own responsibility, similar to raising children. Their involvement

could be a potential factor of their success. They also reported using discussions about children in negotiating contracts or reducing others' toughness.

4. Conclusion

This research has examined women as good examples of transformational leadership style, prepared to manage the companies they are working for in the way they would manage their personal life; using empathy and social skills to influence others. They report mentoring subordinates in a similar way to how they try to be role models for their children and elements of their family lives were constantly brought into discussion when they talked about the way the lead within organizations. Contrary to our expectations, the subjects we interviewed seemed to be more inclined to control but not necessarily to command. They wanted to be involved in detail in the organizational life and less willing to let others take the responsibility instead. Even though they reported getting along well with male peers, they have difficulties in accepting a shared management position, because in such a situation they could be at a disadvantage and they will lose the authority.

Different impression management strategies were described when women leaders negotiate with women, respectively with men. Generally speaking, they tend to appeal to masculine features in order to inspire sobriety and strength and they use more complex strategies of presenting themselves when negotiating with women: trying to analyze more the way they dressed and, in some situations, even use some artifacts to create ugliness.

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Coping Strategies and Communication: A Qualitative Exploratory Study of Children with Parents Suffering from Acute Central Nervous System Injury

Abstract

The purpose of this qualitative study of children having one of the parents affected by a severe central nervous system injury is to explore the role of communication within the children's coping process, to identify certain patterns of coping and to investigate how these may differ depending on the age of the children. We therefore analyzed 32 counseling sessions with 8 children (4 sessions for each child), from 8 separate families. Three of the children were about 12 years old, while the rest ranged from 14 to 17. The counseling session took place during a five months period, as it follows: a week after the injury occurred, one month later, three months later and five months later. The analysis led us to identify certain coping strategies such as wishful thinking, resignation, distraction or seeking social support. The research is even more important as the studies on the subject are nearly inexistent and it is focused on a category of utmost value – children.

Keywords: children, communication, coping, qualitative study, somatically ill parents

1. Introduction

The notion of coping captures, in essence, an individual's ability to manage their behavior, emotions and motivational level under stress circumstances (Schulman, 1993, Cummings *et al.*, 1989). Lazarus and Launier (1978) ascribe to the coping ability those efforts directed either towards action or towards intra-psychic, to manage (including reducing, minimizing, tolerating of) the conflicts an individual is facing in his internal or external environment. In children, this skill helps in achieving a dose of control, satisfaction and ensuring self-content (Rothenberg, 1971). In adolescents, an efficient coping reinforces one's self confidence and autonomy (Aronson, 1986, in Rollin *et al.*, 2000).

In situations when a parent is suffering from acute central nervous system injury, the inner and outer world of the child becomes troubled and stress levels increase considerably. The new realities include: physical vulnerability and alteration of the parent behavior, a change in the quality of intra-familial relationships and also in the level and distribution of household tasks, an unsatisfying fulfillment of emotional and social needs of the child, the lack of communication about the illness or in some cases the use of so called "conspiracy of silence" in order to protect the children of potentially harmful information. Beside these issues, specific

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aspects are perceived as overwhelming by the child, due to his age and cognitive development (as an example, we have the need for autonomy in adolescents). To integrate and balance the varied range of emotions associated with this new life situation, children will approach various strategies of coping, directed either towards managing their inner world, or towards solving practical problems.

Studies on children with a parent suffering of somatic illness (Worsham, Compas & Sydney, 1997, in Romer *et al.*, 2002) identified certain coping styles characteristic for different age groups. While young children enhance their dependence on the healthy parent, adolescents resort to emotional and social support offered by friends, or to what is called *avoidant coping*, or adaptation by avoidance. Kidcope, the instrument that assesses coping strategies in children between 7 and 17 years, operationalizes avoidance strategies by: distraction, withdrawal or social isolation, wishful thinking and resignation (Spirito & Overholser, 2003). Another instrument, the Self-Report Coping Survey (Causey & Dubow, 1992, Spirito & Overholser, 2003) lists *distancing* (to avoid thinking about the situation) and *internalising* (anxious response to the situation and self-closure), in contrast with closeness: the search for social support and problem solving.

In a study investigating the child's use of coping, Compas *et al.* (1996) examined coping appraisals and coping strategies in 134 children, adolescents and young adults using semi-structured interviews. After the participants had described the ways they had coped with their parent's disease, they were provided with definitions of emotion-focused coping ('trying to deal with their feeling about their parent's illness'), problem-focused coping ('trying to change or doing something about their parent's illness'), and dual-focused coping ('trying to accomplish both of the goals'), and then asked to classify their intention to use of each coping strategy. They found that use of emotion-focused coping was related to more emotional stress and more avoidance of thoughts about their parent's cancer, and that children with parents with cancer have little opportunity to experience a sense of control. Family factors found to be protective for children and adolescents have been open communication, adaptability, cohesion, expressiveness and less conflict. Risk factors were conflict in the family and delegating too much responsibility to the child (Edwards & Clarke, 2004; Grant & Compas, 1995; Harris & Zakowski, 2003; Howes *et al.*, 1994).

Christ *et al.* (1993, 1994, in Romer *et al.*, 2002) shows that school children tend to develop clinical symptoms (somatization, sleep disturbance, weakness of concentration, with obvious repercussions in school activities), while adolescents show a more mature pattern of empathizing with the sick parent, since they are more capable to understand the disease than the small ones.

Compas *et al.*, in 1996 (in Thastum *et al.*, 2008), found that in children of parents with cancer, the coping styles focused on regulating emotions increase with age. A certain variable that studies take into account (Perez, 1997) in attributing individual coping strategies is gender. Girls seem to prefer emotional balance and social support, being educated to seek the support of others and to admit and communicate their own feelings. Boys, on the contrary, are raised in the spirit of withdrawal, accustomed to not needing help, but solving their own problems. Therefore they resort more often to cognitive restructuring, including in facing a parent's severe illness.

2. Objectives of the Study

The level of illness-related information provided to the child, family communication patterns, and the amount and quality of social support available are considered as important moderators influencing the ways in which the child is affected by parent illness (Lewandowski, 1992). The present research aims to explore in depth how children cope with a parent's illness, whether there are certain coping strategies, the communication role in the process and how those strategies differ from one child to another, depending on age. Many quantitative studies provide relevant data in the design of therapeutic interventions, but their effective implementation requires prior in-depth exploration of the psyche of the children involved. The limited amount of research for parents with acute CNS affections urges this commitment.

3. Methodology

The present study is part of the international research project – Children of Somatically Ill Parents (COSIP), funded by the European Union. In Romania, the neurosurgery clinic of the Emergency Hospital “Dr. Bagdasar” was the one where all hospitalized cases were monitored for a 12 month-period. Those that meet the inclusion criteria were selected. The analyzed data comes from eight children of different families, monitored over six months, benefiting from four counseling sessions distributed as follows: a week after the parent's accident, one month later, 3 and 5 months respectively. Three of the children were around the age of 12, the ages of the remaining five varying between 14 and 17. The study includes four girls and five boys. In three of the cases, the affected parent is the mother, while the remaining five involve the father.

Having to choose between the vastness and depth of the analysis (Flick, 1999), we aimed to a middle path. We preferred a few cases and tried to capture as deeply as possible the differences and symmetries between the coping strategies of the two age groups: 12 and 14 to 17. Qualitative methods are particularly valuable in providing indepth understanding of the experience and appraisals of the individual family members, as well as providing means to consider the complex interplay of interpersonal interactions within the family (Krahn & Eisert, 2000).

All counseling sessions were recorded and transcribed (without altering or reformulating the conversations). Data were analyzed a method based on the interpretative phenomenological analysis method (Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). We did not intend to test hypotheses and generalize the results. Instead, we aimed at exploring in depth the processes of adapting and internal restructuring of the child, when the parent suffers from a central nervous system injury.

4. Results

a) Schoolars (average age of 12) – The novelty and significance of the event brings about numerous coping strategies, strategies which will be sorted and alternated while the situation develops. The event starts with two high-impact moments. First is hearing the news and then the contact with the injured parent, which shock and require urgent management of the rush of emotions like surprise, fear, disorientation. At the same time the need for information

regarding his or her parent is very high. The emotional adjustment occurs through shading tears and a cry for family support: *I only sat in his lap and cried. That was all* (g, 12), rather than for social support of friends (which we will meet in adolescents). Loyalty to family and even dependence of it, as a strategy for adapting to circumstances, are recorded in this age group in a higher degree than in adolescents. Finding themselves forced to choose a particular attitude when they first see their parent in the hospital, children react by quickly recording the parent's emotional state and behaving complementary to it, and similar to the attitude adopted by the healthy parent. In this context, strategies of decentralized parentification (Thatsum, 2008) or helplessness are outlined, in order to reduce the parent's discomfort and one's own disorientation, even when this involves suppressing their own emotions: *I was reluctant to cry – if I cried, he saw me and he'd cry even harder ... and he's not allowed to cry, to be upset or anxious* (b, 11). Parentification, alongside empathy and sharing of information, is also intended to offset the irrational fear that children experience, that of being responsible for the parent's condition (Romer, 2002).

In just one case the child (g, 12) does not mention neither any of the above specified moments nor her father's (stepfather) condition, instead adopting a "nothing happened" attitude. The distancing is radical: practically, the girl trivializes the event and ignores its meaning. She inserts it within an everyday lifestyle as if it was a common fact: *Even if mom was at the hospital, mom and grandma and I met at the BIG Store, because the hospital is close to Big and she bought me pants, a jacket, a watch and a headband*. The unexpected and the unknown of the situation, alongside the concrete absence of the parent, raise the need to search for information: *I want to know everything, absolutely everything! What's happening, what's it like, why is it this way, why not somehow else ... I want to know what problems daddy has... I want to know what's mom like on the inside, if there are any broken bones... what's she thinking...* (g, 12 years). That is why, the communication process within the family members is so important.

In contact with the new realities some children resort to restricting their social lives to family and maybe a close friend. Andra, 12 years, plays indoors with her neighbour, Linda, also 12. She needs to remain in the ordinary, unchanged environment of her apartment. Other children resort to internalization: they refuse to communicate, although they need to and they are hiding their feelings from those they live with. *I cried at night when I was alone in my room and cried in my sleep... looking forward to coming to Bucharest... to meet my friend and to tell her how I felt* (g, 12 years).

The increased dependence of the parent that suddenly became helpless requires an exchange of roles, whether in the form of parentification (*you must help him, he won't listen, I won't say anything because he gets upset; I went outside with him because he wanted to play*), or in the form of depreciation of the parent's judgments and rising confidence in their own (*I won't allow him, he doesn't realize what he is asking*). The parent becomes a child, and children who have younger brothers show greater ease in manifesting parentification and disapproval towards the parent's judgments.

In addressing and adapting to the many facets of the situation, a child will adopt the attitude and coping style of the parent that he perceives as stronger and closer. If he no longer corresponds to the parent as the child knows him, if he has changed, than the child will carry identification with the parent as it was before the accident. He will adopt those pleasant and powerful aspects of the parent's personality, which are now missing. For example, a 12-year-old girl whose mother was very quiet, nothing disturbed her, and who would never argue,

but now is mostly irritable and irrational, shows patience and tolerance toward her and other family members. Thus, identification reinforces parentification.

Identification with the healthy parent also takes place, probably, because of the child's fear of "losing" them as well (Romer, 2002). For example, if the father is uncommunicative and hides information about the mother's affection, the child, although angry and frustrated by such behavior, uses the same communication strategies towards his younger brother, in order to protect him. A boy (of 11) which, by necessity, has been strongly involved in the household chores, translates his frustration toward the father who "*can not do things on his own*", in resignation and parentification. To do so, he identifies himself with the "hero" mother, who *has an infernal job, and now must care for four kids and more: Mother was afraid to drive – once she had an accident and a car hit us right on her side and since then she is afraid to drive. But now, given the situation, she has defeated her fear and she is driving – she has no other choice.*

b) Adolescents (average age of 16) – From the very moment the news is heard, some differences based on the gender variable stand out, although initially we did not intend to relate to gender. In order to overcome the moment of shock, children (adolescents) seek ways to solve the situation (*I helped the guys from the ambulance put her on a stretcher ...* (b, 16), as well as social support, and resort to emotional regulation to release the pressure. Girls admit the intensity of the shock, while none of the boys specify to have felt these moments as a shock. This dichotomous trend will persist throughout the 5 months of counseling. While the girls express and communicate their feelings of vulnerability, boys either do not admit to it, or succeed in converting them into resignation or assertiveness, which is managed through direct action: *I was annoyed at the moment and I felt like crying ... I punched the fridge and I felt relaxed* (b, 17).

Emotional adjustment is therefore possible to girls by expressing their emotions (by crying, by need to communicate and to be heard) and to boys, by rendering the event ordinary, by the lack of involvement in housework or by offering to others as little emotional support as they can. The consumption of energy in boys is not heading, apparently, towards managing the affects, but towards searching for information, solving the problem, and in all cases, towards maintaining a "nothing happened" attitude and behavior: *I was eager to find out what he had, I did not know what he had ... I'm fine now; I got it, so to speak. (...) Nothing changed in our lives (concerning the fact that the mother is in the hospital and they are at home). It's not a big deal, it's a common thing ...* (b, 16). This "nothing happened" attitude, very obvious and steadfast among boys, points to distancing as a coping strategy. It manifest through continuing the normal activities, apparently undisturbed, by denying powerful emotions and trivializing the event.

In order to cope with emotions, girls self evaluate their behavior as a brave one, given the powerful emotions (*I think I was very tough*, g, 18), while boys deny their emotions, do not face or even admit them: *Dad had a surprised reaction... but I do not let myself such easily impressed...* (b, 16). In the absence of emotion regulation (where emotions are not admitted, beyond a constant state of apathy), we have found a tendency towards social withdrawal, but only in one case: *Otherwise, I stayed indoors, I had nothing to do... I was having bad moods; I could not fancy anything ...* (b, 16). Also quite rare, but obvious, is a tendency to internalize, through closing itself and rumination: *Before, I used to pour out, but now I've started to keep it to myself, I can't even cry, I think about it a lot, I just think, that is all I do* (g, 18); *so far I have not talked about my family and what I feel, none of my friends know how I feel about this...* (b, 14).

Action orientation is found in an attempt to partially solve the problem and searching for information: *I was anxious to know what it is... and a neighbor that is a doctor, since she knew, told me how mom was... and I know now* (b, 16).

Emotional adjustment is facilitated by certain cognitive approaches, which oscillate between cognitive restructuring and positive thinking: *I have completely changed ... I'm no longer a child who just asks, I am a person who wants to be able to handle on her own, I want to do things!* (g, 18) *It's good that just one tendon broke and she can still walk... if both of them broke, she couldn't walk anymore* (b, 16 ani); and resignation, when the teen's task is to give meaning to the event or to manage internal conflicts: *Perhaps it should be this way... so that we realise we should rejoice more... we should stop fighting with each other all the time as we do* (g, 17); *Actually, I depend on them at the moment and can not take any decisions, I realize it and accept it because I want to go on* (g 18).

The new situation (hospitalization and the continuance of the parent's recovery at home) involves almost their immobilization, thus increasing the household chores. Girls are naturally taking on some of the responsibilities, thus speculating the opportunity to feel useful, to offer insurance (*when helping my mother and consoling her, I helped myself* – g, 18). They offer help and partly solve the situation, motivated by the seriousness of the event: *I felt I couldn't bare it anymore ... but I couldn't just not do anything... right then, in that moment I did not feel anything, I did not know of myself, like I was a programmed robot ... I don't know where I got all that strength from* (g, 17).

Boys, just as naturally, take on a minimum of responsibilities, considering that the healthy parent “is handling it”. It is interesting to remember that a younger boy would behave contrary to the teenage boys' tendency, and very similar to a teenage girl. This diversion of responsibilities to healthy parent (*I can't do anything to help him*) is among girls equivalent with seeking another adult in the family, respectively, in this case, the older brother and the aunt (remember that a healthy parent is unavailable), for practical and emotional support. This adult, perceived as strong and steady, also serves as the benchmark for adopting an appropriate attitude to the situation: *My brother, I never saw him crying. When I grasped he was flustered and tormented... that moment I knew that something was really not right* (g, 18).

A restriction of communication and deep contacts within the family circle can also be seen, both in boys, who do not share *personal problems* with friends, and in girls. However, social support remains a constant, whether adolescents obtain it simply by belonging to the group and activating in a “group of friends” (boys), or they find it in a close and stable person (girls), inside or outside the family, which is perceived as available and empathic (aunt, best friend, boyfriend): *My friend was a reliable support, almost like an older sister* (g, 18). It seems that unmet emotional needs and vulnerability in adolescent girls are diverted to those available, which also symbolize “family”: *My boyfriend and his family helped me a lot... I can't talk to my dad as I talk to Mihai's father...* (g, 17).

In the period immediately following the shock, the call to social support serves facilitating the emotional adjustment and temporary distracting one's attention, in order to balance the tensions: *I was very scared... I cried... my boyfriend helped me a lot* (g, 17).

Simultaneously, boys prefer to dilute emotional stress by staying in touch with the entourage. While not underestimating its importance, they clearly separate the ‘hang out’ friends from family. These friends' function is to support, to ensure continuity (we remember that boys tend to depart from the situation), to distract, not to facilitate communication: *There are things that you talk with friends and things you talk with your family ...* (b, 16).

Also as an emotion regulation strategy, identifying with them, as we saw in the above age group, takes place frequently. Children assimilate the coping style of the parent, alongside his practical and emotional attitude towards the situation. Identification is done both consciously and verbalized (*I react like mommy*) and unexpressed as such, but obvious: *There were terrible moments, but I think I was cool. (...) My mother has a heart illness, but she is strong. (...) Dad usually has a tough attitude* (g, 18).

Each and every time, the parent that the adolescent identifies with is the one that he finds to be closer and stronger. For example, Dan (16) shows apathy or emotional detachment, although in practical situations he is directed towards action. He thinks about himself '*I do not let myself easily impressed by a situation*' and he does not use to encourage his mother, as he does *not know what to say*. His justification is that *he would not like to be nagged* with words of encouragement, if in her shoes. Simultaneously, we learn that his mother asked him not to cry or allow himself be impressed. Therefore, his emotional rigidity seems to be related partially to his identification with his mother (*I react like mom*) and partially to his wish of protecting her. In fact, he is the only teenager in this study to show a consistent tendency towards social withdrawal.

Towards the parents, teenagers display two opposite tendencies. On one hand, there is parentification and role exchange, consisting of taking over obligations and empathizing, with or without suppression of their own feelings. Parentification occurs in all cases, but mainly in relation with the favorite parent, whether they are the injured ones or the healthy ones: *I stayed to listen, I tried to give her everything she needed* (g, 17); *I am trying to take care of him, help him improve his mood* (b, 17).

On the other hand, teenagers blame the sick parent for the other parent's difficulties and even for the outbreak of the injury. This way, the ambivalent feelings (frustration and concern, responsibility and the need for autonomy) are integrated through outright exteriorisation. For instance, Alex's dad has an undesirable social behavior: excessive drinking. Alex sees dad's accident as a consequence of his vice and strongly experiments the shame and social inadequacy, considering that acceptance from others represents a sore point of adolescence: *I was so ashamed... of my father drinking... and being in the hospital...*

Unlike school children, adolescents do not protect the healthy parent. Girls exteriorise the tiredness and frustration they feel as a consequence of having increased responsibility: *Can't I just have some quiet time to learn for my exams? I understand she needs someone permanently, but I cannot break in a thousand pieces* (g, 18). Boys skip any household chores or other duties, according to the distancing strategy: *Mom will help him, as she has so far without problems...* (b, 17); *Dad cleans up, he can handle things on his own, there is nothing I can do to help him...* (b, 16).

Self-assertion is another age-characteristic tendency, consistently displayed by children. In the new tormented context, self-assertion may be related to school (*I hope I'll get good marks at the final exams, so I won't disappoint my teachers*), or to the parental attitude (*There's no one to talk to, they are not listening, they never allowed me to say what I had in mind*). The feelings of adolescents are that they are misunderstood, not taken into consideration, or that they are restrained. Such feelings are managed mainly through revolt and open conflicts with the parents, unlike the younger children, in which these feelings would rather bring about sadness and internalisation. *I am picking on her, and she is picking on me... because she speaks foolishly, she speaks too much... and right now I am not interested in her opinion, as a matter of fact* (b, 17).

5. Conclusions

The children in this study worked hard in their effort to adapt to the stressful life situation imposed on them by having a severely ill parent, and to preserve and care for the family system. Even though most children seemed to manage rather well, all children were strongly affected by the illness.

The increased complexity of the mental and emotional mechanisms in adolescents is emphasized by highlighting the variable “gender”, which could not be ignored in this age range and confirms that emotional regulation and social support are associated particularly to girls, while boys tend not share their feelings and not seek help in solving problems (Perez, 1997).

The coping styles used by adolescents cover closeness strategies (emotional balancing, search for social support from family and entourage, incentives for action by seeking information and problem solving, and taking over household responsibilities, parentification, cognitive restructuring), but also avoidance strategies: distraction, distancing by trivializing the event, internalization, resignation. Vehement externalization of grievances occurs only in this age group, ranging up to conflictual outbreaks towards parents, despite their health status.

Identification with the parent perceived as stronger and as closer to the child is a powerful coping mechanism, prevalent in both age groups. On the other hand, school children (12 years) often resort to closeness coping (parentification, helplessness, emotional balancing, social support, seeking information and trying to solve the problem), to identification with the parent and to certain strategies of the internalization spectrum: distancing from the situation by trivializing the event, denial, social withdrawal, refusal to communicate.

The findings of this and other qualitative studies contribute to a deeper understanding of the emotional struggles of children with ill parents, which is difficult to achieve with quantitative generic measures.

This study points to the importance of developing psychosocial information material and counselling possibilities for families with a seriously ill parent focusing on facilitating factual as well as emotional communication within the family, empowering the parenting function of the ill as well as the healthy parent, and helping children in sharing their worries and thoughts.

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Innovations in the Organization of the Romanian Higher Education: Project-Oriented University*****

Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explain the concept of project-oriented university as a new type of university that embraces project management as an explicit organizational strategy, thus enabling it to survive and thrive under circumstances of complexity and constant change. This concept has not been used in connection to higher education so far, which still operates with distinctions between Humboldtian and entrepreneurial universities. It is premised on the idea that there is a connection between a university's maturity in project management and its innovativeness. The concept inherits the solid conceptual core of a fully-fledged model of an organization in terms of project management maturity (i.e. project-oriented organization). This substantially contributes to its operationalization into a model for universities as particular type of organizations. The model comprises two components: the former oriented towards the structural dimensions of project management ("the hard" component – processes, procedures, organizational structures) and the latter oriented towards the social dimension of project management (skills, attitudes, competences – the so called "soft" component). Research will focus on three Romanian universities and will explore both dimensions. In exploring the former dimension, research will check whether project management is an *explicit* organizational strategy of the studied universities, applied both to internally or externally-funded projects; whether project management and program management processes are formalized and documented into working procedures; whether a Project Management Office is in place, which is responsible for the coordination of all running projects; whether project management expert pools exist; whether a common project management terminology is used across the organization. Research dedicated to the second component will examine the consistency of project management culture across the entire university, the career and personal development paths in project management and the climate for continuous improvement of project management methodology. Empirical results will offer the basis for assessing the potential of the project-oriented university model to create the framework for universities to develop, innovate, and be competitive on the global education market.

Keywords: Project-oriented university, organisational strategy, project management maturity, project management culture

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1. Higher Education – A Microcosm of the Global Society

Global economy is increasingly a knowledge economy, making people's skills and qualifications more important than traditional power indicators such as territory, geography, natural resources. Today's global environment is characterized by complexity, turbulence and perpetual change, thus making information, innovation, technological prowess and people's skills the most valuable resources of any society. Globalization imposes new rhythms of performance to every economic or social field. Higher education is no exception to this, since it lies at the interface with the external environment, where skills and qualifications will be used and exploited for economic benefits. In this context, universities are under a two-fold pressure. First, they provide services, knowledge, skills for fast-moving sectors. The knowledge and skills may quickly become obsolete and irrelevant for the economy. Second, universities need to innovate and to adapt to situations of constant change. Both types of pressure force universities to develop their innovativeness capacity. This capacity is not merely a source of competitive advantage, but a prerequisite for survival.

The university is unanimously acknowledged as one of the world's most durable institutions. In spite of its stability over the centuries, the university has continuously been sensitive to a wide range of transformations taking place in the world. Changes of different kind (socio-political, economic, cultural, to name the most frequent ones) have required different response strategies from the university, but it is certain that any external change imposes a reaction of the institution facing the complexity of a turbulent environment. It is the purpose of this paper to describe a possible way in which universities might cope with the pace of change in today's world and with the challenges of the future. We propose a new model to characterize the university as a dynamic organization: the project-oriented university.

Before we present the theoretical foundations of the project-oriented university model, we need to briefly point out the landscape in which the higher education institutions perform worldwide, and in the European Union in particular. Universities across the world, similarly to many other complex organizations, struggle to survive under circumstances of constant change. In order to "stay alive", universities need to find ways to escape the pressure of globalization. The external political and economic pressures drive universities to innovate and to come up with strong institutional responses related to innovation. Globalization and the accompanying phenomena – emergence of the knowledge-based economy, rapid obsolescence of knowledge, fight over talent, emergence of a global education market place education at the heart of development and competitiveness processes. According to Quinn (2001), there are four economic trends pertaining to the contemporary world and having huge implications at all levels: the shift from a materials to a service- and knowledge-based economy, the preeminence of intellect, innovation, technology, and software – not capital or products – as economic drivers, the disaggregation and globalization of technology and economic activity in all fields, the explosion of knowledge generation, innovation and technological progress rates.

Global economy is increasingly a knowledge economy, making people's skills and qualifications more important than traditional, hard power indicators such as territory, geographical position, and natural resources. Surviving, performing and thriving on the global market largely depend on the quality of the education system. As we have already underlined, globalization imposes new rhythms of performance to every economic or social field. Higher education is no exception to this, since it lies at the interface with the external environment, where skills and qualifications will be used and exploited for economic benefits. There are authors

who see things even in a more dramatic manner, considering that “higher education witnesses the greatest amount of global influences, cross-national traffic, newest communication technologies, and interdisciplinary problem solving, thus rendering it, in some way, a microcosm of a global society” (Bash, Greenwald & Goldman, 2007: 15).

Universities are under a double-fold pressure. First, they provide services, knowledge, skills for fast-moving sectors. The respective knowledge and skills may become easily obsolete and irrelevant for the economy. As underlined by L. Bash and others, “with the increasing complexity that accompanies globalization, there is an imperative for colleges and universities to adapt to a fast changing world as they prepare their students for the demands of the global economic, political and social world that awaits them” Bash, Greenwald & Goldman, 2007: 16). Second, university itself needs to innovate and to adapt to situations of constant change. Both types of pressure force universities to develop their innovativeness capacity. This capacity is not merely a source of competitive advantage, but a prerequisite for survival.

2. Innovation – Research – Education: The Magic Triangle of Contemporary Development

One of the frequently used metaphors in describing globalization and the knowledge-based economy is the *knowledge triangle* whose three sides include innovation, research and education. In order to further enrich this metaphor, we add a new target – the university – and consolidate the triangle by placing this newly introduced variable at its centre. The basis for such metaphor enrichment is the importance that the university bears on all three dimensions. The university directly influences all three poles of the “knowledge triangle”. This makes the university one of the main aspects to be taken into account when planning the Research & Development strategy of a country. The R&D field is considered to be the engine driving competitiveness and growth in the globalised world. Reports and analyses carried out by professionals in development studies show that investing in research and innovation is the key to reach progress at all levels. Many of the countries of the world have quickly grasped the force of this argument and have taken consistent and coherent action in the R&D direction. Not surprisingly, the most cited examples are the two very dynamic Asian countries – India and China – that provide a convincing lesson of adaptation to the constraints and challenges of a rapidly and continuously transforming world. Although they have chosen different ways in which to contribute to the development of their economy – India has transformed in the world’s largest high-tech laboratory, whereas China has become the world’s largest workshop (Dobrescu, 2007) – the common wire that links them both is the significant investments in Science & Technology to achieve economic breakthrough.

As far as the European Union is concerned, its advantageous position among the world’s great powers seems to be threatened by the rapid transformations taking place in all fields and by the EU’s incapacity to react accordingly. Therefore, solutions have been proposed and actions have been taken in order to move things forward and to help EU27 remain loyal to the objectives established in the Lisbon Strategy. But becoming the world leading knowledge-based economy by 2010 and allocating 3% of each member state GDP to R&D are not easy targets either for the EU or for many of its members. Nonetheless, there is hope that even if the “great goal” of becoming the world’s knowledge superpower were not reached, the EU would at least manage to preserve its place among the leaders.

In spite of the high targets which have proved to be difficult to reach so far, EU has made a few significant steps forward by launching a comprehensive solution to deal with issues concerning the R&D field. This solution consists of promoting the construction of a European Research Area (ERA) which is meant to act as a catalyst of the EU's policies in R&D. The idea has been quite well received among the stakeholders (as shown by the results of the public consultation on the Green Paper "The European Research Area: New Perspectives", 2008), out of which those working in universities represented an important part.

The Green Paper on ERA clearly states that in order to stay competitive and to contribute to the growth of the countries in which they perform, established universities have to reconsider their role as the most relevant provider of educational services, and to start investing in their innovation and research potential. One of the weak points imputed to the EU's R&D policy is the insufficient attention paid to the important role of universities in knowledge acquisition and transfer towards all areas of society. The role of universities in strengthening the EU's R&D capacity is essential, as they directly influence all three poles of the "knowledge triangle": research, education and innovation. Investments in the quality and research infrastructure of European universities contribute significantly to reaching the objectives of the ERA. Universities need to be encouraged and sustained by national and regional public or private bodies to open up and to align themselves to meet the constraints and challenges of global competition in research and education. ERA emphasizes the idea that universities need to be encouraged to enhance the exploitation and the commercialisation of their research products. One way to do this is to promote the cooperation between universities and industry, universities and other research stakeholders, both public and private, and between universities and the government. Universities need to convince stakeholders – governments, companies, households – that existing resources are efficiently used and that the results of university-based research would produce added value for them (Communication From The Commission. Mobilising The Brainpower of Europe: Enabling Universities to Make Their Full Contribution to the Lisbon Strategy, 2005)

These recommendations seem to lie on the combination between two of the well-known models of the modern university: the humboldtian university and the entrepreneurial one. EU is aware that doing first-class research and education is not sufficient in the age of globalization, and that universities have to turn their attention to the benefits of the entrepreneurship. This is to say that whilst trying to successfully cope with the alert rhythm of changes in the society universities need to transform themselves into agents of innovation and of development.

Although we will not go much further into analyzing the two models of the modern university, we propose another solution that could help universities to coherently and strategically adapt to change. The model we propose has been developed within the project management field of study and benefits from its specific tools and methodologies. The project-oriented university model – as we called it – has the important strength that it inherits the core conceptual structure of a fully fledged model of an organization in terms of project management maturity: the project-oriented organization.

3. Project Management Maturity or How to Deal with Change and Innovation in a Routine Way

One of the contemporary answers to the challenges of the global context characterized by turbulence and uncertainty is project orientation, or how to deal with change and innovation in a routine way. In the light of the quite recent preoccupations of project management professionals, we might say that there is a significant concern for both the theoretical and practical potential of project management maturity models. As an immediate consequence to this, there is an increasingly active debate among members of the PM community on the importance of maturity models for project management. Some theoreticians consider that maturity models can be a very useful methodological tool assisting organizations in performing strategic planning for project management, and that these models can ultimately lead to achieving excellence in project management (Kerzner, 2005).

All types of projects – no matter how varied – relate to innovation in some way, be it technological, business or organizational. This is why concern has grown around the link between projects and innovation, the role of projects in innovation, taken broadly to include not simply technological innovation, but organizational, institutional, process-related and other forms of innovation as well.

Projects and project management have been discovered as new sources of growth, competitiveness and innovativeness. In this context, marked by the evolution of project management from an engineering technical function to an organizational methodology that can be embraced successfully by communities, associations, municipalities, government agencies, big companies and even societies as a whole, the concepts of project-oriented company and project-oriented society gain ground. In simple terms, project-orientation means that project management is an explicit and routine process of an organization. The premise underlying research into project maturity is that there is a competitive advantage of companies through project-orientation, that there is a correlation between the maturity of a project-oriented company and its managerial competitiveness (Gareis, 2005). Project-oriented organizations are more and more frequent worldwide and, interestingly enough, the trend towards greater maturity in project orientation can be noticed in some Romanian organizations, too (Petrom, Rompetrol, BCR, Romtelecom). In Romania and elsewhere, project-oriented organizations have already proven their competitive advantage over other organizations, as being more competitive, more innovative, and more proficient in dealing with the new, the complex, and the turbulent.

4. Premises for an Analysis of Universities in Terms of Project Management Maturity

Research into project management maturity has not been extended yet to the higher education system, which operates with the traditional distinction between humboldtian and entrepreneurial universities, as we have mentioned above. However, recent literature on education shows that the humboldtian university is now considered inadequate in the global landscape of higher education. Its inadequacy is mainly triggered by the fact that this model described the teaching and research activities of a university in a static environment, which needless to say is not the case anymore (Brătianu, 2007).

There are some structural changes in the higher education and research field that call for a different approach in universities, what we consider to be the project-orientation approach.

Changes are mainly related to the changes in the process of knowledge production. For example, the practices of research have changed radically. Currently, research is by definition interdisciplinary and it is done in partnerships. The characteristics of knowledge production processes (intensity, rapid obsolescence, shortened life cycles of products, services, and ideas) demand that “research must go beyond the intellectual curiosity of the investigator; scholars should push their ideas to application and ultimately to the market; thus, universities and their faculties need to think further than the acquisition and development of new knowledge and pay attention to the transmission of this knowledge and the challenges of technological innovation (Mohrman, Ma & Baker, 2007: 150). Research implementation appears to be the greatest priority and the dissemination of the knowledge created. Therefore, research and knowledge production have become increasingly complex processes retaining features of uniqueness, with specific objectives, carried out over a clearly cut period of time by dedicated teams and with limited resources (including financial ones). The current way of producing knowledge – which includes new phases such as knowledge implementation and dissemination – makes project orientation most adequate since the very definition of projects mirrors the above mentioned characteristics: complexity, uniqueness, clear objectives, determined duration and limited resources of all kinds.

The concept of project-oriented university is rather new and research dedicated to it is at the beginning. In our opinion, the concept could ground a new model for higher education institutions, a model that views maturity in project management as a means of enabling development and of increasing organization’s (i.e. university) chances to cope with multiple transformations in the external environment.

Why would a project-oriented university model be more suitable to face the current reality than other models? Mainly because the core idea underlying the project-oriented university model is to describe how the university can adapt itself to changes and thus stay competitive on the global education marketplace. The aim of the model is to provide the university with the necessary means of conceiving a coherent response to external inputs. This reaction must fulfill the three-fold requirement of the project management view concerning the organization’s capacity to adapt to change and to engage in the competitiveness race:

- there must be a *quick* answer to global challenges;
- the answer must be *innovative*;
- and, finally, the answer must be *methodologically* grounded.

The project-oriented university model has the advantage that it exploits the solid theoretical framework of project management maturity models. This framework lends it the necessary tools to build on a consistent proposal that fulfills the above-mentioned requirements and moreover sets up the strategy that universities might use to successfully cope with current changes.

5. The Project-Oriented University Model

Just like the individual project managers, organizations need to become more competent, develop the necessary skills, knowledge and attributes, evolve and mature in order to conduct, manage and support their projects effectively and successfully. The organization’s ability to effectively manage programs or projects, to support those projects in their operational environment and to effectively apply best practice project management principles, processes and techniques, influences the success of projects and the ultimate realization of the organizational

goals and objectives. Therefore, the more competent an organization is in the management and support of projects, the more likely it is to evolve, mature, develop, and be more successful. In addition, central to this development is the organization's ability to assess its performance both internally and in relation to competitors (Mahata, 2007).

There is a significant concern for both the theoretical and practical potential of project management maturity models. The strongest associations of project management have developed their own project management maturity models. PMI has its own model, which is widely employed – OPM3 (Organisational Project Management Maturity Model), whereas APM has developed PRINCE2 MM (PRINCE2 Maturity Model). In addition to these, some of the largest corporations – such as IBM – and local project management associations – German Project Management Association, for example – have elaborated their own organizational maturity models and thus have proposed a specific way in which organization could assess the maturity of individual projects (Cooke-Davies, 2002).

At this point, one may ask: what is the point of adopting and using a project management maturity model? To what extent an organization that adopts a maturity model is more efficient than another that does not? And, furthermore, to what extent is a university – seen as a particular type of organization – that adopts a project management maturity model more successful than another that (totally or partially) ignores the advantages of applying this methodology?

The concept of *project-oriented university* senses the particularities of higher education institutions to which project management as an explicit organizational strategy is applied. *What makes a university project-oriented?* We might conceive a two-fold answer that comprises both the “hard” (concerning the social dimension of project management, skills, attitudes, competences) and the “soft” components of the concept (the structures related to project management). Here are some remarks on these two components:

The “hard” part refers to the following aspects:

- project management is an *explicit* organizational strategy, applied both to internally or externally-funded projects;
- project management and program management processes are formalized and documented into working procedures;
- a Project Management Office exists, which is responsible for the coordination of all running projects;
- there are expert pools (which provide project teams *in situ* and know-how transfer from one project to another);
- a common project management terminology is used across the organization;
- clustering of projects into programmes takes place and project portfolio management is performed, in order to seek create synergies among discrete projects and steer them so as to fulfill organizational strategy.

The “soft” part consists of:

- there is a consistent project management culture across the entire university;
- people are permanently trained and developed in project management;
- there is a favorable climate for continuous improvement of project management methodology.

At this point, we should make a clear difference between project management *in* universities, project management taught *in* universities, on the one hand, and project management orientation *of* universities, on the other. The first item refers to the project management courses that are taught in universities, while the latter deals with project management maturity,

meaning both formal (e.g. work in terms of projects and programs, organization of the PM Office, elaboration of templates and project plans, the settlement of Project Management Expert Pools, etc.) and soft aspects (e.g. accountability and empowerment of project managers, tools for project team management, marketing efforts toward further promoting project management as an explicit organizational strategy, etc.).

6. A Brief Examination of Project Orientation in Three Romanian Universities

This section of the paper presents the findings of a brief investigation of project orientation in three Romanian universities located in Bucharest. The three universities differ in their specialisation. Thus, we have examined a university specialised in social sciences studies (National School of Political Sciences and Public Administration), another one that offers programmes in business and economics (Academy of Economic Studies) and a technical university (Technical University of Civil Engineering).

We have applied a questionnaire comprising 12 closed questions to people responsible with academic research and institutional development from each of the three universities. We have also conducted semi-structures interviews with three professors in order to further assess the project management maturity of their respective institutions. First, a separation between internal and external projects of the university has been drawn. Respondents were asked to indicate how many internal and external projects are currently implemented in their university. We used the label “internal projects” in order to describe the projects whose objectives concern only the university (its growth, its popularity, its organisational strategy); the internal projects are funded mainly by the university (from its own funds or from loans). Internal projects could be described as marketing initiatives (Gareis, 2005). On the contrary, by external projects we referred to those actions by which the university contributes to the development of a product or a service which is not entirely its own. External projects are funded by national or international donors (such as public or private companies, the Romanian government, the European Union, the World Bank, etc.) preoccupied with education and/ or research. The implementation of an external project requires the university to act in compliance with the objectives of the funding institution.

Secondly, we have tried to see how different specific project management tools and techniques are used in the implementation of both internal and external projects of the university. We haven't sought to exhaustively investigate the project management methodology applied; instead we have focused on the fundamental, “classical” techniques that should be used in any project implementation process (e.g. project organisation chart, project roles and responsibilities, project objectives plan, WBS, milestone plan, Gantt chart, etc.). Our goal was to determine how frequently these specific project management tools and techniques are used in universities with respect to the two types of projects.

Finally, the study encompassed a dimension concerning the project management culture and the way universities preserve this culture and exploit its potential in order to successfully manage project complexity. We started from the premise that a sound project management culture lies at the basis of a project-oriented university. However, in order to assess the level of the project management culture of a university many aspects must be taken into consideration and a consistent research must be carried out. We haven't had here the time or the

means to embark in such an undertaking; our purpose was to only to check if the three universities examined meet at least the fundamental requirements for being considered as *inchoate* project-oriented universities, and if they show signs of project orientation in their organisational strategy. The findings of the investigation of each one of the universities will be presented below, and a general conclusion will be drawn.

6.1. National School of Political Studies and Public Administration – a University Unaware of Its Own Strategic Advantage

This is a university whose main field of specialisation is social sciences, of which communication studies and political sciences constitute the primary scientific interest. However, in order to adapt to the constant changes on the market and to successfully face the challenges of the global world, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration (NSPSA) has continuously adjusted its educational offer by proposing new academic programmes (MSc or MAs) and modules of specialisation (BA).

Before discussing the results of our study here are a few words on the history of the university. NSPSA is a very young university; it was founded in 1990, and since then it has continuously sought to break down the traditional divide between academia and practical issues. Perhaps more than other Romanian university, NSPSA has been forced to cope with the rapid changes in the academic environment after 1989, and there was little time to adapt to new systems before these changed again. Things have evolved, though, and the Romanian academic environment tends to become more stable than before mid '90s, at least as far as the governmental matters are concerned. Although much more unknown than other Romanian universities, NSPSA has managed to rapidly overcome this inconvenience succeeding in placing itself amongst the most famous universities in Bucharest. A solid contribution to this success was the rapid growth of the Department of Communication and Public Relations and the transformations that took place within it. One of the most interesting and most appreciated initiatives brought on by this Department was the launch of a Masters Programme in Project Management. Therefore, by the constant improvement of this programme at least one component of the university has acquired the theoretical knowledge in the field of project management that could be put into practice or disseminated amongst the decision makers. First steps on the long way to reaching project management maturity are the knowledge of project management methodology and of its crucial role in attaining the objectives of a coherent institutional development strategy. Unfortunately, as it may be seen further in this paper, NSPSA hasn't had yet the ability to coherently articulate a development strategy that makes use of projects and project management maturity. Put it simply, this university is unaware of its strategic advantage over similar institutions that have not yet adopted a project-oriented approach to planning future development.

NSPSA has not reach yet sufficient maturity in order to distinguish between internal and external projects. In fact, and this seems to be one of the most intriguing matter, this university has no internal projects. This is the general impression that transpires from the analysis of the answers to the questionnaires applied. The interview with one of the professors involved in project management and institutional development has revealed the fact that NSPSA has actually some internal projects (e.g. construction of a new building, launching of new academic programmes, organisation of national and international conferences), but these initiatives are not viewed as projects. This situation could be explained at least in two ways: either

there is no common and correct understanding of the term “project” (this idea is very plausible, as the term project is widely used incorrectly in the Romanian language, and we have shown this in another study (Bârgăoanu, Negrea & Călinescu, 2007a)) or there is no coherent strategy of the university based on project and project management orientation, or a combination of both factors.

With respect to external projects, NSPSPA seems to perform better. However, this finding should not comfort too much the decision makers and the stakeholders. Interestingly, as we believe it is the case for many Romanian universities, NSPSPA has implemented and currently implements a series of projects funded mainly, if not exclusively, from external sources (mostly the UE, but also the World Bank). These projects have been implemented without using a project management methodology. In fact, the university runs many research projects commissioned and funded by the National University Research Council that should constitute only a part of the project portfolio of the institution. NSPSPA concentrates its resources on the implementation of these projects. This may be the consequence of the fact that universities are somehow urged (even obligated) by the Ministry of Education and Research to submit proposal for research projects funded by the Council. The number of research projects implemented is one of the criteria for promotion and acknowledgement within the university. Given the institutional pressure exerted on this type of projects many of them are poorly managed (or, drastically said merely unmanaged) and end with no impact upon the university policy or upon the academic research, although the projects close within time and within budget. This situation may be remedied by including these research projects into project portfolio of the university (as a way to address a specific component of the development strategy of the institution) and by using project management methodologies in order to implement them.

Given the fact that project management is not considered to be an advantageous way to organise and coordinate university's goals and objectives, the tools and techniques specific to project management are not applied in managing NSPSPA projects. In spite of the fact that most of those who run projects or are involved in their implementation to different degrees have the theoretical background necessary to work in project management, projects are implemented without applying project management. Even if they hadn't had the skills to use project management tools and techniques, the co-called project managers would have had the opportunity to acquire those skills *in situ*, at their home, by participating in a workshop or training session conducted by the team of the programme in Project Management, or by any other team, outside the university. But, this has to be included in the organisational strategy of a project-oriented university or of a university that is interested in adopting and exploiting a project orientation approach.

Finally, the project management culture is rather poorly represented within NSPSPA, and this conclusion follows easily from what have been said above. The analysis of the filled in questionnaires has shown that the university lacks a Project Management Office, a favourable climate where project management as an organisational strategy to be valued, project managers who conduct projects according to a specific methodology, expert pools or a common understanding of language used, at least at an organisational level. Within NSPSPA, we have seen the premises for putting all these into place and fully acknowledging the importance and, at the same time, the tested efficiency of the project management as an organisational strategy. The only (apparently hard) thing to do is to persuade the decision makers that this is a way to become more competitive on the global education market and to make them seize the opportunity for institutional development.

6.2. Another Case of Missing Project Management Culture: the Academy of Economic Studies

The second university we have included in our study is one of the largest higher education institutions in Romania. The Academy of Economic Studies (AES) attracts annually hundreds of students who wish to embark on a business career. The AES has continuously grown and now it comprises not only specific departments in fields such as economics, management or finance, but also specialisations in public administration, marketing etc. We did not have the possibility to investigate project management use at all levels of the AES; we have only managed to make inquiry into the use of project management methodology in one of the AES's departments (Business Administration Department, Centre for Research on Intellectual Potential). Although the investigation was not carried out in more than one Department of the AES, we chose to discuss it nevertheless. From this point on, we will refer exclusively to the activity of the Centre for Research on Intellectual Potential (CRIP).

The analysis of the questionnaires applied and the discussion with the director of the Centre have shown that the overall impression over the activity of the CRIP regarding its project management maturity shares many similarities with the situation we have met in the case on the NSPSA that we have briefly described above. Coming back reversely, the CRIP lacks an authentic culture of project management. Although the question concerning the existence of a Project Management Office have been answered affirmatively, we have discovered that in fact there is no PMO but an office that formally gathers information on each of the projects run by the Centre. As for other components of a project management culture, the CRIP lacks know-how transfer between project managers; it also lacks expert pools (who could provide project teams *in situ* and know-how transfer from one project to another). Moreover, no clustering of projects into programmes takes place and project portfolio management is not performed, in order to seek create synergies amongst discrete projects and steer them so as to fulfill organisational strategy.

Apparently, project management tools and techniques are used in project implementation within the CRIP. This could be a plus and a sign that the centre is relatively prepared to meet the project-oriented formal requirements. But, as shown before, it is not clear if the project management methodology is accurately and constantly used for all projects run by the centre. Thus, the CRIP has no internal projects (e.g. the organisation of a conference is not seen as a project) As far as the external projects are concerned, the portfolio of the centre comprises only research projects funded by the National University Research Council. The remarks on this type of projects mentioned in the case of NSPSA entirely apply to the CRIP too.

Last, project management is mostly seen as a subdivision of the management field and management is one of the main specialisation area provided by the AES. The director of the Centre emphasized that the development of a project management culture requires setting up specific values of project management in the first place. He also mentioned that Romanian universities are quite far away of that stage if we take into account that “anti-management” is actually the guiding idea of governmental institutions that coordinate and supervise the quality and competitiveness of the Romanian higher education system.

6.3. A Promising Candidate to the Project-oriented University Status: the Technical University of Civil Engineering

The Technical University of Civil Engineering of Bucharest (TUCE) was founded in 1994 as the only Romanian university specializing in civil engineering. Higher education in civil engineering has a long tradition in Romania. Our study has shown that it is quite mature in its project orientation. It's true that there are important dimensions of project orientation that still need to be explored and assimilated, but this is reachable within reasonable time limits.

In order to examine the project-orientation level of the TUCE we have applied questionnaires and have interviewed one of its academics involved in several projects currently implemented in the university. The questionnaire, which was used as an interview guideline, served as a structured analytical tool meant to ease data collection. In January 2009, 11 projects are run by the TUCE: seven internal projects and four external projects. Internal projects consist of four research projects, two investment projects related to infrastructure, and one institutional development project. All these projects have a high degree of visibility in the university. Internal projects seem to be understood by most stakeholders as well structured projects, with a start and an end, engaging a specific number of resources, and being committed to achieve measurable goals. External projects consist of two research projects expected to deliver innovative intangibles, such as patents, and two consulting projects implemented at the benefit of the Romanian public administration. As it may be easily noticed, this is the only university from the three similar institutions we have examined that accurately distinguishes between internal and external projects.

However, the distinction between internal and external projects may have been altered by a certain degree of confusion caused by the meaning of research projects in the Romanian universities. There is a growing trend in Romania, namely to fund academic research only through external non-reimbursable opportunities, such as the Structural Funds available for Romania from the European Union until 2013. No or little internal funding – such as funds from tuition fees or bank loans – is granted by Romanian universities for their research projects. In project management theory and practice, external funding means that an organisation is mobilized to implement projects for an external client that agrees to invest money and trust for the achievement of the project goals. This commits the implementing organisation for an effective project management that would guarantee that resources are used in the most effective way. Most research projects implemented by Romanian universities are managed as internal projects, even though the project management theory would describe them as external projects. This is not only a matter of terminology, but also a matter of responsibility and ownership of project results. We may assume that a project-oriented university would tend to make a clear difference between external and internal research projects. External research projects are a key for economic competitiveness of the university, while internal research projects would be a laboratory for new ideas, a nutritious field for the germs of innovation leading to long-term development of the society as a whole.

Project management methodologies seem to be largely used by the TUCE in both internal and external projects – under the limitations resulting from the perceived difference between these two types of projects. In the project initiation phase, the TUCE uses the formal project assignment, the project organisation chart, the description of roles and responsibilities, and internal project norms on a regular basis. The communication plan is used only in some projects. In the project planning phase, several key project management tools are always put into practice, such as: the plan of the project goals, the Work break-down Structure (WBS), the

milestones plan, the Gantt Chart, the resource allocation plan, the cost plan, and the risks analysis. The Critical Path Method is rather rarely implemented.

In all cases the project logo and the project name are created to identify the project, which is a proof that we may discuss about a defined project culture in the TUCE. Furthermore, project coordination activities are well defined, too. The assigned project manager attends coordination meetings with the University's Senate, with the project team members and key stakeholders. Also, the project plans are largely used as communication tools. Project controlling methodologies are implemented in most of the TUCE projects. Project reporting seems to be kept at a rather official or formal level. Except for technical and financial progress reports, which are a must, some other reporting tools, such as meeting minutes, are not very popular. This may be a result of the fact that, in project management terms, the TUCE deals with external projects – funded by European Union or the Romanian Government – where financial and technical reporting must be done on a rather “religious” basis for the funds to be received. Project closing phase is seen as a separate project phase, and a special focus is put on planning the activities that will follow after the project ends.

As a general remark, it is reasonable to state that project management tools mentioned in this analysis are not necessarily actual signs of the TUCE project management maturity, but rather a symptom of the norms and rules imposed by funding entities. From this perspective, one may differentiate between project rules and project management maturity. From our analysis, the TUCE is a university that applies project rules and norms. There is not enough evidence that the TUCE is a project-oriented university that implements project management as an explicit organisational strategy. This statement is backed up by some evidence gathered during the investigation: the TUCE does not have a Project Management Office, which means that there is no project portfolio coordination, no unitary tools and no explicit project management methodologies; the TUCE does not understand project management as an organisational strategy, as a means for creating competitive advantage, flexibility, and innovation.

The statement that the TUCE is oriented rather towards project rules than towards project management is further backed up if we take a closer look to the field this university specializes in. Buildings and engineering have always been associated with projects. If we look back to the early 60's, the first project management standards were developed for civil engineering, aeronautics, and defense industry. In Romania, before 1989 and even in the early 90's, the term “project” meant technical documentation for buildings. Furthermore, engineering activities were based upon very strict rules. Engineering as a discipline was seen as highly standardized. It is somehow natural that civil engineering, in general, and TUCE, in particular, is inclined to implementing its projects by using a complex set of tools and methodologies. But this does not mean that the TUCE is a project-oriented university, namely that it fulfills the three-fold requirement of the project management view concerning the organisation's capacity to adapt to change and to engage in the competitiveness race: an innovative, quick, and methodologically grounded answer to global challenges.

However, even if it still lack a solid project management culture the TUCE seems to be the most advanced university from the three examined in this paper to reach the status of project-oriented university. We admit that it needs to makes further significant efforts to attain the project maturity it probably seeks at the same time as we acknowledge its progress until now. Once the technical aspects set up, the procedures put forth and the project methodology constantly used the university has to focus on spurring on decision makers to revise the organisational strategy by means of assessing the importance of project management use. Unfortunately, in most of the cases this seems to be the hardest thing to do.

7. Conclusions

Our analysis of the three universities in terms of its project orientation has revealed that they are at the beginning of acquiring project management maturity. They are truly characterized by a sensible dynamism and they are very active and proficient in the field of projects or, more broadly, in undertakings that have to do with the new and the innovative. A similar conclusion cannot be drawn as to their proficiency in project management, which ends up in a paradox that we have explained elsewhere (Bârgăoanu, Negrea & Călinescu, 2007b), that of having projects, but no project management. Simultaneously, the paradox is even more emphasized due to the situations in which certain processes and undertakings that are not project worthy are defined (or rather named) as such. In this way, projects are no longer a means of dealing with complexity, with a view to reducing it, but of further increasing it.

The analytical grid explained above allows us to come up with some major findings regarding project management maturity of the three universities.

a. They run many processes that potentially could qualify as projects and be organized accordingly – for example, design and launch of new educational programmes, of new educational formats and delivery systems, such as the videoconferencing system, construction of a new headquarters; yet, there is no formal process or procedure of project definition (investment proposal, investment decision, project proposal, project decision, project assignment, including assignment of a project manager); these types of endeavors are not explicitly defined as projects or programmes and are not run using project management methodologies;

b. The term “project” is reserved mostly for externally funded undertakings, such as research projects funded by the National University Research Council, while internally-funded ones are not even referred using this term; this creates the widely spread misperception that projects refer solely to external undertakings, thus missing out the very basic merit of projects as vehicles for organizational update and process reengineering.

c. There is no formal procedure of assigning project managers and project team members to projects; the roles of project manager and project team members are not formalized, and the overwhelmingly important role of the project owner is not documented or performed;

d. There are no explicit procedures for project implementation, that should organize and formalize the project management sub-processes of initiation, coordination, control, close-down;

e. There is no project management unified methodology across the entire university (project management sub-processes and phases, role description, authority and reporting lines, empowerment strategy);

f. A Project Management Office, that should provide support for projects and programmes by means of templates, best practices, standard forms etc., does not exist;

g. There is no website for the coordination of the university project portfolio, a website that should act as catalyst for project management efforts, from which the potential project managers could download implementation guidelines and standard forms, where they can communicate and share experience with other project managers.

We consider that this applies to many – perhaps most of the – Romanian universities, allowing for the generalization that the academic field as a whole is not very mature in its project orientation. One finding deserves particular attention: the fact that the term “project” is reserved mostly for externally funded undertakings, such as research projects funded by the specialized institution. People in the academia think that it is enough to apply for funding (by means of application forms) and, fortunately to get these project proposals funded. Enough for projects

and project management! Getting a project proposal funded does not entail running the respective project according to a specific project management methodology. And this, inevitably, leads to a misperception of projects and project management, respectively, and to an uncanny and unsafe “strategy” – to have projects, but no project management.

Apparently, many universities have understood that they have to attract funds and have as many projects as possible, but regardless of their relevance for the strategic development of the organization. Perhaps this is too strong of a claim; however, it is not entirely improper to characterize Romanian universities in this perspective. The most important aspect of the project-oriented university model – the use of project management as an *explicit* organizational strategy – has not penetrated this type of organization yet. Our investigation has revealed the fact that there are no internally funded undertakings that are defined as projects and managed accordingly. Meaning that the universities – in spite of having lots of undertakings that could qualify as projects – misses the opportunity of using this organizational strategy, known as project orientation, for the purpose of increasing their competitive advantage in the Romanian academic environment and their readiness to embrace new and innovative trends. The fact that these processes are not organized and dealt with in a project form does not mean that they end in complete failure, or that they do not deliver results. It means that, sometimes, money and time is wasted, quality is not always met. And, most importantly, the organization as a whole is not ready to cope with changes, new developments, opportunities, challenges and risks in a *routine* way. Which might have as a consequence an inability to find the best way of reaching competitiveness and innovativeness.

Recent transformations on the global society have affected the academic environment, as well. These changes have shed light on the timeliness of switching to a new university model, designed to successfully face the challenges of the future. It seems that the model of the Humboldtian university has become more and more unsuitable for helping develop the university under the pressure of globalization. Time has come to look into another way, and project management field may offer a direction to follow. The theoretical framework of the project management maturity model has contributed to the emergence of the new concept: the project-oriented university. There is still time to change the attitude of universities towards the strategic advantages of implementing project management as an explicit organizational strategy. Let us imagine a situation where the Romanian universities would be told as the British universities had once been told: swim on your own, or sink. Hopefully, they will strive to remain on the surface and manage to do so by resorting to the right swimming style – project management orientation.

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Recenzii

Maria-Claudia CĂLIN*

Google – de la companie la verb

Vise, D. *The Google Story*, New York: Bantam Dell Publishing Group, 2005, 326 p,
Jarvis, J. *What Would Google Do?* New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009, 257 p.

La întrebarea care este site-ul lor preferat, majoritatea oamenilor de comunicare britanici incluși în *The A list*, topul profesioniștilor din domeniu realizat de revista *Campaign UK* (2009) a răspuns Google. Cum s-a transformat însă proiectul de doctorat de la Stanford University al lui Larry Page și Sergey Brin într-una dintre cele mai de succes companii din lume? Cum a reușit Google să se impună ca verb pentru a desemna prin excelență procesul de căutare pe Internet? Cum a influențat Google comportamentul consumatorului astfel încât să aibă un cuvânt tot mai greu de spus în fața corporațiilor, după cum evidențiază studiul (2010) condus de Cosmin Alexandru – Managing Partner B&P Brandivia cu privire la rolul comunităților de consumatori?

Recent mi-au stârnit curiozitatea două cărți ce au ca subiect comun Google, fără însă a se suprapune din punct de vedere al analizei. Astfel, David A. Vise, reporter la Washington Post, realizează în cartea sa *The Google Story – Povestea Google* (Bantam Dell Publishing Group, New York, 2005) o biografie exhaustivă a Google. Pe de altă parte, Jeff Jarvis, unul dintre cei mai reputați specialiști în noile media din spațiul anglofon, explică în cartea sa *What Would Google Do? – Ce ar face Google?* (HarperCollins Publishers, New York, 2009) succesul Google și ce implicații pozitive ar avea aplicarea metodei Google într-o serie variată de domenii.

Ceea ce merită reținut din cartea lui Vise vizează ambiția celor doi fondatori Google de a dezvolta motorul de căutare în concordanță cu valorile lor de cercetători și mai puțin din poziția de oameni de afaceri. Page și Brin descriu compania Google ca pe o universitate unde se desfășoară simultan o serie de proiecte. Explicația pentru o astfel de perspectivă provine din viziunea celor doi, potrivit căreia soluția perfectă vine doar ca urmare a unui număr mare de încercări nu întotdeauna reușite.

Interesat de procesul de extragere de informații dintr-un volum mare de date, Page și-a anunțat profesorii de la Stanford University că va descărca în calculatorul său tot Internet-ul. La acel moment (1996), pe piața motoarelor de căutare existau Excite, AltaVista, Yahoo și Netscape. Noutatea modelului Google, numit la început BackRub consta în principiul de construcție folosit, pe care Page l-a descoperit din utilizarea AltaVista pentru proiectele în curs. Cu această ocazie devine tot mai încrezător în importanța utilizării link-urilor ce stau

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la baza Google pentru a stabili popularitatea informațiilor (Page Ranking), după principiul “cu cât o informație este mai valoroasă cu atât va fi citată mai frecvent”.

Page și Brin lansează la Stanford University, în 1997, pentru o perioadă de testare, motorul de căutare (google.stanford.edu), care se bucură rapid de popularitate. În concordanță cu scopul motorului de căutare, acela de a face disponibilă o cantitate considerabilă de informații, numele de Google s-a impus desemnând în matematică, cu ortografia corectă g-o-o-g-o-l, un număr foarte mare. Încurajați de succesul repurtat, Page și Brin încep un an mai târziu un lung proces de căutare de finanțare, renunțând la studiile de doctorat (nefinalizate până în prezent, spre nemulțumirea mamei lui Brin). Surprinzător sau nu, Google ajunge să fie cotate în 2004 la bursa din New York. În scrisoarea formulată de fondatorii Google cu această ocazie ‘*Informații utile pentru cei care dețin acțiuni Google*’ aceștia își exprimau viziunea asupra companiei și anume de a contribui la realizarea unei lumi mai bune, în care Fundația Google să depășească compania Google din punct de vedere al impactului mondial.

Vise include în cartea sa un chestionar specific procesului de selecție Google (<http://www.thegooglestory.com/glatpage1.html>), prin care candidaților li se solicită să dea dovadă, pe lângă aptitudini tehnice, de o serie de calități cu caracter soft. Printre întrebările incluse se numără: “Acest spațiu a fost lăsat liber în mod intenționat. Cum ai umple acest gol într-un mod valoros?”, “Care este cea mai frumoasă ecuație matematică pe care ai întâlnit-o vreodată?”, “Care este următorul pas în domeniul motoarelor de căutare?”, “Este o duminică însorită, ora 2 *pm*. Ești foarte aproape de Oceanul Pacific, poți să explorezi o pădure exotică sau să vizitezi o serie de atracții culturale de renume. Ce ai face?”.

Cartea răspunde de asemenea la câteva curiozități precum: schimbarea logo-ului paginii de start în funcție de un eveniment universal, ce a fost determinată de intenția echipei Google de a anunța utilizatorii de participarea la *The Burning Man*, un experiment social de dezvoltare sustenabilă, sau generarea de resurse fără a crea în rândul utilizatorilor impresia unei companii ahtiate după bani prin trasarea unui spațiu de anunțuri sponsorizate, realizarea aplicației Google News ca urmare a superfluxului de informații în contextul evenimentelor din 11 septembrie 2001, precum și dezvoltarea Gmail ca răspuns la calitatea serviciilor de e-mail disponibile la acest moment care nu permiteau stocarea unui număr mare de informații. Una dintre cele mai puternice observații ale lui Vise este aceea că Google a ajuns să fie cunoscut și utilizat la nivel mondial fără să se fi investit într-o campanie de comunicare, fiind exemplul perfect de promovare prin *word-of-mouth*.

Pentru a asigura fluiditatea lecturii, Jarvis își structurează cartea pe trei paliere de analiză. În primul capitol (‘Legile Google’), Jarvis explică de ce unele companii au succes în comunicarea online, iar altele mai au de învățat. Al doilea capitol (‘Dacă Google ar conduce lumea’) conține o trecere în revistă a felului în care metoda Google se poate aplica în diferite industrii: mass-media (Google Times), divertisment (Googlewood), edituri și tipografii (GoogleCollins), restaurante (Google Cafeteria), shopping (Google Shopping), utilități (Google Energy, Google Telecom și Google Mobile), marketing (Google Cola), transportul în comun (Google Air), imobiliare (Google Real Estate), bănci (Google Investments și Google Banking), sănătate (St. Google Hospital), asigurări (Google Insurance), educație (Google University), politică (United States of Google). În ultimul capitol (‘Generația G’), Jarvis extrapolează impactul Google la nivel social, identificând transformările induse în mentalul colectiv de cel mai cunoscut motor de căutare la nivel mondial. Având în vedere filosofia Google, Jarvis formulează o serie de observații: clientul are întotdeauna dreptate, oferă-le o platformă care să le permită să o dezvolte, intermediarii nu își mai găsesc locul, abordează o atitudine transparentă, cei mici sunt cei care fac legea, nu vinde lucruri pentru că nu sunt interesante.

Cartea se deschide cu o luare de poziție surprinzătoare: ‘Nici o companie și nici un manager nu par să fi înțeles cu adevărat cum pot să aibă succes în epoca Internetului, cu excepția Google’. A gândi în spiritul Google, scrie Jarvis, înseamnă a dezvolta un conținut care să aducă valoare adăugată, să fie simplu de accesat potrivit criteriilor motoarelor de căutare și să poată fi transmis cu ușurință de la un utilizator la altul.

Caracteristica principală a Google, observă Jarvis, este atenția pentru simplitate. Deși este unul dintre cele mai puternice instrumente din lume, Google este totodată unul dintre cele mai simple. În dezvoltarea motorului de căutare, Page și Brin au mers pe ideea că oamenii vor fi cu atât mai interesați să se implice, cu cât companiile le vor lăsa o mai mare libertate de exprimare. Astfel, structura de tip platformă specifică Google (ex. Google Reader, Google Maps) care permite contribuția utilizatorilor este modelul recomandat de Jarvis în comunicarea online. Google este una dintre puținele companii care nu trebuie să se scuze atunci când lansează un produs aflat încă în faza de testare, ba mai mult, își încurajează utilizatorii să construiască pe baza aplicațiilor deja existente. Jarvis dă ca exemplu în acest sens aplicațiile pe care Jake, fiul său, le-a dezvoltat, și care altminteri ar fi costat Google sume considerabile.

Din analiza modelului Google, Jarvis extrage o serie de lecții importante la nivelul managementului organizațional. Potrivit Marisei Mayer, vice-președinte *Search Product and User Experience Google*, membrii echipelor tehnice sunt încurajați să dedice 20% din timpul de lucru proiectelor legate de propriilor interese. Statisticile interne sunt o dovadă pentru faptul că o astfel de decizie aduce rezultate: jumătate din produsele și serviciile lansate de Google în al doilea semestru al anului 2005 au fost realizate în acest interval.

Internetul are oroare de ineficacitate, fapt ce pune în discuție printre altele cărțile în forma lor actuală. În epoca Google ele au marele dezavantaj de a nu putea fi actualizate în timp real și de a nu dispune de un motor de căutare online. Jarvis citează articolul lui Ben Vershbow de la Institutul pentru viitorul cărții, publicat în *The Library Journal* (2006), în care autorul nu exclude posibilitatea ca într-un ecosistem digital cărțile să fie scrise din asamblarea informațiilor stocate online. Paulo Coelho este autorul pe care Jarvis îl menționează pentru felul în care folosește Internetul în activitatea sa. Fără a-i fi teamă să-și facă disponibile online cărțile, Coelho a reușit să-și fidelizeze cititorii, cu care comunică prin intermediul unei camere web sau prin contul său de Twitter.

Potrivit lui Jarvis, Google este mai mult decât un motor de căutare; înseamnă o schimbare socială. Rezultatul este o lume transparentă, construită pe conexiuni, pe ascultare reciprocă, pe încredere, pe înțelepciune, pe generozitate, pe eficacitate, pe jocul cerere-ofertă, pe nișe, pe platforme, pe rețele, pe viteză și pe abundență. Membrii generației G au un spirit de inițiativă dezvoltat, participă la viața socială și economică, ‘au creat lucruri de excepție, tehnologii de excepție, companii de excepție și idei de excepție’. Refuzul de a împărtăși un link sau o părere despre un restaurant, un film, o carte poate fi considerat în epoca Google semnul unui comportament antisocial. Președintele think-tank-ului american Consiliul asupra Relațiilor Internaționale, Richard Haass, citat de Jarvis, vorbește într-un articol publicat în revista *Foreign Affairs* (2008) despre trecerea de la o lume bipolară, moștenirea celui de-al Doilea Război Mondial, la o lume non-polară în care nu există un model de referință, astfel încât toate opiniile sunt binevenite.

Lectura complementară a celor două cărți este recomandată pentru oricine vrea să înțeleagă mai bine fenomenul Google. Cartea lui Vise este o primă cronică a companiei Google, utilă pentru dezvoltarea unor principii corecte în afaceri. Dincolo de evenimentele recente mai mult sau mai puțin pozitive pentru imaginea sa, Google îți deschide ochii asupra impactu-

lui inovației tehnologice asupra mediului societal. În cazul abordării lui Jarvis, ai impresia că tocmai ai trecut printr-o ‘spălare de creier’. Astfel, începi să vezi tot mai multe aplicații și beneficii ale implementării filozofiei Google. Pe alocuri ai însă sentimentul că Jarvis exagerează cu ideea de a face disponibil pe Internet până și cel mai mic detaliu, încât riscăm să fim reduși la stadiul de dependență inexorabilă față de dispozitivele de conectare online. Cu toate acestea, principiile de bază în relația cu clienții și angajații deopotrivă merită să fie reținute și mai cu seamă aplicate. Principiile companiei Google se înscriu în ceea ce Philip Kotler alături de Hermawan Kartajaya și Iwan Setiawan numesc marketing 3.0. Cei trei autori vorbesc în cartea lor *‘From Products to Customers to the Human Spirit – Marketing 3.0 / De la produse la consumatori la individ – Marketing 3.0’* (John Wiley & Sons, New Jersey, 2010) de transformări majore în relația organizație – public. Astfel de companii au înlăturat din vocabular cuvântul ‘consumatori’; pentru ele există doar oameni înzestrați cu capacitatea de a gândi și de a simți. În consecință se concentrează pe dezvoltarea unei misiuni, viziuni și valori care nu descriu atât promisiunile față de clienți și angajați, cât oferirea de soluții cu impact asupra societății căci în definitiv oamenii au conștiința rolului lor în această privință. *Emotional marketing* este complementat în marketing 3.0 cu *human spirit marketing*. Or, compania Google pare să se fi dezvoltat pe acest concept încă înainte de formularea lui!

Bogdan GHEORGHÎĂ*

Politica în era digitală. Între perspective universale și realități românești

Sălcudeanu, T., Aparaschivei, P., Toader, F. *Bloguri, facebook și politică*, București: Tritonic, 2009, 208 p.

O carte apărută în anul 2009 la Editura Tritonic vine să completeze cumva strălucit nu foarte dezvoltata literatură românească în domeniul “new media”. “Bloguri, facebook și politică” al cărei editor este Dorina Guțu, sub a cărei îndrumare au lucrat mai tinerii Tudor Sălcudeanu, Paul Aparaschivei și Florența Toader, completează câteva pietre de temelie în zona spațiului on line de la noi. După ce autori precum Sorin Tudor cu “Politica 2.0.08: politica marketingului politic” sau Dorina Guțu cu “New media”, cărți apărute în 2008 tot la Editura Tritonic, deschiseseră privirii publicului românesc în mod sistematizat cercetări în această zonă, asistăm la noi concluzii din partea lucrării amintite în urma unei cercetări direcționate pe bloguri și facebook și legătura realizată între acestea și consumatorii de politică.

Așa cum observă Tudor Sălcudeanu în primul capitol al lucrării, blogurile “*au devenit din ce în ce mai importante având în vedere că: oameni politici sesizează potențialul lor în procesul de legitimare a puterii, instituții media tradiționale pierd monopolul asupra informației, ajungând uneori să fie influențate de lideri de opinie până acum absenți din spațiul public, iar apariția spațiului public virtual poate reprezenta atât un factor de încurajare a participării politice, cât și un risc de polarizare a societății în jurul unor ideologii opuse*” (p. 27). Desigur că asistăm la o creștere a importanței pe care pe de o parte consumatorii iar pe de altă parte ofertanții o acordă acestor noi canale de transmitere a mesajelor în politica românească. Iar importanța nu e data de numărul adică de cantitatea de indivizi care accesează internetul cât de calitatea accesărilor. Altundeva, același autor notează: “*trebuie să recunoaștem deschis faptul că această coagulare pe criterii ideologice reprezintă oportunitatea politicianilor de a intra în contact nemijlocit cu nucleul dur al propriului electorat și de a-și forma o bază de militanți. Efectul de întărire este asumat atât de utilizatori cât și de către bloggerii politici, iar rolul major al blogosferei politice autohtone nu este cel de convingere a indeciziilor ci de menținere a dialogului direct cu cei care pot forma opinia nehotărâților*” (p. 76).

Lucrarea pornește de la trei ipoteze majore. Mai întâi că “blogurile politice românești stabilesc conexiuni mai degrabă cu bloguri care împărtășesc aceeași ideologie decât cu altele”. Apoi că “tendința de polarizare va crește de-a lungul timpului”. Și, nu în ultimul rând că “o rețea de bloguri politice coagulează în jurul ei mai degrabă un grup omogen de utilizatori, în acord cu ideologia dominantă”. Verificarea ipotezelor – așa cum recunosc și autorii – nu s-a putut baza pe un aparat de analiză standardizat, verificat și rodat în alte cercetări având în

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vedere noutatea demersului. Dar lucrarea celor trei autori pare valoroasă privită tocmai prin prisma acestui aspect. Autorii sunt conștienți de faptul că demersul pe care și l-au asumat poate fi supus criticii dar nevoia de studii pe acest domeniu este esențială pentru înțelegerea valențelor comunicării politice azi când nu mai vorbim doar despre afișe, mesaje și clipuri, ci, poate cu o mai mare apăsare despre blog, cont de facebook, rețele sociale, youtube etc.

De la clarificarea unor termeni folosiți în “blogosferă” textul curge către prezentarea câtorva “bloggeri” și caracteristicilor blogurilor lor. Astfel, Paul Aparaschivei inventariază câteva bloguri ale politicianilor români și, pe baza analizelor sale, trage câteva concluzii care își dovedesc valabilitatea în cazul alegerilor din 2009. Lăsăm însă plăcerea descoperirii acestora celor care se vor aventura în lectura textului tot așa cum analiza extrem de interesantă a blogurilor europarlamentarilor merită să-și desconspire prin lectura textului potențialul explicativ al succesului candidaților.

Florența Toader se apleacă asupra fenomenului Barack Obama. Poate niciodată în istoria comunicării online reverberațiile nu au fost atât de puternice ca în cazul lui Obama înainte și în timpul campaniei prezidențiale. Cât de mult l-a ajutat pe Obama “rețeaua cu 250 de milioane de fețe” la câștigarea alegerilor este una din reflecțiile la care ne invită autoarea cu rigoarea statisticilor și cifrelor ce atestă o muncă importantă. *“Victoria nu ar fi fost posibilă (n.n. pentru Obama) în lipsa unei strategii solide în care folosirea internetului și ideea de schimbare au ocupat o poziție cheie”* (p.162).

Cercetările celor trei autori se transformă într-o lucrare omogenă sub aspectul noutății demersului. Cele trei perspective alcătuiesc împreună o lucrare credem de bază în explicațiile felului în care poate fi folosit onlineul în comunicarea politică. O carte utilă studenților dar și specialiștilor și chiar a oamenilor politici, o carte valoroasă prin deschiderea de drum pe care o încearcă, “Bloguri, facebook și politică” pare înainte de toate o excelentă introducere în cercetările onlineului din România. O lucrare cu un potențial explicativ solid bazată pe o metodologie clar explicată. O carte care se constituie într-un generos punct de pornire pentru explorări ulterioare dacă ar fi să ne luăm după cuvintele cu care ne “amenință” elegant editoarea: *“Va urma!”*

Ceremonia de acordare a titlului de
Doctor Honoris Causa
profesorului Jan Sadlak

Remus PRICOPIE*

***Laudatio* of Professor Jan Sadlak on the
Occasion of the Ceremony of Awarding the
Title of Doctor Honoris Causa by the
National School of Political Studies and Public Administration**

Professor Sadlak has more than twenty-five years of experience in the field of higher education, international relations and economics. He is a member of the editorial boards of leading journals in the fields of higher education and social policy, among which, Higher Education Management (published by OECD). He is a member of governing and advisory boards of various organizations, such as: ESMU-European Centre for Strategic Management of Universities, Belgium, and the Scientific Board of the Higher Education Management Program, at the Danube University Krems, Austria. He holds a Ph.D. in Educational Administration and Comparative Education from the SUNY / University of Buffalo, USA, and a M.A. in Economics from “Oskar Lange” Academy of Economics in Wroclaw, Poland. He was awarded several high-level distinctions and five honorary doctorates (Doctor Honoris Causa), among which, one from “Babes-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca and one from “Lucian Blaga” University of Sibiu.

He was the Director of UNESCO – European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES) in Bucharest and Representative of UNESCO in Romania (1999–2009). He is currently Vice-Rector for International Cooperation at the Warsaw Academy of Social Sciences and Humanities. He is a Visiting Professor at the Faculty of European Studies of “Babes-Bolyai” University in Cluj-Napoca. In October 2009, he was elected as the President of the IREG Observatory on Academic Ranking and Excellence.

On May 27th, 2010, Professor Jan Sadlak was awarded the title of Doctor Honoris Causa by the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, Bucharest, Romania. The ceremony took place at the Central University Library of Bucharest. We reproduce in this number of the Romanian Journal of Communication and Public Relations, the *Laudatio* speech given by Professor Remus Pricopie, Dean of the College of Communication and Public Relations, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, and the Acceptance speech given by Professor Jan Sadlak.

* Professor, Dean of the College of Communication and Public Relations, National School of Political Studies and Public Administration.

Your Excellences,
 Dear Members of the Parliament,
 Dear Ministers,
 Distinguished Guests,
 Ladies and Gentlemen,
 Dear Colleagues and Students,
 Dear Professor Sadlak,

Please, allow me to begin with a confession. Among the many tasks that I have undertaken with deep joy and emotion during my career, this one holds a special place. It is not only the academic community of SNSPA that holds Professor Sadlak in high esteem, this great assembly is the undeniable proof that he has won the respect and admiration of many Romanian and international personalities of the academic and cultural world, of scientists, diplomats, and politicians. Some of them have joined us today; those who have not been able to, have sent dozens of congratulation messages, acknowledging the remarkable achievements of a remarkable personality. I am glad and honored to have been the one called upon to portray, in a few words, the profile of an outstanding individual, that has already become part of the international academic elite.

However, I come before you today not without certain unease. First of all, most of you have long known the person we celebrate here today, have worked with him, have grown to appreciate him and developed their own image of *who Jan Sadlak is*.

Alas! no speech would be able to include all these perspectives. And then, considering the complex personality and accomplishments of Jan Sadlak, I would like to think that anyone asked to write this *Laudatio* would have felt a little anxious because of the challenge undertaken. Therefore, should you feel that this *Laudatio* has come short of capturing all the elements, all the nuances needed to complete such a complex portray, please give help me and, during today's celebrations, step in and emphasize those aspects that have escaped me or which I may not know. I believe that in this way we'll be able to complete our mission for today: respectively, to portray the academic, professional and moral profile of Professor Jan Sadlak.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Looking at the blank piece of paper raised an unavoidable question: Where to start? Should I begin with the moment I met Professor Sadlak, should I begin by introducing his works of reference in higher education or should I start by underlying his achievements in international higher education?

Reflecting on these options, I have decided to begin with my first contact with Jan Sadlak. It was not a face-to-face meeting, but a "literary" one, in the Library of Congress in Washington D.C., some years ago, when I was working on the paper that my mentor at George Washington University, Graduate School of Education and Human Development, Professor Jim Williams, had asked me to write on rebuilding the history and evolution of the Romanian universities. There, in the library, I found two excellent works:

1. "Planning of Higher Education in Countries With a Centrally Planned Socioeconomic System: Case Study of Poland and Romania", Jan Sadlak's PhD dissertation, defended in 1988 at the State University of New York at Buffalo, before a Committee comprising Professor Philip G. Altbach, Professor Bruce D. Johnstone and Professor Gail P. Kelly, all three worldwide leading personalities in International Higher Education, and

2. “Higher Education in Romania, 1860-1990: Between Academic Mission, Economic Demands and Political Control”, also authored by Jan Sadlak, and published by the State University of New York at Buffalo, in November 1990.

Before talking about the works themselves, I would like to make an observation. Unfortunately, in the collection of the Library of Congress, there are a surprisingly small number of papers and books written about Romania, in general, and about the Romanian higher education, in particular. Among the authors present there, I should mention: Cezar Birzea, Mihai Botez, Dumitru Chitoran, George Dinca, Paul Dobrescu, Mihai Korka, Mircea Malita, Andrei Marga, Adrian Miroiu, Ioan Mihailescu, Vasile Puscas, Ana Maria Sandi, Jan Sadlak, and only a few several others. Jan Sadlak was the only author who was not Romanian and who constantly wrote about the Romanian academic system, before and after 1989.

Why have I mentioned these two works of Professor Sadlak? The first work, *Planning of Higher Education in Countries With a Centrally Planned Socioeconomic System: Case Study of Poland and Romania* is remarkable through its richness in statistical data and facts about two of the communist countries of that time, all analyzed in a critical manner. I appreciate his efforts to gather all that plethora of statistical information about Romania in a time when transparency was not a value. Going beyond the empirical research conducted by the doctoral student Jan Sadlak, the reader may notice the bold and elegant manner in which the concept of planning in higher education (a concept borrowed from the so-called “Soviet model”, which has its roots in the Marxist-Leninist ideology, and according to which education should have the social and cultural role in the transformation of the Communist societies) was criticized and exposed as a tool for the control of the academic community by the central power. The array of transformations of universities in Poland and Romania is carefully reconstructed and analyzed starting with 1947, mainly focusing on the sensitive relations between the new political regime in the two countries and the classical academic values (academic freedom and university autonomy). The organization of the universities, the manner in which curricula were designed along with the relationship between academia and the communist regime, all came under the scrutiny of the then doctoral student Jan Sadlak. The multidisciplinary dissertation makes use of specific scientific instruments, traditionally employed by historians, economists, experts in international comparative education and in political science. This work, which has never been published in Romanian, is today one of the few documents in a wider international array that try to explain what happened in the higher education sector in two of the communist countries, from the late ‘40s until the ‘80s.

The second work, *Higher Education in Romania, 1860-1990: Between Academic Mission, Economic Demands and Political Control*, published by the State University of New York at Buffalo, in November 1990, has its own significant contributions to the field of higher education, not only by presenting new data, but also through its unique perspective and the year the work was published.

In 1990, Romania had begun to recover from a 42-year communist dictatorship. We were in a time when we tried to find way, while passing, on one hand, through effervescent moments fueled by the desire to find normality, but on the other hand, through confusing moments, fueled by fear that we may be powerless in our attempt to rebuild what we had lost. At that time, Romania was in great need of points of reference and of support. The work of Jan Sadlak has both the historical landmarks from which the reconstruction of higher education system in Romania was to start, and the moral support and encouragement that Romania needed

in order to be able to pass through a new process of institutional transformation. It is more than a point of reference and moral support when a foreign researcher reminded us, Romanians, in 1990 that our universities had hosted professors such as Mihail Kogalniceanu, Victor Babes, Ion Cantacuzino, Spiru Haret, Nicolae Iorga, and the list goes on. It was only with great confidence that Romanians could think about the future when the same author reminded us that the endeavor of Alexandru Ioan Cuza to redefine modern Romanian higher education by founding Romanian universities in Iasi and Bucharest was one of the most visible and complex processes in the 19th Century in Europe. The same international authority, Jan Sadlak, made Romanians even more secure about their positive evolution when he let us know that, in fact, although communists tortured the Romanian academic community, they did not succeed in destroying the spirit of *academia*, and that, under the communist regime, the main science and engineering higher education institutions have managed to maintain their international academic reputation. This also represents one of the key reasons why Romania became, in 1981, one of the main attractions for foreign students. The author also reminded us that, during the communist regime, Romania had the chance to have appointed a minister of education like Mircea Malita, a well-known personality in the area of higher education and research, who had the wisdom, authority and the influence to establish and maintain UNESCO-CEPES in Bucharest – UNESCO's specialized center for promoting policies for higher education in the European area.

I have selected a short paragraph from Dr. Sadlak's work to exemplify the way the author referred to the Romanian academic community in 1990: "[...] students and some of their teachers and other academics, especially those in Bucharest, during the events that occurred at the end of December 1989, acted as vanguards of the revolution which, with the support of the army, brought down the communist regime in Romania. It shows that opposition is possible and that, despite long indoctrination, intellectual isolation and physical intimidation, there are some members of the academic community who share a genuine desire for academic freedom, truth and excellence in teaching and research, who feel the need for the respect of academic autonomy, and who want to prevent universities from being used mainly for political ends or narrowly interpreted economic needs. It looks that their persistence in the struggle for democratic changes has not been diminished by current internal political strife and economic difficulties". The author does not make any empty statements, but comes up with clear data and evidence, placing the Romanian education system in a matrix rigorously built on scientific arguments.

Unfortunately, this document was not published in Romanian, either. However, it was familiar to the Romanian policy and decision makers who started the reform process in the early '90s, and who integrated many ideas contained in Jan Sadlak's work into the public policy documents they had drawn up.

After reading these two works, I was wondering who Jan Sadlak really was. Sure, I knew at that time that he was the Director of UNESCO-CEPES, but I did not have enough biographical details in order to understand the real value of his scientific contributions and his interest for Romania before and after 1989. I have learned all these over time, and many of the details presented here were told to me by Professor Sadlak himself, as for example, his first experience in Romania in 1974. At that time, young Sadlak was one of the first UNESCO international officials who came to Bucharest following the establishment of the UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education – CEPES in 1972. Prior to this position, Jan Sadlak

had received an M.A. degree in Economics in 1968 from the “Oskar Lange” Academy of Economics in Wroclaw, Poland (currently called the Wroclaw University of Economics). He had also obtained a Postgraduate Diploma from the Faculty of Social and Economic Sciences of the University of Zurich, Switzerland, where he had studied between 1971-1972. From 1972 to 1974, Dr. Sadlak worked as a senior assistant at the Faculty of Management and Organization at the Technical University of Wroclaw, in Poland.

Six years of experience at UNESCO–CEPES have left a significant mark on the academic and professional career of the young international official. In the UNESCO–CEPES, Dr. Sadlak was able to focus with professionalism and from an international perspective on higher education issues, using the comparative approach as the main tool. Here, he came into contact with the field literature, and was able to identify the main trends of thought of the time. Last but not least, here he also had the opportunity to get in contact with many personalities in the field of education and with their work.

This immersion into the world of international higher education has increased Dr. Sadlak’s interest in advancing the research of the field. Thus, between 1983 and 1985 we find Dr. Sadlak at the School of Education, from the State University of New York at Buffalo / University of Buffalo, USA, as a research and teaching assistant and a Ph.D. student. Between 1985 and 1988, Dr. Sadlak served as Executive Secretary of the Standing Conference of Rectors, Presidents and Vice-Chancellors of the European Universities – CRE, Geneva, Switzerland, and, between 1989-1992, as a Visiting Scholar and Associate Professor at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education / University of Toronto, Canada. In 1992, he returns to UNESCO where he is appointed as Senior Programme Specialist and Chief of the Section for Higher Education Policy and Reform in UNESCO, Paris, until 1999 when, Federico Mayor, UNESCO Director-General at the time (1987-1999), granted him the high responsibilities of leading UNESCO–CEPES and of representing UNESCO in Romania. This mission concluded with the retirement of Professor Sadlak in July 2009.

When I learned more about the origins and nature of the scientific foundation of his achievements, I focused with even greater interest on analyzing his academic work. Thus, I discovered that most of Jan Sadlak’s works represent a kind of barometer of the higher education in Romania, in the region and, at the same time, a sort of a road map of what should be done in the future. Examples are numerous, but as my time is limited, I will share with you only one:

In September 1992, at The International Conference on the History of Universities, in Gent, Belgium, Dr. Sadlak presented the paper called “Students in Poland and Romania since the End of World War II: Highly-qualified Manpower, New Intelligentsia or Just Students”. In 34 pages Dr. Sadlak shows, the historical evolution of the Polish and Romanian students during the Communist regimes in Warsaw and Bucharest, a complex analysis based on abundant, but carefully selected, historical data. Certainly, the paper has an exceptional value, especially if we consider it in the context of the present. After the communist regime ended, it seemed necessary to evaluate what had happened and to begin to reconstruct decades of history of higher education. However, if one would re-read this paper now, almost twenty years after it was written, he/she would be surprised not only by the ability of the author to understand the past, but especially that of decrypting the future. Yet again, to avoid altering the author’s message, I chose to exemplify this with an excerpt from the conclusions of this paper, published, mind this, in September 1992: “The adaptation of higher education to the rapidly advancing economic and scientific integration of Europe implies the need for the re-

adjustment of students and studying to these developments. The introduction of the credit system, as well as undergraduate and graduate degrees based on the model used by the American research universities, is one example of the direction of this process. More importantly, the on-going overhaul of higher education in Poland and Romania should be seen as a part of the structural transformation of these countries to the iron rules of market economy and development of democratic society, based on adequately educated middle-class. This process will have to deal with such student questions as what proportion of college-age population should attend higher education and to which level a society is ready to share the cost of historically non-tuition public higher education. It is not yet clear what answers will be formulated. The search for socially acceptable and economically feasible solutions is hampered by the disastrous situation of the public purse, lack of accreditation mechanisms and legislative process and frequent changes in composition of the governments. It can only be expected that despite all these difficulties the conditions in which students will function as essential member of any viable academic common societal good as highly-qualified manpower and educated members of society. It can also be hoped that their country's historical experience in this regard will be a lesson and an inspiration in this endeavor".

Reading this text, now in 2010, it is not hard to see that, in fact, in a paragraph written in 1992, Dr. Sadlak had described the areas in higher education that were subject to structural reforms in Romania and in many other countries in this region. The transferable credit system, the restructuring of the cycles of study into a more flexible undergraduate, graduate, doctoral-type formula, the need to identify alternative financing sources for higher education, such as the introduction of tuition fees in the state-financed universities and the implementation of student loan schemes, the massification of higher education and the introduction of university assessment systems, the development of the student-centered education, etc., are all educational policies promoted by various governments over the past two decades and identified as possible solutions by Dr. Sadlak as early as 1992.

I feel the need to make a clarification. It is true that Professor Sadlak has spent a good part of his career writing about the higher education systems in Romania, Poland and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to think that this was the central axis of his research interests. If we take a look at the topics studied and promoted through academic research by Professor Jan Sadlak we'll see that he was equally interested in academic networks, comparative approaches between Western and Eastern countries, higher education systems in OECD countries, transfer of technology, science parks and centers of excellence (a topic that we now talk about quite extensively, while Dr. Sadlak wrote about it in 1992), diversification of higher education (1994), cooperation between higher education and industry (1997), the financing of higher education, globalization of higher education (1998), innovation, academic freedom, academic values, public responsibility, transparency, international rankings, and much more.

In addition, I think that, in assessing Professor Sadlak's contribution to the advancement of higher education in the European Region and worldwide, one must consider not only what he has written over the years, but also the platforms of discussion and cooperation that he created or supported. A relevant example would be *Higher Education in Europe*, first published in 1976 as a bulletin of information on higher education and developed over time in an important scientific journal, a landmark in the European area of higher education.

Another aspect that I would like to emphasize is that the young Ph.D. candidate in Comparative Education and Educational Administration has also left deep marks at the School of Education, of the State University of New York at Buffalo, USA. I had the privilege to visit this university several times and to meet Professor Bruce Johnstone, one of the scientific referents for the doctoral dissertation of Jan Sadlak. There I was told that, in many ways, Professor Sadlak had opened the collaboration between the research center at Buffalo and various other research centers in Europe, including CEPES.

After his return to UNESCO, in 1992, Dr. Sadlak served as a program specialist in the Division of Higher Education, contributing to the progress of various projects of significant impact. Perhaps among the most relevant is the First World Conference on Higher Education held in 1998 in Paris. Federico Mayor, Director-General of UNESCO at that time, appreciated the contribution of Dr. Sadlak at that international event and, as a proof of his appreciation, he granted him the high responsibility of leading UNESCO-CEPES in Bucharest and to be UNESCO's Representative in Romania. Returned to Bucharest, a place already familiar and dear, Dr. Sadlak continued his work of promoter and catalyst for the new ideas in higher education.

During the 10 years spent in Bucharest, Jan Sadlak organized at UNESCO-CEPES, in collaboration with various national, regional and/or international bodies, 64 international events on: bilingual university; networking for the European space of higher education; institutional approaches to teacher education (2000); quality of higher education; inter-regional relations in education, science, culture and communication; new higher education institutions and their role in local and regional development; Lisbon Recognition Convention; statistical indicators for higher/tertiary education; virtual university (2001); brain drain and the academic and intellectual labor market; governance and management of higher education; indicators for institutional and program accreditation in higher education; strategic management in universities; statistical indicators for quality assessment of higher education institutions – ranking and league tables methodologies; the role of higher education in the 21st Century; European model of management of higher education; quality assurance and the development of study programs (2002) and the list continues and concludes in 2009 with the organization of the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in the European Region: “Access, Values, Quality and Competitiveness”, convened in the context of the 2009 *World Conference on Higher Education*, organized in Paris.

Most of these events were supported by a series of articles that appeared in the 40 issues of Higher Education in Europe published during the mandate of Dr. Sadlak at CEPES and in dozens of publications such as monographs, working papers, studies on higher education, studies on science and culture, etc. To this list we could add the contribution that UNESCO – CEPES, under the leadership of Professor Sadlak, has had in the development and works of the Lisbon Recognition Convention and the Bologna Process.

Of course, the quantity is not the most significant element of this presentation. And, of course, considering Professor Sadlak's work – it couldn't be. But what I really think we need to quantify – and that should not make the object of a *Laudatio*, but of a major scientific research – is the impact that all these conferences, seminars, workshops, scientific journals and publications created and / or coordinated by Jan Sadlak produced not only in this region, but also worldwide. It will be a duty for us, the young generation, to undertake this task and continue what Professor Sadlak has started.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

July 15, 2009 was Director Jan Sadlak's last working day at the UNESCO-CEPES. It was a little past 6 p.m., and I was working in my office at the Ministry of Education. I knew from Dr. Sadlak that he had reserved all that afternoon to clean up his office and organize the stuff to be shipped to Paris – mostly books, of course. I thought it might be nice to keep him some company. So, I got two cans of beer (*well, we were off-duty, after all!*), and I went to the UNESCO – CEPES. As always, he was glad to see me, although I slowed him down for the next couple of hours. Surrounded by books and documents, at some point we came across a letter that Dr. Sadlak had received in 1991 from Edward Shils, a distinguished sociologist of the University of Chicago and of the Oxford University, at that time, editor of a leading research journal – *Minerva – A Review of Science, Learning and Policy*. The letter referred to an article that Dr. Sadlak had submitted to this journal, and Edward Shils, who was known for his sharp, straightforward style, was returning it for revisions. Dr. Sadlak confessed to me: "It was not easy to accept his straightforward criticisms, but you could not, but admire his effort to study your manuscript. I keep the correspondence with him related to my papers as a testimony of the way academic critique should be carried out. It was a hard, but very useful experience of academic maturity". The article referred to was published in 1991, under the title "The Use and Abuse of the University: Higher Education in Romania, 1860-1990", and is a piece of academic work that is worth reading.

Although I knew Dr. Sadlak's work style, it was then and there that I realized success is not only work, but work well done. In the same time, it occurred to me that it also takes courage, and maybe *inspiration*, not necessarily for developing great ideas, but mostly for developing great *partnerships*. Partnerships for life, with great, exceptional people, that could teach you a thing or two, and with whom to explore your *great ideas*. I remember how Dr. Sadlak has expressed so many times his appreciation for Rene Maheu and Federico Mayor, exceptional Directors General of UNESCO, who are probably now part of the world cultural heritage for their ideas and their deeds. I also remember Dr. Sadlak telling me how he had met Clark Kerr, an American professor of economics and academic administrator, the first chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley and twelfth president of the University of California. More than a few times I witnessed Dr. Sadlak expressing his deep appreciation and respect for Professor Malita, as well as for Denis L. Meadows, significant member of the Club of Rome and co-author of the well-known report *Limits to Growth*. And these are but a few of the people that Dr. Sadlak holds in high esteem.

As proofs that Dr. Sadlak has been successful in his endeavors, there are the numerous acknowledgements from international organizations – from being accepted in different Academies of Science (for example, the European Academy of Arts, Science and Humanities, Paris, France; the World Academy of Arts and Science, San Francisco, USA) and prestigious associations (such as the European Centre for Strategic Management of Universities, Brussels, Belgium; International Ranking Experts Group – of which, in fact, he is the president), to becoming member of the editorial boards of leading journals in the field of higher education and social policy, among which: *Higher Education Management* [published by OECD], *Science and Society* [published by the European Academy of Sciences, Arts and Humanities]; *Journal of Studies in International Education* [published by the Netherlands Organization for International Cooperation in Higher Education (NUFFIC)].

Last, but not least, proofs of the great appreciation that Professor Sadlak enjoys are also the other five Titles of Doctor Honoris Causa that he has been awarded by universities from Romania, Ukraine and the Russian Federation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that it is our responsibility, as academics, to acknowledge the exceptional work of exceptional people. And, at the same time, it is our duty to bring excellence into the Romanian academic community. By awarding to Professor Sadlak the Title of Doctor Honoris Causa, we not only acknowledge his remarkable achievements, but also bring him closer to the academic community of SNSPA and, why not, of the other Romanian universities.

Thank you very much for your attention!

Jan SADLAK*

Acceptance Speech at the Ceremony of Awarding the Title of Doctor Honoris Causa by the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration

Stimate Rector SNSPA,
Stimate Decan,
Stimați Miniștri, Rectori, Membrii al Parlamentu Romaniei,
Dragi colegi din UNESCO-CEPES,
Dragi studenți,
Doamnelor și Domnilor,

Sunt profund onorat de acordarea acestei înalte distincții a prestigioasei instituții a învățământului superior românesc care este *Școala Națională de Studii Politice și Administrative din București*, (SNSPA). În octombrie 2010, SNSPA va celebra aniversarea celor 20 de ani de la crearea sa și în acest context anticipez felicitările și urările mele.

Ca tema pentru această scurtă alocuțiune am ales se împărtășesc câteva reflecții legate de impactul universității în formarea Europei și al spațiului european, referitoare în special la Europa centrală și de est. În încheiere, aș dori să prezint câteva observații personale care pot fi valabile în contextul dezvoltării învățământului universitar românesc.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The university we know today has been the European invention. In a certain way the history of Europe, practically since Middle Ages, can see its universities as one of contributing factors to defining its identity. Even if many aspects of mission, structure and functioning reveal a national histories and context, the universities in Europe has some common traits. You have such an agreeable feeling when you cross the doors of main building of any major European university.

An explanation of this spiritual overtone might be a consequence that already from its inception; the university represented the germ of the idea of multinational community. It should however be pointed out that all teaching was in Latin a *lingua franca* of not only of the Roman Catholic Church but also of political and intellectual life in most parts of Europe.

Some historians argue that the university, which institutional structure since the Middle Ages was based on “colleges of masters and scholars”, has also another internal arrangement that of the “*nationes*”. It could not be excluded that it is this group representation has been a nurturing setting for an idea of “the nation” which later on, particularly in the course of the 19th century, was reinforced by a concept of the “nation-state”. It is also a period of crucial change in the concept of the university. This new way of doing higher learning and science

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is a so-called Humboldtian model of the university. It has rapidly been a prevailing concept for European universities. Interestingly, more technocratic and centralizing model of organization of higher learning introduced by Napoleon has not found the followers.

The founder of this new model was Wilhelm von Humboldt (1767-1835) who initiated, around 1810, a major reform of the University of Berlin, after a long period of decline. The purpose of the reform was to free the university from direct state intervention [a permanent feature of relations between the university and the authority to which I shall return in a later part of my presentation]. The reformers were arguing for transformation of the University of Berlin by referring to two principles – *Lerhfreiheit* [freedom to teach] and *Lernfreiheit* [freedom to study]. It is this Humboldtian interpretation of knowledge creation and its dissemination, greatly inspired by ideals and thinking of the Enlightenment, which gave basis to two pillars of contemporary higher education – institutional autonomy and academic freedom.

Adherence to these two “freedoms”, to be enjoyed both by teachers and students, was conceived in order to assure an organic and mutually reinforcing mechanism of free circulation of knowledge between research and teaching. The Humboldtian model of the university was a role model for many universities and institutions of higher learning, and not only in Europe but also in the United States [John Hopkins University] and Japan. It had also an inspirational value for later formulation of human and cultural rights, which is one of the pillars for any types of the European democratic construct. Not to mention their universal relevance.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

There should be little doubt that higher education and science, while developing according to its own rules and pace, is also a reflection of economic, social and cultural conditions in a given region. This is particularly relevant to keep in mind when looking at the evolution of higher education in Central and Eastern Europe. While being an integral part of Europe, the region in the course of last two hundred years has experienced a string of dramatic changes in the nation state existence as well as political, economic, social order. All those factors and events had usually been accompanied by significant modifications of the borders, ethnic migrations as well as religious compositions.

A symbolic caption of the dimension of those changes is the fact that two consecutive world wars as well as the rise and fall of communism as a global ideology all have originated in this region. It was also a region in which the rise and fall of a particular state and the fate of its people and its social institutions was, for a most time during the last two centuries, linked to fate and interests as well as institutional structures of such imperial powers as the Habsburgs, the Ottoman, Prussian, and Russian as well as its aftermath the Soviet Union. Since the end of the 1980s, and in the context of democratic reforms and building of market economies, most of the countries in the region have also undertaken a set of profound reforms. Higher education was both the source and object of such reforms.

Those reforms were important to restore historical basic tenants of academic institutions which in many ways debased traditional organization of learning and science by incorporating the Soviet model. Some might argue nowadays that the Soviet model was nothing more than an ideological platitude but there is still evidence that some old structures and practices are present in institutional arrangements and academic life. It is understandable taking into consideration higher education is a “slow system”. It also means that if higher education in those countries is setting its sight on long-term success, it will need to be persistent, seek unconventional approaches and demonstrate willingness to implement them. It is the challenge for

those inside and outside of higher education or as we like to say nowadays involve various stakeholders. In my opinion the Bologna Process is a good guiding star for those reforms. As you know it is one of view truly pan-European projects [in which today participate 47 countries] and despite various difficulties it creates grounds for universities and other higher education institutions to play a key role to present-day challenges of Europe defined by globalization and knowledge economy.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

A major mission of any higher education institution deems to be called “the university” is human development. That is to produce people ever more able to function competently and ethically in their personal, professional and community lives. They, graduates of our universities and other higher learning institutions, represent the human, intellectual and cultural capital of our countries. They are engines of cultural advancement and economic development. They are key component of the so-called “creative class”. This new social category is described as those working in science and engineering, research and development, technology-based industries, the arts, music, culture, aesthetic and design industries, and in the knowledge-based professions of health care, finance and law. Between 25 and 30 percent of a total human capital in the highly economic performing nations currently work in these sectors (Florida and Tinagli, 2004).

It needs to be mentioned that in current globalized world culture is an “organizing bond” which should facilitate human interactions and contributes to “social cohesion” and creation of “social capital”. This is why talking about a “European culture” is not less important than a discussion about the common market and common currency... even now when standing of Euro is being undermined.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is quite evident that further development of Europe cannot be seen without understanding of a complex reality which is its richness but can be a source of tensions when control over territory is of lesser importance than control and access to all kinds of markets, ability to generate and use knowledge as well as a capacity to develop new technology and human resources. It is more than ever clear that a crucial question is human capital to which we can also add a cultural capital.

Higher education and its various institutions, despite their far reaching academic and non-academic differences, are not only the place for creation of essential technological advantage. If they are as expected to play due role in society they need to find the way to balance searching of greater scientific competence while preserving intellectual independence as well as represent an expression of cultural and social commitment of a multitude of the stakeholders. As such they have an important role to fulfill in order to equip us better when we deal, individually and collectively, with challenges of this “intimately entwined reality”, including the problems related to realization of educational aspirations of national minorities reflecting moral unity and cultural diversity.

Rich history of Europe has demonstrated that the only possibility for a perpetual peace among men is when reciprocal tolerance is a dominant principle of human, institutional and international relations. And as already observed Voltaire; “emancipated minds are the most praiseworthy element of unity”.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

“In Europe happiness ends at Vienna” Emil Cioran, a great Romanian French philosopher wrote when Europe was so dramatically divided by ideologically-predetermined and militarily imposed division of Europe for “the West” and “the East”. But even at those sad days there were people who tried hard to use emerging “windows of opportunities”. Here I have in mind Academician Mircea Malitza who ably used his vision of academic international cooperation and made possible that in 1972 was opened in Bucharest the UNESCO European Centre for Higher Education (UNESCO-CEPES). It is serving this centre which has brought me to Romania and has significant impact on my academic interests and professional development. Therefore I would like to say how grateful I am for this opportunity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me conclude this presentation with few remarks which I would like to be seen as a “whish list” from an engaged observer of Romanian higher education, which, as you know, I am for quite a number of years. My observations are based foremost on analyses of those systems and institutions which were able to affirm and expand their relevance and academic performance. My list is neither exhaustive nor hierarchical and is addressed to decision-makers, policy-makers and academics.

Firstly, I would like to make an observation addressed to decision-makers and legislators. It needs to be stressed that a strong support of government and politicians to higher education and research is essential but it needs to be associated with willingness to offer a meaningful degree of academic and research autonomy so that they can operate and achieve the goals. It should be pointed out that universities do not respond well to top-down commandments from the governments. Ministerial plans enunciated from high levels are often shot down even before the ink is dry. The governmental “management” of higher education now needs more than ever to be light rather than heavy, soft rather than hard, and foremost indirect rather than direct. Governments and legislators have to learn anew that they have to show greater confidence and trust in their universities while keeping close eye on they overall performance and effective administration. This requires setting clear rules and regulations, in other words – more steering than micro-management. Of course, a sustained at predictable level of financial support for fairly long period of time is also needed.

Secondly, let me address the academics by making an observation about a “successful university” [evidently I refer to all types of higher education institutions]. It looks that particularly important in their quest to such status of respectability is when they have been able and encouraged to develop a stronger institution-wide governance capacity, one that integrates faculty, administrators, and students. They have generally strengthened the position of the rector, the dean, and the department head, locating some authority and initiative in those persons. We may say they have strengthened personal authority, the kind we usually associate with the concept of leadership. It sounds like a paradox but the quality of leadership becomes a major challenge for democratic systems and autonomous organizations. And trusting people to do the job you have given them is one of the most difficult aspects of leadership.

A specificity of “academic leadership” is that it should encompass entrepreneurialism, transparency and ethical dimension as well as collegiality. But collegiality – that much treasured resource of traditional universities – needs no longer be biased toward defense of the *status quo* but instead to be oriented toward change. The successful academic leadership relies in fostering professionalism and promoting excellence in teaching coupled with continual upgrading of

quality standards. It means that selection, promotion and retention of faculty, researchers, and students are based on truly meritocratic policies and practices.

And the last observation concerns a recurrent issue in the long history of the relations between the university and the authority. The lesson is that an important precondition of mutually beneficial relations as well as to achieve good academic performance is to respect the university autonomy in its four dimensions – organizational, financial, staff matters as well as in academic matters. The lesson we have learned from the communist times is that stifling of liberty of decision, liberty to innovate are disastrous for the individual as well as society and its institutions, including the university. [These four dimensions have been identified by the European University Association for elaboration of a scorecard of university autonomy – aimed at benchmarking university autonomy on the national level across Europe. The launched of the scorecard is due to take place in the winter of 2011].

There is no doubt that Romanian universities are making efforts to strength their capacity to respond to societal expectations and develop themselves in order to find a due place in a fast-changing world. And as indicated in a study presented in November 2009 by the team producing the well-known “Shanghai ranking”, Romania is one of two other European countries [Slovakia and Ukraine] which could have at least one Top 500 University, taking into consideration its economic size measured by a total of its GDP and relative wealth measured by GDP per capita. Thus remains a question if policies, legislations and budgetary allocations are providing necessary framework for a further advancement of higher education in Romania. I leave it to your judgment if this is the case...

Doamnelor și Domnilor,

Vă mulțumesc foarte mult pentru prezența dumneavoastră și pentru atenția acordată.

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