

**MAPPING HETEROGENEITY:  
QUALITATIVE RESEARCH  
IN COMMUNICATION**

Loredana Ivan, Corina Daba-Buzoianu, Brenden Gray (Editors)  
*Mapping Heterogeneity: Qualitative research in Communication*

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Loredana Ivan,  
Corina Daba-Buzoianu,  
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# **MAPPING HETEROGENEITY: QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION**





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## **Part 1.**

# **REMARKS ON QUALITATIVE RESEARCH IN COMMUNICATION**



## Remarks on qualitative research in communication

Loredana Ivan  
Corina Daba-Buzoianu  
Brenden Gray

The international conference, *Qualitative Research in Communication*, held in 2013 at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest set out to explore a range of topics related to the qualitative research in communication including narrativity, social identity construction, media, framing, discourse analysis and semiotics, intercultural, organizational and counseling communication. Papers from a various range of national contexts were presented, a selection of which are compiled in this volume *Mapping Heterogeneity: Qualitative Research in Communication*. The conference is the result of several years of qualitative studies in communication conducted at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration and is already developing into a research project in which we aim to investigate the practices of qualitative research in communication in different cultural contexts. The volume does not focus on methodology, but rather gathers papers in which scholars have used qualitative methods in communication research.

Through the volumes' preliminary remarks we aim to introduce a set of critical signposts and questions into this heterogeneity. These are centered on the ontological status of qualitative research in communication; the conceptual implications of bringing the theory and practice and communication into contact with those of qualitative research.

By investigating the other's reality and by analyzing how the other gives meaning to life, qualitative research is strongly linked to cultural studies. Moreover, qualitative research highlights the relation between researcher and research, as it reveals how research is being represented in different cultural environments and the way the individual experience is revealed. Qualitative methodologies are products of the Western Europe and Nord American nineteen and twenty's century scholars (Taylor & Lindlof, 2013). These western epistemologies have had a significant influence on qualitative research in other countries, scholars arguing about the universalization of certain cultural elements used in interpreting qualitative data. This idea is grounded on the relation between the qualitative research and the representation of the colonized world (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and implicitly on the post-colonial and post-communist politics. Considering all these, this volume is the first in a series of studies in which we aim to investigate the practices of qualitative research in communication in different countries.

### **Constructing meanings**

Qualitative researchers are generally preoccupied with the reality of the 'field', and try to decipher it by investigating the representational construct. Researchers in communication are concerned with the role that social representations have in social reality regulation, and are aware of the fact that social representation compete

to monopolize this regulation. As the process of meaning-making has a significant importance for researchers in communication, qualitative research becomes crucial.

A special attention is being given to the relation power-text, with emphasize upon how power is encoded in texts. Generally, the analysis of texts are prioritized over the analysis of acts and performances because texts apprehend, “fix and frame” (Kress 2009, pp. 76-77). Social meaning is thus ‘read off’ text and situation is backgrounded. Given their interest in the constituting and legitimizing powers of language, communication researchers deal primarily with how texts represent and mediate social action. In contrast to traditional field researchers, discursive research seems to assume that the way that various texts ontologically mediate and shape says more about social reality itself than the phenomena that they are said to mediate and shape. Considering these, we may ask why communities of practice would seek to integrate the social and practical concerns of the social inquirer with the textual and discursive concerns of the communication inquirer.

Qualitative research in communication highlights the extent to which power is invested in language. Critical projects in this domain and those with claims to reflexivity would therefore aim to develop reliable methods to describe power-in-action, in social practice and therefore demonstrate how power is fixed in language. It should also take into consideration the fact that research text in itself potentially functions as an agent and actor and should investigate how it circulates, reproduces and frames, and how it is part of practice.

Qualitative studies in communication cannot, as Hammersley (2008, p. 15) might assert, simply fall into the comfortable relativist position that research is simply equivalent to other practices and that its outputs simply present “further versions of reality”. Instead, we can ask how research practices and texts invested with

legitimate power and authority are. The culturally constitutive role of language and discourse is often touted by qualitative research theorists (Lincoln & Denzin 2008, pp. 2-8) as a way to deal with this question. If researchers are at least aware of the effects of power in their work may have a greater reflexivity on their part. Researchers cannot assume that language simply describes and explains the social world but rather that it plays a crucial role in making it. Discourses not only have the role in producing mental conceptions and making visible the subjects' position, but further than that they construct social 'realities' and "interdiscursive hybridities" (Fairclough 2012, p. 180) and 'transform practices' (Van Leeuwen 2008, p. 5).

Given this, it is generally assumed by qualitative researchers that the methodologies that they deploy and the languages that they adopt are neither transparent nor politically neutral. Like other representational practices research is thoroughly ideological. We must not ignore the fact that research practices are grounded in their own cultural contexts. These unreflexive practices could implicitly promote the idea that knowledge producers are indifferent to the machinations of power. So where does the power in research practice actually sit? If it is true that research discourses play a symbolic role in the building of hegemony, consensus building and so on then how is this 'practically' and 'discursively' achieved? Further to this, under what conditions do qualitative practices become "genuinely reflexive" (Wacquant & Bourdieu 1992, pp. 69 -70).

But in what way all these deal with how qualitative researchers contribute genuinely, substantially and concretely to the improvement of human life and life in general? How do qualitative researchers deal with the colonizing propensities?

Although this volume is not providing answers to all these questions, it manages to reveal some of the practices in conducting

qualitative studies in different fields and in different cultural contexts (Romania, Poland, South Africa, Turkey, Greece, and France). The papers emphasize on how reality is being constructed and on how communication creates representations.

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## **Part 2.**

### **IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION AND SOCIAL MEANINGS**



# **Analyzing cultural identities in an intercultural historical approach: a critical discussion of the methodological assumptions**

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## **The identities of yesterday and of today**

Globalization and the new communication technologies have led to a chain of changes in the lives of societies and in the world of culture. Another factor that has contributed to these changes has been the increased intercultural communication, the fact that individuals and groups belonging to different cultural backgrounds travel from one corner of the world to another, they interact physically and virtually, work together and influence each

other. Undoubtedly, humankind undergoes an intricate process of acculturation, interference and hybridization of cultures, on an unprecedented historical scale. Such increasingly intense interactions between and across cultures have produced significant changes to their inner structures, and within the academic field, they have required new theoretical insights into the relation between national identities in transnational contexts. Hence, the changes that have occurred in societies and cultures have entailed not only changes in collective identities, in their internal configuration, but also in the theoretical models applied for their investigation.

For the purposes of our argument, it is instructive to mention a few directions for these changes. In the first place, it should be noted that globalization has triggered, paradoxically, a revived interest in national and ethnic identities (on the theoretical level), but also a generalized crisis of these types of identity (on a social level). The thinkers who have lately dealt with the theme of identity have reached a relative consensus and share the idea that in the contemporary world “a generalized crisis of identities has become a global phenomenon” (Huntington, 2004, p.16). Another frequent remark is that today we witness a disappearance of the previous forms of identity and a transition towards other forms of their manifestation and expression. National identity had a statute of preeminence in relation to the *small* identities, be them individual or of a group. Today, the hierarchies are reversed. Individual identities (multiple, constructed, invented, negotiated, liquid, temporary) overcome the national identity. This is a reliable indicator of the shift towards an identity which is no longer a predetermined attribute, but a cultural construction with variable geometry. Therefore, against the essentialist conceptions of yesterday according to which nation and national identity were as a predetermined support of social life, today “identity reveals to us as something that has to be invented

rather than something that has to be discovered” (Bauman, 2004, p.15). Moreover, European integrity is a process questioning the role of nation-state and the theme of national identities, gradually shifting the interest toward the problematic of European cultural identity, an emerging trans- or post-national identity.

In the wake of these changes, national identities appear to be complex and relative, rather than homogenous and absolute entities. Let us say also that cultural identities depend today more than ever on the image they build themselves up in the global communicational space. In this context, a proper understanding of national identities requires an *intercultural historical approach* and an outlook that is interdisciplinary, comparative and critical at the same time. The interactions and contacts between societies and cultures are phenomena that have occurred, with various intensities, all along human history. But intercultural histories have become indispensable today, when the level of most important processes is no longer “national”, but “global” (Demorgon, 2002, p. 323), and when the interactions and hybridizations between cultures have gathered momentum and have triggered implications much more relevant in comparison to the past. Intercultural approaches, that can offer us a new mental map of topicality, can also be projected retrospectively, in order to reconstruct a more complex and accurate image on the national past, helping to overcome ethnocentrism and limited visions.

### **The relation with the past, a sore point for the Romanian culture**

To start with, we are interested in seeing how the Romanian culture has dealt with these changes affecting the identity paradigms in the European space once postmodern thinking gained momentum. In Romania, these changes took place in post-communist

period, when heated debates were carried on the critical analysis of the cultural history and the redefinition of Romanian identity in relation to the evolution of ideas and European cultural paradigms. In this context, for the Romanian culture, always concerned mainly with its identity, an extra question arose. It is about the need to place our culture in the European context of interactions and influences it took shape and to remove the ideological distortions to which the issue of national identity was submitted under the communist regime (Boia, 1997). Many others took part in this major operation of *the critical reinterpretation and rewriting of the national cultural history*, aiming mainly to review and revise the critical evaluations imposed on certain personalities and cultural currents during the years of the communist regime.

At the same time, the relation with the pre-communist past, mainly with the inter-war period, rich on the level of spiritual creation, but also contradictory from the ideological viewpoint, was reproblematicized. Mainly in the case of authors having right-wing sympathies, communist historiography enforced a series of one-sided interpretations that had to be reviewed and corrected. Benefitting from the climate of free debates and a wide documentary support, intellectual and specialists from various domains have succeeded to write syntheses on modern Romanian culture, such as “critical histories” of Romanian literature (Manolescu, 2008) and of social and political thinking (Bădescu, 2002, Dungaciu, 2003), works that reconstruct and scrutinize relevant topics for understanding the national past (Schifirneț, 2007, Malița, 2010), as well as works opening up original interpretations and angles on our identity (Marino, 1995, Alexandrescu, 2000, 2008, Boia, 2012). It is symptomatic that in the last decades, the most vivid debates in the cultural and academic space (with intermittent reverberations also in the media space) were carried around two themes: the relation

with the national past and the relation with the Romanian and European identity (Martin, 2008).

Approaching these themes from the perspective of Romania's institutional adherence to the European Union, the historians and specialists of today have (re)discovered that the integration into the European cultural space represents the problematic matrix of the Romanian political thinking and action in the modern epoch. Romanian modern culture was situated in a space of interferences and multiple influences, between the West and the East, at the crossroads of various cultural differences. Romanian authors were interested in the issue of cultural differences and proposed theoretical models within the mainstream paradigms of the Western Europe. Thus, reconstructing the history of ideas in the Romanian space, we find ourselves inevitably in a position to reinterpret and to "recover" the identity paradigms developed by the Romanian thinkers in the interwar period. There are many arguments justifying this reproblematicization. In the first place, it is about the intrinsic theoretical value of those theories and the fact that they were developed from a natural explicitly assumed comparative and intercultural perspective. Many Romanian thinkers have defined and critically examined the Romanian identity in relation with the Western cultural model, seen as a reference system to the idea of cultural performance. Consequently, their axiological and methodological perspective can be useful today, although historical and geopolitical contexts have changed. Thus, they can inspire new researches on cultural identity, a theme reborn in the context of globalization and European integration.

The relation with the cultural works and identity paradigms of the past raises a series of methodological issues the studies of cultural history cannot circumvent. Therefore, it is necessary to unravel through a complex scrutiny the interaction between the

ideational content of these works, the historical context and the audience in their time of genesis. Moreover, it matters to know the relation between demarche of the interwar Romanian thinkers and the prevailing theoretical orientations in the European space. Starting from their affiliation to certain theoretical and identity paradigms of the time, it is also relevant to ask how the Romanian thinkers positioned themselves in the European and Romanian ideological picture. Taking one further step in this historical and hermeneutical analysis, we are interested to see if there is a relevant correlation between theoretical assumptions of those models and their ideological orientation. Let us not forget that it democratic regimes were in crisis and extremist currents cropped up, that Romania was crushed under the geopolitical pressure of the two totalitarianisms of the time, namely the Bolshevik and the fascist.

At long last, if we shift the point of observation to the current cultural context, it is important to see what meanings are acquired by these works/models/ texts when interpreted through the grid of the new structures of thought. What type of reading would be appropriate today to grasp the function these identity models fulfilled in the context of the interwar period? And to check up the validity of these Romanian models for analyzing identities and cultural differences, we should see to what extent we can use as research tools for the analysis of certain contemporary situations, taking into account the specific processes we witness (globalization, European integration, hybridization of cultures) and the ideological frameworks embracing today the issue of cultural identity.

The last question is the most challenging one, since the Romanian culture, being a culture of interferences, it produced a significant reflection on interculturalism. Nonetheless, as we know, the image of the cultural past is recomposed in terms of the current theoretical models of identity. Dominique Wolton (2003, p.



69) argues that a key issue of contemporary world is the nonviolent management of cultural differences, and to achieve this goal the cultures should build up “relational identities”, namely open identities for cooperation and dialogue with “the others” and not “shelter-identities”, closed and rejecting any dialogue. As we shall see, without getting completely free of ethnocentric and essentialist perspectives specific to the time, Romanian thinkers insisted on the influences and bridges among cultures, developing such relational models with significant current resonance and which can be used for understanding a world characterized by globalization and intercultural communication, but also by a generalized crisis of identity.

### **The Romanian culture, a canvass of contrasts**

If we try to revive, through a quick and schematic glimpse, the interwar Romanian culture, we shall come across a canvass of contrasts: clashing lines of thought and outlooks, aesthetic trends and extremely varied publications, sharp ideological polarizations, heated polemics. It was a living culture with outstanding scientific achievements in several areas, with systems of remarkable philosophical and social thinking, with highly elaborated artistic works. Usually, the authors who describe this epoch consider that it is crossed by several cleavages, such as the conflict between generations or the theoretical opposites (the rationalist, diversified trends were competing with the spiritualist, religious, psychoanalytic ones, etc.). The most significant cleavages concerned however the broad cultural and ideological currents, distributed along two main axes: modernism – traditionalism and Europeanism – autochthony (Georgiu, 2002, pp. 252-255).

When analyzing the identity paradigms, what really matters is their positioning on the last axis of opposites, namely the strategic relationship between national and European. Indeed, the

basic criterion differentiating these paradigms is the attitude they proposed toward the Western cultural models, toward the values and currents of ideas that came from the West. As we shall see, some thinkers believed that the Romanian identity structure was radically different from the West, while others felt that, being Latin people, the Romanians belonged naturally to the space of Western civilization, wherefrom they received salutary and fruitful influences, favoring the development of its cultural and political modernity. Of course, between these opposing attitudes, we encounter many intermediate positions, which saw in the Romanian culture a complex alloy, a combination of autochthonous and European elements, a culture of synthesis and interference, which has absorbed various influences. Hence its originality, that combines the traditional character with the openness to new spiritual experiences (for instance, the avant-garde movements which were very vigorous in the Romanian culture) as well as its vocation to be a communication bridge between the East and the West.

The interwar theories on Romanian identity differ in the way they approach a series of relations, such as the relations between European and national, between unity and diversity, between universal and specific, between global and local, relations that can be seen either in opposition or in convergence. In the first instance, identity is interpreted in a *disjunctive paradigm* that emphasizes the inequality of terms from this equation (favoring one of them), and in the second instance by a *conjunctive paradigm*, which focuses on the similarity or convergence of terms involved in defining this identity. As we elaborated in previous studies (Georgiu & Cârlan, 2011; Cârlan, Ciocea, Georgiu, 2011), the disjunctive paradigm describes theories on the relation between national identities, or between national and supra-national ones which render cultural identities as being autonomous, at least potentially in conflict, and

tending to privilege differentiation as a symbolic resource of self-affirmation in the asymmetrical center-periphery relation. Views such as Samuel Huntington's on the clashes of civilization, or Dominique Wolton's considerations on refuge-identity are clear, contemporary illustrations of such paradigm. In the Romanian case, Nichifor Crainic's view on the constitutive role of religion for the Romanian identity is a typical case.

The conjunctive paradigm describes theories on the relation between national identities, or between national and supra-national ones, that presuppose a relational reading of identity, critical self-evaluation and, in the European case, permanent comparison between complementary national and European aspects. Convincing illustrations of such a conjunctive paradigm are Edgar Morin's view on European identity (Morin 2002) – for a supra-national case, or Eugen Lovinescu's view on the formation of modern Romanian civilization – as an example relevant for the national level. Both paradigms can mobilize essentialist or non-essentialist criteria for belonging, and both paradigms are apt to illustrate particular cases of center-periphery approaches in intercultural communication (Cârlan, Ciocea, Georgiu 2011): disjunctive paradigms describe the scenario of a single center and multiple peripheries, while conjunctive paradigms focus on interferences between various centers crystallized in the periphery. In the following sections, we will present some relevant theorizations of the Romanian identity in the inter-war period, discussing them in relation to the two paradigms and their methodological assumptions.

### **Religion as a decisive factor in the identity equation**

We shall illustrate the first category of approaches by two conceptions on identity placed at opposite poles on the national

– European axis. For the nationalist and autochthonist conception, we chose Nichifor Crainic (1889-1972), a writer, thinker and influential publisher in the interwar period, when he led the magazine *Gândirea*.<sup>1</sup> Along with a group of intellectuals and writers, Crainic developed a traditionalist, Orthodoxist and autochthonist, anti-democratic and markedly anti-Western conception. Crainic, who was a theologian by education, started from the assumption that the core of national identity is given by the religious factor, of the type of religious faith, which is then reflected on all the elements that endow a culture with specificity. Hence, he believes that Orthodoxy and the spiritual tradition crystallized thereon are key components of the Romanian spirit, which should be protected and promoted. A national regeneration is possible only by returning to our traditional elements. Therefore, Crainic embarked upon the rehabilitation of the Orthodox spirit, criticizing the rationalist and individualist tendencies he attributed to Catholicism and Protestant denominations.

Consequently, there would be an *incompatibility* between the Romanian mentality and the spirit of Western culture (dominated by rationalism, pragmatism, individualism and democracy). Orthodoxy would be deeply impregnated into peasant spirituality and is characterized by the individual's integration into the community, the intuition of cosmic harmony and the feeling of human participation in the overall existence. Instead, the Western Catholic and Protestant milieus gave birth to rationalist and subjectivist philosophies, tearing the individual apart from the overall existence.

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<sup>1</sup> The journal *Gândirea* was issued in Cluj, in 1921, under the direction of Cezar Petrescu. From 1922, the magazine moved to Bucharest, and in the first years, until 1925, it had an open program, without a well-defined ideological orientation. From 1926, the magazine was led by Nichifor Crainic, who gave it a traditionalist and Orthodox line. The current developed by Crainic was called *gândirism*.

Crainic considered that the crisis of the modern world could be overcome only by abandoning rationalism and any philosophy of individual “consciousness” which, through the thesis of the autonomy of reason, cut off humankind from the overall existence and locked it up into its haughty consciousness. Here are reasons for which the author rejected Western influences, on the grounds that they side-tracked Romanian spirituality from its traditional matrix. Crainic was also consistent with his philosophical principles with regard to his political options. A follower of extreme-right ideology, he militated for a state with a corporate-type organization, which should also be an “ethnocratic state” in which local authentically national forces and not the alien ones should hold the power. At this point we have to mention that his explicitly nationalist program was not derived from a biologist and racist conception, but from a spiritualist one, as he was a sympathizer of fascism in its Italian version.

In the end, a major clarification should be made. Crainic also provides an interesting *theological foundation of his identity paradigm*. Catholicism, with its formal universalism, does not valorize its national and local differences. Instead, Orthodoxy, which strives for “the unity in spirit” does not destroy “the natural variety of the world”, the particularity of living forms, does not lead to their “uniformization”. Orthodoxy is respectful of “the language and ethnic individuality of each nation”, while Catholicism is guided by a standardizing spirit (the same language of worship, a rigid centralism of the hierarchy and so on). Therefore, for Orthodoxy “nations are various units of the created nature” and the church “is molding its forms on the national body”. “Catholicism... universalizes what is local, whereas Orthodoxy localizes what is universal” (Crainic, 1997, p.51).

With this last statement, we may conclude that for Crainic, religions – as an integrated factor into the collective mentalities – play a decisive role in the historical construction of national identities

and in the formation of symbolic representations through which nations define themselves. We can see that Crainic's ideas on the importance of religion in shaping identities are consistent with the recent theory of Huntington (2008), who argues that religious type factors are those that differentiate civilizations, gives them identity and represents, at the same time, the main sources fuelling up current conflicts.

### **Synchronization with the Western world, a historical imperative**

In the same period as Crainic, Eugen Lovinescu (1881-1943), a major literary critic and historian, a promoter of literary modernism, developed an interesting theory of cultural synchronism<sup>2</sup>, running counter to Crainic's outlook. Lovinescu has elaborated, for the first time in the Romanian culture, an intercultural history of the process of modernization of Romania, placing the Romanian identity in a constellation of regional and continental influences, the Western ones being preeminent in the modern epoch. As a theoretical support, Lovinescu is relying on cultural evolutionism and diffusionism, mainstream approaches for such fields of inquiry at the beginning of the 20th century.

As other Romanian authors before him, Lovinescu operates with the opposition between East and West, the first one being associated with the past and stagnation within traditional frameworks, while the second one with the future, the progress and modernity. Whereas Crainic emphasized on the virtues of Orthodoxy

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<sup>2</sup> Eugen Lovinescu presented his theory of synchronism in a reference work, *The History of Modern Romanian Civilization*, published in three volumes, in 1924 and 1925. Written from a liberal and pro-European perspective, with antitraditionalistic accents, the work stirred up a wave of polemics and controversies in the epoch and later on.

and pre-modern tradition, Lovinescu considered that the East and Orthodoxy “are forces of the past and not of the present”, forces which prevented our modern evolution (Lovinescu, 1997, pp. 12-13). According to Lovinescu, the Romanian political and cultural space gradually exited the influence sphere of the Eastern Europe, entering the Western sphere. This change of geopolitical significance occurred in the first decades of the 19th century, when the intellectual and political elites managed to change “the historical orientation axis of the Romanian people from East to West” (p. 13). Thus, Romanians have built their nation state and their modern culture under the salutary and massive influence of the Western model. His strong belief was that the model of the Western civilization would be adopted by other peoples as well, so that the slogan *Ex occidente lux* would be valid globe-wise.

Taking over a series of concepts and ideas from the Romanian and European thinking, Lovinescu formulated the “law of synchronism”, according to which, in modern history, first and foremost in the European space, we can find out *an increase in the interdependencies between societies* as a consequence of the development of communication technologies and of the contagious spread of ideas and civilizational elements. This converging evolution is traceable in all societies under the pressure of *seculum* (the “spirit of time”) which determines a gradual solidarization of them on behalf of certain principles, values and institutions. The law of synchronism, “which works in order to level up and not to differentiate” (p. 275), has as its effects a progressive *uniformization* of the political and economical structures and a spiritual and cultural *homogenization*.

Lovinescu’s theory addresses many critical aspects of the Romanian phenomenon. We only signaled the way in which it deals with the *relation between national and European*. In agreement with his background assumptions, Lovinescu underestimates

the national factors and overrates the European factors. In the identity paradigm he built up (and which had a far-reaching influence, beyond the intellectual milieu), the external factors of our modernization played a greater role than the internal ones, while the Western *forms* played an active, shaping and stimulating role, while the forces representing the national *background* were passive and often rejecting the exigencies required by the modernization process. It is an over-schematizing approach to cultural history that was frequently imputed to Lovinescu.

A current reading of Lovinescu's theory shows that the author used in his analysis many concepts also significant for the present-day debates: spheres of influence, the mechanism of social and cultural imitation, modernization, the autonomy of values, the spirit of time, synchronism. Therefore, Lovinescu's major contribution is that he effectively introduced a fertile concept fecund in the theory of culture, that of *synchronization*, by which we can say that he foreshadowed the phenomenon of present-day globalization. It is a useful concept to analyze several realities of current world, including the process of European integration, since we also deal now with a phenomenon of synchronization among Member States, on various level: economic, administrative, legislative, institutional, educational and under certain aspects, cultural as well.

### **The identity condition on a "watershed land"**

Keeping up the same reference system, namely the relation between national and European, we come also across balanced analytical models, wherein the weight of the two factors in the identity equation is relatively equal, and the authors take care to avoid extreme stands. Such a model belongs to Lucian Blaga (1895-1961), a thinker who developed a complex philosophical system, centered



on an original theory on culture. Educated in the German intellectual milieu, at the crossroads of varied influences, the author starts from the assumption that any culture has two constitutive dimensions: symbolic and stylistic. The symbolic dimension is a universal one, but it is always made manifest in particular stylistic forms, within a “stylistic field” shaped by factors which belong to the collective subconscious of an epoch, society and national community. The factors generating the differentiation of cultures are grouped by Blaga under the concept of “stylistic matrix”, a concept similar in function and articulation with the concept of “cultural pattern” of the American anthropology of those times, but grounded in an essentialist, Jungian-type metaphysics of identity.

The main factors constituting the stylistic matrix of a culture are, leaving technicalities aside, the spatial and temporal horizons, the dominant axiological accents, the values and meanings attributed to time, movement, history and human destiny, the preference for certain values in the order of creation (Blaga, 1985, pp.179-180). Rooted in the collective subconscious, the stylistic matrix provides an orientation for any cultural creation of a people and for its historical manifestations. It can be conceived as a “prism” through which human communities and individuals perceive and interpret the world. Relying on this theoretical support, Blaga undertook an in-depth analysis of the Romanian culture, integrating it in an assembly of influences, in order to reveal its specificity.

Blaga’s identity paradigm can be fitted into the broader orientation of cultural relativism, in opposition to the approach of the single-line evolutionism. Yet, he has not rejected cultural influences, considering that “we cannot develop unless we integrate into Europe” (Blaga, 1985, pp.312), but these influences are always filtered through one’s culture stylistic matrix, which has, in this regard, a function similar to that of the a priori categories of Kant.

Integrated in a “network of European determinants”, Romanian modern culture was inevitably a subject of various influences, some of them being considered by Blaga as “modeling influences” – mostly those coming from the French cultural space, while others as “catalytic influences” – most of them coming from the German space. “The French culture is like a *magister* who demands to be imitated, while the German culture is like a mentor who leads you toward your own self” (Blaga, 1985, pp.315). The Romanian culture was formed under the combining influence of the two models, employing, at the same time, the resources of its historical and cultural roots.

It is important to notice that Blaga, despite his essentialist metaphysical assumptions, didn’t treat Romanian identity in a self-contained manner, instead he integrated it into the European identity. In his outlook, Romanian and European identity are consonant and not opposed. Blaga is interested to keep up the balance between these extremes: national and European, tradition and modernity, East and West. “What road the Romanian stylistic matrix will take is hard to tell. But sometimes a mere statement may read as a prophecy: we are neither in the West nor in the East. We are where we are: with all our neighbors together – on a watershed land.” (p. 330).

### **Other examples and research directions**

When investigating a major author’s outlook, it is important to analyze its theoretical sources, how they relate to the issues of that age, but mainly to see what current meanings that outlook may convey. In Blaga’s case, as we pointed out, it is necessary to have a comparative analysis between his theory on stylistic matrix and the theory of American anthropologists on the cultural

*pattern*. Likewise, instructive would be an analysis aimed to highlight Lovinescu's theory on synchronism in terms of its surprising resonances with the current theories on globalization.

Other Romanian authors would also deserve to be rehabilitated and reinstated in the public circuit of current culture, given the value of their work. For example, it would be appropriate to call into question again the theoretical model of Bucharest Sociological School led by Dimitrie Gusti, who developed his own method of research, namely the monographic method. It involves the research of a social unit from various perspectives by multidisciplinary teams of specialists, who can build such an integrated comprehensive image of the phenomenon. For instance, Gusti's theory of the sociology of the nation, elaborating four frames (cosmic, biological, psychological and historical) to which the social phenomena should be related and the four types of social events (economic, spiritual, legal and political) is very useful to understand the complex architecture of a national identity and the variable relationship among its constitutive elements.

Likewise, we ought to bring back into the current debates the conceptions embraced by Mircea Vulcănescu and Constantin Noica on the importance of the language as a primary factor of national identity and as the expression of a specific outlook on the world, which must be related to certain research directions from the Western space, to the hermeneutical perspectives and the theories of cultural and linguistic relativism (e.g. *the Sapir – Whorf hypothesis*). Vulcănescu and Noica shed light on certain features of the Romanian spirit through a very intricate analysis, decoding connotative meanings that were "buried" in the intimate fabric of the Romanian language. We should also mention that the last book written by Noica: *The European Cultural Model* (1993) addresses the much debated issue of European cultural identity. It

is a book that can always be referred to in contemporary debates, but which is missing from the bibliography of Romanian intellectuals when they deal with this issue. The new generation of intellectuals should highlight the European dimension of the modern Romanian culture, the fact that Romanian thinkers problematized in their works the major themes of modernity, even if these works were not known and did not benefit from a proper dissemination and recognition within the European environment.

### Conclusions

Many Romanian scholars (Lovinescu, Blaga, Noica, Alexandrescu) have defined our culture as one of interference and synthesis, negotiating between opposite civilizations. Confronted with the binary terms of tradition and modernity, on the one hand, and Western and Eastern models, on the other, Romanian thinking found the conjunctive paradigm to be the meeting point of European and autochthonous traits. Current cultural histories are confronted with many methodological exigencies and dilemmas when analyzing the conceptions on nation embraced by several thinkers in the interwar period. The three authors we presented above illustrate three different ways to see and interpret the Romanian identity, placing it into a narrower or broader network of regional and continental influences. The analysis of these identity paradigms is an occasion to underline how important are the quality research methods in cultural history. Under the pressure of globalization and European integration, the identity of cultures changed substantially, which is expressively described and problematized by the new theories on identity. When remaking the past, we have to take into account the “truth of facts”, to the extent we have access to it through the documents of that time and also

through the current interpretations lending certain meanings to national identities.

The studies in cultural history have a problematic character from a methodological viewpoint. The identity paradigms developed by Romanian thinkers have correspondences (similarities and differences) with the Western theories, so that comparative analyses are mandatory. Researchers investigating cultural identities were positioned within a field of knowledge interests, they started from certain theoretical assumptions and their analysis was directed by certain “interpretative assumptions” or hermeneutic principles. Moreover, studies in cultural history have to face delicate methodological issues since their analytic and explanatory endeavor risks being shaped by tacit axiological commitments. For instance, in their analyses, Romanian theorists started from philosophical points of view and methodological frameworks already popular in the European cultural landscape (such as psychoanalysis, evolutionism or cultural relativism) and incorporated tacitly their axiological commitments, but developed, beyond these frameworks, original theories and efficient methodologies for qualitative analysis applied to cultural differences. Their contribution can be reconstructed as a qualitative endeavor in intercultural communication and can be reflexively evaluated from such a perspective.

An important methodological requirement is the relation between the theories discussed and the historical context of their genesis and the reception context, the national cultural context and the European cultural one. These requirements derive from the need to relate the history of culture (ideas, works, personalities, currents) to the social, political, economic history and the evolution of mentalities. We have to see how it reflects upon a certain work, “the spirit of the time” and what answers it gives to the specific challenges of the time. A history of national culture

should establish value hierarchies, however relative they may be, should measure up the contributions and achievements of various authors, should compile a catalog of personalities and fundamental works, should propose a scale of national values. The formulation of value judgments is extremely difficult, given the tensions between the historical criteria and the present-day criteria, between past and present.

The culture historian must answer the question: what was important once in a cultural domain is still important today? Ideas, works and authors who dominated the public spirit in a certain epoch can still tell us something significant today? In any case, we must consider the role a certain conception played in the national culture, but also its intrinsic value, as measured up by intrinsic criteria. Ideological criteria are inevitable in the case of works on philosophical, social and political thinking, but they should be explicitly assumed and applied cautiously, in conjunction with the axiological ones. Starting from the principle of autonomy of values and cultural spheres, we should give pride of place to axiological criteria and to reconstruct the evolution of Romanian culture as a *whole*, without any political bias.

As various trends in the study of identities in post-colonial contexts emphasize, it is the astuteness of history that theoretical models trying to cope with the contemporary crisis of identities generated by the intricacies of globalization can find roots and explanatory models in approaches to identities stemming from the periphery, where the historical processes of nation formation and consolidation couldn't have avoided the recognition of potentially clashing relations between cultural influences and the search for a reassuring identity.

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# ***Hijab* as a symbol of identity.**

## **The case of the Romanian Muslim women**

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### **Introduction**

A feature of the Muslim women and a realm in itself, women's veiling is nevertheless an Islamic symbol. There are different types of veils used in the Muslim world (e.g. *hijab*, *niqab*, *chador*), each of them revealing important particularities of covering and conveying different meanings. This study aims to investigate the meanings that Romanian Muslim women give to covering, by inquiring the

process of veiling and its connection with the identity construction. We do not analyze the image of the Muslim women *per se*, nor the ideological and religious aspects of veiling; instead, we seek to examine the way in which women who veil refer to *hijab*, the reasons for covering and the context of covering. Literature shows that many non-Muslims consider *hijab* as a symbol of women's oppression, which generates rejection and pity, unlike other traditional clothing (Bullock, 2002). However, for Muslims, the *hijab* and all forms of veiling are rooted in the religion and represent the observance of God's will. Women who cover themselves state that their decision is connected to their devotion to God, being a statement of modesty and a symbol for woman's honor, dignity and devotion to Islam (Hawkins, 2009). In fact, the woman has to cover her beauty in order to avoid attracting male's attention. Nevertheless, social status, life expectations, personal experiences and social contexts generate different meanings of the covering. Living in a Muslim country will influence the way in which women refer to veiling. A Muslim-born woman covering in her home Muslim country will experience veiling differently from a Muslim-born living in a non-Muslim country. Often the latter is a descendant of ancient or recent immigrants, and in this case, veiling becomes a connection to a historical past and to the search for solid roots. Not to mention here the re-veiling movement and its wide spreading among young Muslim women (Bullock, 2002).

The second and third generation women wearing the *hijab* have an important role in creating a cultural space for the development of the autonomous self (Williams & Vashi, 2007). The *hijab* emphasizes their Islamic affiliation and implicitly their Muslim identity, and is used as a reaction to the 'living in between cultures' phenomenon. Furthermore, converted women who live in their origin non-Muslim countries refer to *hijab* as a symbol of their new status and

identity. In most cases, although it derives from religion, veiling has been used by women as a social symbol (Seikaly, 1998, 182) and it is constantly transformed according to the life and social experiences.

Our paper focuses on the way Romanian-born Muslim women experience veiling and inquires the influence that *hijab* has on their lives. Our interviewees are Muslim-born women living in Romania, descendents of historical ethnic groups, and converted Muslim women, married to Muslim-born men. We examine the personal experiences of these women, the contexts of covering and the way in which the *hijab* has been symbolically transformed in order to fulfill other needs.

### Previous studies on veiling

All forms of veiling are a public statement of the Islamic identity and are deeply rooted in religion as they are an expression of women's devotion to God. Drawing on the literature in the field we discover that there are significant differences between the way non-Muslims and Muslims refer to *hijab* and implicitly to Muslim women. We are mostly interested in the research focused on Muslim women as our study inquires the meanings that Muslim women attribute to wearing the *hijab* and its role in the transformation of the self. It is worth mentioning that researchers emphasize different roles that veiling has in women's lives and in the way they negotiate their identity after donning the veil. Our paper aims to investigate the practice of veiling as a form of identity negotiation process, which is deeply connected to the religious dimension of the covering, to the women's presence in the public space, to group's pressure, to fashion statement and belonging.

The religious implications of the covering and the fact that *hijab* derives from religion represent key elements in describing the

experience of veiling. As scholars point out, Muslim women mention their devotion to God and connect the veil with modesty, dignity and spirituality (Hawkins, 2009, Haddad, Smith, and Moore, 2006). Moreover, studies show that young Muslim women use the *hijab* as a public statement of their liberty and of their resentment against consumerist Western societies (McGinty, 2006; Bullock, 2002; Lazreg, 2009). Others describe the *hijab* as a “symbolic curtain” (El Guindi, 1999), used by women in order to feel protected and private. This has a direct influence on being a good Muslim as it is a source of modesty and integrity. When discussing the religious connotations of veiling, one has to take into consideration the case of the converted women. As Allievi shows, converted Muslim women tend to use authentically religious discourse (Allievi, 2006). For these women, the veil has significant religious implications as it enables their adhering to Islam and their integration into the Muslim community.

In addition to being a religious symbol, women’s covering in Islam is also a fashion statement, especially in the case of young Muslim women. Evidence from studies shows that women have come to use the *hijab* in order to fulfill other needs, not only religious, but also identity, cultural and social needs, too (Seikaly, 1998). Veiling is subject to fashion, innovation and trend (Schmidt, 2004) and has an important role in shaping the identity of the young Muslim woman within the Muslim community, on the one hand, and in the non-Muslim community, for those living in a non-Muslim country, on the other. Interestingly, this happens mainly in the case of young Muslim-born women living in a non-Muslim country. *Hijab* is a fashion statement, but also a social statement of belonging to a certain group. Being a symbol of belonging, the *hijab* has the role of reinforcing women’s identity as response to the marginalization they experience in Western societies (Read & Bartkowski, 2000). As scholars point out, many young Muslim-born women

start veiling as teenagers although their mothers and grandmothers never covered, as a response to being caught in between cultures. Covering is a way to address the issue of cultural space and Muslim women's access to it (Williams & Vashi, 2007), a phenomenon following the 1970s re-veiling movement (Bullock, 2002).

The *hijab* is also connected to the identity construction and to the negotiation process of the self, as it overlaps with the search for a personal identity, in the case of young Muslim-born women, and with the need of belonging and integration, in the case of converted Muslim women. This dimension of identity construction encompasses the religious, cultural and social dimensions and builds on the personal experiences of the woman. In the specific case of converted women, the *hijab* has an essential role in shaping the new identity and in surpassing the difficulties of being caught between the old and new religions. As McGinty argues, the *hijab* has a psychological dimension as its meaning lies in the biographical particularities of the converted woman (McGinty, 2006). A new self/other relationship is being revealed through *hijab*, and it becomes both a public statement of belonging to the Muslim community and a statement for the self.

Drawing on the literature on veiling and identity formation, our paper inquires the role of the *hijab* in the construction of self and in the negotiation of self levels in the case of Romanian-born Muslim women and Romanian converts.

## Methodology

Using qualitative methods, we examined the way Romanian Muslim-born and Romanian converts refer to *hijab* and its influence in the transformation of the self. We conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with seven Romanian Muslim women

living in Bucharest, two being Romanian Muslim-born women and five converts to Islam. The two Muslim-born women were descendants of two ethno-religious minorities in Romania (Tatar and Turk minorities). In order to recruit the seven participants to our qualitative study, we used snowball and purposive sampling. The interviews were conducted by the authors in November-December 2012. The participants age between 22 and 40 years old and fulfill different social roles (e.g. doctoral students, a primary school teacher, an online TV editor, working in the family business). We conducted individually recorded 40 minute interviews and coded the participants with letters from A to G, in order to ensure the anonymity of the interviewees.

It is worth mentioning that all participants declared themselves both Romanians and Muslims, pointing out that both nationality and religion are part of their identity. Several times, the Tatar participant emphasized the fact that she belonged to an *assimilated* family, referring to the fact that her parents did not preserve the Muslim traditions within the family.

During the interviews we conducted, we asked the participants to recall the moment they decided to cover and to describe their experiences related to it. We also asked about the reasons of their decision to veil and how their family and closest friends perceived their choice. We addressed the religious implications of the *hijab* and inquired about the connection between religion, family and society.

## Discussion

Throughout this study, we tried to analyze Muslim women's perception of *hijab* as a symbol of identity. We focused on the identity construction process, particularly on the changes in the way these

women perceived themselves and the way they have constructed their inner self. During the interviews, we asked about women's personal experience of veiling and the impact of this decision on their everyday life. We also addressed the reasons for covering and their opinion on how this was perceived by their families and friends. Our interests mainly revolved around the moment in their lives when they decided to wear the *hijab*.

It is worth mentioning that all the women we have interviewed mentioned that the *hijab* has lead to a significant change in their personal lives and has been a trigger of the self development. Equally important, there were differences in perceiving the *hijab* between Muslim born women and converts. There is no doubt that there are significant differences in the meanings attributed to *hijab* by any of these women. The two Muslim born women, descendants of the ethno religious minorities in Romania, decided to veil although they came from assimilated families, where the Muslim religion does not necessarily play an important role. Their mothers never covered and there was no interest in the family for veiling or for any other religion-related matters. These women started to wear *hijab* in adolescence as a symbol of defining their self and as an answer to the quest for meaning in life. In the case of the converted women, veiling is a marker of a new identity, the Muslim one, and is a powerful symbol of integration in the Muslim community. Although these are two main different reasons for covering and we describe several covering experiences, the role that *hijab* plays in the identity construction is undisputable.

### **Hijab as a marker of identity**

The interviews revealed that one of the most important features of wearing the *hijab* is the fact that it fosters personal identity. When asked about the impact of the *hijab* on their everyday

life, women mentioned that it had led to a significant change; it produced a crucial shift in their lives. This shift must be contextualized and understood according to the psychological need to develop an identity. In the case of Muslim born women, the *hijab* must be put into relation with the teenagers' struggle for self-development. They were Muslims living in a Christian Romanian society. Regardless of religion, culture, ethnicity or nationality, adolescents are struggling to define themselves, to find roots that would help them develop an inner world. In this case, this struggle finds an answer in religion, as it reveals an ancient, mysterious and mystic past.

*"I was fascinated to see them going to pray for the rain to fall or going to the Mosque [...] Years had passed by and as I became adolescent interesting things happened". (B)*

It become obvious, the need to construct an identity by returning to an unknown past, which is used to escape from being caught in between cultures and religions. The Tatar woman mentions: "It was in fact the need to return to the origins of those who, in essence, are assimilated" (F). The feeling of belonging to an *assimilated* family is one of the most important elements in her decision, as she frequently uses this word when referring to the moment when covering. The Turkish woman saw in *hijab* a way to perpetuate the values of her ancestors due to the special relation with her grandfather. She was fascinated by the Islam prayers and customs and Islam became a world in itself, a world that reveals the connection to a mystic realm.

*"I am the oldest of the grandchildren of the family and the only Muslim one. We were 23 grandchildren, but I am the only one who embraced Islam. Therefore, I was always in between and this had a great impact on me as a child, at least unconsciously. As I grew older, I went both to the Church and to the Mosque, but above all*



*the most important was my relationship with my grandfather, who spoke Turkish". (B)*

The search of an identity in adolescence overlaps with the teenagers' rebellion and with the psychological need to be different. The fact that the family disagreed with their decision to veil had a significant impact on the meanings they attributed to veiling. This opposition transformed the *hijab* into a symbol of personal liberation and of choosing an own path.

*"For my mother it [B's veiling] was the greatest source of grief in her life. My mother did not want to talk to me for 3 months. For me, choosing this path was the shock of my life. Some mean voices said that I was in a sect and that I was fooled to join them, but I decided to learn Arabic. My grandfather died content that someone would carry on his name as it should". (B)*

For the Tatar woman, the *hijab* was constructed as a symbol of maturity and of liberation from family ties. Through *hijab* she finds the power of assuming her own life and of affirming her Muslim identity. It is a public statement of a new identity and of her right to make her own decisions.

*"My parents strongly disagreed and I actually didn't wear it, this was in adolescence. Then, after graduating from high school, you know how parents in Romania say: before 18 years old you are in my home, you do as I say, you don't break my rules. So I waited for graduation and then I chose to cover". (F)*

As in the case of many other teenagers, family opposition has had the opposite effect on their decision to veil. By forbidding them to veil, their families have actually transformed the *hijab* into a personal symbol of defining the self and have given it the power of liberation, which is so important for adolescents. The *hijab* became the symbol that was the core of the identity construction process.

### Hijab as a symbol of belonging

In addition to being a public statement and an identity marker, the *hijab* is also a symbol of belonging to the Muslim world. For Muslim born women, the *hijab* is used to create a space of personal and social acknowledgement of the Muslim world and a separation from the Romanian non-Muslim society at large. Accordingly, veiling is a way of strengthening the ties with the Muslim community and is expressing in public their adhesion to Islam.

In the case of converted Muslim women, the *hijab* is strongly connected to their husbands' image within the Muslim community. These women admit that their veiling has positive consequences on the way community perceives their husbands. By wearing the *hijab*, women adhere to the religious and moral values of Islam and subsequently are considered good Muslims. There is no doubt that this has a significant influence on their integration into the Muslim community. In this case, veiling reveals the connection between the acceptance of the converted Muslim woman into the community and the image of her husband. Being a good Muslim woman influences the perception of the husband by the Muslim community. Although they admit that their husbands never forced them to veil, they admit that this has an impact on the way community sees their husbands. One of the women we interviewed said: "I know that he is seen differently in the community if I wear the *hijab*". (E)

*"The first husband gave me total freedom, while the second was more detached when I was a Christian. Now he would make a scandal if I did not wear the veil anymore because his image in the community would be affected". (C)*

Being a public statement of their conversion to Islam, the *hijab* is also a way of creating a symbolic realm where women feel protected and private. Veiling means a retreat in the inner world and at the same time a public behavior. Through *hijab*, the sense of

belonging is linked to the moral, religious and social conduct of the converted Muslim woman.

### **Old and new levels of self**

When asked about their belonging to Romania and their identity as Romanians, all women mentioned that they are proud of their national identity and declared themselves both Muslims and Romanians. They mentioned that being both a Muslim and a Romanian is part of their identity and that these are equally important. From this point of view, especially the converted Muslim women, tend to use their national identity in order to ensure continuity among the self levels. Accordingly, they try to avoid a possible dissolution of self due to conversion. The national identity is enforced as a symbol of the personal identity and is considered as an important level of the self. As G mentions, “I believe that I am a Romanian-Muslim and if I have to choose, I am Romanian”. We are dealing with two levels of the self that overlap, but the Islam identity is considered more powerful as it visible in the public sphere by means of wearing the *hijab*. “When we go out, we are defined by the veil. It’s Islam first, then Romanian” (E). The struggle for a new identity is, nevertheless, a negotiation between the old and new self levels. These women find themselves in a new identity and tend to valorize the Romanian identity in order to avoid the dissolution of the self. The old and new levels of the self are intrinsically connected in order to assure the acknowledgement of the personal identity.

For Muslim born women, their ancestors have a significant role in building a shared identity. Their ancestors have shared the same history with the Romanians and have fought together in wars and battles. B mentions “my grandfather fought in World War II in the Romanian Army” and F refers to the national holidays, their right to vote and the importance of the Romanian language:

*“I shall not go to the church on Saint Andrew’s Day, but I shall stay at home as it is a legal holiday (...) I surely respect Romanian societal traditions. I went with my children to the 1st of December parade and they enjoyed it a lot. I belong to the Tartar minority in Romania, but my grandfather went to war, and was seriously affected by it, he even sang Tartar songs about the Dniester battles. It is obviously a Romanian identity, our forefathers fought for the same cause which many Romanians fought and died for.”*

## Conclusions

Our study revealed that veiling is strongly connected with the personal experience of the women. Also, the context of covering is an important element in the process of understanding the meanings that women attribute to *hijab*. Although there are differences in the way women refer to veiling, the mechanism of covering is similar, as *hijab* is a marker of identity and a symbol of defining or redefining self. In the case of converted women, covering means assuming a new identity, while in the case of Muslim born women it reveals the search for a new identity in adolescence. Accordingly, although the contexts are different and the meanings have significant particularities in the two cases, women tend to use *hijab* in order to fulfill certain needs. The meaning that others attribute to *hijab* is an important trigger for their representation of veiling, in different contexts and in different moments in life.

An important output of our study is the negotiation between self levels in order to assure, on one hand, the recognition of new self levels, and on the other hand, to avoid the dissolution of the self. In both cases, the national identity is being used by both converted and Muslim born women as a solid ground of their identity.

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# **Taste, fashion and adolescence identity: the social function of fashion trends**

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## **Introduction**

The following paper is an exploration of how adolescents think about fashion and use it as a tool for creating social order. I choose clothing as an example of fashion because – compared to other domains of fashion (design, furniture, cars) – clothing is more related to the self and body than other material object. Clothes are fundamental to the adolescents as well as the adult sense of identity. The criticism of one's clothing and appearance is taken more personally than the criticism of one's car or house. This suggests a high correlation between appearance and personal identity (Craik, 2005). Manipulation of clothing is not only intended to decorate the body, but it informs society through a simultaneous action, by shaping and defining personal and collective identities. Thus, clothing becomes part of creating identities that are used to signify attendance to a certain group or not.

Clothing is a basic fact of all traditional as well as modern civilizations. No matter its level of development, clothing depicts the social approved way of covering and revealing the body within certain society (Barnard, 2007; Bălăşescu, 2007; Crane & Bovone, 2006; Craik, 2005; Carter, 2003; Kaiser, 1997). As dressing the body fulfils the aesthetical tastes and signals the social status, clothing overcomes its functional need and, therefore, it becomes a cultural fact. This premise – the primacy of form over the function – lies as the heart of many sociological approaches of clothing.

In this paper, the relationship between fashion and identity is been addressed in terms of symbolic interactionism paradigm following the pioneering work of Goffman (1959) and Stone (1965). From this perspective, “as the self is dressed is simultaneously addressed” (Stone, 1965, p. 102) means that identity is communicated and marked by the way individuals are dressed (Roach-Higgins & Eicher, 1992). As clothing represents visual means of communicating identity, many issues appear to be raise in relation to fashion and adolescence, but I will explore only two that represent a source of public as well as scientific debate. First, I will consider that clothing is an important mean of handling the developmental task in adolescence, namely accepting the physique and using the body effectively. Adolescents become self-conscious about their physical appearance as they reach sexual maturity. During adolescence, they often compare their body with that of others and become more sensitive to the youth cultural accepted norms of covering and revealing the body (Oliver, 1999). Secondly, clothing and others aspects of appearance provide important socializing functions for adolescents such as need to belong to a certain group and gain peer acceptance. Especially in adolescence, ideas of appropriate appearance – that are mostly ‘good look’ and being ‘a star athlete’ (Coleman, 1959, p. 42) – are the driving motivational forces



within the high school culture. Researchers have found that as one approaches adolescence he/she begins to conform to dress style shared by the peer group (Brown, 2004; Kaiser, 1997; MacGillivray & Wilson, 1997; Creekmore, 1984).

### **Adolescence and fashion**

Adolescence have been among the most studied age group in social and behavioural science since the end of the Second War World. Through the years, a huge literature has sought to understand how adolescents reveal their bodies, how they behave in various contexts, how they get autonomy towards parents, how they join the groups, how they learn new skills and ideas, “what attitudes they have about various issues, what factors affect their attitudes and abilities” (Moshman, 2005, p. xii). In all these approaches, it had been emphasized that adolescence is a period of fervent search for identity when teenagers betake counter-conformity behaviour for consolidation of the self and the accomplishment of the sense of belongingness (Ling, 2008). Following up the idea that key psychological changes take place in adolescence, a particular line of quantitative (Creekmore 1984; Smucker & Creekmore, 1972; Kaiser, 1983; Kaiser, 1997; MacGillivray & Wilson, 1997; Beaudoin & Lachance, 2006) and qualitative (Johnson, Kang & Kim, 2014; Pilcher, 2010; Brock, Ulrich & Connell, 2009; Willett, 2008; Rawlins, 2006; Oliver, 1999) researches have focused on how adolescents follow fashion, specifically how they cultivate their style of dress and teen’s slang to express various forms of identity (Nguyen & Brown, 2010; Danesi, 1994; Sebald 1984; Hebdige, 1979).

Much of the contemporary quantitative (Creekmore, 1984; Smucker & Creekmore, 1972; Kaiser, 1983; Kaiser, 1997; MacGillivray & Wilson, 1997; Beaudoin & Lachance, 2006)

research on adolescence fashion is grounded in pioneering theories (*trickle-down theory and trickle across theory*) about fashion diffusion (Simmel, 1904; Blumer, 1968; Bourdieu, 1984). Georg Simmel (1904) was among the first sociologist who observed that clothing and fashion provide opportunity for individuals to experience the sense of individual agency (autonomy) and the sensitivity to sources of social prescription in their everyday lives (conformity): “fashion, on the one hand, signifies union with those in the same class, the uniformity of a circle characterized by it, and, *uno actu*, the exclusion of all others group. Union and segregation are the two fundamental function which are here inseparably united and one of which, although or because it forms logical contrast to the other, becomes the condition of its realizations” (Simmel, 1904, 544).

Reiterating Simmel's, Blumer's and Goffman's works, more than five decades of quantitative studies have explored the social-psychological motivation of adopting certain clothes in relation with physical and psychosocial changes during adolescence. It had been showed that clothing patterns represent a major factor in peer acceptance (Creekmore 1984; Smucker & Creekmore, 1972; Kaiser, 1983; Kaiser, 1997) and, consequently, clothes are worn to be in tune with the group (MacGillivray & Wilson, 1997; Beaudoin & Lachance, 2006). Adolescent apparel had also been related to self-esteem and body imagine along the adolescence (Sontag & Schlater, 1982; Daters, 1990).

In the last 20 years, serious academic attention to how adolescents follow fashion has been paid on the micro-interaction level of analyses (Johnson, Kang & Kim, 2014; Heikkilä, 2011; Pilcher, 2010; Brock, Ulrich & Connell, 2009; Rawlins, 2006; Oliver, 1999). Inspired mostly by the popularity of the symbolic interactionism paradigm in sociology and social psychology (Hamilton, 1997), researchers have been focused not only on the causality of the

relation between fashion (e.g, peers, media, physical, psychological and cognitive changes; self-esteem) and consumers (particularly, adolescents), but also on how these processes take place. Several questions of research gathered from literature review reflect this path: What were the appearance management rules learned during childhood and adolescence? Form whom and what did these rules come from and how were individuals taught these rules? (Johnson, Kang & Kim, 2014). How mother/daughter relationships affect the tweens' apparel relationship? (Brock, Ulrich & Connell, 2009); How consumption, fashion and intergenerational relationships affect adolescents formation and how are these relationship negotiated with the spaces of the home? (Rawlins, 2006); How meaning is ascribed to fashion form and appearance? (Hamilton, 1997). As the present article is a qualitative research of how adolescents understand fashion, I will review similar studies that have approached this subject.

Investigating how appearance management rules are acquired during childhood and adolescence, K.K.P. Johnson, M. Kang and J.-E. Kim (2014) found that the teenagers are sensitive to enhance their attractiveness and to fit in their peer group. Conforming to the appearance of others (peer group, reference group) and gaining the acceptance of friends represent the social drivers of appearance management in adolescence. While the influence of media seems to have no place in the adolescence appearance management, as authors emphasized, the social context (home, school, community) increases in managing the adolescents clothing behaviour. Even mothers are considered the key socialization agents and the source of conflict over appearance (Johnson, Kang & Kim, 2014) as the adolescents begin to mature, they mainstream gender-related information for constructing their own gender schema (LoBue & DeLoache, 2011).

Media and celebrities are often blamed for shaping the adolescents body self-esteem and clothing consumption. According to J. Pilcher (2010), the public debates that voice concern over losing innocence through sexualisation of girls' clothing is not founded. Using semi-structured interviews with girls aged from 5 to 12 and diary-work by parents, she concluded that early adolescents desire to wear certain outfits ascribed to adult females (high-heel shoes, tops, halter-neck tops, mini-skirts) that are related to innocence pleasure of play rather than revealing the body. Going through puberty, the girls from the study embody the idea of 'dressing up' and 'ageing up' only after they negotiated these with their parents, especially their mothers. Similarly, R. Willett (2008) found that adolescent females (12-13 years-old) exercised their agency without adopting the media images of skinny women or sexy fashion being able to resist social pressure regarding clothing.

When it comes to fashion, peer pressure to conform may not always be as powerful as it is often presumed, especially for those girls aged between 9 and 16 (Rawlins, 2006). The relationship between mother and daughter is central to the process of defining adolescents' identity as long as mothers constrain the girls to wear their favourite clothes at school. As mothers and daughters disagree over the vanity clothes at school, "the process of (dis) identification with parents is one of the strongest influence on identity" (Rawlins, 2006, p. 375).

Taking into account the way fashion is adopted during adolescence, K. Oliver (1999) questioned how social prescriptions determine girls (13-15 years old) to devote meticulous attention to their body and personal appearance and how these rules are embodied. Because today's culture puts great value on the way people look, fashion represents a code through which adolescence girls interpret whether their bodies are 'in fashion' or 'out of fashion', whether

they look 'right' or 'wrong', normal or abnormal. When they make statements about others appearance, girls often rely on the criteria provided by what is in fashion at certain time: "According to Nicole, Khalilah, Alysa and Dauntai, to 'look right' and be 'normal girls' need 'healthy hair', the 'right clothes and shoes', the right 'body shape' and they must 'look feminine' (Oliver, 1999, p. 230).

Considering these researches mentioned above, the main goal of this paper is to investigate the way adolescents think about fashion, what functions they ascribe to clothing and how they use it to express social identity. The social interactionism perspective leads me to explore the meaning of clothes that emerge from adolescents' interactions and the way they create their own realities by managing appearances.

## Method

*Sample and data collection.* I gathered data from two groups interviews (N=8; N=6), conducted from May and June 2013. I think focus group is a proper tool of social research on fashion due to several reasons. First, focus group can better comprise the social nature of fashion, because following a trend means living within a group, thus performing a conventional behaviour. Secondly, our participants to the focus groups were girls with age ranged from 14 to 18 years (N=14). As I've showed, the main features of their ages are the pressure to conform to the peer group rather than to the primary group. So, focus group could be a natural setting of gathering data on desirable appearance and taste within in group. All the girls are students at public schools and they come from middle class families. I conducted two focus groups interviews: one with the group of teenagers who have experienced the constrains regarding dress code in Romanian schools (group 1) and the other group

who had not followed a dress code during secondary school (group 2). The groups were natural, meaning that the members knew each other and the interviews were conducted in the location in which the groups normally met. All focus group interviews were held in Bucharest. The interviews lasted for about 60 minutes each. The approach to data collection was semi-structured. Participants' responses were transcribed. After reading the transcripts we grouped units of information under particular themes.

### Data analysis

*The pattern of clothing in adolescence.* The discussion began with the description of their outfit and their accessories, and then shifted to what they think about these. After that, the discussion was orientated towards pattern of clothing behaviour and social function of dress. We asked the participants to describe the appearance of a typical girl of their age and to say what came to their minds when they had to dress. Although they expressed their particular tastes on clothing, two elements of appearance gained more group approval than others: the tight-fitting jeans and the straight hair.

#### Group 1

*Interviewer: Let's suppose I have to draw a girl of your ages. Tell me how I dress her, what does she wear, how her hair looks like?*

Oana: I like those girls dress up in black skirt of medium length... because I don't like girls with the short skirts... this is the way I see a girl from my ages... and she is wearing boots made from leather, those boots that fit with dress.

Monica: I think wearing jeans is quite comfortable so she could wear jeans. And her hair should be straight.

[All of them approved]: We also agree Monica's idea. Let's put a pair of jeans on her and draw her with straight hair.

Denisa: I also saw her in jeans....those tight-fitting jeans because I hate wearing large jeans. I also put a casual blouse on her.

Roberta: My girl is wears a skirt and straight hair.

## Group 2

*Interviewer: Let's suppose I have to draw a girl of your ages. Tell me how I dress her, what does she wear, how her hair looks like?*

Dana: I saw her in tight-fitting jeans, with blonde straight hair. And she wears a pair of boots that match with that kind of jeans.

Anca: She has blue eyes, straight hair, jeans [she looks at Dana to approve her idea] and sport shoes like converse. Maybe she wears a large blouse.

Livia: Yes, with jeans and straight hair.

*The social function of clothing.* Regarding cognitions when they get dressed, our subjects recognized the use of clothing for adorning the body. Few of them mentioned the function of clothing for covering the body. The answers also showed that they are able to see themselves from the perspective of others and their awareness about others is taking into account when they choose a particular style of dress. There was no difference of opinion in the two groups regarding the social function of clothing. They seek the form, rather than the function of clothing.

*Interviewer: When you open the wardrobe in the morning, what is the first think that comes to your mind?*

Oana: To look well. I mean to put on my clothes and accessories that match together. This is the way the others could see me beautiful.

Anca: Dressing is about conforming to a rule. If you like, let's say, to go out in pyjama, you are free. But we can't go everywhere like this. It's about respecting the others. Our colleagues adopt fashion styles from TV. They are not aware where that styles come from.

Irina: I agree with Denisa. We grow up and we discover clothing the body, so we like to look well in the others' eyes.

Monica: I think I put the comfort first. I don't like wasting my time arranging a large blouse that can get out of my jeans. Clothing is about personality. I mean wearing a dress mirrors a romantic girl, but wearing jeans a sport one.

Livia: When I put on my clothes I think at looking good.

Roberta: Through clothes we express ourselves, namely we can dress as we want.

Denisa: When I get dressed is like a work of art. I imagine a girl. I have long hair but I wish I have it longer to fit it with different styles of dress. Clothes help me to be more feminine.

*Being popular within adolescence culture.* Related with the early and contemporary studies about peer acceptance and rejection during adolescence, I asked girls to provide me details about how to draw a girl of their age. They described her in terms of the latest clothing trends within youth culture, that was a girl dressed in jeans, with straight hair, wearing a T-shirt and a pairs of ballerina. Then I asked them to tell me how girls could become popular within their culture, at school as well as within the group. According to their responses, popularity within adolescence culture means 'to be attractive', 'to be equal friend of all' and to be recognized by the peers as well as by the teachers as popular and smart. They also mentioned the role of Facebook as shaping popularity during adolescence in achieving approval of one's posts and status on Facebook.



*Wearing the uniforms.* One of the most interesting themes of research was related to the experience of wearing uniforms at schools. One of the researched group consisted of girls who wore uniforms at secondary schools. That means they had experienced the freedom of dress as well as constraints regarding dress code. Our participants to the study recognized that the uniform is a sort of social order within a “chaos of thousand clothing styles” but they dislike it due to the constraints over the individuality. But all of them agreed to the fact that wearing a uniform is easiest than choosing every morning what to wear.

### *Group 1*

*Interviewer: How do you feel wearing the uniform at school?*

Monica: Uniform cuts off our personality that means dress shapes the way we express ourselves.

Denisa: That means wearing the uniforms we are all the same,. I can't show how much I like jeans, for example, or express my taste and preferences.

[Others agreed with Monica and Denisa]

Oana: While I was wearing the uniform, some people were laughing at me. I heard them saying what a bad dress she had put on her!

*Fashion photography.* Because fashion spreads through media, I consider the fashion photography a possible representation of the latest trends. In this way, I selected four fashion photos from the *Bravo*, the most read magazine by the Romanian teenagers. I asked them what meanings convey the clothing from photos and what aspects of these photos they disliked. The girls that experienced the normative way of dressing during their secondary schools were very concerned about those photos exposing the bodies: “I wouldn't wear a dress that would show so much of my legs”. Long

skirts and short pants were associated with negative traits of personality such as lack of intelligence, unattractive. Jeans and jeans skirt were linked to smart, healthy and attractive person.

### **Discussion, conclusion and limitations**

What are the social functions of clothing during adolescence and how teenagers pattern their behaviour to respond accordingly? Our results revealed that gaining peers and teachers approval, being attractive and being popular are the motivational drivers that shape the clothing behaviour of adolescence. It also regulates adolescents' social interactions and appearances in several contexts such as school and peer group. Consistent with previous researches (Johnson, Kang & Kim, 2014; Twigg, 2012; Moshman 2005; Brown, 2004), as the adolescence emerges, the parents influence decrease, the peer group gains gradual importance in self-evaluation. The clothing behaviour in adolescence follows the same path, being related to amount of time spent with peers and psychological changes that take place in this period. Peer group is an influent source of appearance rules even for those adolescents that had been socialized within a more normative use of clothing (schools uniforms).

The findings also revealed that adolescents are active social actors who permanently interpret the meanings of their clothing. They are able to image the others' reactions towards their appearance and actively seeking to reach a compromise between their desire to look different and to conform to the cultural norms which they have internalized. They also conform to the fashion by adopting the most prevalent and desirable way of getting dressed within youth culture: the tight-fitting jeans and strait hair. Our results are also in line with the previous qualitative researches (Johnson,

Kang & Kim, 2014; Heikkilä, 2011; Brock, Ulrich & Connell, 2009; MacGillivray & Wilson, 1997) which emphasized the way teenagers interpret their experiences of fashion and body image allow them to cope with a series of tensions between their sense of autonomy and their sensitivity to social norms (conformity).

The results of this research also showed that new technologies emerge as a source of popularity within adolescence groups. As the subjects stated, the smart phones, the number of Facebook friends and the evaluation (number of likes and dislikes) of their messages posted on Facebook become more and more cultural elements that shape the adolescents' identity. Further empirical evidence is needed to conclude the role of new technologies in shaping the peer relations during adolescence.

In generalizing the conclusions, several limits of the research need to be considered. The participants were quite homogeneous according to their age, residence and family income. The focus group could trigger conformity to the others opinions as well as reinforcement of the stereotypical thinking. Despite limitations, it is interesting to study how a mundane and ubiquitous fact of human life (that is clothing) can exercise such a powerful influence in shaping the social life of adolescents. As our results showed, adolescents are aware of the meanings of clothing in relation to social norm, thus, those that experience a dress code during secondary school tend to criticize more those styles that were subject to moral restriction in society. To point out, the most important outcomes of this research showed that adolescents are rather interested in living and fitting with the group than being different from the others in signalling identity.

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# Personal Identity as Phenomenology of Capable Man

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## Introduction

The term identity is conveyed in the texts and contexts of various disciplines, which confers it multiple meanings. We talk about the national identity, cultural identity, ethnic identity, historical identity, social identity, professional identity, subjective identity, individual/personal identity, collective identity and the examples could continue, chosen from any area where identities are constructed. All these terms are used to express the personal and collective identities of individuals which threaten their ontological status.

The notion of identity is grounded in the philosophical tradition of Aristotle, in the modernism of Leibniz and in the Heideggerian phenomenology and hermeneutics (Boboc, 2013, pp. 189-190). According to Heidegger, the concept of difference plays a major role in the definition of identity that will be assumed of as weak thought, with cultural connotations, psychological and political

implications. Beyond the traditional logical-ontological paradigm, in postmodernism, identity is a notion often used in different theoretical contexts emphasizing specificity and difference to someone/something inherent to an individual or a community. However, some authors point out the conventional character of the notion identity (Remotti, 2009), and implicitly on its exploratory value concerning the concept of personal identity.

In an attempt to define the concept, one can say that the personal identity consists of a *same* that can be multiplied or simplified, without losing the essence, but also from a number of otherness features, resulting from how differently others look on the *same*. All these constitutes a unique sense, whose unity is found in the individual who is different from others and the cultural specific community suggestion.

From these premises I started to formulate the question of the relationship between personal identity and the construction of an individual ego using the Ricoeur's perspective on narrativity. According to Remotti, on the one hand, identity is *there* and it needs only to be *discovered*, and on the other hand "there is no identity, but rather there are different ways to organize the concept of identity", or, in other words, "always, in some way, identity is built or invented" (Remotti, 2009, p.5). This conception is consonant with the narrative perspective on the identity.

### **"My name is Paul Ricoeur"**

In his book *Parcours de la Reconnaissance*, Paul Ricoeur defined personal identity as constructed narrative identity of capable man. From Ricoeur's perspective – to say, to do, to tell stories and to tell himself are *capacities*: to say means to tell stories, to tell and to tell stories are forms of action, by which the individual shows



awareness of himself and shares this to others. Here, personal identity is defined in the context of a attempt to bring philosophical dignity to the idea of recognition, which is central in Ricoeur's work. In addition, constructing personal identity means remembering the self, which above all, is essential to define the person and this awareness development of self, that is achieved through memory, history and forgetting. In the context of narrative theory, *idem* identity, for the same individual, appears as

*"all the features of permanence in time, biological identity in the genetic code, located in the fingerprints to which is added physiognomy, voice, walking, going through customs, stable or, as they say, contracted to the features that marked it accidentally, but by which an individual is recognized as the example of great Odysseus' scar"* (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 153).

For Ricoeur the *same* (or identity *idem*) is the ontological foundation of the person or the community, a situation that cannot itself be modified. At the same time, the identity-*ipse* is that in which lies the quality of a membership "in fiction to produce a multitude of imaginative variations for which changes tend to do problematic the character of identify the same" to "the nude question: Who am I?" (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 154).

According to Ricoeur, *ipse* identity has the quality of belonging to fiction, of producing a multitude of imaginative variations in whose favor the transformation of character tends toward the same identification problem. Through this distinction emphasized by Ricoeur, we can see, on the one hand, that the essentialist view contains constructivist elements, and on the other hand, that the constructivist or conventionalist perspective cannot be missing altogether from essentialist elements. In this respect, essentialism and constructivism are complementary, which requires, an elementary comparativism – a methodological exercise proper to

creative hermeneutics. The original notion of *creative hermeneutics* was discovered by Mircea Eliade as the main method, along with phenomenology, both related to the history of religions. Discussing on hermeneutics, Ricoeur speaks about hermeneutics of suspicion and mentions that it denotes an interpretive stance related to beginning of paranoia which presupposes that the depth shape of the organization or any other work culture is incomprehensible to the knowing subject, without the addition of prejudice (Ricoeur, 1981). On the contrary, hermeneutics of trust produces creative works of meaning for modern man and forms a part between live sources of culture “because, after all, every culture is constituted by a series of interpretations of myths and ideologies revaluing its specific” (Eliade, 1971, p.129). From this perspective, Ricoeur's interpretation of the narrative construction of personal identity illustrates the imaginative and creative hermeneutics of trust.

As identity is established by making personal and collective memory through a discourse that chooses its own symbols and thematic areas, we may consider that the creative hermeneutic method can be used in the analysis of a subjective phenomenon as one of the self-perceived identities and the perceived identity by others. The purpose of any hermeneutics of trust is to understand each other, by a generous internalized process of recognition of the validity of other possibilities of being. It consists of enjoying individual details of other ways to understand reality. The great art, the creative force of hermeneutics is seen at the time of fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 2004).

On the other hand, a contradiction appears when we make theoretical generalizations on personal identity, since there are at least as many identities, as there are individuals. Even if they largely identify themselves with anthropological discourses on the identity of their time, each person has a proper discourse on self

and existence whether or not it gets marked as an expression of the unique unrepeatable style of their life, as happens with creators. This is because the essential and unique identity makes us different one from another; each perceives, thinks, externalizes and speaks about their identity in his own way; there is not a type of man, whether new or old, but only different people; if the self-definition does not represent a goal of existence, identification with a higher being or idea becomes the tendency for all human beings to think about these, sooner or later.

According to Ricoeur's work, we can speak of a sense of individual identity as subjective identity *selfhood* (Ricoeur, 2004). The selfhood identity expresses the result of a reflection of what is the individual *ego*, beyond an intrinsic quality of something or someone to be in a certain way and no any other (Ricoeur, 2004). According to Ricoeur, the Cartesian cogito philosophy and John Locke's theory of reflection actually pave the way for what he has termed a *hermeneutics of the self*. In addition, the advent of the Cartesian cogito is the major event after which the self-reflection establishes a different style of thinking, illustrated by transcendental philosophy of Kant and Fichte, both centered on the ego (Ricoeur, 2004, p.138). The investigation of recognition is interested in the hermeneutics of the self to the extent that explores the dialectic between identity and otherness through personal forms of the verb can, including: *to be able to say, to be able to make, to be able to tell and tell himself*. To say, to make, to tell and told himself are ways of doing; in other words, they are ways to build an identity by memory, action, faculty of judgment. All of these are features of the *capable man*.

If excessive politicization of multiculturalism favored an indefinite request of affective, legal and social recognition (Ricoeur, 2004, p.317), the actual self-recognition which means the assertion of personal identity occurs when self-designation of the speaker takes

place in situations where the self-reflectivity meets with otherness, in other words, when someone becomes able to say “My name is Paul Ricoeur” (*Moi, un tel, je m'appelle Paul Ricoeur*) – which signifies the real establishing of the speaking subject (Ricoeur, 2004, p.146). According to Ricoeur, the capable man is the one who can build a personal identity by its specific narrative language, different from others (Ricoeur, 2004, p. 152). So, he builds personal story of his own perspective, beyond or together with the symbolic or metaphorical language of religious and artistic creations, beyond or together with the conceptual language grounded in phenomenological philosophy.

### **Beyond the false identity**

Entitled “A phenomenology of capable man”, Chapter II of the second study (“To recognize oneself”) of *Parcours de la reconnaissance* addresses the issue of personal identity through the act of telling. In this study, Ricoeur shows that under the reflexive form of *to tell*, the personal identity is projected as a narrative identity (Ricoeur, 2004, p.150). The reflection on the talking man comprises a constructed identity by the subject itself; even this identity is an invented one. An invented identity is possible either as a subjective alternative to the objective identity as perceived by the other, or as a discovered identity, which is recognized in the act of artistic reception. The latter, often means the act of reading (Ricoeur, 2004). This fictional action which is the real part of the truth of creation and reception is due to the author and, at the same time, to the receiver (reader) which responds with the act of reading. In this perspective, a story appears simultaneously with the inexpressible *inner man*, before this moment. It is about the self-discovery in the act of reading, more accurate than the recognition of *oneself as*

*another (soi-même comme un autre)*, which was vaguely familiar to the reader, but he didn't meet him yet. The notion of personal identity is related to the inner man, with his immortal essence. On the other hand, it is a truth that does not need to be demonstrated that the characters which writers create are immortal beings. In this case, the identity of a character as some of his characteristics and the identity of capable man who creates that character/personage are reflecting each other, without having to replace one with other. The capable man is the one who can externalize and say something of the inner man as creator of character that he built with his own abilities. Also, the reader can learn from the example of character/personage while the author/capable man can understand, and thus he is able to build his own history, his own subjective identity. And such a history as subjective identity does not involve to build an unrealistic identity (like Emma Bovary, for example), resulting from the addition of features specific to a fictional character of another person.

By building and by telling his story, the narrator not only becomes aware of himself, but he is also known by others. The construction of a history can consist in the act of telling, but it can also be an aspect of the rule of metaphor, of the life passing through the story and of the narrator's life which pass with the story. This can take many forms from mythology, through history, literature and imagery, until philosophy, as, for example, the story of the idea as a phenomenology of consciousness, as it is shown by Romanian philosopher Constantin Noica (Noica, 2009).

Identity construction by the narrator also involves the temporal dimension, because the personal identity can be defined as narrative identity. The selfhood (or self-reflexive) called *ipséité* by Ricoeur, also reveals its historical dimension, different from the logical dimension, but not outside of it. According to a hermeneutics of the self, the idea

of narrative identity provides access to a new approach to the concept of selfhood, which, without reference to the narrative identity, is unable to deploy its dialectics, i.e. the report between two kinds of identity, namely the identity of the immutable same (*idem*), and the mobile identity, *ipse* of itself. By this dialectics, the narrative identity can be considered in its historical condition (Ricoeur, 2004, p.153). In this respect, it is worth mentioning the dialectic of identity facing otherness which introduces the question of the relation between private identity and public identity. Thus, “a story of a life is mixed with that of others” (Ricoeur, 2004, p.155). The personal identity becomes a narrative synthesis between the individual level and the collective level of identity. The status of the collective memory in the light of individual memory is the expression of *capacity to memory* and it belongs to all subjects which found their lexical expression in any of the personal pronouns. So, the whole community is allowed to say *we* on the occasion of special operations of remembering. On the other hand, the narrative identity reveals its fragility in the confrontation with others. Either in the case of an individual, or of a community, the narrative identity reveals its fragility (Ricoeur, 2004, p.156). This fragility is manipulated by ideologies of power, through symbolic mediations of action. These are mainly based on the resources which the variation of narrative configuration provide, telling otherwise and in this regard identity temptation consists in the fold of identity-*ipse* on the identity-*idem* (Ricoeur, 2004, p.157).

### **Memory, understanding, identity**

From the phenomenological point of view, the narrative identity is configured using memory as a province of the imagination as shown in Ricoeur's *Memory, History, Forgetting* (*La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*). In this book, Ricoeur describes how one can

build identity with the memory itself: the phenomenology of memory deliberately opens on an analysis which is oriented towards object of memory that was before the mind. Then it passes through the stage of the quests of memory, of the history, of the reminder. Finally, phenomenological approach passes from the given memory to reflective memory, the memory of oneself (Ricoeur, 2000, p. II).

The common problem that concerns both the phenomenology of memory, the epistemology of history and hermeneutics of the historical condition is the representation of the past and also, according to Ricoeur, “the egological problem” (Ricoeur, 2000, p. 3). Thus, according to the above analysis we can say that remembering becomes a power of capable man. From a certain point of view, the man who could be phenomenologist par excellence, the professional of self-memory – in a generic sense, through the other’s memories – is the historian. One can see that this understanding of the otherness defines the moral identity of the capable man, as both individual or personal component and member of community. This issue is also pointed out by Hayden White. By analyzing *Memory, history, forgetting* which he considers Ricoeur’s *summa*, he notes:

*“His aim had been to show, after the manner of Kant, how history – demeaned by positivists, existentialists, analytical philosophers, and skeptics in general – was not only possible, but was also necessary to a properly human conception of our humanity, our identities as both individuals and members of communities, and our roles as good citizens of the polities to which we belonged” (White, 2007, p.233).*

As a heir of husserlian phenomenology, Ricoeur formulates the problem of personal identity and collective identity as follows:

*“These two questions are asked in the spirit of Husserl’s phenomenology. If we say too fast on my memory that is myself at first person singular, the concept of collective memory can figure only as an analog concept, i.e. as a foreign matter in the phenomenology of memory. To*

*avoid the closure in a useless aporia, then the attribution's question of the act of remembering to someone and thus, to all grammatical persons – must be suspended, and we have to begin with the question what?" (Ricoeur, 2000, p. 2).*

As in *Parcours de la reconnaissance*, the phenomenology of memory presented in *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli* is structured around two questions: What do we remember? What is memory about? At the same time, the memory is confronted with this aporia which ordinary language contains: the presence which seems to consist of the past's representation seems to be that of an image (Ricoeur, 2000, p.5). Often, in this image, we recognize personal identity. But such an imagined identity (imaginary construction beside memory) sometimes selects only the appropriate components of the self-image, namely those that correspond to acceptable images that we have about ourselves.

Even if subjective identity is true, to be sure of its validity, by intersubjectivity, it must be confronted with the image of the other about us. It is certain that identity is defined not only as a result of self-perception, it is not only the consciousness of *I am I*, and if I am, I cannot be another one at the same time and under the same ratio (Taylor, 2001; Ricoeur, 2004).

According to Ricoeur, the capable man can say, do, tell stories and recognize oneself or recognize a person (the others) in a state, in an image. This is about the possibility of building a personal identity. But each person has his own perceptions and memories, and some of these are difficult to accept. We can see that the capable man is the one who is able to resist against his own painful or unpleasant memories, one who by a realistic attitude accepts them, as involved components in defining his identity.

*"We can immediately see, however, that the historical condition indicates an existential situation in which human beings are caught in a*



*complex interplay of the three modes (...) of temporality: present, future, and past, in which conventional historical knowledge (the history of the historians) has the function of obscuring and repressing recognition of that 'being towards death' which is the ultimate cause of human anxiety, melancholy, and despair and the principal impediment to the achievement of the kind of love that would make creative 'forgiveness' (of oneself as well as of others) possible" (White, 2007, p. 237).*

In fact, the problem of personal identity as a narrative identity may be a possible answer to the question: "What people think of themselves?" And this answer reflects one side or the other side of identity's issue in the story of the adventure of own consciousness. According to Ricoeur, this adventure goes from "remembrance to the reflected memory through reminiscence" (Ricoeur, 2000, p. 4) and it is part of the pragmatic construction of identity. This is characteristic for human being, the one who has the ability to do something with its own memory, both in terms of research and nostalgic return to oneself, as in the sense of deciphering the mystery of life that arouse the curiosity since his youth, as Hayden White shows: "The younger Ricoeur (...) existentialistically believed that human being was a mystery, human existence a paradox" (White, 2007, p. 236). In fact, the fall in history means that every individual and every community must build its own identity using the narrative. The story contributes to the construction of the subject's identity. The construction of a final definition for the identity of the person is located at the convergence of collective identity (with its national, social, civil, civic components) with personal identity. The latter can be psychological or cultural identity that is made up by adopting a status, by subjective choices and attitudes, by building self; it can be self-recognition in pre-existing models or, conversely, it can be self-recognition in the strictly autobiographical characteristics that capable man recounts all along an story of himself.

The essentialist and constructivist visions of identity are complementary. If the political identity, the social identity or cultural identity can be a matter of decision in a developed democratic state, personal identity of the individual (both in biological sense, civil or metaphysical meanings), ethnic-historical identity are substantial objectives assumptions of any subjective identity construction. In the society, the capable man is the citizen and this status is related to the issue of recognition and identity, as they are analyzed by Ricoeur, because at the level of citizenship is reflected capable man's feature of action (agency), defining his status by the story of rights (Ricoeur, 2004, pp. 199-200).

Regarding identity, authors like Engin F. Isin and Patricia K. Wood note that in terms of differences, citizenship is more of a concept of status, while

*"identity is a concept that presupposes a dialogical recognition of the other; it is a relational concept. But it is also a concept that presupposes identification in the sense that individuals recognize attributes or properties in each other that are constructed as identical or at least similar" (Isin, 1999, p.4).*

Regarding the dialogical recognition of each other, as well as Taylor, Ricoeur emphasizes the importance of the reception in narrative construction own to capable man, but the method by which it is debated, adds a political dimension to the phenomenological act.

## Conclusions

Ricoeur's theory of narrativity shows us that substantialism and conventionalism are two complementary approaches which theorize the sense of identity. In the first case, the *patterns of expressing identity* are kept in classical ontological and logical sizes, in terms

of perpetuating *the same*, an inheritance, a tradition; in the second case (identity *ipse*) it comes about an attempt to discover, by the addition of some new dimensions. Also, it is about the redefinition of identity whether it concerns an individual identity or a community one. It is important to note that the era of ideologies has passed and now identity can be specified without any political connotations.

From Ricoeur's point of view, considering the research problem of identity through narrative theory, and regarding the connection between conventionalist and essentialist perspectives, we can pose several questions such as: how much of our identity strictly belongs to us and how much do we owe to others? In other words, what is the proportion between trans-individual and individual construction of identity? Referring to Ricoeur's work, we can say that differences between people aren't due to physical characteristics. Instead, living *my* life in a unique way, using my personal memory to tell the story of myself – all these are the things that define me and distinguish me from others. Identity consists of a mosaic of otherness. It is made up of concrete things which are most intimate, belonging of our being, but also of ideal things. This new consciousness imposes this kind of difference: there are as many identities as there are many individuals, but if they can be defined by a specific difference of self-consciousness and temporality, proximate genus is given by a temporal human being.

Finally, as Ricoeur mentions, the relevance of essential identity's data and their chance to be discovered depending on how they are placed in a building of itself, into a convincing story, which leads us to the conclusion that discourse on personal identity is essential either the capable man adopts common conventions or he invents his own style, while he is telling the story of himself. Storytelling (about himself or about his community, about his rights or community rights) helps the capable man to construct a personal

subjective identity or a history, but also to share with others the result in the frame of the society, and this becomes a meaningful action.

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## **Part 3.**

# **SEMIOTICS, PRAGMATICS AND REFLEXIVITY**



# Speech text/image act and class habitus: practicing agency through photography

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## Introduction

The paper discusses *Two Way* and *The Conversationalist* two dialogical photographic projects undertaken by the author in 2011 and 2013 respectively. Taken together, the projects asked eight shopkeepers/shop owners in Johannesburg to art direct photographs that were subsequently exhibited in their place of work and homes. The central interest of the project was to understand the role photography played in the everyday lives of the shop keepers/owners. It provided them with a unique opportunity to creatively conceptualise and art direct a photo shoot for an audience in their work and home context. This paper discusses the two in terms of theories of the multimodal (Kress, 2010), dramaturgy (Goffmann, 1959) in conjunction concepts drawn from field theory (Bourdieu, 1989, Bourdieu et al. , 1990, 1993, 1995, 2005) in order to

determine the manner in which research subjects performed and transformed their habitus and expressed agency through the practice of photography. The analysis of the two projects suggests that Pierre Bourdieu's approach to the research subject, one that relies heavily on the survey, obscures the games that researchers and subjects routinely play in the research communication situation and thus the complex interpersonal dynamics at work within research situations. This notion of research as a communication situation, as is suggested in my discussion of the two projects, offers a view of the habitus and agency that is perhaps more nuanced and sophisticated than the somewhat reductive and cynical one offered by Bourdieu et al (1990) in the study *On Photography: A Middlebrow Art*. Unlike conventional studies, the two projects unfolded within the subject's lived spaces and provided for the realization of a "photographic event" (Azoulay, 2010, p. 23) as a generative opportunity for subjects to perform their habitus through a variety of communicative modalities – "gesture, speech, image" (Kress, 2010, p. 80).

### **Background: aesthetics and photography as a popular medium**

After working in a dialogical aesthetic (Kester 2004) and relational aesthetics (Bourriaud 2004) paradigm for a number of years (2007-2010) it became clear to me that a more sociological orientation was required from me in my practice as a community-based artist. Discourses around community-based artistic practice, given their lack of sociological orientation and idealist leanings tend not to entertain notions of antagonism, legitimacy, symbolic violence, social exclusion and power in aesthetics (Bishop, 2012). The medium in which I was accustomed to working in – drawing in collaboration – with a speaking and gesturing participant seemed



problematic firstly because as an aesthetic medium it tended to alienate non-initiated subjects and, given the ease with which a traditional medium such as drawing could be appropriated by the gallery and museum the frame of the project could be shifted away from the participant's context.

Photography as an essentially popular cultural form, carrying an intrinsic voyeuristic quality could effect both a more equitable dialogue between artist and participant and provide the basis to explore how power relationships are established between participant and artist, researcher and subject in the research or aesthetic situation. Unlike aesthetic media, the camera could be used as an instrument in community based visual projects for 'purer' sociological research. *Two Way* and *The Conversationalist* were thus developed as projects that actively resisted the category of 'art'. The two projects also grew out of my general dissatisfaction with local participatory projects which claimed to be participatory and egalitarian but which, to my mind, paid little, if any, attention to how artists and in particular fine arts photographers appropriate working class culture or the image of working class culture to accrue cultural and symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1993). It appeared to me that art photographers involved in participatory art projects (Bishop, 2006) did not seem at the least concerned with the potential voyeurism inherent in their practices; how, for example, the gaze of their often working class "participants" came to be appropriated and exoticised for a privileged exhibition audience. The shift from representational photography in South African contemporary art to situational, participatory photography in the mid 2000's simply marked for me a fashionable 'turn' toward the 'relational' which in effect meant a shift from the exploitation of the subject's body and image toward the appropriation of their ways of looking, style of living and schemes of perception (their habitus if you like). This

shift seemed to me to be affected for the benefit of privileged gallery audience tired of documentary, post-apartheid documentary photography and hungry for a new photographic approach that will allow it to renew its natural right to distinction. Indeed such participatory practices struck me as being more invasive than the documentary style, contemporary, art photography that routinely exoticises, fetishizes, commodifies and objectifies the subject. I felt at the time, that projects which asked participants to ‘image themselves’ or their circumstances; or that encourage the individuals to exercise their voice, agency, solidarity through coauthored experiences with artists continued to position, through their “aesthetic orthopedicism” and “aesthetic evangelism” (Kester, 1995, 2004, p. 88), their participants as *needy subjects*.

I explicitly use the term ‘subject’ rather than ‘participant’ throughout this paper to recognize complex processes of “interpellation” that are brought to bear on individuals involved in both research and aesthetic projects. Using the term subject acknowledges the legitimizing and often hidden class frames that frame such encounters between individuals and artists. Indeed in both photographic projects the individuals working with me were certainly aware that I represented a certain kind of power; research (legitimate knowledge) and photography (pseudo legitimate culture) respectively. I realized through my own community-based art projects that, depending on the frame of a given art project, some subjects are more predisposed than others to speak with agency and voice: which is determined, to a large extent, by their ability to ‘play the game’ of the legitimising agency. In other words, in order to play the game, a prerequisite for being able to resist it, an individual would need to be predisposed which, in essence, requires a configuration of consecrated, cultural capital; one that stands in a relation of resemblance to the community-based artist. Many of

the so-called participants in my photographic art projects simply did not possess the prerequisite cultural capital required to challenge a project frame and thus ended up being “spoken by the camera” or spoken by the project itself.

It occurred to me, prior to the conceptualization of *Two Way* and *The Conversationalist* that, because photography was not tainted by the aesthetic pretensions of disinterestedness attached to other art forms it possessed the potential to provide subjects with occasions for the exercise of agency within their own context. This is perhaps because, as Bourdieu et al. demonstrates (1990), photography, as a medium and social practice, exposes struggles for symbolic legitimacy and provides insight into class ethos and the construction of the habitus. In Bourdieu’s terms, the production and consumption of photographs represents the “objectification of subjectivity”, a subjectivity which is “the internalization of objective social structures” (Bourdieu et al. , 1990, p. 5. ). Photography is the artistic medium that is most “governed by social functions” (Bourdieu et al. , 1990, p. 15). The camera is, in its most rudimentary sense, a framing device that provides its user with singular opportunities in daily life to select and classify their experience, processes which to the sociological eye reveal their position in social space and show the extent to which their gaze is constitutive of a user’s class (Bourdieu et al. , 1990). A sociological (rather than an aesthetic or psychological) approach reveals that photography, no matter whom it is practiced by, is always a ritualized activity that reveals the norms and values of a social group through the objectifications of the gaze. This insight is of central concern for photography projects that claim to be authentically ‘dialogical’.

### On Photography: the research situation and the habitus

*On Photography*, a survey of the social uses to which photography is put, contends that photography, given its ambiguous status, as an “art” in the position of the “sphere of the legitimisable” (as opposed to the sphere of the arbitrary and the sphere of the legitimate”) (Bourdieu et al. , 1990, p. 96) provides a privileged opportunity to understand class ethos and its relation to habitus because “photograph itself is usually nothing but the group’s image of its own integration a “sociogram” (Bourdieu et al. , 1990, p. 23). In comparison to *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Bourdieu, 1989), a book that examines the habitus as an expression of position in cultural space, *On Photography* engages squarely with habitus as a *dispositional* expression of *social class* and *class stratification*. It’s central subject is the tastes of various classes existing in France in the late 1980’s; the peasant, class, middle and upper middle classes as well as the social functions to which these classes (understood in occupational terms) put their photographic products and practices in their daily lives. This focus on existing practices is balanced by the elicitation of commentary by interviewees upon a selection of touristic, family, and art photography provided by the interviewer. The book aims to demonstrate “that even the most trivial photograph expresses, apart from the explicit intentions of the photographer, the systems of schemes of perception, thought and appreciation common to a whole group” (Bourdieu et al. , 1990, p. 6) It shows how the

“durable dispositions that are the class habitus and the ethos are [reflected via photography] in the small perceptions of everyday life” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 5). *On Photography* is unique in Bourdieu’s oeuvre because it conceptually it binds the individual habitus to class ethos: hence the “class habitus” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 5).

*On Photography* is a problematic text in the sense that it positions its subjects as spectators and the sociologist as consecrated and totalising observer of the spectatorship of the subject. Direct quotes provided of subjects' speech in the text of the book is suggestive of this relation. Paradoxically, despite being assigned the role of spectator (an evaluative role), the subjects featured in the study are nonetheless also characterized as having a largely unconscious relation to photography (their evaluations are in themselves unconscious expressions of a group). This is not the case for the researcher of the social who is naturally cast as an observer: both conscious and reflexive. It suggests a sociologist whose vision of social space is total and all encompassing in contrast to the subject whose vision is myopic, limited by their cultural vocabulary. Inferences about the social nature of photography, the nature of social class and generalizations about the habitus are largely drawn from a subject who misrecognizes their role as spectator: they do not know that they are in fact spectators observed. The text presents a social subject justifying their photographic production; classifying and categorising instances of decontextualized, consecrated photographic material according to an unknown and unfamiliar scheme and reflecting on their consumption rituals for the benefit of an outsider belonging to a superior social group, who has the ability by virtue of "skôle" (Bourdieu, 1997) to schematise these little statements into a total and coherent class scheme. The subject is also required to represent themselves as social actor employing a modality (Hodge & Kress, 1989), linguistic vocabulary and a language that may not be adequate to the task of expressing their intentions and dispositions. The structure of this research situation itself as a social relation is such that the subject has little choice but to accept the superior reflexive legitimacy of the sociologist and to perform

accordingly as a dupe, an unconscious spectator of his or her own unconscious existence.

The subject's active enactments and performance of their social position and disposition through embodied image-making is given no weight here. The capacity of the habitus to be generative (rather than simply constraining) is not something afforded by a survey driven approach such as which is adopted by *On Photography*. This is also true of other studies on the cultural sphere such as *Distinction*. A methodology of this kind, one that places the disembodied enunciation of habit, pattern and routine in the foreground (spectatorship) and the performance of autonomy and originality (active performance) in the background is almost bound to produce a picture of reproduction, one that reinforces the fatalistic notion that individuals are involuntarily bound to their social class, caught up in the circular motions of the habitus and entirely constrained by the dynamics of the social field in which they find themselves so that they have but no choice, regardless of their station, but to play their role in the reproduction social inequality ad infinitum. Invariably, as Ranciere (2003, p. 189) remarks such "fictitious questions of aesthetics produce what is required by the sociologist: the suppression of intermediaries, of points of meeting and exchange between the people of reproduction and the elite of distinction", vis a vis the dialogical exchange (of goods and services) between research subject and sociologist. Given the survey's orientation is toward testing rather than toward open elicitation and dialogue, the research subject is bound to give to the sociologist what they perceive as the 'right' answer (in terms of lexis, register, accent, bodily hexis,) and thus may be said to be encouraged to perform play the serious games of legitimization, self-objectivisation and distinction.

However, this is not necessarily a problem, provided, as I will show later, in referring to Goffmann (1959), that the games that

subjects play in the research situation is *the* primary focus of sociological research. Perhaps, to borrow loosely from Mills (as cited by Buroway & von Holdt, 2012); what is absent in the work of Bourdieu is a more imaginative sociology, one that makes provision for less conventional research modalities, those that offer opportunities for subjects to play outside the confines of their routines, to perform routine, to converse with members of other social groups, to engage with newness and originality. Perhaps what is required, at the very least, is a research method that possesses a sociological disposition for play. What do research subjects do when they are provided with singular opportunities to be “creative” within the research situation itself through popular media such as photography; to respond to the researcher, beyond the survey or interview? What is the outcome of a research situation when subjects are further provided with multiple modes of communication (photography, speech, gesture) to act and interact out of the ordinary? What do subjects do when research encourage “*homo ludens*” over “*homo habitus*” (Buroway & von Holdt, 2012, p. 178)? Do they simply, as Bourdieu may argue fall into the “automisms of the habitus” (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 145)?

### **Photography and performativity in social research: impression management and the habitus**

Bourdieu’s theories go a long way to explain, in macrocosmic terms (and to an extent in microcosmic terms) the structure of social space and structuring power of social space. The equation, capital + field + habitus (Johnson in Bourdieu, 1993) is a useful construct in understanding positionality, but is perhaps less valuable in elucidating the more complex and internal processes of identity construction (Crompton, 2008). Moreover, how useful

is this equation in articulating the intimacies of the habitus, the modest and tactical moments of individual resistance? Identity, as Bourdieu would suggest, is shot through, even on the most intimate level, with the structuring power of the habitus, field and capital? This leads me to the work of Goffmann (1959), in particular his study of face-to-face communication in *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* which is critical in demonstrating that the meanings communicated by the research subject are hardly transparent. Rather, to borrow from more contemporary theory, the communications of the subject are “discursive representations” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 29) and “rhetorical arrangements” (Kress, 2003, p. 43) of “social action” and “social agency” (Van Leeuwen, 2009, pp. 24-25) manufactured directly or indirectly (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, pp. 121-122) audience or a picture of an audience. If this is true, how can a researcher trust the notion of a coherent habitus if a subject’s representation of their identity is constantly shifting, representationally speaking, from one context to another.

Goffman’s notion of “impression management” (Kristiansen, 2009, pp. 214-215 in daily, face-to-face encounters could easily be extended to include face-to-face research situations. If this is the case, then the interview questionnaire or structured interview survey as a qualitative modality is one, that allows for the researcher’s “definition of the situation” to be established at the outset of any given communication. It could be said, following Goffmann, and Sacks’ concept of “turn-taking” (Sacks as cited by Silverman, 2011, p. 68) that because the interviewer instantiates the transaction they could be said to frame the interlocation between themselves and the interviewee from the very start. It is in the interests of the interviewer/researcher to achieve, through various means, control of the research situation

*“by influencing the definition of the situation which the others come to formulate, and he can influence this definition by expressing him-*



*self in such a way as to give [research subjects] the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with his [the researcher's] own plan" [my addition] (Goffmann, 1959, p. 15).*

Further to this, the researcher's presence in the social situation of 'research' provides a definition that requires the subject to assume a subordinate position because it is assumed that they are the passive object of study that only the researcher is capable of deciphering. In other words, the subject assumes that the researcher knows something about them that they don't!

The lack of a 'natural' praxis in the social relation between researcher and subject accentuates research as a game or performance. It may be the case that subjects perform for the researcher creating and participating in various scenarios. They may, for instance, oblige the researcher in an act of cultural goodwill and cooperate passively. They may show active enthusiasm in order to garner a favourable impression from him and in doing so accrue symbolic capital through their association with him/her. In social terms, the researcher is generally in a class above the social. He or she is a delegate, the representative of a dominant social group of which he is also a part. The tacit recognition on the part of the subject that the researcher possesses consecrated cultural capitals and the membership credentials to match may lead them to assume a subordinate position confirming their place in the social order or to act opportunistically in order to benefit from association with the researcher. There are a myriad of possibilities here and stances the subject may take in order to frame "the principles of organization which govern events [... and all the participants'] subjective involvement in them" (Goffmann 1974, p. 11).

There are also many modalities that subject can draw on in responding to the researcher's definition of the social situation. They could conform to or resist that definition and provide a new frame.

They may misrecognize the situation and hide their embarrassment when caught out. A subject may make the “expression he gives” to a researcher correspond to the “expression he gives off” (Goffmann 1959, p. 14) and appear sincere or alternatively overdetermine his/her message by giving off surplus meanings to mask a perceived deficiency that they see in themselves. If it is true that research subjects seek and maintain their distinction through impression management, in the research situation, then Bourdieu’s work, which is largely preoccupied with notions of distinction, simply takes no account of the complex dissimulations and communicative possibilities at work when subjects speak. One may say that there is a lack of self-reflexivity in this. Denial, displacement, refusal, rejection, suppression, exclusion, exaggeration, grandiosity, self-promotion are only some of the means research subjects can use to construct a “front” or a “face” (Goffmann 1959, p. 32) for the researcher. Additionally, there are numerous discursive and representational techniques that subjects have at their disposal to struggle against or to conform to a definition of a situation. They can manipulate their “manner, appearance and setting” (Goffmann 1959, p. 33) in a variety of interrelated modes to represent themselves as social actors to the researcher. Given the complexity of these variables is it any wonder that participants in research projects understand their roles as players in a game of legitimacy. In the light of this, is it possible for a social researcher to make categorical statements about the habitus by simply plotting economic and cultural capitals on an x and y axis? (Where is the researcher to be placed on the grid or is his/her habitus the legitimizing frame itself?). The point is that it is feasible that research subjects take on a position of performer or actor when confronted with a member of a class perceived to be above them.

If the research situation is conceived of as the space of symbolic struggle and resistance against symbolic privilege then to what

extent is the habitus an illusion, a collective or conjoint act of magic produced by social relation that is the research situation? Bourdieu pertinently remarks that “the dominant have no interest in social change and the dominated have not the means to effect it” meaning, following Buroway’s & von Holdt’s (2012, p. 64) argument that, the Gramscian “organic intellectual” is simply a myth. This is so because the dominant have no interest in sociological knowledge (the knowledge of social domination) and neither do the dominated because it is useless to them. The sociological researcher therefore has no other role than the disinterested producer of knowledge or cultivator of their own personal distinction (Buroway & von Holdt, 2012). Although, to a high degree Bourdieu’s project is the exposure of the class interested-ness at the heart of disinterested fields such as the artistic, academic and intellectual fields and the lengths that academics, intellectuals and artists go to in order to mask their membership to class and their related class interests and struggles his method fails to mark out the stakes of a sociology that requires for its own existence the reproduction of distinction. In many ways, researchers are too social actors who put on a “face” for their field, colleagues and peers controlling the representation of themselves and their subjects in order to make or take a position within the academic field (Bourdieu, 1990). Is it any wonder, given the double-nature of the research performance that the habitus as it presented sociologically is a paradoxical structure with its own front and back, improvisations and structure, a structured and structuring structure, regulated and regulating, one that looks forward and back (Bourdieu, 1995, pp. 52-65)? If it is understood that the research situation creates a social relation and that that relation is the focus of scholarly investigation qualitative researchers can observe in a more fine-grained manner the workings of the habitus and its capacity for transformation. The question of whether a

correlation can be established between a subject's capacity to play the research situation in their favour and their social position/possession of cultural capital is a difficult one. Is there a relationship between a subject's capacity to challenge the frame of the project and their possession of cultural capital?

It must also perhaps be emphasized that habitus is performed for the researcher and by the researcher. The statements of respondents cannot simply be taken at face value. Perhaps it can only be accessed through provision of multiple modes and affordances otherwise the researcher risks misrecognising the subjects performance (hexis) for the habitus (internalized social structure) without necessarily understanding the dialectical relation between them. Arguably, agency can be measured by the manner in which research subjects resist, on a micro level, the frame of the project itself through their game playing or impression management. We can only understand how this is done by firstly offering subjects multimodal affordances to communicate and in thick description of the representations as social actors. It therefore makes sense to refocus sociological research upon the struggles for legitimacy that play out in the research situation itself between the researcher and subject. But how to proceed?

### **Habitus and multimodality in social research: semiotic affordances**

Bourdieu asserts that because photography is a minor art “[it] provides a privileged opportunity to observe how class values may be communicated in the absence of any formal education” (Bourdieu et al. , 1990, p. 65). Photography is not a consecrated or distinctive art (by virtue of its accessibility, automatism, portability as a medium etc. ). As such because it is popular it naturally requires no formal training or cultivated knowledge in order to

practice. It is surprising that given this definition, *On Photography* examines its subjects formally rather than, as in the case of naturalistic inquiry, understanding its subjects practicing photography in their own contexts. The study artificially tests its subjects. How adequate is the survey as a means of assessing what is an informal practice and furthermore, in the absence of a formal curriculum or qualification against what modalities will the subject be tested and against whose values?

The artificiality of the survey is perhaps symptomatic of Bourdieu's assumptions about education in general and the nature of learning. His ideas on education may be said to be highly conservative because they are premised on the notion that learning is ultimately a passive affair. For Bourdieu, superficially, learning takes place when legitimate knowledge is successfully banked in the mind of the learner through transmission style teaching delivery. Deeper, transformative learning is understood mechanistically as the training the body so that the mind is disciplined to behave predictably. Thus, habitus formed through deep learning is simply the outcome of "ritualistic" conditioning and domination (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 69). Bourdieu tends to conflate training and education in his thinking as if they amounted to the same thing. It follows from such thinking that only through the notion that knowledge can be constructed or interpreted is simply negated by this model of learning this has serious consequences for pedagogy. The feel for the (academic) game is nothing but a predisposition to learn and simply shows the extent to which an individual's training bears an affinity with the social circumstances they presently occupy. Pedagogy, in these, contrary to Freireian thinking is nothing but domination. Learning is cathexis and catharsis is unthinkable. Bourdieu provides a framework for learning and education that is essentially impoverished and cynical which is largely

transposed onto his understanding of photographic practices in *On Photography*.

Bourdieu's ideas on education can be easily criticized as succumbing to the logic of domination which is not necessarily a given in every situation. This criticism is important for research because it implicates the possible pedagogical relation between researcher and subject. To return to my original problem of legitimacy, Freireian critical pedagogy, in contrast to the pedagogies of domination, assumes that the struggle for legitimacy, emancipatory interest must be *central* to the educational project. Assessment modalities such as high stakes testing, examinations, questionnaires (which bear a strong relation to Bourdieu's research methods) serve the interests of the dominant classes and simply reproduce existing social inequality. In contrast, as Gunther Kress (2010, Kress et al. , 2003) and many other argue "multimodal" approaches to assessment, make provision for a variety of meaning making practices that are invariably shaped by multiple factors such as social class, sexuality, race, culture, gender, age and so on. Learning is not simply a question of capitals but a question of how knowledge comes to be legitimized through the modes in which it is represented, fixed and framed. Education could thus be seen as a site of struggle for *modal* legitimacy. The same could be said about research practices.

The research instrument could be similarly understood in pedagogical terms as a legitimizing modal device. Instruments designed to elicit the nature of the habitus will inevitably produce different results depending upon their mode. For instance, an observation study of individuals practicing photographic rituals will produce different results to structured interviews, written questionnaires or participatory action research projects. The point is that the modal orientations of research practices determine paradigmatically what kinds of knowledge are produced and how they are

valued. Research practices that rely centrally on “reported speech” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 50) as a mode to elicit data will prompt the subject to perform in a more informal manner than in the written mode given the ethereal and temporal nature of speech. Similarly, a visual response, as opposed to a written response, on will require a spatial rather than sequential logic (Kress, 2010, p. 75). In many senses, the control for definition of situation is a modal and “criterial” struggle over who will “fix” and “frame” (Kress, 2010, pp. 76–77) meaning an ontological and a political problem.

A multimodal approach to qualitative research (eliciting gesture, speech, image, written language) used in conjunction with dramaturgical approaches (impression management in the dialogical situation) informed by field theory (in which crises for legitimacy take place) to my mind therefore promises to give a richer and more relational account of the habitus. A multimodal, dramaturgical, methodology may be a finer instrument for the identification of modest disruptions and resistances to the habitus.

### Two Way and The Conversationalist: research method

In this half of the paper, I compare the research methods employed in *Two Way* and *The Conversationalist* two projects that grew directly out of my engagement with *On Photography*. I will show that the dramaturgical multimodal approach highlighted above as a method for visual sociological research does not necessarily negate Bourdieu’s field approach. On the contrary, both of the projects undertaken strongly confirm Bourdieu’s thesis, that being that

*“the relationship between individuals and photographic practice is essentially a mediate relationship [one that includes] reference to the relationship of the members of other social classes. . . [and] hence to*

*the whole structure of relationship between the classes*" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 9).

It also strongly confirms that, "for the working and middle classes, the aesthetic expressed as much in photographic practice [...] appears as a dimension of the ethos" and shows that, in the final analysis, class ethos is the organizing and constraining principle in the everyday practice of photography (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 6). However, it also became clear to me that the project offered the subject a singular opportunity to defamiliarise themselves with photography within the context of their everyday lives. From this I was able to identify potential to activate the generative, improvisatory aspect of the habitus in longer term projects.

*Two Way* was a photographic research/art project, based in Coronationville and Melville Johannesburg designed specifically to generate findings for the *Wide Angle: Photography and Public Practice Conference* (Johannesburg 24-25 May 2010). Two shop owners were asked to art direct a photoshoot and to exhibit the photographic print that they had made within the shop. Its aim was to ascertain the social purposes to which the selected shop owners would put photography employing strong thematic triggers/frames 'memory', 'community' and 'neighbourhood'. The concepts for the photographs were generated from loose conversations that took place between the subject and myself. The subjects then directed the preparatory sketches made by myself and the final photographic shoot. The project placed heavy emphasis on the frames 'creativity and 'conversation'. The subjects were keenly aware that their images would be shown at a conference.

*The Conversationalist* was a sociological visual research project, based in Melville Johannesburg. Three shop keepers and two shop owners from a variety of different socioeconomic backgrounds were asked to generate concepts for two photographs but on this



occasion, unlike in *Two Way*, not in conversation with the researcher. They were invited to conceptualise one photographic for and/or about 'home' and another for and/or about 'work'. Once printed to their specifications, these two photographs were then entered into circulation in their daily lives by the subjects themselves. The aim, similar to that of *Two Way*, was to elicit more detailed data from shopkeepers about their social class, their biographical relation to photography and regarding their choice of image, subject matter and the social function assigned to the photographic print. Unlike *Two Way*, this project was weakly framed thematically but offered subjects a range of modalities by which to represent themselves as social actors and gave low emphasis on the notion of 'creativity'. Subjects knew that their images were not to be shown at the conference setting and that their shop and home was the only site of reception for the project.

Each project was completed within the period of a month, *Two Way* in March 2011 and *The Conversationalist* in May/June 2013. After producing a street map and photographic panorama detailing the types of shops on the respective streets, I walked directly eliciting interest from strangers and passerbys and asking them, in the case of *Two Way*, to point out "the oldest shop on this street" until I was finally led via community members two shopkeepers/owners who showed interest in engaging with the project. This approach was useful because it allowed me to use temporary informants to obtain the consent of subjects.

The participants in *Two Way* were interviewed around themes such as 'neighbourhood', 'community', 'memory'. This interview was followed by an in-depth on site conversation (with an emphasis on exchange rather than storytelling) which was recorded in writing through extensive note-taking. From the start, the participant was informed that the conversation would move toward

a photographic “moment” which they were invited to conceive of with us (or individually) and ‘art direct’. Once the photographic concept had been developed we would make return visits to the shop until the participant had identified one ‘meaningful image’ and a date was set for the photo shoot. Notably, up until the day the photograph would be taken no camera or recording device was present in the participant’s space.

In *The Conversationalist* I identified 20 shops spread over the length of the commercial section of the street so that my selection covered a range of functions, economic brackets, and class distinction my aim being to secure a small group of subjects who varied greatly in terms of social class. I cold canvassed for participation in the project by dropping off pamphlets with interested individuals and returning the following day to confirm participation and securing appointments. Out of the 30 individuals approached, 21 showed interest, 4 outright rejected it and 5 committed to engagement with the project.

I would return to the shop at an appointed time for an initial structured interview (recorded through written notation) that aimed to elicit data regarding age, gender, language, occupation, leisure activity, views on the place of work, support structures (economic and social), living and working circumstances, social aspirations, social integration and crucially the subject’s prior relation to photography (personal use, consumption, competence, affective relation to photography, social use). The structured interview was followed by an invitation issued by the researcher to formulate a concept for a ‘home’ and ‘work’ photograph. The subject was briefed to generate images that were meaningful and socially purposeful about/for home, about/for work. Subjects were encouraged to consider the relationship between the two images in their ideational processes.

I returned two to three days later to ‘take instruction’ from the subject, produced a series of sketches in their company. Subjects could have photographs taken at any site provided it was within a 10km radius of their shop or home. They could also have the images printed at any size specifications. Once the photographs had been taken in a variety of locations usually in the presence of the subject the photographic images were carefully edited and in some cases styled to meet the needs of the subjects, printed and then five days after the photoshoot returned to the subject for a period of a week. Each subject was asked to track the movement of their photographic print and remember as far as possible who they have shown it to, where it was shown, what responses it provoked and their own thought process about the image.

In a way, at this stage in *The Conversationalist*, the subject could adopt the persona of a researcher in their own right. I then returned to the participant for a second structured interview (recorded through written notation and audio recording) that elicited data regarding how they felt about the project, why they participated in it, how the photographs were different, the intended and actual addressees of the photographs, the context of their display, reactions to the image. Critically, I gathered affective statements from participants regarding their attitudes toward the photographic event, the meaning of the subject matter depicted in the images, whether the image conformed to their tastes. This was generally followed by an unanticipated informal conversation where the subject would ask me more “personal” questions.

The project generated a wealth of visual, gestural and speech data. The analytical method employed for both projects was generally the same. Visual observations of the subject’s gestures, movements, appearance, mannerism; anecdotal information regarding arrangement of space, venue, setting; audio data recorded from

structured interviews, as well as written notations and the visual data within the photographic image itself were then subjected to a filtering process (see Figure 2 for the conceptual framework for *Two Way* and Figure 1 for the analytical procedure for *The Conversationalist*) where I used the following conceptual categories to organize my observations in order to ascertain how “the photograph was a statement of group’s image of its own integration” (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 26). This framework allowed me to ascertain the extent to which the project image mediated between the habitus of the subject and their class ethos. I could describe the relation in qualitative terms as “affinity”, “solidarity”, “strong”, “weak” and so on.

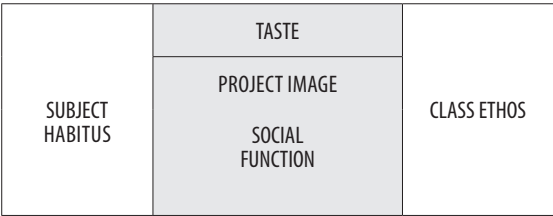


Figure 1. Analytical framework for *Two Way*.



Figure 2. Analytical procedure for *The Conversationalist*.

This analytical procedure being far more dense and complex than that employed in *Two Way* which allowed me to sift through data generated through various subject modes of communication and distill this into patterns. The performance of multiple self-representations could now form mediating relationships between habitus and class ethos rather than a single photographic image and this is where the project deviates most significantly from Bourdieu's survey driven approach and that used in *Two Way*.

The procedure (Figure 2) was useful in the sense that it allowed me to do two things: 1) identify patterns and discrepancies in the social functions accorded to photography through the various performative modes enacted by subjects. For instance, I could confirm or disconfirm the stated 'commemorative' function of a photograph asserted by the participant by comparing this to the gestural reaction elicited (which for example actually revealed a 'festive' function) in the showing of the photographic print; 2) I could determine against the statistical regularity of a modal function whether the subject was in fact impression managing for my benefit or being 'sincere'. It became apparent toward the end of the research process that a critical discourse analysis would perhaps give clearer insight into how subjects positioned themselves in relation to myself, and performed for their addressee provided I had the equipment necessary for a total documentation of each research situation. As it stands however, the existing procedure allowed me to both describe a class relation between myself and the research subject and understand the expression of the group/class through subject performances.

### Initial findings from *Two Way* and the *Conversationalist*

Since both projects and given the scope it is not possible for me to give a fine-grained account of my findings, nor provide them

with evidentiary force. What I present below are generalized observations about the project where I touch occasionally on the data it elicited.

Using the camera as the primary data generating instrument for the project, I found created rich and analysable results that give insight into how subjects performed multimodally and what criteria they motivated in their self-representation and representation of the definition of the research situation. Below I list the ‘potentials’ of the camera as a vehicle for sociological research:

- The category of photography allows the researcher immediate access to the prior knowledge and lived experience of the subject.
- The anticipation of the camera and the presence of the camera generates “unfolding”, “modalities of eventness” (Azoulay, 2012, p. 27).
- The photographic print prompts focussed informal conversation which can be analysed.
- Because it is an analogue artefact and a virtual digital entity the circulation of the photographic image can be tracked.
- The photographic print can be utilised as a reference point between researcher and respondent for structured and unstructured interviews.
- The use of the camera emphasises classification and selection and thus provides insight into the schemes of perception of subjects.
- The camera provokes situational context-specific performativity for naturalistic inquiry.
- The camera provides opportunities for multimodal communication (gesture eg. in the art direction, arrangement of space for photo shoots, posing; speech eg. in interviews and conversations about the image; and obviously the visual

mode as in the case of the photograph itself and supplementary opportunities like the pose).

In essence, the offering of photographic moment in an unfamiliar context gave the subjects a unique opportunity for self-representation which all eight embraced for varying reasons. The two subjects in *Two Way* were a white, English speaking woman in her late 50's who had been running an antique shop in Melville for half a decade having taken over the shop from a previous owner who had run it for almost 20 year and a coloured man in his early 40's who was in the process of taking over the general dealer/café from his father and owner, an 80 year old man who had run the shop in Coronationville prior to his son for 35 years.

Confirming the insights of Goffmann's impression management, both participants, in the initial stages of the project, were almost obsessively preoccupied with the fact that their speech, ideas and the final image may be negatively judged by academics despite the researcher's attempt to frame the project in terms of their everyday experience. It became clear for me that the central reference point for the project participants was the legitimating power of the conference which mediated their attitudes, the way that they spoke, their gestures, register, diction and so on. Indeed, there was a sense in which the participants internally and voluntarily judged their own class habitus in terms of their own misrecognition of the conference as a corporate, transcendental, 'academic' space which would expose and evaluate their subjecthood.

The struggle for legitimacy that appeared to play out in the mind of both participants centered around whether to produce an image that was either instrumental (for the shop) or aesthetic (for the conference) or both. The Melville participant chose a decorative, individualised and aesthetic approach: to dress/set one of her tables for a still life photograph that would be printed and displayed

in an ornate frame in her shop to beautify it for her customers. The solution revealed that she felt the need to make an aesthetic statement “I don’t know why I like it. Not interested in advertising my shop. I just want to admire it”; one that simultaneously met what she perceived as the academic requirements of the conference “I am not sure what is best. I am ignorant on these things. Perhaps I am not the best person”, her tastes as a collector and the decorative needs of her shop.

In contrast, the Coronationville participant, belonging to a more working class background chose a more instrumentalised and community-based approach choosing to produce an image that could be used for many functions, amongst others to create social cohesion in his community by ‘revitalising the community’ by photographing and publicly displaying the drum majorettes from the school nearby performing on the street. “I want something to ‘make people think... when the community was much, much better”. Analysis of the choices of the participants suggested strongly that they were informed by 1) the understanding they they were required to perform for academia and 2) by the need to conform to class in to which the participants felt they belonged.

Although *The Conversationalist* proposed a simple transaction, two interviews and the response to a brief in exchange for two carefully art directed, shot, edited and printed photographic images the project generated a wealth of data by providing subjects with a range of modalities with which to respond to it. The openness of the project provided multiple opportunities for the expression of the habitus through Bourdieu’s assignment of the group and integrative function to photographic practices. Given this openness the project it also subjects ample opportunities for misrecognition and game playing which meant that the five participants could easily manipulate the definition of the research situation.



It comprised of five subjects: Elize Augusta, a 66 year-old, Afrikaans, widow who has been working as member and director of a home industry business the 'Koljander' collective for 30 years, Greg, a 28 year old English speaking arts graduate and freelance illustrator, and comic book store retail clerk; Katlego Phokwane, a 24 year-old man who works as working as a sales assistant at Adult World - an adults DVD, mini-theatre and sex toys retailer - so as to support his father, and two siblings; Paul Tetteh, a 48 year old Ghanaian man who owns "Paul's Tavern" - a shebeen that has been operating Main road for the past five years; and William, 63 year old Ugandan tailor, specializing in curtains, who runs his own small business out of a hair and beauty salon.

The project provided confirmation of the strong relationship between class ethos and habitus. In every case, and much to my surprise, despite the fact that all the participants are African by birth, the functions they accorded both verbally and in terms of their photographic choices conformed neatly to the tastes and functions of social classes designated by Bourdieu in *On Photography*. However, that being said, from the most disadvantaged subject whose proximity to legitimized culture was the greatest to the most privileged whose proximity was the closest an awareness of legitimate culture was apparent which meant, as I will discuss later, that they each had a reference point or standard by which to manage impressions. In no case could an individual's tastes, practice and appreciation of photography be said to be completely arbitrary. Each was able to modulate their class habitus to produce meaningful images. Indeed, subjects performed their class ethos in surprising and intimate ways rather than simply conforming to the rules and conventions associated with their social group. For instance, by virtue of his class position, a subject combined the connotations of surveillance attached to photography to that of self-promotion. Another, openly employed his

photographic prints to deceive is relatives in order to claim honour. Katlego, the shop attendant working at the sex shop asked for a landscape photograph to be exhibited above the counter so that he could have an illusionary view of the hills that can be seen from the corner outside the shop. What was striking was the subjects located in Bourdieu's "sphere of the arbitrary" conformed least to the appreciative conventions of their social class whereas those with a legitimate relation to photography and high culture conformed most.

I found in *The Conversationalist* that, that all of the participants, but one (who possessed an homologous relationship to the researcher) either misrecognized the research situation as something else or manipulated the definition of the situation to suit themselves which could account for the non-conformity of their image choices. In nearly every case, the subject took advantage of their association with me and the affordances provided by the project to accrue some kind of capital within their own which was not by any means an unconscious effect of their class habitus. Each subject was able to manipulate their appearance, manner and setting in order to present a picture of distinction.

### **Conclusion: agency practiced as a game of self-representation**

In this paper I have argued for a dramaturgical and multimodal approach to visual sociology to counter the reductionism inherent in Bourdieu's field approach by referring to two dialogical photography projects undertaken by the author. The question that remains unanswered in my approach a critical and educational question. How "photography [... as] the object of a reading that is sociological" (rather than one that is "technical", "aesthetic" or psychological) (Bourdieu 1990, p. 1-8) can produce a practice that is critical and emancipatory, one that employs its mediumicity to highlight

the struggles for legitimacy that take place in the mind of all agents involved and between the agents in the act of representation in the research situation. The research at no stage made the participant explicitly aware, of their subjecthood in the research process which meant, by and large, that the subject 'acted' suitably, allowing their creative process to be determined by the legitimising frames set up in advance by the voyeuristic gaze of the researcher, the conference and the class habitus represented by both. If photography as an everyday performance, in contrast to auratic aesthetic object, holds promise to produce a reading of the world that "sociological", one that is marginally less dominated by the strictures of legitimate culture then what does that practice look like? Indeed, to borrow Benjamin's terms (2008), how can photography function as a revolutionary apparatus designed to make "highly productive use of a human being's self-alienation"?

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# **Beyond an ethics of privilege.**

## **Suffering and agency in the age of mediated uncertainty**

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### **Introduction**

This paper explores the possibilities opened up by the documentary genre for constructing the distant sufferer as a complex, historical agent, in the broader context of what has recently been acknowledged as a dramatic moral-ethical turn in media and cultural studies (Ong, 2009). In this sense, recent efforts to reevaluate the meaning of morality and mediation in an increasingly interconnected world, as well as the importance held by media ethics in relation to distant suffering (Boltanski 2000, 2004; Chouliarakis 2006, 2010, 2013, Silverstone 2007), proved that, on the one hand, technological connectivity alone is not sufficient “to improve our overall moral condition or to foster a cosmopolitan cultural outlook” (Tomlison, 2011, p. 347) and that, on the other hand, there is no unproblematic way of mediating or looking at suffering.

The shift from mere awareness to questions regarding how this awareness is brought forward and who should be the beneficiary of

media attention, as well as the central place morality holds in these inquiries have generated an increasing interest in the way in which media, through their employment of various semiotic resources and discursive strategies in the process of mediation, manage to either undermine or to foster a cosmopolitan commitment translated into a willingness to imaginatively engage with and to address the Other as a historical being perceived in connectedness to a number of features of her complex and concrete context. Since witnessing suffering pushes this engagement to the extreme, the mediation of distant suffering becomes one of the privileged means of assessing not only media's success or failure in creating "a global public with a sense of social responsibility towards the distant sufferer" (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 1), but also the importance held by images as vehicles of modal imagination. Multimodal analysis, supplemented by a critical approach concerned with the way in which images take on a specific ethical content in various contexts, become useful means of understanding why images are so important in providing the condition of possibility for cosmopolitanism by allowing viewers a theatrical involvement in the scene of suffering.

In this context, the present paper examines the relationship between media and moral identity in terms of resources for meaning-making, cosmopolitanism being regarded in relation to media texts as "a mode of managing meaning" (Hannerz, 2001, p. 102), respectively as a disposition of intellectual and aesthetic openness towards those represented through specific media texts. By relying on two analytical categories, discursive agency and projected agency, the paper aims to envision a hierarchy of documentary voices, ranging from representations of suffering which fail to foster a cosmopolitan disposition by failing to humanize the sufferer to representations which nurture a cosmopolitan sensibility by means of reflection and deliberation. This approach wishes to

expand Chouliaraki's concern with how television news shape cosmopolitan sensibility towards distant suffering, to a different genre, the documentary and to understand how documentaries may open up different perspectives on the distant Other by reposting images of suffering in new contexts, which put competing visual media, such as television news, under scrutiny. This inquiry should not be conceived as a statement regarding the documentary's superiority in respect to television news, the relationship between news and documentaries being one of complementarity to the degree that viewers "do not experience factual genres in isolation but as part of a mix of factuality" (Hill, 2007, p. 2). Both genres form a continuum of spectatorship and representation, ranging from brief, segmented glimpses of one-time moments of suffering to more elaborate, rhetorically complex depictions of human pain. The question is therefore not how one genre is better than another, but how could one improve the other, respectively what is the potential of documentary practices to compensate for certain aspects which more often than not go unnoticed by news (How far should one be willing to sacrifice cognitive and behavioral certainty streaming from relatively unproblematic comprehension, typical for the news format, in order to "do justice" to the complexity and ambivalence of actual sufferers as historical agents? How far should one be willing to transgress certain models of action which specify who is permitted and who is forbidden to entertain certain actions and behaviors?). In this sense, the paper hopes to reveal potential means through which the documentary may challenge the dominant framework within which distant suffering continues to be understood, framework which I describe as an "ethics of privilege" and which I contrast against the concept of "agentic equilibrium".

### The demand for urgency and the ethics of privilege

As both a moral actor and an environment which embodies the primary values of the society that produces them, media simultaneously represent and establish collective norms of obligation which circumscribe the spectator within a framework characterized by individual and collective obligations to read the scene of suffering as a claim on the spectator to become an ameliorative agent. The moral imperative of urgent, on-the-spot action upon suffering is in this sense one of the most poignant manifestations of an ethics of privilege which can be broadly read as “the sufferer is over there, you, the compassionate one, have a resource that would alleviate someone else’s suffering” (Berlant, 2004, p. 4). In order for it to be the source of grand emotions such as indignation or sympathy, pity must always be conceived as an emotion in operation, a catalyst relying primarily on an ethics of privilege consisting of three norms: 1. *the norm of distinction* (one must always be able to distinguish between those who suffer and those who do not); 2. *the norm of abundance* (everyone has the resources to feel for and act on distant suffering in an unrestricted manner) 3. *the norm of existential certainty* (one can and must know at all times who occupies what place within the traditional humanitarian triad consisting of victim-perpetrator-benefactor).

Besides being a means of reinforcing certain predispositions and patterns for action in relation to distant suffering, this framework also acts as a blueprint for reconstructing the relationship between the model spectator and the model sufferer understood as the idealized concept of the spectator and the sufferer as structured into the text, concept which encourages certain readings over others (Livingstone, 2002, p. 245). According to this account, the distance between the spectator and the sufferer is not so much a



matter of physical distance (the incapacity to directly intervene in order to stop suffering) as a matter of symbolic distance which endows the spectator with exclusive qualities such as agency, historicity and decision-making capacity at the expense of the sufferer's helplessness and lack of agency. This asymmetry associated with "the tension between the proliferation of moralizing discourses (...) and the public's bounded ability to feel and act on distant others" (Chouliaraki, 2010, p. 120) feeds a public ethical discourse of urgency and grand emotions according to which "everyone can, in principle, feel for and act on distant suffering in an unrestricted manner" (Chouliaraki, 2010, p. 120).

### Reevaluating the ethical norms of mediation

To the degree that mediated images have increasingly come to define what constitutes our reality and "since it is the relationship we have with others which defines the nature of our own being, such links as we might have with these mediated individuals increasingly becoming the crucial ones for us too" (Silverstone, 2007, p. 4) the problem of what norms dominate the ethics of public life today and how these norms shape our understanding of suffering becomes crucial. In this sense, I envision the concept of "agentic equilibrium" as a means of reducing the asymmetry inherent in the process of mediating suffering by redefining the relationship between spectator and sufferer in a manner which would allow an agreement between unequally affected individuals; this implies, on the one hand, relieving some of the pressure of urgency on the part of the spectator and, on the other hand, endowing the sufferer with a fair amount of self-sufficiency and agency without diminishing the significance of his or her suffering. As a tool for challenging the inequitable ways in which agency is distributed, the concept hints

to Adam Smith's notion of "sympathetic equilibrium" defined as a method of reducing the imbalance between the spectator's natural disengagement generated by his feeling of safety and the sufferer's overwhelmingly intense pain (Smith, 1984, pp. 21-22). In this sense, we shall proceed by identifying the obstacles and limitations the spectator as an ameliorative agent has to face and we will strive to prove that agency is not the exclusive characteristic of the spectator, but an essential aspect of what it means to be human and consequently the only way to endow victims with the quality of humanness.

### **Conditional freedom: challenging the norm of distinction**

If one should consider the meaning of "suffering" beyond physical pain in the broader context of influence or being an object of action (according to the classical meaning of the word, one could suffer any passion, the semantics of classical Greek and Latin allowing one to "suffer" pleasure (Gross, 2006, p. 52)), the affirmation that spectators "suffer" mediation becomes potentially less whimsical. This fundamental vulnerability of the spectator is instrumental to a better understanding of how the programmatic project of the media employs action on the actions of individuals, people simultaneously acting and reacting to the dispositions for action suggested by the media. As part of a public constituted through mediation, the spectator is "unable to express or witness himself except in mediated forms", he is reliant on others, especially on media producers, to feel represented, since the spectator, as well as the public as a whole, "has no ontological essence prior to mediated representation" (Coleman & Ross, 2010, p. 29).

What Chouliaraki describes as the programmatic character of mediation manifests itself not as an intentional, coherent, strictly

regulative form of power, but rather as a way of mobilizing meaning, “a generalized resource of symbolic definition” which “proposes some dispositions for action and not others as desirable for spectators” (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 65). In this sense, the openness that allows activity comes from “the semiotic structures of meaning-making rather than from subjective forces” (Bratich, 2008, p. 38), the polysemy of mediated discourses ensuring both diversity and certain degrees of freedom within a structure that forms the audience as recipient in a chain. As a “governmental technology for the conduct of conduct” (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 65) mediation endows the spectator with conditional freedom: the spectator is on the one hand the primary ameliorative agent within the mediated viewing relationship established between spectator and sufferer, while on the other hand media shapes and therefore conditions the agency of the spectator according to certain regimes of pity, regimes which favor certain dispositions for action over others and which hold as paramount ethical values the demand for urgency and grand emotion.

Agency, both as freedom and regulated action, meaning action which is being acted upon, thus lies at the core of a programmatic project which capitalizes ‘on a set of potential capabilities that media both “imagines” on behalf of the spectators and enables them to enact as “free” subjects’ (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 65). The media delivers the spectator back to himself as an image, both visual and mental, an image which may be distorted or which may fail to reflect his complexity, but which the spectator is nonetheless forced to take into account. As a method of regulating, but by no means determining the spectator’s position regarding distant suffering, the model of the spectator as a beneficiary of “conditional freedom” strives to find the middle ground between an overly pessimistic narrative which conditions the spectator’s reactions in an exclusive

manner (the passive, selfless consumer), and an overly optimistic narrative which empowers the spectator beyond any regulative influence (the active, informed citizen).

### **A moral economy of scarcity: challenging the norm of abundance**

Rather than inhabiting a world of unlimited resources and freedom, spectators live in an economy of scarcity, where pity is no longer a simple emotion which relies on a clear program of ameliorating suffering, but a source of endless anxieties concerned not only with the quantity and nature of the resources necessary for alleviating suffering, but also with the question “whether there is any adequate solution to the problem at hand, not only within the world but in the spectator’s sense of what is to be done” (Berlant, 2004, p. 6). Arguing against the idea that “emotion is a kind of excess, something housed in our nature aching for expression” (Gross, 2006, p. 5), Gross strives to prove by looking at the works of thinkers such as Aristotle, Seneca or Hobbes that instead of fueling equally shared social passions, “the constitutive power of emotions depends upon their uneven distribution” (Gross, 2006, p. 5). In this sense, Gross envisions a political moral economy wherein passions are constituted as differences in power (negotiating social difference from a particular perspective: sympathy from whom? for whom?) and wherein they are conditioned not by their excess, but by their scarcity (to the degree that emotions act as markers of social distinction, rather than expressions of a universally shared humanness, emotions are ultimately unequally distributed). In this context, far from “a symmetrical phenomenon felt equally by everyone for everyone else” (Gross, 2006, p. 172) pity becomes more about negotiating the best outcome for the suffering Other within an economy of inequitable distribution of the resources to feel and act, an economy which follows Sontag’s dictum ‘no “we” should

be taken for granted when the subject is looking at other people's pain' (Sontag, 2004, p. 8).

From "semiotic resources" as building-blocks of meaning to "symbolic resources" as building-blocks of the self, from the resource scarcity of the spectator to the resource-bound agency of the sufferer, the concept of "resource" reveals itself as accommodating enough to combine a symbolic understanding of identity and a pragmatic account of agency. Resources are symbolic to the degree that they enrich and transform self-formation into an open-ended process, while they are also pragmatic to the degree that they are socially conditioned, while they simultaneously condition agency. As Thompson explains (Thompson, 1995), people access symbolic resources from uneven social, economic and material positions, while the tremendous expansion of mediated symbolic resources has placed new demands on the self in a way and on a scale that did not exist before, this discrepancy between demands and access to resources being one of the driving factors of emotional and agentic scarcity.

### **The ambivalence of the sufferer: challenging the norm of existential certainty**

Besides relying on alleged universal presumptions about how one should deal with suffering, the ethics of privilege uses the mediated presence of the distant sufferer as an incentive for urgent action by stressing the sufferer's minimal capacity to act as opposed to the spectator's autonomy and freedom. The sufferer's intrinsic powerlessness is further enhanced by the presence of a benefactor or a persecutor, the two essential figures of action in the scene of suffering, figures which organize the spectators' disposition to feel and act at the expense of shifting the focus from the actual sufferer to the deeds and conduct of a third party. One reason for focusing

on benefactors and persecutors as the sole depositaries of agency and as the source of all moral dispositions (spectators react not so much to the actual suffering, as to the sufferer's reaction towards benefactors and persecutors) lies in the relationship between benefactors/persecutors and patterns of imaginary action: to the degree that "all literary texts draw on a finite set of available archetypes, configuring these archetypes according to the genres in which the literary text functions" (Bawarshi & Reiff, 2010, p. 17), their role in nurturing the imagination derives partly from the historical importance they play not only in fairytales and novels, but in all artistic genres which involve temporal development and which rely on suspense in order to reach a resolution.

Compassion fatigue thus appears, according to Boltanski (Boltanski, 2004), to be less a consequence of how suffering is mediated and more a matter of how benefactors and persecutors fail to nurture and support the language of sentimental gratitude or the language of indignation; benefactors and persecutors no longer orientate the spectator's disposition to feel and act towards distant suffering, because they no longer constitute credible agents, their humanness ceasing to be related to their capacity to act as they become mere excuses for governmental interventions or military action. In this context, this paper concerns itself with a shift which aims to focus on the sufferer as an element of public concern in opposition to the focus on benefactors and persecutors as the sole figures of action. A secondary aim also concerns reevaluating the notion of benefactor and persecutor in order to understand how the sufferer as an agent could incorporate these two dimensions and how this expansion could further benefit the mediation of distant suffering by putting the spectator in the position of engaging with what Chouliaraki described as a form of reflexive particularism (Chouliaraki, 2006). Endowing the sufferer with agency ultimately

connects humanness with the distinct quality of historicity, meaning that what a person is always emerges in the context of a certain flow of action, a context we can only understand as historical.

The ambivalence of the sufferer thus resides in her double status as victim and agent, ambivalence which echoes the condition of the spectator as simultaneously a free, resourceful agent and a “sufferer” of mediation. As an agent, the sufferer takes the form of a humanized, historical being, somebody who feels and acts on his or her fate, but whose actions are nonetheless insufficient to put an end to suffering. In this sense, the sufferer appears as being both “in danger and dangerous” (Chouliaraki, 2006, p. 148), where “in danger” refers to the sufferer’s evident powerlessness to decisively change his fate, while “dangerous” appears as a consequence of the sufferer’s agency. Suffering is no longer the element which distinguishes and separates the spectator from the distant victim, agency becoming instead the characteristic which simultaneously binds and distinguishes one from another: as an element of identification, agency endows both spectator and sufferer with humanness, while as an element of distinction, agency signals the inescapable “otherness”, the unpredictable, fluctuating, incomprehensible and somewhat dangerous quality of all beings capable of action and decision.

### **Ethics, spectatorship and documentary filmmaking**

The question of what exactly contributes to the understanding of morality as constitutive of the documentary genre has recently come to bear an increasingly visible influence on how people write about, define, view and even direct documentaries. It is thus this prevalent logic which comes into play whenever one thinks of the documentary as a genre capable of achieving the prerequisite of

moral vision (Ong, 2009) which fosters questions such as: what meaning of “moral” is employed when discussing the issue of the documentary as a moral genre? If morality is constitutive of the documentary genre, what kind of moral responsibilities does the documentary hold and towards whom? Are these responsibilities constitutive only for documentaries and not for other genres?

In order to tentatively approach these questions, one must first look at the characteristics of the documentary as a constructed representation, rather than as a mere reproduction of the world around us. Plantinga (Plantinga, 1997) defines documentaries as assertions about the real world to the degree that documentaries commit themselves to describing a state of affairs as happening in the actual world. In this sense, by committing themselves to the truth of the proposition, documentaries hold an epistemic responsibility towards spectators and protagonists, these epistemic claims acquiring a moral dimension to the degree that they simultaneously act as essentialist claims: documentaries do not merely portray people, objects and places (fiction films also do this) they portray them as they really are. As assertions, rather than mere suppositions about reality, documentaries manifest a strong belief in the expressed propositions, as well as a strong commitment to these propositions, fact which enables documentaries to be held morally responsible in view of at least two fundamental aspects: the vulnerability of the protagonists and the credulity of the spectators.

The epistemic authority the filmmaker holds in regard to the protagonist is not restricted solely to editing and to the fact that the filmmaker can later manipulate the filmed material without the protagonist’s acknowledgement or to the capacity of the filmmaker to put thing into perspective, but incorporates a deeper dimension which relies on a specific claim to knowledge: I, the filmmaker, do not just portray you, I uncover through editing, lighting, focus,



angle, aspects of yourself you might not have even been aware of. This vulnerability that the documentary reveals thus echoes one of the most unsettling aspects of disclosing oneself in front of another: 'it is more than likely that the "who", which appears so clearly and unmistakably to others, remains hidden from the person himself, like the *daimon* in Greek religion which accompanies each man throughout his life, always looking over his shoulder from behind and thus visible only to those he encounters' (Arendt, 1998, p. 179). Not knowing whom one reveals when one discloses oneself and not knowing how the filmmaker will manipulate this disclosure are, in this sense, two of the most important aspects when discussing the vulnerability/authority duality intrinsic to the documentary genre. Rather than being professional actors, documentary protagonists reveal themselves as social actors, their value for the filmmaker consisting not "in what a contractual relationship can promise, but in what their own lives embody" (Nichols, 2001, p. 5). Establishing that documentaries are about something outside the documentary itself is what ultimately makes documentaries morally responsible for the things about which they make truth claims. In this sense, the dictum of "doing justice" to the protagonists dates back to John Grierson's work (1929-1954) both as a filmmaker and as a producer, who sought to portray for the first time the faces and bodies of the working class not as objects of ridicule, but as "social agents in their own environment and with their own voices" (Smaill, 2010, p. 53), this events marking the appearance of the victimized as speaking subjects in the tradition of the realist documentary. However, this responsibility of "doing justice" to those in front of the camera does not restrict itself to the narrative effort of revealing the sense of complexity and depth emanated by full-rounded individuals, extending itself to the broader preoccupation of the documentary for winning consent or influencing opinion.

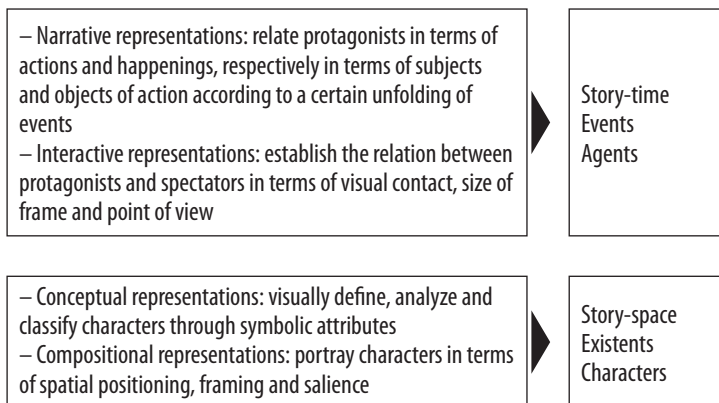
The second aspect which must be taken into account when discussing morality as a constitutive aspect of the documentary genre is the relationship with the spectator. It is in this sense that the documentary acts as a contract between the filmmaker and the spectators through which the filmmaker commits himself, on the one hand, not to assert that what he portrays is reality itself, while, on the other hand, he commits himself not to portray as real something which did not actually happen or which does not really exist. The point where these two commitments ultimately converge is the documentary's moral responsibility of not taking advantage of the spectators' credulity and not exploiting this willingness to believe on the basis of the documentary's epistemic authority streaming from the images' alleged quality as objective evidence. Documentaries are not pristine representations of the real, but they are also not fiction, they are about real subjects whose existence precede and will outlast the actual shooting of the documentary. Deceiving spectators into believing something exists when in fact it does not, ultimately affects the public as a group which can act together:

*"When documentaries deceive us, they are not just deceiving viewers, but members of the public who might act upon knowledge gleaned from the film. Documentaries are part of the media that help us understand not only our world, but our role in it, that shape us as public actors" (Aufderheide, 2007, pp. 4-5).*

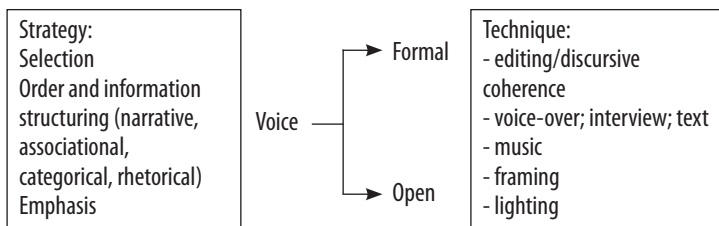
Rather than being strictly a matter of stylistic signature, as in fiction films, the documentary filmmaker's aesthetic choices, as well as artistic perspective, echo to a large degree the ethic assumptions inherent in the creative work. In doing this, documentaries make an assertion about "inherent right or wrong, goodness or badness and they also contribute to our social discourse about what we value in our society and how we deal with it" (Donovan, 2012, p. 345).

# Analytical categories: projected agency and discursive agency

## Projected agency (What):



## Discursive agency (How):



While projected agency visually defines the spectators' object of contemplation in terms of the protagonists' symbolic attributes, behavior or cinematic persona, discursive agency engages the spectator by constructing her viewing position. Discursive agency thus translates itself into a general attitude taken by the discourse towards its own protagonists, attitude which the documentary further communicates to the spectator in terms of "voice" and an overall feeling or tone. Platinga (Plantinga, 1997) identifies, at the most abstract level, four main discursive strategies employed by all documentaries: selection (what is selected and what is omitted),

order (temporal structuring of events which can be: narrative – portray relationships between characters in a dramatic manner, as-  
sociational – emphasized likeness and similarity, requiring only the  
loosest of associations; categorical – consist of a catalogue of parts  
and elements, together with an explanation and analysis; rhetorical  
– relies on ethical proof, emotional proof and demonstrative proof)  
and emphasis (achieved through structural arrangement or stylistic  
devices). In this sense, discursive agency designates the way in  
which the discourse negotiates between absolute epistemological  
authority (the “know it all” attitude of the formal voice) and ab-  
solute epistemological hesitancy (the idiosyncratic, observational  
attitude of the open voice). The way in which the documentary  
negotiates its position along this epistemological axis ultimately  
determines the type of relationship the documentary seeks to es-  
tablish with its protagonists and spectators in terms of the allowed  
level of ambiguity: are protagonists complex characters or “types”,  
do they have clear goals or do they wander around aimlessly, does  
the documentary know more or less than its protagonists, does the  
documentary withhold information or does it answer all salient  
questions, does it teach or observe etc.

Unlike discursive agency which focuses on the overall feeling  
rather than particular scenes and which is thus qualitatively dif-  
ferent from any of its possible manifestations, projected agency  
allows the spectator to engage with the protagonists in terms of  
events, characters and actions. I consider projected agency as much  
a matter of what protagonists do during events as a matter of who  
they are as characters (Chatman, 1978), respectively of how they  
are portrayed as agents or objects of action in relation to other  
protagonists (narrative representations: who does what to whom,  
are protagonists depicted specifically or generically, how are ste-  
reotypes and categories of agency employed) and to the spectators

(interactive representations: distance between spectator and protagonist generated by the size of frame ranging from extreme close-ups to extreme long shots, contact established by the presence or absence of direct visual contact between spectator and protagonist, point of view influenced by the angle of the camera, high, eye-level or low angle and frontal or oblique angles) and how they are portrayed as characters (conceptual representations – represent participants in terms of their class, structure or meaning and compositional representations – information value streaming from spatial placement, the presence or absence of framing devices which connect participants, salience as an eye-catching quality defined by size, color, tonal contrast, etc.). These four representational devices have been extensively discussed by Kress and van Leeuwen in their description of the main kinds of semiotic work performed while “reading” an image (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006).

### **Case study findings**

The case study employs qualitative discourse analysis as a manner of revealing the manner in which three documentaries dealing with distant suffering succeed or fail to encourage spectators to reflect upon the ambiguity of the sufferers' position within the designated system of places (sufferer-benefactor-persecutor). All three documentaries deal either directly or indirectly with civil war, due to the fact that, unlike natural disasters which reinforce the dominant victim-benefactor framework, civil wars problematize both the suffering and the agency of the protagonists by making it increasingly difficult to provide clear answers regarding who is who. If people spend their lives looking for certainties, anchors and identities capable of putting sense into their existence, than civil war challenges all this by making it harder to distinguish genocide

from a fight for political freedom, ethnic differences from sectarian interests, terrorist groups from civilian fighters. The three documentaries range from the least ambiguous voice which circumscribes its protagonists to certain categories of agency and takes a clearly favorable stance towards a cause, to a more ambiguous voice which refrains from taking sides and which focuses instead on revealing the difficulty of assessing blame, guilt and responsibility.

### **Ground Zero: Syria (2012)**

In 2012, New York based magazine Vice commissioned war photojournalist Robert King to spend some time in Aleppo and Al-Qusayr among the members of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) and the medical staff of two local field hospitals, the recorded material being uploaded on the Vice website. The footage was generally advertised as “raw material”, meaning a series of largely unedited vignettes picturing different aspects of life during the Syrian civil war, ranging from the battle for bread to the lack of medical supplies. The documentary is segmented into six episodes delineated through inter-titles which appear at the beginning of each episode as white text on a black background: “Burning of the old souk”, “Aleppo field hospital”, “Aleppo bread lines”, “The destruction of Dar Al-Shifa” and “The Free Syrian Army”.

### **Discursive agency:**

The documentary dismisses any causal connection between episodes in favor of an associational structure which relies on an aesthetic of fragmentation and discontinuity; “civil war” acts as an abstract nucleus holding together open associations based on likeness and similarity (the lack of medical supplies in the doctors’ case, the lack of food in the civilians’ case and the lack of military

equipment in the FSA fighters' case). Each episode is an independent and fairly homogenous chronotope which confines its protagonists to certain categories of agency (civilians, doctors, FSA fighters), the analysis occurring within the episodes rather than between them. The structuring of information deemphasizes not only narrative causality, but any element which could point to a potential contiguity, such as the protagonists themselves, the documentary manifesting a striking reluctance to portray the same protagonists twice.

Causality is confined to the boundaries of the same space-time and subject matter, while agency itself is confined to roles protagonists act out in an exclusive manner; protagonists do not interact in any meaningful way, they do not exchange roles or transgress their attributions, each chronotope ascribing the scenes of an episode to a single space (field hospital, bakery, souk) and a unified sense of time ("a day in the life of..."). In order to illustrate the process through which defected soldiers formed the FSA, the documentary employs a brief animation which portrays civilians, government troops and FSA fighters as black silhouettes distinguished only through their specific clothing; while civilians form a black, homogenous mass, the government army wears the official military equipment, the uniform acting as a visual stereotype which signals a high level of generality; as government troops transform themselves into FSA fighters, they change clothing and turn their guns against their former colleagues, the schematization of the process and the actors involved being one of the means of signaling the documentary's interest in prototypes, rather than individuals.

Selection operates as a means of excluding from the documentary potentially contradictory information and of reinforcing the appropriate type of protagonists as symbols for the cause. While according to some accounts (Rafeeq, 2012) civilians were in fact the

first to rebel against Assad's regime, the documentary emphasizes the role of defected soldiers as vectors of change. This approach is convenient for several reasons: 1. it tackles the problem of terrorism since "soldiers" are less likely than civilians to be considered terrorists given the fact that the army connotes discipline, order and obedience 2. it transforms the task of overthrowing the regime into a heroic narrative (soldiers gave up their formal duties in order to follow their moral instinct no matter the consequences) and 3. it ameliorates the concerns regarding what would happen if FSA would actually win the war and take control of the country, since soldiers are trained men, both physically and psychologically, and thus less likely to "go crazy" (the fact that Robert King asks a FSA member if the war has made him crazy is in this sense telling).

The documentary spares no effort to provide protagonists' testimonies with the maximum amount of visual evidence, supplied mostly through editing as an overlay of file footage shots or stills accompanied by the protagonists' voice-over. The gap between the individual voice of interviewees and the overall voice of the documentary is almost inexistent, the documentary employing whenever possible images (live or archival footage, photographic slideshows) and text as means of authenticating the protagonists' stories. This approach echoes the overall tendency of the documentary to treat protagonists as icons whose testimonies illustrate a collective cause rather than individual stories.

### **Projected agency:**

Most of the documentary's narrative representations bear a transactional characteristic which echoes the formal voice aspiration towards clarity and concision: in most cases, we see who does what to whom, the most salient transactional process being the one between doctors and wounded patients. The only



non-transactional representation depicts FSA fighters and civilians targeted by Assad's army. The decision to deliberately exclude images of Assad's army echoes the documentary's overall rhetorical purpose of presenting only one side of the story in an effort to advocate for a cause rather than stimulate debate, while, on the other hand, it is precisely this absence which seems to render government troops an abstract, yet omnipresent force, an invisible entity whose actions remain hidden but whose effects can be felt everywhere; the documentary thus follows the confrontation of two opposing supra-individual forces (Assad's army and the FSA) with conflicting yet homogenous goals and motivations.

FSA members are constructed as people "like us", who share Western democratic values and should thus be trusted to take over the country. Positive stereotypes (honor and duty) and the selection of an appropriate type of characters (FSA is said to be formed by defected soldiers rather than civilians) are reinforced as means of combating possible concerns on the part of the spectator regarding what would happen if FSA would win. With the exception of interviews in which they are confronted with the camera in a more controlled, formal manner, protagonists engage with one another without minding the camera: completely immersed in their suffering, protagonists are often oblivious of the camera precisely due to the intensity of their emotions. The structural unity of the protagonists is stressed through existing similarities in terms of: clothes, motivations and goals, questions asked by the filmmaker.

### **Darwin's Nightmare (2004)**

Darwin's Nightmare explores fish export and illegal weapon trafficking in Tanzania, in terms of an encompassing allegory: Darwinism as survival of the fittest. Shot on the outskirts of Lake

Victoria, the documentary deals with the disastrous effects of introducing the Nile Perch, an exotic type of predatory fish, in the ecosystem of the lake as part of a scientific experiment; a voracious predator, the Nile Perch bred uncontrollably and drove to extinction a great deal of the native fish species. However, the disastrous ecological effects turned out to provide an unexpected economic advantage: Perch fillet constitutes Tanzania's best-selling export to Europe and the main source of income for local fishermen and factory workers. As the documentary gradually reveals, the Russian pilots who deliver the fillet to Europe, are actually bringing weapons to Tanzania, which are further used by neighboring countries in violent conflicts.

### **Discursive agency:**

Darwin's theory acts as an organizing metaphor, the structure of the ecosystem as an allegory for the global trade system finding a close resemblance in the documentary's own discursive structure. In this sense, the documentary employs a categorical structure which fits its protagonists and the sequencing of events into a catalogue of parts and elements, each element holding a functional role in the efficient functioning of the overall system. By employing what Plantinga describes as functional analysis and causal analysis (Plantinga, 1997, p. 121), the discourse simultaneously documents the function of the parts (fishermen, factory staff, pilots, prostitutes, homeless children) in relation to the whole (the multinational industry of fish and weapons and the underlying world order it supports) as much as the functioning of the parts as they affect each other within this ecosystem. According to Plantinga, categorical discourse usually presents subjects of a topical nature, its representation being synchronic, rather than diachronic and thus focusing on entities existing simultaneously, rather than unfolding in time.

This structure fits well with the overall functioning of the “ecosystem” as an entity comprising numerous co-existing elements which influence each other while they simultaneously grow and develop, the documentary incorporating these micro-narratives within its overarching dichotomy between “the winners” and “the losers of economic evolution”. To the degree that all micro-narratives are inextricably linked to it, fish appears as the element which reunites these disparate destinies, the various stages fish goes through in order to be shipped abroad introducing us to various protagonists which are related to fish in different manners.

The documentary analyzes the relationship between protagonists in terms of comparison, contrast and classification, Darwin’s natural selection theory supplying the starting point for depicting the way in which “the weak” (Tanzanians) are contrasted against and classified in opposition to “the strong” (the West, Tanzanians who collaborate with the West). Similar to “Ground zero: Syria”, the testimonies which are in agreement with the documentary’s own voice benefit from visual and textual support, but, unlike “Ground zero: Syria”, the documentary also employs voices with which it does not necessarily agree and towards which it maintains an ironic distance either through crosscutting, camera angle or size of frame (e.g.: familiar Western discourses are ironically reinterpreted: the recycling discourse is envisioned as sheer need, meaning that nothing gets thrown away in Tanzania because people literally eat garbage).

### **Projected agency:**

The documentary struggles to find the middle ground between representing complex human emotions and dispensing with characters in favor of forces set off against each other (the weak versus the strong). Protagonists are not so much icons as individuals who share a common fate and express themselves in a diverse manner,

although, as pieces of an enormous mechanism, they are incapable of escaping the fate they are confined to. Although they depend on each other in a functional manner, “Darwin’s Nightmare” almost never documents the direct interaction between those “in charge” and those who merely follow instructions.

This demarcation is maintained throughout the documentary as a statement regarding the two separate worlds which co-exist in Mwanza and which echo the broader inequalities of the trade system. Albeit more complex than “Ground zero: Syria” protagonists, the characters are ultimately stand-ins for one of the two camps, they are either winners or losers in the race for survival, the two camps bearing conflicting interests, fact which makes any direct contact or interaction impossible. This antagonism is reinforced by the presence or absence of symbolic attributes, in this case objects which are conventionally associated with Western symbolic values (i.e. technology associated with the concept of progress, clothing associated with social status, surrounding environment: whether protagonists reside indoor or outdoor). The spectator is constructed as an involved bystander: someone who engages with the narrative world, but does not belong to it, a person who fails to act effectively in order to disrupt the victim-perpetrator framework and is thus defined by inaction (bystander), but who is sufficiently involved in the causal chain in order to indirectly affect others (the preference for close ups and extreme close ups shot from oblique angles is suggestive of this involvement/detachment dialectic).

### **The Redemption of General Butt Naked (2011)**

Inspired by the tradition of intimate documentary portraits, the documentary traces the journey of Joshua Milton Blahyi, formerly known as General Butt Naked, a warlord in the First Liberian Civil

War, who suffered a dramatic conversion to Christianity and who now seeks forgiveness for his deeds, travelling the country as an evangelist. Between 1989-1996, General Butt Naked led a mercenary unit, comprised mostly of child-soldiers who fought without clothes, due to Butt Naked's belief that bullets cannot affect him while naked. In 1996, when the civil war was coming to a close end, Butt Naked allegedly had a theophany which led him to embrace Christianity and seek refuge in Ghana, where he lived in exile for more than 10 years. Upon returning to Liberia, General Butt Naked admitted in January 2008 to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) that he is responsible for the death of approximately 20,000 people, his confession leading to numerous death threats which will force Butt Naked to hide in Ghana until 2010, when he returns to Monrovia.

### Discursive agency:

What distinguishes the documentary from similar narratives focusing on perpetrators' confessions is the willingness to overcome "the problem of the perpetrator perspective" (the risk of authenticating the voice of perpetrators by incorporating them as witnesses in the documentary) through a conscious decision to limit the use of distancing mechanisms, such as the employment of editing, music and other techniques as means of contradicting the perpetrator's statements or making the perpetrator's account compete with a third-person, "Voice of God" narrator who provides the context in which the statements should be received (Jones, 2012). The feeling that we are dealing with a subjective point of view reinforced by the dream motif, a personal experience which, precisely because it is personal, cannot be set in relation to or undermined by another epistemically dominant voice, is further enhanced by the narrative structure of the documentary which is illustrative of

what Chatman describes as the “modern plot of revelation”: “it is not that events are resolved, happily or tragically, but rather that a state of affairs is revealed” (Chatman, 1978, p. 48), in this case, the difficulty of situating the protagonists within a predetermined system of places and moral categories.

The documentary successfully illustrates the use of unreliability and ambiguity not so much by positing that General Butt Naked is either a good or a bad man, but by emphasizing that such a distinction may be in fact impossible to make. In this sense, the documentary’s voice is simultaneously unreliable and ambiguous because on the level of appearances it suggests that the real stake of the documentary is to decide whether Butt Naked is a good or a bad man (the documentary providing evidence for both accounts), while on the level of intentions it reveals the falsity of the first question’s presupposition that there is a right answer. Therefore, while unreliability refers to the discrepancy between being led to believe that there is a yes/no answer when in fact there is no answer at all, ambiguity implies making the spectator second-guess her decision: is she supposed to go with the relativistic version (the goal is not to provide either a positive or a negative answer but to question the very possibility of an answer) or is she supposed to actually decide, given the fact that the documentary provides evidence for both a positive and a negative answer.

### **Projected agency:**

The documentary rejects a mode of narration based on medial transparency (testimonies as unmediated, unperformed and unrehearsed authentic representations) in favor of an approach which transgresses this method of generating authenticity: Butt Naked reveals himself as a performer, completely aware of his role in the documentary (in one instance, he cries out: “No! If this is the

only thing that is going to take the story there, let the story go!”). This rejection of authenticating genuineness in favor of a more self-conscious approach has to main goals: on a discursive level, it helps shift the focus from questions regarding who is a reliable witness and who is not to a more reflexive account preoccupied with how this kind of reliability is constructed and enhanced through authentic representations. On the level of projected agency, *Butt Naked*'s transgression of authenticity conventions plays an important role in heightening the level of tension exhibited by the spectator confronted with such contradictory inputs: if actions are symptoms of personality, what do *Butt Naked*'s actions reveal? In this sense, the documentary entertains at the level of motivation (both the spectator's – how the spectator justifies a given textual element and the protagonist's – why the protagonist acts the way he does) the type of ambiguity it rejects at the level of macro-structurally significant narrative action.

## Conclusion

The case study focused on identifying a hierarchy of documentary voices, ranging from representations of suffering which reduce sufferers to impersonal groups of unfortunates who fail to communicate or interact with each other and whose testimonies illustrate a cause, rather than a story, to representations which challenge the traditional humanitarian narrative, according to which victims are stripped of context and reduced to “causes” humanitarian organizations appeal to. While the first two documentaries seek to mobilize action on behalf of the protagonists following certain recipes which reduce sufferers to victims of circumstance or rather victims who experience their implacable fate as a result of the category to which they are confined (doctors, civilians, rebel fighters, “losers

of economic evolution”), the third documentary struggles to bypass this limited type of ameliorative action by envisioning more complex and enduring forms of engagement, the notions of sufferer, persecutor and benefactor ceasing to act as exclusive modes of being in the world and becoming identities people develop in particular contexts.

The analysis is an exploratory attempt to the degree that, while the two main categories, discursive agency and projected agency, can be identified in most documentary films as constitutive entities, the “what” and the “how” of the filmic world, the selection of illustrative scenes constitutes one of the fundamental challenges towards replicability and one of the significant epistemological issues in working with visual images. The importance of the analyst in such an attempt and her own immersion in a certain visual culture cannot be overlooked although, hopefully, an increasingly explicit and rigorous critical visual methodology will provide the framework needed to ground such explorations.

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# Metareference in Visual Communication

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## Introduction

Having a long tradition in philosophy, logic, linguistics, semiotics, meta-reference can be theoretically clarified via Scholastic opposition *supposition formalis* and *supposition materialis*, or via Port Royal dichotomy *ideas of things* and *ideas of signs* (Nöth, 2000). The modern philosophy of language distinguishes between *object language* and *meta-language* (Carnap, 1958, p. 78). Meta-language mirrors language and, in this process, the feature of reflexivity is obviously involved. Its referent is a verbal sign. Extending the attempt of defining meta-reference, we underline the fact that meta-reference may also mirror meta-signs if we take into account not only the language, but the visual artistic communication as well. Its referent is a meta-sign. "A metasign is evidently also a sign with a

referent and a meaning of its own. Metareference is the property by which a metasign refers to its referent, which is itself a sign” (Nöth, 2009, p. 92). The meanings of the meta-signs offer the possibility to discover an entire new perspective in which the sender’s visual expression is meant to be watched not like a mere transfer of information related to a storyline, but as a complex meaningful structure on the syntagmatic axis. The structure reveals genuine and authentic visual patterns which focus on a wide creative horizon unfolding multi-access to various interpretations, meta-reference being an eminent topic. “Metareference activates a certain cognitive frame in the recipient’s mind.” (Wolf, 2009, p. 27) From a semiotic point of view, it was established that verbal signs can be explicitly and implicitly meta-referential, while non-verbal signs are only implicitly as such.

We have to stipulate the fact that we prefer the locution *meta-reference* instead of *self-reflexivity*. Our choice is motivated by the logical connotation of the prefix *meta* implying the distinction between the world of the objects and the meta-level which opens useful pathways for understanding the creative-pattern of a visual achievement. Meta-reference indicates that the syntagmatic artistic structure is meant to be read, seen, heard, interpreted, etc. from a different perspective coming into prominence *ars poetica* and enhancing imagery, understanding and profundity for the audience.

In a narrow semiotic sense, “reference” means “the relation of verbal signs to the extralingual world” (Rehbock, 1993). During the latest decades, “reference” refers to any kind of signs and to a wide range of realization from a simple pointing to a referent to complex cases of relations between sign and referent (or between signifier and signified) (Krah, 2005). Thus, referring to the possibility to cover also the large field of media, meta-reference can be defined as a “transmedial form” of self-reference resulting from

the configuration of the sings “located on a higher level” of performance, interpretation, logical links, and meta-awareness either of the sender or of the recipient (Wolf, 2009, p. 31).

For many centuries, the meta-referential phenomenon has been present in humanities, but the research work began later. This crucial aspect was first present in literature (*Tristram Shandy*, *Adam Bede*, *Le Malade imaginaire*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Patul lui Procust*, etc.). We offer intentionally random examples details because it underlines that meta-phenomena research stems in literary studies. Afterwards, it makes one step further, testifying for its ubicuity in culture: poetry (Rimbaud, John Ashbery, etc.), music (*La Valse* by Ravel, *Capriccio* by Richard Strauss, *Symphony no. 4* by Anton Bruckner, *L'Opera seria* by Calzabigi – libretto – and by Florian Leopold Gassmann). Meta-painting and meta-sculpture have been always very well represented and commented upon (Magritte, Vermeer, Velasquez, etc. and V. I. Stoichita's critic work).

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fruitful essays have revealed meta-referential practice and strategy in other media-fields: architecture (*Piazza d'Italia* by Charles Moore, *Maison Dick* by Jean Nouvel), photography (Thomas Struth, a member of Düsseldorf Kunstakademie), etc (see further Arhip, 2012). Meta-reference became an explicit expression of self-consciousness during the '60s and afterwards. Besides the aspect of self-representation, it also involves dialectic forms (essence vs. appearance; truth vs. illusion; reality vs. image, object vs. sign) and the ambiguity of the aesthetic border. From the director's point of view, self-reflexivity in cinema may be seen as a device revealing the enunciation, but, for the audience, it emphasis that it is watching a movie. This paper aims to highlight a broad human meta-capacity. Meta-reference in films has received little attention in Romanian studies. This neglect must be reformed,

although there are no examples of Romanian meta-referential films. This art also allows fruitful research in view of larger aims, namely to shed light on author's self-consciousness filling the lacunae of existing research.

### **Methodological basis of this approach**

This paper considers the visual semiotics' methods (adapting the functions and the codes for artistic communication) and to meta-referential theory developed by Werner Wolf (Wolf, 2009). We are aware that W. J. T. Mitchell's monographs on media theory and visual culture are very valuable, but we shall deal with such a more detailed approach on another occasion. Mitchell's interest in developing a science of images is very insightful. His work mainly regards pictures, paintings, and he refers to visual culture as a form of life in which pictures are living things (Mitchell, 1998).

The paper observes the dichotomy *fictum* (fiction centred meta-reference) – *fictio* (mediality centred meta-reference). We transfer several meta-devices from other arts to film not aspiring after a closed system. *Prima facie* it seems ideal to use pair-concepts applicable to all media. The results take the shape of a visual semantics revealing the relationship between visual signs and significances and a pragmatic perspective emphasizing the relevance for the receivers. The contribution also capitalizes mythical and the symbolic significances of a few cinematographic elements, trying to offer a more complete understanding of these innovative artistic endeavours. We have chosen two famous directors, Woody Allen and Michael Haneke, because their works are illustrative of meta-referential approach. Their masterpieces underline explicitly and significantly the opposition between aesthetic norm and the new paradigmatic value of meta-film.

## The relationship fiction-reality

The screen and the image displayed on it are a kind of bridge between fiction and reality. The visual arts allow a special undertone and an extremely spectacular feature for this method to create a variety of connotations. The cinema-field confirms this remark. The directors and the film production designers were captivated by the opportunity to achieve, through fantasy, bridges between the fiction-world and reality. A simple chronological unfolding of more or less predictable events, the effort to come into notice due to various visual or sound effects were no longer enough to require more from the spectator's spirit of observation and interpretative ability. The masters of cinema wished new challenges and a different message of their creations.

Woody Allen has flirted with the idea of *film within film* almost since the beginning of his career. In an interview, he said that it was not Buster Keaton's attempt (*Sherlock Jr.*) the one which inspired him, but his own self-interest. „The idea to enter the screen was a thought that came much later.” (Björkman, 2013, p. 167). Thus, after 25 years he had watched Keaton's film, Allen directed *The Purple Rose of Cairo* (1985), an obvious example of getting over from fiction into reality and vice versa. A double-crossing between fiction and reality takes place in this film. The character within the film, the archaeologist Tom Baxter, emerges from the screen into the real life as he fell in love with the common waitress Cecilia who has a bleak life and an unhappy marriage losing her into the fictional realm. Cecilia sublimates fiction and personages of her watched films. She may be perceived as a filmic sophism/specious argument and her fictional adventure reiterates the travel of Lewis Carroll's character, Alice, into a fantasy world inhabited by anthropomorphic creatures. Allen's movie deals with a kind of para-aesthetic reception-process.

Cecilia is the chosen character who sees the imaginary structure, can live in it and according to its rules. She was convinced of Tom Baxter's statement: "In my world, people are self-consistent. You may rely on them" (Björkman, 2013, p. 169). Woody Allen also presents a very consistent world. Idealizing the fictional world, Cecilia enters the screen following Tom Baxter, who has also descended into the real world. Both crossing of the aesthetic border occur under the pretext of a quasi-traditional love-story. Therefore, the viewer watches two films in which the main characters have dual membership to different fictional levels, and the meta-referential aspect becomes the principle theme of meditation for the director and for the audience. Woody Allen was fascinated by the possibility to blur the limit between fiction and reality. The proof can be found in his previous works. For a token, in *Husbands and Wives* (1992), *Manhattan* (1979) or *Annie Hall* (1977), the main characters talk explicitly about trans-medial aspect.

In *Annie Hall*, the male hero, Avy, is waiting with his girl-friend in a cinema-ticket-line. He is exasperated by the emphatic claims without arguments of another character standing right behind him. Unable to endure hearing any longer, Avy steps forward and he addresses to the viewers, declaring them empathetic witnesses. The previous speaker comes also next to him and a real debate begins. The interlocutor introduces himself as a professor teaching *TV Media and Culture* at Columbia University, being extremely competent in matters related to Marshall McLuhun's writings. Immediately after that, Avy brings McLuhun himself into a close-up shot in order to support his opinions and to contradict the pedagogue's speech. This keyman, apparently inaccessible to ordinary reality, appears from behind a poster. The poster works as a metaphor of the screen, and, for two or three minutes, the film braids fictional elements and reality.



McLuhan's appearance is kind of *correctio*, a rhetoric device in the strategy of manipulating discourse. The term *correctio* comes from Latin and it refers to the amending of a statement just made by further detailing the meaning. It is a kind of redefinition often employed as an interruption or as a climax (Baldick, 2004). The most often used and offered example for a *correctio* is the one in Shakespeare's famous play *Hamlet*: "I desire not your love, but your submissive obedience" (Shakespeare, 1994, I.2.137-38). In terms of performance of the film, this *correctio* is an interruption. From the point of view of the filmmaker (Woody Allen), the *correctio* becomes the climax of a metalepsis. In our paper, the use of the term „metalepsis“, coined by the French narratologist Gérard Genette, is limited to the initial definition, paraphrased as follows: a leap across a frontier between „two worlds“ in an artistic creation (Genette, 1972, pp. 67-282). McLuhan is an incarnate *anthorismos* joining the world of ideas with the concrete world. The stylistic figure *anthorismos* consists of replacing a word with another which is considered more powerful and accurate (Dragomirescu, 1975, pp. 67-68). In this context, the word is replaced by the implicit and categorical image of the personality saying: "You know nothing of my work". Regarding this well-known scene of his film *Annie Hall*, in the same series of interviews, Woody Allen admits that he tried to persuade Ingmar Bergman or Fellini to appear in his film. They appreciated the originality of Allen's idea, but couldn't be present in the movie-set.

In M. Haneke's movie, *Caché* (2005), the audience watches the home-life of Laurent family through a static camera installed on the street called Iris. Iris is a visual diaphragm of the eye controlling the amount of light reaching the retina. Mythological, Iris was the messenger of the gods, a female correspondent for Hermes. The sight of the audience is presented metonymically due to the video

cassettes and drawings received by G. Laurent. In Haneke's second film, *Funny Games* (1997/remake in 2007), the strange killing doublet Peter and Paul looks straight to the camera several times, talking to the audience and the director about their decision, regarding the course of action and the predictable happy-end which it is not the case of their murder-game. In addition, Paul literally rewinds the film with a television remote and he goes for a turn in reality. According to the biblical perspective, Paul and Peter are martyrs revealing true knowledge and faith. Haneke inverts the original meanings and the normal evolution of the events.

*Code Unknown*, another film made by Michael Haneke in 2000, begins and ends with sequences of non-verbal communication performed by deaf-mute children. These are visual metaphors for the significance of the whole film. Several epic threads are started and they can be interpreted in as many ways as possible. The actions take place in several countries (France, Romania, Albania, Afghanistan, etc.) and the native speakers talk in their different languages. The film re-creates the Tower of Babel. As in the biblical story, people migrate from one place to another trying to reinforce their identity. The Tower of Babel symbolizes chaos and confusion. The film is a counterpart to the myth. Confusion is the divine punishment for human *hubris* and collective tyranny which coerce human being. The characters try to express their feelings and to re-establish mutual love, understanding and unity.

*Amour* (2012), Haneke's latest film, resurrects an old and classic love-story, *Romeo and Juliet*. The myth is sublimated. The characters are the generalized and trans-medial lovers of all the world love-stories. The scenography is timeless. The director's involvement is neuter and the film bears repeated screenings for the on-lookers who may discover different meanings each time they watch the movie. *Amour* underlines the fact that the artist's work does not

imply clarity and it is as complex as the world. The audience must receive and interpret the creations.

### Exergues

“Exergue” is a term derived from Latin (*exergum*) and it has been used in France as a collocation of *hors d'œuvre* since the seventeenth century because it refers to something engraved at one end of an image or on the reverse of a coin. Afterwards, it has developed and enriched its meaning, being applied for a text or an inscription on a small space of a painting, image, scene, etc. We have noticed that the two movie-directors, Woody Allen and Michael Haneke, decided to use *exergue* for a better understanding and kind of an optical “investigation” on behalf of the audience. An already mentioned example is the name of the street in *Caché (Iris)*, and another one, in the same film, is the title of the movie watched by G. Laurent at the cinema (*The Brothers*). The allegoric title applies to the biblical brothers, Cain and Abel/Georges Laurent and Majid. Regarding Woody Allen’s movie, the exergue is: *Now playing The Purple Rose of Cairo* – it underlines the fictional crossing over of the two characters, Cecilia and Tom. Above all, this is the clearest exergue for meta-referential intention on behalf of the director.

### Symbols and mythological meanings

All these movies are very rich in symbolic elements implying also biblical or mythical significances. The combinative perspectives of the directors are a strong proof of their artistic intentions. The communication is based on words, gestures, looks, symbolical or mythical clues, *trompe l'œil*, *l'œil surpris*, *hors-d'œuvre* or *pareragon*, etc. *Trompe l'œil* is a perspective illusion originating in Baroque

which seems to open up the artistic space. In the thematic context of this paper, we are especially interested in trompe d'oeil exploring the boundary between fiction and reality. One of the consequences of trompe l'oeil is l'œil surpris which underlines the unexpectedness or renders chatters, giggles, appreciations. After watching several scenes of the films discussed in the paper, we may assume that the film-characters are getting out from the screen looking for a larger space or they are forcing the perspective. Parergon is an embellishment, something appearing like an accessory to the main work or like an adjunct to the main subject. They can be noticed and figured out by the audience. The spectator is embedded in the visual field of the movie finding his spiritual food. The illusionist character of the representation constitutes the source of intellectual pleasure. They wish to modernize their art and to transform the audience into a more elevated and active communication-partner. The illusionist character of the representation constitutes the source of intellectual, aesthetic pleasure. There is a prominent, deliberate continuity between the representational level and the reality-level breaking the Hollywood-standards and classic norms.

A universal symbol is the rose (*The Purple Rose of Cairo*) and it connotes revival, love and accomplished perfection. All these meanings comply with Cecilia's wishes and dreams which do not become true. Eventually, the movie itself is the Rose, the perfect, magical cinematographic jewel. Cecilia remained in her dreary life and her only offering for Tom Baxter/Gil Shephard is a merry-go-round which stands for *simulacra* of the world. The purple color of the rose represents the mystery of life and the nocturnal or feminine principle, apprising for rule violation.

The Laurent family, presented in *Caché*, receives several video cassettes revealing pieces of their own lives and having a deceiving designation of threat. This modern device stands for G. Laurent's

recollections of his wrongdoing against his adoptive brother during their childhood. The cassettes and the drawings are projections of this guilt and his remorse. His present successful, fulfilling life and career as guest of a TV talk show cannot counter-balance the culpable past. His real sin is not his vanity, but his self-abandonment which is the main cause for not realizing the *gravitas* of his behavior. George Laurent, the contemporary Cain, is guilty of violation of *xenia*. The Greek term *xenia* refers to the ritualized friendship and hospitality, both of them being not observed by George.

The drawings received by the Laurents have a bloody cock on them. The cock is another symbol standing for vanity and reckless anger. Laurent's envy and hatred as a child against his adoptive brother, Majid, render the mythical conflict between Cain and Abel. The drawn blood from Laurents' received papers figures Cain's sacrifice in front of divinity, but the tribute is not accepted. Georges Laurent carries up his sin and grief.

The egg is the main symbolic element in *Funny Games*. The egg is a universal symbol referring to genesis and the mystery of human existence. It is the primary reality which contains the plurality of human beings. The egg is the anaphoric element of the series of crime-games played by the doublet Paul and Peter in *Funny Games* by M. Haneke. One of the two strange young men comes to borrow eggs from their next victims. The egg also symbolizes order and the diversity of the origins. Although the egg is not essentially the first, it epitomizes the seed of diversity. Each crime starts with this basic principle, and the variety of possibilities to continue the events is impressive. Paul and Peter challenge the audience to this game of a new and unpredictable unfolding of events. They become the directors and a kind of para-characters evolving into a second parallel fictional level. *Funny Games* proposes the reverse of a happy-ending for a thriller. The para-characters

behave abnormally and have an unusual appearance. They are wearing white golf-clothes instead of the classical black helmets for negative personages. This dress-code announces new rules of a strange game. It is a paradox as the croquet-game from *Alice in Wonderland*. When Paul and Peter violently attack the family, the movie itself becomes a loaded gun and the onlookers are molested similar to the characters. The para-characters disobey all the normal rules of a serial killer; there are no miraculous escape routes or techniques, no survivors, no justice. The movie deconstructs the modality in which media present violence. Virtually, the doublet does not commit crimes. As directors of the new genre of film about violence, they kill or eliminate a category of predictable, oversimplified characters that they no longer want to be present on the screen and in the scripts. An element of the cinema-heroes paradigm must disappear.

Symbolically, the double or the divided self has a tragic and evil connotation. The double is our enemy who comes to fight against us and it forebodes death. Paul and Peter, the doublet from *Funny Games*, came to Anne and George Farber's vacation house and, after a prologue consisting of a bunch of lies, they took the family hostage. They represent the psychopathic enemy who proposes sadistic games during the next twelve hours. After the innocent guess-game of famous musical theme, a game played by the family before reaching their vacation retreat, the double Peter and Paul initiates them into sadistic games involving mental and physical violence. Another connotation of their arrival to the house and on the screen may be that specific to the author/director as a *visitor* into his own creation. He becomes a semiotic instrument and creates his self-portrait as a modern, iconoclast and contextualized film-director. The onlookers may see the work *in fieri* as in renowned Vermeer's or Velasquez's paintings. In those episodes, the

image is put between brackets and it addresses to the viewer able to read visual symbols, creating scenarios, and implicit plot-ideas.

In *Funny Games*, golf may be seen as a metaphor for life or for the course of life. The sport golf is the only one not requiring a standardized playing area, but it involves definite rules and a degree of hazard (unplayable situations). Paul and Peter play life-and-death golf on the greater field of the neighbourhood in which every family is a hole, but they also play golf with the Farber family, the death of each character being a hole. The final scene in which Anne fails to grab the knife and save her life being thrown from the boat is very figurative. The move resembles a skilled stroke of a golfer and her fall is like the roll of the white golf-ball into a hole. A lot of inter-textual syntagmatic combinations can be noticed while the game is taking place. The standard plot is reversed and disestablished; the general assembly is a completely different one. The common thriller and the intellectual-film constitute *in absentia* rapport. They are mutually exclusive. The director also uses a sophism *extra dictionem*. The relative elements are intermingled with the absolute ones as in *Alice in Wonderland*. The cinematographic sophism highlights *technè*, the art itself as the real subject of any film.

In *Amour*, the dove, a universal symbol of the Holy Ghost, connotes purity and innocence. It is seen by Georges Laurent at the window or in the depth of his mind looking for a gateway for his love and for their lives. The dove is the vital principle, but it is also Aphrodite's bird standing for the erotic achievement between two infatuated lovers. This symbol is constantly and explicitly used by the director. Still, Haneke has stated several times that he has troubles with the symbols, because they always mean something specific.

In all these films, the screen acts as a modern mirror that highlights the relationship between truth and illusion, between reality and fiction. As well, the directors' camera in all these movies is the

door for our fictional entering and the characters' reality disclosure. The relationship between cinematographic fiction and the reality of the onlookers has become a meta-artistic one. The movie itself is a parergon, meaning a work undertaken in addition to that of nonconventional communication between the audience and the directors. The latter brings to light the stagy elements and challenge the onlookers who become the real partners of the artistic communication. The lens of the camera has become an aesthetic border. It plays the role of a window or that of a door or any other kind of specular surface in painting or in architecture. In fact, we have to deal with the awakening of self-consciousness of the new cinema. The emergent cinema rests upon three convergent features and artistic impulses: illusionist representation, the theme of the vanity of action/story and the meta-referential aspect of the artistic representation. The lens of the camera emphasizes the hiatus between two different spiritual attempts to deal with cinematographic art.

## Conclusions

Our "carefree approach" (Metz, 1991) brings the concept of meta-film into attention of Romanian public and research-area, but there is a long way to go before entering a large-scale dialogue. Most of the previous Romanian essays commented upon the artistic message and the subject of a film, the director's style and vision, the actors' performances and the critical praise, rejection or indifference. Most of the papers regarding cinema-field used to focus on product, production, reception or consumption on the film-area. Taking meta-reference into account in the above mentioned films, we point out that the onlookers are challenged to interpret, answer and act as diegetic audience, the border between reality and fiction being intentionally vulnerable. The paper highlights a multitude of



symbols, connotations, mythical implications, visual and meaningful perspectives revealed for the first time. It also points out the fact that film-art has struggled for a greater and specific autonomy.

Our approach has obvious current limits and our intention is take these into account in our further analysis. The visual artistic communication will have to take into account meta-syntax, meta-semantics and meta-pragmatics in our future approaches. As a matter of fact, the film-image presents itself as being aware of its image-character and it expresses the desideratum of acceding to a superior existential level. A valid issue for further approaches will be the difficulty to range the variety of aesthetic filmic forms and their effects. Also, a major task is to determine the functions of various meta-devices in different cultural, mental and historical contexts. A script analysis can provide useful and relevant insights regarding the director's achievements and his specific intention to approach aspects of meta-reference.

Our future contributions tackling meta-reference and meta-signs in filmic communication must take into account the different media, the message being a specific artistic work which lays itself into a particular cultural context, code and channel. It also requires a receiver with valuable cognitive skills who is capable of decoding the message. Using traditional typologies of the paradigm, this receiver deciphers a new syntax on the syntagmatic axis of images. The act of viewing is a complex transaction between the viewer and a kind of competence which posits a film to be watched in an "economic manner" (Eco, 2011, p. 49). This enhances understanding and the viewing pleasure is supported by the context. Semiotic methods draw upon more than mere comparisons, metaphors or analogies.

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## **Part 4.**

### **PERFORMING NARRATIVITY: FROM LIFE STORIES TO STORYTELLING**



# **Understanding of inclusion through digital storytelling: A case study of assessing the impact and effectiveness of workshops across Romania**

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**“We tell ourselves stories in order to live”  
(Joan Didion, *The White Album*, 1979)**

In the introduction to *The Politics of Storytelling*, Jackson (2006) describes how he draws inspiration from the Hannah Arendt's view that storytelling is never simply a matter of creating either personal or social meanings, but an aspect of “the subjective in between” in which a multiplicity of private and public interests are always problematically in play (Arendt, 1958, quoted by Jackson 2006). Storytelling is, in Jackson opinion, one of the primary ways in which we make sense of the world and our position within it.

Storytelling is universal; it cuts across cultures and is one of the activities which distinguishes and defines humanity. It is also complex and can be culturally specific. For example, *Rakugo* is one of the finest forms of comical monologue, a storytelling technique from Japan. To master such a technique, one needs a lengthy preparation time because the art of *Rakugo* is passed from master to student through oral practice. The storyteller sits on the stage, is surrounded by specific prop and tells a three part story: *makura* or prelude, *hondai* – main story and *ochi* – the closing, punch line. *Rakugo* started as a street performance, with performers entertaining the people passing by with anecdotes (Harrigan, n.d). *Rakugo* is no longer as popular as it used to be, however, Beicho Katsura III, an 86-year-old *rakugo* comic has been recognized by the Japanese government as a “Living National Treasure”. For this reason, Hiroshi Ishiguro, professor at Osaka University and one of the world most famous robotics specialists, created a *Beicho Andriod*, a human droid which is the copy of Beicho Katsura III (Hornyak, 2012). This shows how storytelling can be treasured as an important part of our cultural and sometimes national identity; how it helps to define people and their interaction.

Stories are not only about traditions, they express the soul of a community, its experiences and failures, the wisdom and how people have subjectively lived events - they are a reference point for social education and enculturation. “The collective past, present and imagined future times and places represent a subjective point of view that frames how a person feels and storytelling transports people to different points of view so they can reinterpret or reframe what particular facts mean to them” (Simmons, 2007, p. 14). Freeman (2010) describes how the narrative imagination discloses meanings that might have been unavailable in the immediacy of the moment, and truths that might otherwise have gone

unarticulated. We tell stories every day, and our stories tell many things about us. Telling good stories, stories that matter, stories that will stay with people and influence their lives are not natural skills for many people but something developed through practice. Until recently, it has been a specific, informal role taken by grandparents or other elderly members of the community. Romanian literature abounds with examples where old people tell stories in long winter nights to their nephews and nieces. Telling stories like this used to be a popular skill in high demand from grandparents.

The new media explosion and the increased access to mobile technology, where cheap smart phones allow one to record video materials and post them instantly on the internet leads to opportunities within what Burgess (2006) calls large consumer participation in the media culture. Changes are not only related to democratization of content creation or user generated content, due to the Web 2.0, but also to what Florida (2002, quoted by Burgess, 2006) referred as *ubiquitous creativity*, a feature of the current cultural citizenship. We are all potential authors, creators, and citizens. In fact, in terms of the storytelling, we have moved from a physical person to an online Web 2.0 person, with the potential to become online storytellers. The physical storyteller has been transformed into a digital version and this, in case of many people, demands an increase newer digital skills.

### **What is Digital Storytelling?**

The term “digital storytelling” (DS) and the methodology associated with it were crafted in the research labs of Berkley University from California and are now increasingly used across the world. DS describes a simple, creative process whereby people with little or no experience of computers, gain skills needed to tell a personal story

as a two minute film using predominantly still images. Burgess (2006) defines it as “a workshop-based process by which “ordinary people” create their own short autobiographical films that can be streamed on the web or broadcast on television.” Different authors see DS as means to express vernacular creativity (Burgess, 2006), research method for local health issues (Gubrium, 2009), a form of personal creativity (Lambert, 2013), a mean of preserving a community’s identity and a form of oral history (Klaebe et al., 2007).

As a method, DS combines techniques to develop literacy and storytelling skills with an introduction to basic Information and Communication Technology (ICT). This is underpinned by group exercises and individual processes that develop confidence and build self-esteem. Such elements are combining to form the narrative basis of digital stories. On the surface the digital stories are all singular, personal audio visual accounts of an individual’s story, yet – the making of them is shaped by the collaborative experience in the workshop. Each story shows how someone envisages their place in a personal and a public world. They all bridge the past, present and the future. Particular sets or groups of stories acquire a wider representative meaning and, in doing this, say something deeper about the place they come from. This paper goes on to look at a group of stories and the process of making them through the eyes of the storytellers.

The original approach to Digital Storytelling workshops set out by Lambert in his *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* (2007) demanded a basic ICT competence as well as the ability to participate in an intensive creative workshop requiring emotional openness and a willingness to collaborate with strangers. Such interaction is the mean through which one’s story is identified, refined and told; it turns from a memory to a digital story ready to be shared with others. However, participants in the early days of digital storytelling



workshops, who were digitally excluded, found the experience to be “primarily” about technology, and technology becomes the focus of the process as we enter the second day, with the voiceover completed and images selected. (Lambert, 2013, *Kindle Locations*, pp. 2081-2082).

First, participants work on developing the story – the process is insightful and reflexive - and they need to decide exactly on which aspects to focus (stages 1 to 3). In the next phases, participants select the images (from personal photo archives or online uploaded copyright free images) in order to illustrate the stories (stage 4). Then, participants write a personal story as a script, not longer than three minutes, and combine key emotions or happenings alongside illustrative photos. The author records the script and the edits the voiceover alongside the images, while the relevant pictures are being displayed (steps 5 and 6). Once the final story is told, the digital story is shared with the rest of the group in a screening of stories (step 7) (Lambert, 2013). Sometimes, participants may wish to show their story to a wider audience, so many stories are uploaded on Youtube or other Internet spaces dedicated to gathering these types of productions.

Due to the workshop development, Most of the stories are initially quite personal, but the final version which emerges through the workshop experience is the agglutination of a personal and social input. “The sort of reflecting upon experience involved in the production of personal narrative can range from seemingly direct rendering of memory into words, to a self-aware evaluation and interpretation of experience, often constructed in interaction with another.” (Davis & Weinshenker, 2012). Participants pass through a process of creation and co-creation, of meaningful social interaction, of adapting the format to the digital environment, while at the same time keeping all short and significant. It is a personal

statement, socially reviewed and accepted; a point where the private and public interests identified by Jackson (2006) co-exist. To take the direction of travel signposted by Jackson (2006), DS is one of the ways in which technology can be used to enable people to tell their own personal stories in a new way. It is a new junction where technology and storytelling meet to point in a new direction enabling authors to craft personal stories using imagery, text and the spoken word.

### **How can we understand Digital Storytelling?**

As a relatively new cultural form drawing on a range of different roots, practices and interests, DS has attracted attention from a range of scholars and researchers. One consequence of this is that literature, research and practice is limited and exploratory, as writers, practitioners and academics work their way towards a fuller, more rounded understanding. Drivers for individual projects are often drawn from different sources with a desire to use DS with particular groups or communities. Sennett (2012) notes how many community projects offer good experiences but have to lead somewhere to become sustainable. This sense of immediacy is found in many digital storytelling projects where the short term benefits of the storytelling process are defined in terms of stories told or people trained. It is rare to find research which considers the content of digital stories or takes a longitudinal approach to the evaluation of the impact of attending a DS workshop on participants. Key note sessions from Joe Lambert and John Hartley at *Create, Act, Change - The 5th International Conference of Digital Storytelling* (2013) sought to bring a greater understanding of the practice of digital storytelling by arguing for a need to “theorise” the work. John Hartley and Joe Lambert engaged with this from starting

positions on opposite ends of the spectrum - as the consummate media theorist and a dedicated practitioner.

This paper proposes that four interrelated different forces underpin digital storytelling work with older people and taken together these are components of a digital or “media literacy” that needs to be fostered to generate the greater inclusion of older people in contemporary society. Firstly, there is a desire to explore the use of the methodology as a means to facilitate the greater digital inclusion of older people through the provision of IT skills; secondly there is the use of the process as a means to engage older citizens in their communities; thirdly digital storytelling is a means for older people to have their voices heard and fourthly, there is an act of creative expression at the heart of the process. The paper explores these four aspects through a cross-sectional survey with a group of older storytellers from across Romania who made digital stories through a project called Extending Creative Practice.

### **Extending Creative Practice**

DigiTales<sup>1</sup> led a research partnership with action research projects using digital storytelling in different settings with older people in Finland, Romania and Slovenia to deliver an initiative called ‘Extending Creative Practice’ (ECP). The company trained local people from Universities, NGOs and libraries who then went on to use digital storytelling with local elderly as a way to creatively address the questions around inclusion. *DigiTales* used a condensed version of the training workshop process set out by Lambert in his

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<sup>1</sup> DigiTales is an independent research company hosted by the Media and Communications Department at Goldsmiths. The company now has a base at the University of Brighton and from September 2013 it will extend activities to Middlesex University.

Digital Storytelling Cookbook (2010). ECP's intensive 'train the trainers' workshops assumed a basic working knowledge of the technical, social and pedagogical skills needed to run a workshop but guided participants through the story gathering process so they could use the skills and knowledge needed to make a story in a collaborative workshop environment (Dunford & Rooke, 2013). This partnership was constructed to have an impact at different levels, with each partner standing to gain new knowledge, experience and skills for subsequent projects.

At the outset DigiTales hosted two "train the trainers" workshops at Goldsmiths, University of London. Fourteen trainers then returned home to work with local communities of elderly people. These fourteen trainers cascaded the project by delivering pilot workshops with older people, and disseminating the methods to colleagues. At the close of the project 101 older people had participated in ICT and digital storytelling workshops in 12 out of 41 regional libraries in Romania. The Finnish partner, Laurea worked through elderly people's centres and with individual housebound or isolated elderly people, and the digital stories produced by older people through ECP provided content for the interactive Caring TV network ([http://www.caringtv.fi/front\\_page.html](http://www.caringtv.fi/front_page.html)). In Finland, 43 students were trained in Digital Storytelling and 13 elderly people took part. Trainers from Romania were county librarians working in the context of the digitalisation of Romanian public libraries. These librarians adapted the workshop based training to make it more appropriate to their elderly cohort taking into account the needs and abilities of older people and their previous experience in providing IT training for the elderly. This involved shorter sessions and more preparatory time with computer programmes. The five trainers from Slovenian partners, Mitra developed a detailed strategy and programme and then delivered training with local

partners, Academia, a Slovenian private adult education institution who were able to provide ICT facilities and support, and Push (which translates as 'Snail') an organisation providing residential care for older people with special needs. A total of 33 older people participated and each made a digital story.

### **Why work with older people?**

A range of factors including the anxieties of older people themselves, inadequate marketing and the dynamics of technological change combine to mean the elderly have often been excluded from the digital revolution and the benefits it brings. The Internet has revolutionised both personal communication and the dynamics between the citizen and everyday services from banking or shopping through to the relationship with public authorities. Many of the public services we received have also been transformed and are increasingly best accessed digitally. The pace of change has been breath-taking and policy makers now fret about the emergence of a digital divide between those on and off line.

Processes which potentially increase internet and ICT usage amongst elderly people have been consistently highlighted as priority actions for policy makers and are therefore areas of interest researchers. Bentivegna and Guerrieri (2010) draw on the distinction between access and usage of the internet to stress the importance of ICT activity which has a continuous impact on everyday experience. Such impact can manifest itself in many different ways so successful policy and practice has ramifications in different areas. Research by the Nominet Trust (2011) drew attention to the need for initiatives which provide older people with greater knowledge training and information about the potential of differing uses of the internet in order to gain more fully from uses of existing

applications (Milligan & Passey, 2011) Although the picture is uneven across Europe, Romania is the country with the lowest number of internet users in the higher age brackets (EU, 2012).

Recent academic research into ICT usage by older people identifies similar issues. Sayago, Forbes and Blat (2013, p. 527) undertook a four-year study with 420 older people which concluded successful learning for older people was dependent on three related elements within any training initiative namely (1) linking learning to real life needs, (2) learning collaboratively and informally, and (3) adopting appropriate memory aids. The longitudinal aspect of the research allowed the authors to explore the importance of acquiring confidence over time. Damodarn, Olphert and Phipps (2013) reached similar conclusions in their study of the over 1,000 older people in the UK. The study concludes that ensuring access to ICT is the key issue for sustaining usage and findings demonstrate that older people with ICT skills value the benefits and independence that access to a computer provides and they are often “exceptionally tenacious in trying to remain digitally connected”. Balazun, Saranto and Rissanen (2012, p. 1202) explore how training in ICT to increase computer usage by older people in Slovenia and Finland provided one means to reduce the loneliness experienced by many older citizens and concluded that “it is important that older people are computer proficient, because computer engagement can reduce the level of loneliness of older people and in this way have a positive effect on their quality of life”. Wandke, Sengpel, and Soksen (2012) argue that user centred design training and instruction is one way to encourage older people to use technology and to overcome the perception that they are somehow unwilling or unable to use ICT. In a similar vein, Gonzalez, Ramirez and Vladel (2012, p. 586) used a survey of 240 older people in Spain as a mean to investigate the impact of ICT training on older people and found that

“the elderly said that they enrolled in different activities to learn and to keep their minds active, and they thought of training as a means of social participation and lifelong learning”.

As well as addressing research questions of academic interest, our work engaged directly with relevant policy questions around usage and impact prioritised by the 2006 Riga Ministerial Declaration encourages “both inclusive ICT and the use of ICT to achieve wider inclusion”. Bentivegna and Guerrieri’s (2010) impact index divides countries into different groups based on the “use and diffusion” of the internet into everyday life. In the period 2004-2009 this impact index rose across all the European countries. However there remains a considerable difference between the strong countries (essentially Northern Europe plus the UK and Germany), countries which possess a strong internet culture (mostly smaller countries like Estonia and Ireland), and those where the internet is less embedded in everyday life. The study shows both a consistent increase in internet usage and a maintained disparity between the different country groups. ECP included partners making stories with elderly people from each group; Finland falls into the first category, Slovenia the second and Romania the third. A 2012 research study commissioned by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and performed by TNS (Quick et al., 2013) shows that 44% of Romanians between 40-54 have never used a computer connected to internet, 71% of Romanians with the age between 55-64 years old and 91% of Romanians over 65 years old have never used a computer connected to the internet, while the percentage for Romanians aged 15-29 who have never used a computer connected to internet is just 11%. The gap is big and libraries, as places for community engagement and lifelong centers are committed to play their civic duty in order to reduce such digital exclusion (International Federation of Library Associations - IFLA, 2004).

The media theorist Henry Jenkins (2008) argues that we should not assume that someone possesses media literacy if they can consume but not express themselves and in doing this the notion of media literacy to embrace production. He sees media world where production and consumption “collide” in different, unanticipated ways to create a new media landscape. The rich potential in this landscape depends on the inclusion of different groups across society as consumers and producers. Nick Couldry (2010) describes how the vastly increased opportunities enabled by digitization for exchanging images, narratives, information and ways of managing data have created new opportunities for voices to be expressed and heard. He talks of a need to “prepare spaces of political exchange” where stories can be told and ideas discussed. Digital storytelling with older people is one means to develop media literacy and provide older people with the means to have their voices heard in the spaces described by Couldry. New digital forms of knowledge and connectivity have led to new forms of inequality, including cultural and generational inequalities. For elderly people, digital storytelling is one approach to addressing this. The elderly are bearers of great personal stories and digital storytelling could be seen as one means for them to tell stories in a new form. Work with older people and ICT often starts from a position of little or no ICT knowledge. Therefore the ECP workshops included a large portion of training in word processing, audio recording, editing tools and the use of the internet. Completed stories were then shared with different community groups across the library network in Romania.

Creative activity and learning with elderly people is often dismissed as a time filling activity rather than something with clear outcomes that can be adapted and used more widely. Digital storytelling offers multiple benefits for older people. In the process of mastering digital technology trainees learn to express them and



acquire skills or confidence needed to participate more actively in many everyday activities in contemporary society. Simultaneously, digital storytelling offers a means of sharing something which is produced through this learning and creativity. Qualitative research (Rooke & Slater, 2012) shows that these all have their own value and that participants in digital storytelling workshops particularly valued the opportunity to be involved in creative activity, which was both ‘fun’ *and* productive. The final result: a film that participants could proudly share with others was particularly valued. Different types of valuable creative, social and technical learning are carefully embedded in the digital storytelling process. ECP was primarily funded to facilitate the digital inclusion of older people, but the partners went beyond a training and exclusion orientated agenda to explore the use of the Digital Storytelling methodology as a means to capture and tell stories about the lived experience of older people in contemporary Europe. In this respect, it shared much with contemporary oral history activity.

### Research design

While different authors see Digital Stories as means to express vernacular creativity (Burgess, 2006), a research method for local health issues (Gubrium, 2009), a form of personal creativity (Lambert, 2013), a mean of preserving a community’s identity and a form of oral history (Klaebe et al., 2007), *our research objective was to understand which of these areas of expression was the most significant for the senior citizens who attended the workshops across Romania*. Such understanding could be used to inform the future development of digital storytelling workshops, with other digitally excluded groups. At the same time, it would allow a better, more specific insight into shaping digital storytelling with the digitally

excluded, senior population. It provides an opportunity to directly address the questions around understanding sustainability of community projects identified by Sennett (2013). Moreover, we have taken into account the fact that the elderly citizens are “pre-digital natives,”<sup>2</sup> that the IT literacy gap in Romania between young and old citizens is wide, and that the senior population of Romania has, to a large extent, never browsed or surfed.

As a result, our presumption was that the elderly attendees at DS workshops would see the courses, as a tool to become ICT literate. Therefore, DS could be used fruitfully as an educational method, in order to teach IT to elderly citizens.

In 2010, 101 seniors have attended the Digitales workshops as part of Extending Creative Practices Project. They have been the target group of our research. Our research method was the opinion questionnaire, conducted through Survey Monkey. Eighty six senior citizens who attended the Digital Storytelling workshops instigated by Extending Creative Practice filled in the questionnaire. In order to fill in the questionnaire, the librarian trainers (who have led these workshops in 2010) have contacted these seniors in the summer of 2013 by email and phone and have forwarded to them the link with the questionnaire. Some seniors agreed to fill in the questionnaire from their home computers and others have filled in the questionnaire in the library. The eighty six participants who filled in the questionnaire were a sample of convenience drawn, as mentioned above, from our ability, through the librarian trainers, to reach a large number of digital storytellers through the library network.

The survey consisted of eight questions. The first two are filter questions, where respondents were asked to tell us if they attended

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<sup>2</sup> Digital natives – millennial (born between 1978-1993) who since birth have been exposed to the Internet and to a constant stream of digital technologies

the digital story workshop and to confirm whether they made at least one digital story. Participants who answered “no” to either of these questions were eliminated from the survey sample. Only five people answered “no” to the filter questions, thus being eliminated from the further response processing. We processed the answers provided by the remaining 81 respondents. Question three asked participants to evaluate their participation in the workshop and rank the experiences they had in drafting their story as mainly an opportunity to: 1) make something creative; 2) learn how to use a computer; 3) express themselves/say what they have to say; 4) be part of a community/group.

Next to each of the above options participants have been asked to evaluate on a Likert 5 point scale the importance and emphasis they put on their experience from the workshops. Participants ranked the different possibilities and then explained their choices a subsequent question. This question was an open question where participants explained the rationality behind their choice. Such statements have been providing interesting arguments and are listed below in the descriptive statistics. The final four questions were socio-demographic and identification characteristics of the respondents; the age of the respondents, education, residential area and respondents’ gender. The survey period was from June 1<sup>st</sup> to June 30th, 2013.

## Results

*Sample structure.* Seventy participants lived in the urban area, while the gender split shows that 58 respondents were female. In terms of education, due to a large split of participants and in order to be able to apply some statistical data processing methods, we decided to group the participants in two categories, those with

undergraduate level (37%) (Secondary school, high schools and vocational schools) and participants who were higher education graduates (63%) (college graduated, MA, and PhD). In terms of age, 36% of our respondents were between 61-70 years old, 30% were between 51-60 years old, 27% between 40-50 years old and the rest were between 71-80 years old.

*Experience while attending the workshops.* The respondents have made the following options related to the most significant experience they had while attending the DS workshops: “DS was an opportunity to do something creative” - 45 participants; “DS was an opportunity to express myself – 8 participants; “DS was an opportunity to feel a member of a community/group – 5 participants”, “DS was an opportunity to learn how to use a computer” – 23 participants.

Below are a few typical comments and opinions from participants who have ranked first the creativity part of the workshop:

*„An interesting way to creatively express myself and an opportunity to meet people with shared passions”,*

*„Because it demanded my imagination and creative spirit”,*

*„I think it was a creative course and I learned how to tell the story of my life combining photos, emotions and I met new people, made new friends and remembered a small part of my own life”,*

*I like telling stories about my family”,*

*„This course gave me the chance to create something I always wanted to do: a small story about the places I’ve been in, where I met special people and they opened my appetite for new people and places”,*

*„It is a possibility to create, in retrospective, different activities and events lived in certain stages of my personal life until retirement. Creative, the significance of every photo I selected. My participation was a spiritual blessing”,*

*„In a monotonous world, I had the chance to express my creativity”,*

*„I realized I can create a beautiful story about my life and I wanted to share my life experiences with people around me”.*

Studying the arguments provided by the participants who have put the IT dimension on the first place, we have noticed that they were, in most part, those with the most limited ICT skills. In this respect, DS seems to benefit the most digitally excluded as the answers provided by them show:

*“I did not know how to work on computer”,*

*“To be honest, this is the first time I use a computer. I had the experience of using a typewriter, but this is the first time I use a computer”,*

*“I am a pensioner and I had the chance late to use the computer, and this program has allowed me to learn more, in a practical manner using this modern communication technique”,*

*“I have never worked on the computer before”,*

*“I had no idea how to work on computer, this was my first time”,*

*“First of all I needed to be able to use the computer, and then perform something”.*

As regards the third choice, DS allowed participants to express themselves, the answers provided by the participants were:

*“I was able to present to others, the greatest joy I had lately. It gave great pleasure”,*

*“It allowed me to express myself once more, compared to what I knew”,*

*“The workshop has created the right atmosphere to express differently my routine occupation”,*

*“I liked talking about my family”,*

*“It allowed expressing my thoughts, to put in a movie what I wanted to say with words, but I could not because I am shy”.*

The people who felt most important that DS is a way socializing, feeling part of a community argued as follows:

*“I don’t work at this point and I spend most of my day indoors and this course has helped me meet new people, especially from my locality and I made some new friends”,*

*“I felt lonely”,*

*“First of all, I have discovered myself and I increased my self-confidence. I have really felt I am part from my city community. I have met people and I have shared impressions. I have learned from other people’s experiences. Thank you and I want to attend other courses like this”.*

Our next step in the enquiry was to test if there are significant differences between men and women when experiencing the activities performed in a DS workshop. In other words, are there significant differences between women and men when they choose their experience in the DS workshop as a creative one, compared to an IT one? Our null hypothesis is that there is no difference between men and women related to the most frequent experience they have on a DS workshop. Analysis (Table 1 below) showed that such analysis is possible.

**Table 1: Relationship between gender and first two ranked DS experiences**

		gender		Total
		female	male	
option	DS something creative	37	8	45
	DS learn how to use a computer	12	11	23
Total		49	19	68

Moreover we can state that there is a significant association between gender and choice of the two most preferred experience chosen by the participants in the DS workshops, with chi square(df=1) = 6.83,  $p < .01$ . As illustrated in the Table 1, no frequency number

was lower than 5. Therefore, our null hypothesis is rejected. Women tend to perceive more often their experience in the DS workshops as a creative one compare to men. No significant association has been found, related to age groups, education level or respondents' residential area.

### **Discussion and conclusions**

To some extent, the data from the survey challenges our initial hypothesis about the primary importance of DS as a means to teach ICT to older people. It seems that, for our participants, the most memorable part of the course was creating the story. As the librarian trainers reported, even if a few participants have seen and used a computer before, none of them have had contact with the software needed to produce a digital story, namely, in our case Windows Movie Maker, which means that for all our participants, this ICT experience has been new. Also, some of the participants have attended other library events in the past and there is a possibility that some of them knew each other before, however, they have not known each other's lives to the extent and level of detail which emerges through a DS workshop. From the responses provided by our participants who have chosen "to express them" as first option, we noticed that their interpretation on self-expression has more a psychological dimension than a civic or political one, although there were also civic expressions noted. An explanation could be the fact that the literature research has shown that DS has been a method which proved great results when applied in working with vulnerable or disadvantaged categories of citizens – minorities, women, and youths, poor people and these groups often make stories which simultaneously demonstrate personal and political points. Last but not least, women seem to appreciate more than

men the creative part of the DS workshops. Many of our respondents told reflective stories and these could be means to populate the space identified by Couldry (2010) with new or unanticipated voices. Ultimately, our research confirms the results of other qualitative studies (see Rooke & Slater, 2012), which are concluding that the DS workshops are mainly ways of streaming creative energies, expressing vernacular creativity in the age of web 2.0., where our elderly storytellers continue the same time honoured activity as their ancestors, tell their stories, pass their wisdom, educate the new generations, but with a digital twist. In this way, the whole of the digital storytelling workshop is greater than the sum of its parts. Each aspect is important and the acquired digital literacy opens the door to a new form of creative expression. It harks back to our opening quote from Joan Didion in her classic account of the 1960s, the era when many of our storytellers came of age.

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## When the social documents are standing by the black marketers (Bişniţarii)

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During the past 10 years, anthropologist Zoltán Rostás has coordinated a series of social researches on phenomena with effects on the social, political, economic and scientific post-communist life. Zoltán Rostás has collaborated with Sorin Stoica (2003; 2006), Antonio Momoc (2007), and with Florentina Țone (2011) in order to perform grassroots investigation on social categories such as emigrants (*căpșunari*), petty activists of the Communist Party, or the revolutionaries who participated at the 1989 Revolution.

This time, together with Zoltán Rostás we have focused on the black marketers (*bişniţari*), a category that managed to survive in communism and to thrive before 1989 through small illegal commercial businesses. One of the reasons to conduct this study was

that the period before 1989 was treated in such a confusing way in schools, that some students' interest on the past and history know-how are practically insignificant. We should not have even been willing to start out research, being aware of this. But the students' advantage is precisely that they were not influenced by a certain background that would direct their research to preordained conclusions. Moreover, the life history conversations provide the student with the satisfaction that he/she has discovered the recent history.

Researchers have used the same method in all these studies: the oral history – life interview. The interviews were conducted after the students went through minimal methodology training. At their classes and seminars, students were told to look for an elderly person who was engaged in the black market at a certain point, and to talk to this person about his/her life – after making sure that their meeting can take place in a relaxing place.

Participants were identified and interviewed by the students of the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies, University of Bucharest. At the Sociology class of professor Rostas, the second year students received the task to conduct a life interview with an old person. The method and the means of identifying the interviewed participants were discussed during the courses.

Most of the life stories this study was built on were gathered by students in a project that had the purpose to teach about how an old person sees his/her evolution in time, during the life cycle. The black marketers' life stories are accessible to all the researchers for additional analysis in the form in which the Journalism students have collected and transcribed them.

Stasz and Ulrich (2000, p. 12) show that the oral histories are “tales or remembering of certain historical events performed by a single person, and the information is usually gathered through recorded interviews and then transcribed”. The topics of the oral

histories reveal through interviews can consist in any aspect related to childhood experiences, memories about wars, revolutions, natural disasters, or even recent or contemporary events.

Authors like Erin Jessee (2011) display a critical approach regarding the oral history method and inquire whether there are limits to the oral history methods and theory. If so, what are these limits? Obviously, in the recent years, oral history has been celebrated by its practitioners for its ability to democratize historical data. Oral history brings the narratives of people and communities, typically absent in the archives, into conversation with that of the political and intellectual elites who generally write history. However, Erin Jessee observed that oral historians sometimes trespass the privacy boundaries, as they investigate intimate issues making them public.

The researcher-students were given the advice suggested by the authors of the research methods manuals, namely that they should choose as subject for developing a single person's biography someone old enough to be interesting, someone whose life worth to be written about (Sitton, 1983). The researcher is recommended to select a particular aspect and a particular part of a person's life – choosing this certain period depends on the investigator's interest (Hopes, 1979). Each interview was prefaced through a data sheet including minimal information on the interviewing "authors" and on the interviewed "characters" (Pop, 2003). Zoltán Rostás (2003, p.7) pointed out that "the reader of the life stories might have the impression that the life histories have been "grabbed" by the young students from their elderly discussion partners. It is not like that. The subject has been telling his own history countless times. He/she is telling it not just to pleasure a student, but primarily to consolidate his own identity. Narrating is a cultural necessity, a social need". This is why the interviews are social documents of the recent history.

### **The oral history method. The life story**

Researchers who use qualitative analysis procedures can take life stories into consideration for identifying the type of life described in each story (ways and places of living, the subject's self-image, the categorization of the types of narration and of personality) and searching for elements that bring consistency/repetition to the informations in each of these aspects (Polkinghorne, 1995, in Atkinson, 2006). The main difference between qualitative and quantitative research is that, while standard quantitative research aims to restrain the role of personal interpretation, qualitative research is conceived so that it implies subjective judgements, the consciousness and the experience of a person.

Quantitative studies are structured so that they scale down the investigation at searching for certain specific relationships between a reduced numbers of variables. Qualitative studies usually have an open ending and look for deeper structures, even unanticipated ones (Stake, 1995). "Theory directs quantitative investigations, whether this aspect is declared explicitly or not" (Atkinson, 2006, p. 115). The quantitative research is based on the hypothesis that we are trying to check through the investigation. However, in a qualitative study, especially in a life story interview, we experience the opposite situation. Atkinson (2006) appreciated that it is better to suspend the theoretical suppositions until the interview is finished and only afterwards to observe if the story generates a theory and which is it. If we want the study to be truly valid, the adequate theory for a story will be generated by the story itself.

A personal life story is not meant to be interpreted as an exact recording of everything that has ever happened in someone's life (Riessman, 1993). The historical truth is not the main goal of the narration; telling your own story involves a personal point of view,

probably a singular one. The story is told from the interpretative perspective that the scientific effort started with. The stories told by the people are dominated or even led by values and they are what the researcher is looking for. These values express what the subjects appreciate most and supply the key for decrypting how the significances are built. What the researcher knows or believes he knows about the person who tells his/her story or about the topic is not a valid measurement unit, because this qualitative method is not necessarily looking for the historic truth, but only the experience and perspective of the narrator on what he/she recalls that has happened. "Studying lives through narratives focuses on the internal coherence of the story as it has been lived by the narrator rather than on the external criteria of truth and validity" (Atkinson, 2006, p. 106).

Atkinson (2006, p.103) underlines the fact that the researcher is looking for "the perspective on life of the one who is living it. The narrator should be considered both the expert, as well as the supreme authority regarding his life. He/she is based on the conviction that he/she knows the story he is telling, and that it is a precise and complete representation of life."

The life story becomes an accurate and valid social document if the researcher receives the same answer to a question whenever and where ever he asks it. That is why the oral history interview has to be resumed after a period of time. The validity stands for the measure in which the investigation collects "correct" answers, and in which there is a correspondence between the information we receive or observe and the one that we expect (Kirk & Miller, 1986). Atkinson (2006, p. 118) draws the attention on the fact that "the domain in which the researcher activates may influence the manner in which he/she approaches the life story". From this reason, the students' inexperience and their lack of recent history information are useful for the oral history type of research (Rostas & Momoc, 2007).

To conclude, a life story is “a narration that a person decides to make regarding the life he/she has lived, told as completely and sincerely as possible, as far as one remembers, and depending on what one wants others to find out – commonly, it is the result of an interview conducted by someone else” (Atkinson, 2006, p.18). A life story can help the researcher to define the position of the interviewed individual within the established social order and the process through which this order is achieved. “The life story helps explain how individuals comprehend social events and movements, political causes that generated them, or how the members of a group/generation/social category perceive certain events and actions” (Atkinson, 2006, p.28).

There is a minor disparity between the life story and the life history. Normally, they are different denominations of the same thing. The distinction between the life story and the oral history is related to the elements that the focus is on, and to the intention. *Oral history* centers on an aspect of a person's life, such as work or a special part one played in the community life (in the present study, what mattered was that the interviewed subjects were involved in the black market at a point in their life). When an interview is focused on the entire life of the person, we are dealing with *a story about one's life or a history of one's life* (Atkinson, 2006, p.28).

*The life story*, as a narrative form, has evolved from the oral history and other ethnographic approaches. Oral history or the life story is a qualitative research method that allows collecting information about the subjective essence of a person's entire life. It starts with a recorded interview, which is transcribed and turned into a fluent story, reproduced only with the words of the person who narrated it. This was also explained to the students who applied the method for interviewing the black marketers.



### Research sample

Unlike memoirs or written memories, life stories are the co-production of two people: one who causes and one who accepts the call (Rostás, 2003). The life story is influenced by the age, sex, social status, ethnicity and religion of the one who asks the questions. In this study, there is a relatively homogeneous group of investigators: students from the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Sciences, University of Bucharest. The students taking the interviews are young people who were socialized during the transition period, and the influence of their own age group, of mass-media and of new media are significantly higher than those of their parents (Rostas, 2003). During the 2007-2008 academic years, students had the assignment to take an oral history interview with someone who was somehow involved into the black market before 1989.

The discussion had to begin preferably from childhood, talking about the family of the subject, and the investigator was not supposed to use pre-defined questions based on prior knowledge, but to ask questions by tracking responses given by the subject. The interview strategy had to focus on questions like “why?” and “how?” In other words, the investigator was allowed to intervene into the discussion, provided he/she was not sharing personal opinions, values, or knowledge. The aim was for the interviewed person to communicate his/her vision on his/her own life as authentic as possible.

The interviews were transcribed word by word, and sometimes significant non-verbal manifestations were noted. The methodology training prepared the student for a different behavior than that of the usual journalists. The investigator student had to gain the trust of his/her subject, to have patience, and ask as few questions as possible.

This study is the result of “interviews with elders” about the underground capitalism in communist Romania. Of the 80 interviews collected by students, 14 were selected for publishing. They strictly followed the method and served the scientific research. Other 2 interviews were conducted by me and by Florentina Țone. The 14 interviews selected for publishing are those conducted according to the rules of the oral history interview. If the student did not follow the methodology training, the recorded interview was rejected and not used for further analysis.

### **Research results**

This article discusses how one can use qualitative research based on the method of oral history in order to highlight less investigated issues from the recent history. The present study is part of the social history studies, and the emphasis was placed on the survival techniques and social lifestyle of ordinary people in the communism regime and less on the political nature of history. The researcher was not concerned with diachronic recounting or political events from the communist regime. It was not the political power that was the subject of investigation, but the daily life of ordinary people.

As Zoltán Rostás (2011, pp. 6-7) noticed on another occasion “there is not only the “Great History” of the powerful elite, the scholars, a large Institutional history. There are lots of “small histories” of the participants, the witnesses, relatives of victims, anonymous viewers who are neither known nor recognized as sources of history. The history of the period, of an event, cannot be understood without taking into account the “small participants”. And how do we access this kind of history? Naturally, gathering historical documents unaltered by the interests of power, dominant ideologies, political and intellectual elites.”

The history of the socialist economy cannot be an exception: oral history interviews with black marketers revealed the mechanisms that made it possible for the market to function under the communist regime conditions in which any manifestation of capitalism was prohibited. The grocery store (*Aprozarul*) was one of the sources of the black market. The merchandise, always scarce, was brought to the stores and stashed undercover, never unloaded on sight, sliced and divided between the heads of the commercial units, and then distributed and speculated on the underground economy networks, which were accessed by the black marketers (*bişniţarii*) and the “smart ones who managed” (*descurcăreţii*). The others, “common Romanians”, had to wait in long lines to get supplies from the official economy.

The life histories revealed three categories of social networks members: the black marketers (*bişniţarii*), the ones who managed (*descurcăreţii*) and the survivors (*supravieţuitorii*). These categories (*bişniţari*, *descurcăreţi*, *supravieţuitori*) are proposed by the authors of the study. Those interviewed discussed about these categories of people in their life stories, but they did not name them this way.

*The black marketers* were buying cheap merchandise from the foreigners who were staying in Romanian hotels or from the Serbs and Bulgarians who were selling in the markets from the Romanian border cities. They were trading cigarettes, whisky, chewing gum, packaged soup. They led to the underground capitalism and transactions, to the “free” commerce within the official economy that was controlled by the state. Black marketers made possible underground capitalism, trade relations, trade “free” economy under an official controlled economy. Communist state, concerned with erasing the debts with the West, limited domestic supply and oriented the production towards export jeopardizing the domestic demand. They took advantage of the market shortage

and the big demand of goods. They developed an informal market, but not always without having officials unaware of the supply and demand games on the “market”. Also on this black market they were taxes being charged. The black marketers stories show that legal fees, those in the formal economy and financial system, were not paid on the black market, yet some taxes were charged. Scalping is described by those who have practiced it as a way of life, as an acceptable business and even necessary in an otherwise bankrupt system: “It was very easy to do scalping, just had to want to do it,” says one of interviewed.

*The ones who managed* were the main supply sources for the black marketers, providing them with the merchandise that was supposed to reach the grocery shelves. They speculated their workplace, stealing goods from their factory or store, and distributing them within the “acquaintances and relationships” system and further on the black market. In an interview with one of the participants, he recalled that:

*“Between these three stores was the Bermuda Triangle. There goods were lost and money appeared! Employees (from simple workers to executives) state entities (food, grocery, restaurants, factories, businesses, etc.) pandered the merchandise and then put into circulation “under the table”. They distribute underground goods that passed through the hands (“first hand”) at their workplace. There are those who managed within the system”.*

These are the people who were taking advantage of the system and relationships that they had initiated maintained and developed at their job. With them it was better to have connections, meaning to know the people who mattered beforehand, and have relations with them before 1989. They were providers for the black marketers, who were afterwards introducing the goods (food and non-food products) on the black market.

*The survivors* were people who strived hard to obtain goods during penury times, without complaining, and did not trade them, but simply consumed them. They were the common people, members or non-members of the Romanian Communist Party. They used the black marketers' services and purchased merchandise from the ones who managed and the speculators, but they did not get into the underground economy to make money. They were the black market consumers.

The life stories of the black marketers (*bișnițarii*), of the ones who "managed" (*descurcăreții*) and the ones who survived the communist regime (*supraviețuitorii*) described their daily efforts to satisfy basic needs, as well as their survival strategies: the lack of consumer goods on the groceries shelves led to the birth of an underground market, to the development of underground "businesses" and transactions.

The grocery store (*Alimentara*) and the shops of the Diplomatic Corps were genuine black market economic hubs. Usually here the work of "scalping" was starting. The goods, always in small amounts, were brought to stores and stored clandestinely divided between the heads of the trade units and then distributed and speculated underground.

Life histories revealed two necessary conditions to become a black marketer in Romania before '89: to have sources where to buy merchandise from that can fuel the demand and to have money to buy the goods. Paradoxically, money – the essence of capitalism – was not a real problem in communism. "People had money but there was nothing on the market to buy with them," is not a cliché. The loan from C.A.R. (House of Unions) was the easiest way for state employees to take possession of capital to start a "business" or for consumption. More difficult was connecting to the sources of supply.

A participant recalled that:

*“...we started to work with a very cheap material, like a ridiculously cheap one that the housewives used for dusting clothes, and this material came in white and pastel colors and we made some off-beat blouses, to stand out amongst the ones that existed on the market, because the blouses on the market were more standardized, like the Chinese had, more communist. Our blouses were very beautiful and required some staple for fastening.*

*– What were you doing with those blouses? Selling them?*

*Selling them... We were sending them to factories; to institutions... we earned money on them. We were earning very well on them. At a certain moment, the channels we were using for distribution were saturated. So we found a new channel at the Import Agency. You couldn't find coffee on the market. The Import Agency received coffee, citrus fruit, all the wonders. The workers over there said “Man, we don't have money, we pay you in coffee”. And we were getting green unroasted coffee and we were giving them the blouses we manufactured. We were roasting the coffee on the stove, got hold of bags, put it in those bags and sold it under-the-table. It was sold at very high prices, very good ones because you couldn't find coffee anywhere.”*

Another one told that:

*“That's what the store windows were empty. They received merchandise: Bulgarian leather shoes... “Otters”, made in Timișoara, were straight basis shoes, very demanded, from natural leather... the sailor t-shirts... everything fashionable was hidden. And it was immediately sold under-the-counter. Even beer got to be sold under-the-table. At the Grocery store (Alimentară) they didn't even display half of what they were taking in. People were stepping on each other waiting in lines and then these guys came and took it. Even at the restaurant, if you were arriving very late, they were selling you the beet under-the-table. Bragadiru was a very bad beer. And everyone want-*

*ed Grivița. Bucegi was requested, too. It was pasteurized (laughs). At least in the Tower, which was more for students, for common people, in the evening they would only serve wine, which was warm, too. At 6 p.m. when the terrace, the tavern were full, they would tell people there was no more beer. And if you had connections, knew people and bribed them, you would drink beer. You had to be close to the waiter, if he knew you were a generous guy, your ice bucket and the best steak was guaranteed.”*

Not all the persons interviewed were or admitted that they have been black marketers. Most of them were people who managed, all of them were survivors. The survivors are interviewed persons who were not involved in the underground economy mechanisms otherwise than as consumers:

*“I was so happy when I managed to buy a butter package, or oranges, bananas. About this food problem in Ceaușescu’s time, I know that one day I went shopping and they were giving butter over there, behind Unirea store, where the market used to be. And I’ve spent a few hours in line for this. Sometimes I was waiting for two-three hours, regardless of the weather... Imagine how it is to wait so long in line for a butter package, for example. Horrible situation! Especially in the winter, with that terrible frost, because we had some tough winter back then... Sometimes there were no more products when you got in front, where you could buy. That’s how long the lines were then, but if you knew the seller and gave her more money or rewarded her somehow, like in barter, she’s keep something for you or let you know when the merchandise came in. We also had colleagues at work who sold different things for higher prices than on the market. It didn’t matter if it was food or clothing.”*

Some of these interviews subjects perceive themselves as small entrepreneurs. Others declare they are visionaries. They narrate that they have anticipated real capitalism. They are the ones who

set the basis of the local capitalism long before the imported capitalism arrived. They are proud that they did not live in the communist ideologic and economic lie.

Some of the interviewed ones point today towards the “card-board capitalists” arrived from the parties that had the power after 1990 and that gave birth to the people who got rich doing business with the state. They do not identify themselves with the partitocracy, with the oligarchy of parties set on top of the Romanian society after 1989. They blame the people who profited from the transition period, the oligarchs of the parties that descended from FSN (National Salvation Front), that they had access to the best economic information and they produced the “nepotism based capitalism”. These interviewed subjects are the petty black marketers, proud that they made money during communism through their businesses and that they have supplied the consumers on the internal Romanian market the merchandise that Romanians needed in tough economic times.

Although in the urban folklore from communism and post-communism the term black marketer was a pejorative one, these speculators and “people who managed” describe themselves as “businessmen”.

*“The term black marketer was bothering me then. If you think of it, “bișnițar” comes from business. That’s it. They were seen very badly by the simple people. When you were saying “this one is a black marketer”, they saw you as the enemy of the state, like some kind of dragon with seven heads. The people’s oppressor... But paradoxically, everyone wanted to buy from you! It was the market demand and the lack of merchandise... that you could supply. You were the missing link in the chain. They called you a black marketer and still they bought.” “What did the black market mean, in fact, and why did the black marketers exist? Simple: there were no products on the market,*



*the demand was very big, people had money, and most of them had money in their home, but didn't have what to buy with them. And everyone desired something. And it was simple to be a black marketer! You observed what was missing, what people would wish for, you found the source for that merchandise and sold it."*

The 1989 Revolution and the economic liberalization were described by the black marketers interviewed here as moments of general confusion on the underground Romanian market:

*"At the Revolution I was sort of concerned, because I was saying to myself: what am I going to do from now on, because if we have freedom, I won't be able to be a black marketer, because people will have everything they want... And what the hell am I going to do anymore?"*

The transition in the '90s represented the sunset of this social category that had its glory in the '80s, but also the moment when it has transformed.

Taking profit of the financial and social relations capital they have developed during communism, some of the small black marketers confessed that they became businessmen after the Revolution. The entrepreneurial spirit and the motivation of gaining money turned many of them from pawns of the underground economy into the main elements of the post-communist type of speculative capitalism.

## Conclusions

Within the life history conversations, the person who conducts the interview does not stand for an academic or public count, so the students' questions did not encounter any suspicion or caution on behalf of the respondents. Students received the assignment to have a regular conversation, after securing the trust of the subject.

Research coordinators did not require a particular type of subjects. The only condition was that at a certain moment in the life of those surveyed they have intersected with the black market. This way three categories of survivors of Ceausescu's communism were extracted in a way unanticipated by the researchers: those who used market mechanisms by taking advantage of the shortage and fueling demand (black marketers), those who have contributed to this process as providers of goods using their workplace for this (those who managed) and those who were the customers of the underground market (survivors).

The small amount of information about the communist period and how the command economy functioned paradoxically constituted an advantage in the achieving oral history interviews. Oral history textbook authors draw attention to the fact that the cultural background and the scientific field in which the investigator operates may influence the way in which questions are formulated and how the conversation is oriented. Students could thus have less influence on the answers of those interviewed. A further research on the students' questions and interventions on the oral history conversations is useful for understanding their way of perceiving the phenomenon they investigated.

Life stories have the advantage of presenting the individual, the accidental, because each of the subjects reported in terms of his/her own microculture. In other words, microculture spoke through them. They were the voices of the microculture they belonged to. Oral history interviews with black marketers or ordinary people who lived the black market phenomenon and life history access to this type of social oral documents made possible a deeper comprehension of the black market mechanisms during the communist regime, which would be difficult to extract only from quantitative methods or by analyzing the written documents.

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## **Part 5.**

### **APPLIED COMMUNICATION: INQUIRING BEHAVIOURS AND ATTITUDES**



# **Elders and the use of mobile phones in Romania:**

## **Results of semi-structured interviews**

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### **Introduction**

The percentage of elderly population increases each day and this trend is accelerating. According to The World Health Organization (2012) the global population over 60 years will double until 2050,

reaching a level of 22% of the whole population, or an estimated 2 billion people – the largest demographic group. The so-called “grandparent boom” is expected to follow a different pattern in Western and Eastern European countries. New demographic projections show an eastward shift of the ageing process; estimates for Romania suggest reaching the highest median age after 2040 among European countries. Concurrently, as we are facing a proliferation of mobility and connectivity using digital devices, information and communication technologies (ICT), and high-speed communication networks are becoming vital infrastructure. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU, 2013) estimations show that the number of mobile phone subscriptions has reached 6.8 billion and that 40% of the population uses the internet worldwide. Other data show disparities in the level of ICT uptake, with less developed countries being also making less use of ICT. Despite these two important trends and the fact that age plays an important role in technology adoption and use, and in communication patterns (Castells et al., 2006), few studies on ICT trends have included elders in their agenda (see Loos, 2012). More studies focus on young people – the most active users of ICT. Furthermore, research on Eastern Europe, those countries which are forecasted to face the highest rates of ageing population, is scarce (Fernández-Ardèvol & Ivan, 2013).

The aim of the current study is to contribute with empirical evidence to better understand the mechanism of acceptance and use of mobile telephony in interpersonal communication in East European countries. For doing so we develop a qualitative empirical research in Romania (rural and urban area). The ongoing fieldwork and preliminary results of the research are presented here

In a recent study using cluster analysis based on Eurostat data, Fernández-Ardèvol (2011) placed Romania in the fourth cluster



on mobile phone adoption and use, together with five other countries (Bulgaria, Croatia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Greece and Poland). This particular cluster gathers countries where adoption of mobile telephony by elderly is markedly below the average, with 62.5% users in the 55-64 cohort and just one third (35 %) in the 65-75 cohort. When the demographic predictions for the next 50 years and the current data on mobile phone adoption for elderly are used, Romania becomes a relevant case to study the future of mobile communication in Europe.

The acceptance of mobile phone by elderly seems to be built up more from utilitarian approach rather than from the hedonistic one (Conci, Pianesi, & Zancanaro, 2009): Adolescents tend to adopt the mobile phone to prevent group exclusion and to strengthen the social ties within their network, whereas elderly are more motivated but the instrumental value of mobile phones on safety and security issues. Empirical evidence (Kurniawan, 2008) suggests that three main aspects drive the mobile phone adoption for elderly: (1) people feel safe and less vulnerable when they are alone at home or when they go out alone and they feel secure they can contact someone in case of an emergency; (2) the mobile phone gives them the possibility to better organize their lives, from the use of alarm clock to the use of reminders to compensate for memories failures; (3) it is a tool for information and micro-coordination to enhance efficiency in daily activities. The utilitarian view of the role of mobile phone could lead to a more rational behavior in using mobile phone services in the case of elders. There is evidence that they deliberately use missing calls and alternatively call on mobile and landlines different persons from their network in order to minimize the costs (Fernández-Ardèvol & Arroyo Prieto, 2013). Yet, using the mobile phone has a positive impact on elders' self-independence and self-esteem (Oksman, 2006). Thus the perceived

usefulness of mobile phones, the internal motivation and the need of self-actualization are considered to shape the mobile phone adoption and use in this particular age group (Tang et al., 2012). Furthermore their level of activism in social and professional life could influence both the perception of mobile phone usefulness and individual's need of personal independence in using ICTs (Information and Communication Technologies). Nevertheless, the personal need for independence influences the level of accepted assistance in using the mobile phone. The so called "assisted users" (i.e. Fernández-Ardèvol & Arroyo, 2013) depend on others (children, grandchildren, relatives, friends...) at a certain degree for using their mobile phones. Their level of dependence goes from not being able to send photos, videos and Internet browsing to not being able to read or send SMS, to install the prepaid card or insert a new number in the phonebook. Assisted users utilize the mobile in the way they are told to use it and feel no control, or no partial control, on their device. As a result, the perceptions of the mobile phone utility, appropriation and limitations are filtered through control person's eyes. For the elderly, one limit of the mobile phone, debated in the literature, concerns the lost of personal autonomy and the increased dependability in interpersonal communication (see Abascal & Civit, 2001). In addition, elders might be concerned that mobile phone use could endanger the traditional communication patterns with family and friends and could diminish their economic resources.

In the current research we explore the distinctive characteristics of Romanian's older individuals in relation with mobile communication. Specifically, we first study the frequency of mobile phone use relative to landline communication and the most frequently used mobile services. We then analyze behavioral patterns: When, where, how, with whom do they communicate via mobile

phone? Finally we investigate their history of using mobile phones and whether there has been any pressure from family and friends to adopt mobile communication and also the problem of assistance and control in using their own devices. We want to address also some peculiarities that emerged in the Romanian case presented here and that could be relevant in research elsewhere.

## **Method**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in the city of Bucharest, in tow small towns (less than 20.000 inhabitants) and in other two rural localities in Romania. Individuals studied were identified by means of a snowball sampling process. Selection axes are based on: (1) age cohort: young seniors, 60-65 years and elder senior, 66+ years; (2) gender; (3) level of education: secondary level (more than 8 years of school) and higher education (college graduated); (4) residential area: Bucharest, small town, rural.

## **Results**

The first analysis of the interviews confirms that elderly have integrated mobile phone in daily routine and have a general positive attitude toward the use of mobile phone. Participants reported to use mobile phone in two thirds of their mediated conversations, while for the remaining third they use the land line phone. The respondents preferred to use the mobile phone in various situations from micro-coordination to emotional support and with a variety of social actors (family, friends, acquaintances, relatives). Instead, the land line is used for longer conversations after 6 p.m., or in weekends, due to the cost advantages offered by providers. This gives us evidence that the pricing system is shaping decisions

on the communication channel individuals will use in their everyday life.

We therefore found evidence to support the utilitarian view in the use of mobile phone and the rationale in the selection of calling using fix and mobile phone: They call on fix phone relatives that do not have a mobile phone and on mobile phone the ones who have it, and they would use landline for longer conversations in evening time and in weekends to reduce the costs.

*“When I call somebody who has a fix phone, I use the fix phone when I am at home... Look, like now I didn’t find something and I was about to call her by mistake from my mobile phone to her fix phone”*  
(Woman, 63, college educated, Bucharest)

Internet, particularly calling on Skype, is used only by those who have relatives abroad, but people from the 65+ cohort hardly use any internet: They lack the skills and are completely dependent on others to communicate with family abroad. Because calling in another country has obvious economic barriers, elders from the 65+ cohort would feel frustrated and helpless when one family member goes abroad for long time and they are not able to communicate anymore.

Still, participants use the mobile phone not only for micro-coordination and for safety and security reasons but also to offer and receive emotional support, in confessions, cheerful conversations and enjoyable moments. The evidence suggests that hedonistic approach in mobile communication is also found with elderly. Their reported call duration goes up to 30 minutes per call and people seemed not to regret it. Consistent with other studies on gender and mobile communication (i.e. Iqbal, 2010), we also find evidence that women tend to engage more in longer and supportive conversations, whereas men use mobile phones more for micro-coordination.

*“With family and friends it is great especially when they are in the same network [phone company] ...we talk like crazy. I talk long time with my friends, we support each other, we give each other advises. For example when I am at the market, I would call and say: there is this and this product, if you want you can come. Do you want me to buy it for you?” (Woman, college educated, 64, Bucharest)*

Current data confirm also that voice call constitutes the most popular service in the case of elders. In addition, people from the 60 to 65 age group largely use SMS. They all reported using alarm clock while few reported the use of the mobile phone calendar. In addition, only people from the 60 to 65 age group and college graduated reported using other mobile phone services, particularly photos. The mobile communication gap between the two groups of elderly seems to be larger regarding specific mobile services than in terms of acceptance of mobile telephony. In this sense, one particular finding concerns sending SMS to congratulate friends and relatives for their birthdays: Participants felt responsible to send such congratulation SMS in order to maintain the relation with that person while they would send also hundreds of SMS on Easter, Christmas and other celebration days. The recipients include not only family members and close friends but also large numbers of ex co-workers. In fact, maintaining strong relationships with the ex-coworkers, after the person has retired in pension could be a pattern widely spread in the ex-communistic countries (as Romania) where people have been working in the same organization and had the same co-workers for 20 to 30 years.

The fact that mobile phones are incorporated in participants' daily routine is shown also through stories about the moments they forgot it at home or elsewhere: Participants reported “the event” as a total lost, struggling to recover the device by all means. However, they would seldom take the way back to pick it up.

*“When I forget it I feel terrorized because I have all the time the feeling that someone would call and I am not there or that I would have something important to say and I will not be able to do it” (Women, 63, college educated, Bucharest).*

For people who worry about the safety of a family member, forgetting the telephone is experienced as even more dramatic event and they would fail doing their duties until they recover it.

*“If I would ever forget it at home, be sure that I would come back and take it, because I want to solve things without worry. When you have a family member who is ill [ his wife] and there is nobody at home, you have to call once or twice per hour to be sure that she is ok and whether she needs something” (Man, 73, secondary education, Bucharest).*

Talking at mobile phone in public transportation seems to be an issue that preoccupies elders from urban areas. They are not necessarily worried that using mobile communication in public could endanger their privacy, but what concerns them is they are forced to share private experience with unknown others which will make them feel uncomfortable. In fact, participants reported they have a clear view of the level of education and social status of a person by looking to the kind of private information they are willing to share when talking on the phone in public transportation. A “respectable” person should always limit their conversations and going in too much detail would definitively embarrass others.

Elders from our sample started, as every individual, as unskilled user of mobile telephones, and gradually accommodate to the new technology. Except for one person, participants reported to get their first mobile phone from their children as a present. Interestingly, in almost all cases the phone was an older model that belonged to their children. As a result, the idea of damaging the phone and suffering the consequences of being stigmatized by their own children appeared in their discourses.

*"At the beginning I would hold it like I had a bomb in my hand. When it rings I would have the feeling that I will drop it and something bad would happen. Then I tried and I discovered new options. Even now I discover new things and I did not manage to master it"* (Woman, 63, college educated, Bucharest).

Elders who are still working or those who are socially or professionally active, including women who take care of their grandchildren, seem to progress rapidly from unskilled to explorative users. This is because the mobile phone is a tool for accomplishing other tasks for which they are expected to use it. The need to show their expertise in the working environment urged them to accommodate with the mobile phone and we found that elders in the sample who went back to work were using more mobile phone services than those who were retired in pension. Moreover, women who were in charge of taking care of their grandchildren were also more familiar with using the mobile phone. They reported calling their children and being called several times per day and were also the participants who reported the most frequent use of photos on their mobile phone.

In several cases elders were persuaded by their children to accept the phone so children would not have to worry about their safety. Participants' level of submission in those cases is relevant to express the fact that elderly rarely gave up their "freedom". They are not passively accepting their adult children to take control of the way they use mobile phones, but they do mostly because they feel children are experts. The way children take control of their parents' devices by giving them their older phones is a good example of intergenerational power.

*"When I retired, my daughter told me: "Mother you are old, you need a phone so we can reach you"* (Women, 69, college education, small town).

In the urban areas elders are catching up with the mainstream in achieving the basic skills to use the mobile phone, while in the rural areas – characterized by higher percentages of population above 65 and lower educational levels – elders remain dependent users.

*“I don’t press the red button, because I can see it is red. Sometimes, by mistake I press the red button... because it was in the left side in my old phone. I loose the number or it is not possible to open it. Sometimes I go wrong because I forget that red is in the left and green in the right side. Look, up to now I lost 100 points, or minutes as they call it. At TV they say we could call somehow and send 2 Euros to help a person... What should I do?” (Woman, 70, secondary education, rural).*

Although the level of mobile phone acceptance in the rural areas is similar to the urban settings among participants in the study, elders living in villages in Romania reported a higher need of assistance. In this sense, the use of mobile phone for interpersonal communication is strongly controlled by their children who had moved to urban areas: In most cases children do not only gave them the phone but also pay the bills and decide what numbers to include in the phonebook. It can be stated that children practically administer, manage, the device. This high level of dependence results in keeping the elder alienating from the phone and creates the opportunity of secondary level of assistance. Therefore, “warm experts” (Bakardjieva, 2005), those who support individuals in their everyday use of technology, are found beyond the family sphere. With children being gone, daily operation on mobile phones are caring out through others from the neighborhood perceived as more skilled: People who work form the post offices, school teachers, local elites or younger neighbors.

For the respondents in countryside the two layers of assistance – first represented by children and second by more skilled locals



– do not allow them to “take control” over their devices. Instead of gradually increase the acceptance of the mobile phone as they use it, elderly in rural areas progress to a higher level of rejection.

*“My husband stressed on me that I should take it when I am going to the city, so I can call if something happens, but I don’t see the point, because if somebody calls me... I can never find it in my bag and when I answer the person is not ringing anymore. If I felt bad, that would mean I can’t call anymore, so why should I take it?” (Woman, 70, secondary education, rural).*

The issue of control and ownership between elders and their children is reflected also in the disadvantages using the mobile phones: They mentioned difficulties in keeping the battery properly charged all the time; and frustration when somebody important to them calls and the phone runs down the battery. We believe that such problems also arise because elders use old phones that have been already exhausted by their initial owners (usually children). In some cases we found that the phone menu was initially set up in English and it was not changed, adding difficulties to the elder to accommodate to the device.

## Conclusions

The interviews conducted with elder mobile users from Romania allow us to conclude that we find similar mechanisms than those described in previous research on elders’ willingness to use mobile communication: Safety and security together with the need to organize daily routine also appeared in the discourses of participants. Although we find support for the utilitarian view of mobile phone in the case of elder users, our data suggest that, at least in the urban areas elders are using mobile communication to enjoy themselves: They reported having long conversations,

supportive talks, and funny moments with their friends when talking on the mobile phone. Consistent with previous findings, women described –more often than men did– having long conversation while men reported more micro-coordination through the mobile phone. It might be that women are more willing to accept they use mobile phone for socializing with others, whereas men admit more mobile phone's utility in coordinating with others. Furthermore the gathered information suggests few aspects that might be relevant for the future research in the area of mobile communication.

First, people felt pressured to maintain their social relations using mobile phone, particularly SMS, to congratulate several others on their birthday and others important celebration (Christmas, Easter). Especially respondents from the urban areas and aged 60 to 65 used a high number of SMS to congratulate not only family members but ex-coworkers and relative distant others.

Finally, we address the problem of ownership and control in using the mobile phone. The fact that most part of the respondents got their phones from their children, and some of the children even paid their mobile communication expenses, raises the question of intergenerational control and agency of use. Interviewees were willing to give up the control in using the mobile phone to their adult children. The relation between elder users and their mature children who assist them seems relevant also in discussing the perceived advantages and disadvantages of mobile communication. We find for example that people were particularly worried about effects of intensive mobile phone use on health but more on the health of their children than on their own. Last, we aim to explore this issue of mobile interpersonal communication and health concerns in a separate paper.

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**An example of figuration – night time workers.  
A qualitative research among the workers of a call centre  
from Bucharest**

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**Introduction**

The article aims to present the theoretical aspects of figuration, by so doing, to provide the bases for the analysis of the empirical data collected. The German sociologist Norbert Elias developed the concept of figuration in his presentation of the complex process of civilization through which societies democratize. It would be difficult to understand a theory (i.e. figuration) without framing it within the context in which it was developed. So, this paper begins with an outline of the process identified by Elias, it goes on to present briefly ways in which it was interpreted and a few critical assessments.

The focus is on figuration, applied in the context of night time work. Nowadays there is a constant rise in the literature on sleep as a physiological process that can influence social processes.

Likewise, sociologists are addressing it as a social and cultural process, building on a sociology of sleep. How do human interdependencies change when the normal work/sleep cycle (i.e. work during the day and sleep during the night) change due to a sleepless economy? is another question that this article is trying to answer with data collected from a qualitative research.

Norbert Elias (1939/2002) in the statement of the civilizing process, noticed that during the centuries, human behaviour pass through a transformation is changing to a more pronounced control of 'the emotional reactions and implicit of the experiences', to 'a movement of shame bar ', to a introversion of 'exterior compulsions' (Elias, 1939/2002, p.7). He noticed this transformation in the synchronic and diachronic analysis that he makes on behaviour changes at table, nose blowing, and slaver or on the behaviour changes in bedroom.

This transformation was highlighted by Elias through the help of books of manners and of evidence from history. He noticed that in the process of construction of the modern state a series of other changes take place: "the disappearance of physical force from everyday interaction between people and the growing affect control, self-control and self-restraint of the individual" (Munch, 1994, p.200). Richard Munch, emeritus professor of sociological theory at the University of Bamberg, adds that one can easily see how Elias obtained the confirmation for his theory, by looking at the way physical force reduced itself from every day interaction, at how manners get refined and modesty boundaries emerge and take clear shape.

Elias wasn't content only with the presentation of the historical transformation, he built a theory which could explain the civilizing process. This is the moment when figuration are taking into consideration. "The theory concentrates on the figuration of powers and

their effects on individual action and societal development. This is why Elias's approach is called a sociology of figuration" (Munch, 1994, p. 201).

According to Elias, the traditional macro-way of looking at the surrounding world, at the society as a given in which people are merely pieces of a system, has to be replaced by a micro-way of looking at people as carriers of "basic dispositions and inclinations" who "are directed towards and linked with each other in the most diverse ways. These people make up webs of interdependence or figurations of many kinds, characterized by power balances of many sorts like families, schools, towns, social strata or states" (Elias, 1978/1970, p. 15).

Thus, the concept of figuration is a tool intended to help in analyzing the core of society, the key subject whose existence makes society possible. As Elias concludes, figuration refers to

*"the changing pattern created by the players as a whole selves, the totality of their dealings in their relationships with each other. It can be seen that this figuration forms a flexible lattice-work of tensions. The independence of the players, which is a prerequisite of their forming a figuration, may be an interdependence of allies or of opponents"* (Elias, 1978/1970, p. 130).

In these figurations, people are link together through "chains of interdependences", their length determines the amplitude of the figuration and it's type. "The concept of figuration draws attention to people's interdependencies" (Elias, 1978/1970, p. 132). About aspect of change concerning figurations, Elias (1978/1970, p. 147) observed a few possible ways: on the one hand the effort to preserve and maintain figuration can "strengthen its tendency to change"; on the other hand action oriented towards changing the figuration can "strengthen the tendency to of their figuration to remain as it is" (Elias, 1978/1970, p. 147).

To Richard Munch we owe one of the best synthesizing of Elias's work in the form of eleven statements:

“1. The more competition for power between rivalling groups in society sharpens, the more a selection will take place, leading to the survival of winners and to the extinction of losers.

2. The more competitors in societal struggles for power can rely on earlier success, the more chances they will have to emerge as winners from further struggles, thus eliminating from the scene a growing number of rivals and finally leading to the establishment of a monopoly on power by one superior authority.

3. The more a monopoly of power has been established by one superior authority, the more a territory originally divided into different principalities becomes united into one kingdom.

4. the larger a kingdom with a unitary rule grows, the more the coexistence of multifunctional small power systems will be replaced by one centralized power system with a functional differentiation of subsystems specialized in the fulfilment of specific functions and the more social interactions will expand in territorial scope.

5. The more power is monopolized by one superior authority that controls a larger territory, the more physical force will retreat from the everyday interaction between people and the more interaction will be controlled by the statute laws passed by the central authority.

6. The more systems are functionally differentiated within a larger system and the more actions expand within this system, the more the interdependence between subsystems and actions will grow, and the longer chains of actions will become.



7. The longer chains of actions grow, the larger will be the scope of effects in space and time resulting from one single action and the greater will be the number of reactions provoked by that action.

8. The larger the scope of effects resulting from one single action and the greater the number of reactions by other actors, the more success in attaining goals will be achieved by the actors who calculate the effects and reactions resulting from their actions more precisely, who exert a stronger self-restraint than others, and who give less room to acting out affects spontaneously.

9. The more actors direct their actions not only after being confronted with the reactions of others but also according to their calculation of others' reactions in advance, the more external constraint will be transformed into self-restraint.

10. The greater the number of actors and strata included in the system of interdependent actions, the greater will be the number of actors and strata that will learn to control their affects by self-restraint.

11. The more prestigious are the actors who represent the avant-garde when it comes to controlling their affects by self-restraint; the more easily the model of the affect-controlled self-restraining human individuals will be diffused throughout every stratum of society by imitation" (Munch, 1993, p.201-202).

Sleep does not escape the civilizing process, and although in this paper is used only as a pretext to study night time workers, a few specification must be done to comprehend it's social nature. Regarding sleep, Elias (1939/2002) observes that this falls back in the social life backstage, after being firstly a public activity, a collective one. In the Middle Age, as the German sociologist shows,

people were sleeping anywhere anytime. The physical place where the sleep happened, being often used by many people: owners and slaves, men and women, hosts and guests. Analysing works about elegant manners, from the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, he concludes that "it was very common for many persons to sleep in the same room, that in the superior class the master slept in the same room with his servant" (Elias, 1939/2002, p.205). Starting with the 16<sup>th</sup> century and rapidly progressing through the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, as also with the other body 'necessities', the sleep became one of the most 'private' and 'intimate' sectors of human life (Elias, 2002, p.205).

Elias' (2002) statements regarding the historical transformation of human behaviour include, in Shilling's (1997, p. 93) opinion, 'an implicit theory of bodies civilization', namely "a long term image about individualization, rationalization and socialization of the body, that helps to explain what means to be incorporated in a certain historical era". Similar to Shilling's (1997) observation, Williams (2007) concludes that the transformation of the *etiquette of the bedroom* is a proof of civilizing process that the sleep passes on all its social aspects, not only of bedroom behaviours (see also Ekirch, 2001, 2005; Melbin, 1978, 1987).

Orientation, meaning and historicity of the civilizing process, were rated as specific notes of originality of the sociology of Elias (vezi Featherstone, Hepworthand și Turner, 1991/1999; Turner, 1984/2008; Shilling, 1993/2006, 1997/2011; Kaufmann 1995/2009; Courcuff, 1995/2005; Williams și Bendelow, 1998; Crossley, 2006), but also as the object of the critics it received. Elias's theory, consider Jean-Claude Kaufmann (2009, p.24), may cause the reader "to doubt the validity of the results refer to the most recent times" since during present times we seem to have a process of de-civilization, the "cancellation handcuffs and taboos" and not the civilizing revealed by Elias. Nevertheless Norbert Elias's theory must be analyzed having

in mind that it was developed 60 decades ago and his theory “major faults” derive from this ( see also Smith, 2001; Kricken, 2005).

### **Work and sleep**

Regarding the relation between sleep and work, studies oriented to features as: working in shifts, consequences of work and society changes on the sleep quality or on the way that sleep is questioned by the media; on the tendency of occidental societies to adopt a poli-phasic culture of sleep in contrast with their mono-phasic sleep practice, by including sleep periods in the working schedule.

In the last years, by works as that written by Stella Chatzithechari and Arber (2009), in a quantitative analyses of the results obtained by *UK Time Use Survey*, it was found a reverse relation between the length of working hours and the (reduced) time of sleep, which was more powerful for men than for women. Also, Maume et al. (2009), approaching sleep patterns of American retail workers, showed that gender differences appear in sleep interruption; the women's sleep being more often interrupted than the men's. These remarks were confirmed by the authors also in their work *Gender, Work – Family Responsibilities, and Sleep* (Maume et al., 2010). In this study, from the data obtained after a qualitative survey realised on families where the mothers were working by night, it was proved that women sleep is interrupted mostly by the housekeeping activities or by the children's needs than that of a man even though they work in a night shift, and the men just during the day. To the understanding of the relation between sleep-work-gender contributes also the work of R. Meadows et al. (2008) about the significances given to sleep by men, from which it results that paid work is considered the main cause of the reduced quality of sleep due to work compulsions and pressure.

Globalisation and economical developments of the last years determined sleep reconsideration in the context of working place. For a long time a forbidden practice, sleep is 'kept to work' (Williams, 2010, p.6). Williams (2005, 2010, 2011) observes that sleep during the day ceases to be deviation from the mono-phasic model of the sleep culture that has 'an 8 hours night time sleep as ideal' (Steger & Brunt, 2003, p.17). Napping on the job becomes more valorised for its refreshing effect that it can have in the cognitive areas of economy. Modernity, according to the 'civilizing process', brings sleep management which withdraws in the backstage of social life (Elias, 1939/2002). Napping on the job, studied also by Gunter and Kroll-Smith (2005) signals the starting of the process of sleep management, of its transformation in a productive feature in the emergence period of reflexive modernity.

## Methodology

To reach the previously stated objectives, the empirical data was collected through the help of qualitative sociological research (with comprehensive interview technique) (Kaufmann, 1998). The choice for these method and technique was determined by the subject's nature which describes an aria being unveiled; an aria that needs further exploratory researches and descriptions that could help in opening the subject and in sociological theoretical enrichment.

The technique of research utilised for collecting data was the comprehensive interview which allows the researcher to formulate the question in a way that the subject interviewed is more involved (Kaufmann, 1998). A qualitative investigation based on comprehensive interview needs an object, 'a trick' to guide the discussions (Kaufmann, 1998, p. 224; Kaufmann, 2007/2002, p.6). The 25 subjects for the interviews, which took place between October 2011

– October 2012, were selected from the employs and ex-employs of a call-centre from Bucharest. This call centre works for telecom companies from France, Great Britain, Germany and Italy. In this investigation ‘the trick’ to initiate the interviews, was the way they started to sleep after the ‘first night shift’. It has to be mentioned that in this research the focus will on human’s interdependences, sleep being just a pretence, although it’s revealing sociological potential is great. This study does not target specific types of interdependences; it tries to envision them in whole to be able to determine possible typologies, a sketch for further analysis.

### **Some findings from the qualitative research**

Based on the gathered data, I argue that there are three major figuration which appear to clash among those who have different spell patterns compared to those of the rest of the society. These figurations are: (1) family and friends that work only during the day; (2) friend and strangers that have a similar work pattern and (3) the largest figuration - society.

#### **Family and friends that work only during the day**

In this set of figuration it was noticed that an important factor concerns’ their living condition – there are workers living with their family (parents and/or brothers and sisters), with their boyfriend or girlfriend, with close or distant friends. In each case changes in the dynamics of the interdependence could be seen through the clashes and conflicts appear due to different work schedule.

- In the case of those living with their parents there are conflicts concerning the noise the workers make at night, when they return from a night shift. There are also conflicts in the morning when they are woken up by the noise

their parents make. Sometimes parents wake up their children in the morning just because it's the only time they can interact.

- In the case of those that rent apartments, there are a lot of disputes because of the noises created by night worker returning from work, or by their roommates, in the morning. (They also complain about the noise their neighbours create in the morning and about the outside noises at the rush hours, when they normally sleep.) This is the reason why they decide to rent an apartment with their friends. Likewise, in the case of those who move in with unknown people, this is the reason way, from day one they set precise rules concerning hours of noise.
- I also noticed that they mention that they receive a lot of complaints from their friends which have a normal work schedule. These complaints revolve around issues of neglect, lack of interaction, lack of face to face contact.
- For those who are married or living with their boyfriend/girlfriend, there are disagreements with their partners, who have normal schedules. Such conflicts centre and happen at the time of arrival home, loneliness, going out to clubs alone rather than together.

### **Friend and strangers that have a similar work pattern**

From the interviews it can be noticed two types of figuration. On the one hand is that formed by the workers work colleagues who became their best friend; in the context of night time work and weakening chains with friend that work only during the day. On the other hand there are figurations (of burglars, homeless people and every other person which is awake at night and does not work in their call centre) whose existence they would rather not know

about, but whose real or imagined presence has consequences on works behaviour.

- Night workers tend to make very good friends with their peers from the same company. They arrange their schedule in a manner that allows them to work in the same shifts. This way they can go after work for drinks or late dinners. Furthermore, during their free time, they organize home parties with guests selected only from present and former work colleges.
- Among the workers there are a lot of stories about encounters that make them feel afraid and out of place. These refer to: cab drivers, who are pungent towards the job this call centre worker do in the middle of night jobs, saying that they probably work at a hot line. Another category would be that of homeless men or crazy neighbours. In order to manage the fear of these encounters: they present secondary adaptations (see Goffman, 1961) that take the form of meeting their boyfriends in front of the building; calling a co-worker friend to stay on the phone while they walk up the stairs or on the entire way home; making a lot of noise, in order to scare away those who could probably be on the stairs, because, at that hour, even a meeting with a friendly neighbour is suspicious.

### **Society**

This last type of figuration, the largest one, from the data collected it was noticed that among those who work in the call centre for longer than one year and have night shifts, there is a great pressure from the social norms to go back to figurations in which the chains of interdependences weakened due to their type of working. These pressures are reduced by a series of coping mechanisms

like – considering the job as being a temporary one usually associated with the college years, with the beginning of their employ life. Interviews reveal that they do not want to work at night all their lives; they all speak about a normal way of living and working.

In order to prevent breaking chains with those working during the day, these workers apply the strategy of taking a holiday or that of changing, from time to time, their night shifts with colleges that have a day shift or ask their project manager for permission to have day shifts in order:

- to meet friends or to participate in family gatherings
- to sleep
- to pay bills
- to go to doctor appointments or
- to take an exam at their faculty.

A complete reconnection with figurations from which they were a part of, before becoming employs in the call centre, seems to take place when marriage plans emerge and when they finish their studies. This reconnection is done by shifting to a day schedule of working, this is achieved in a few ways: either remaining in the company and replacing the project in which they work, with one that has a normal schedule (work only during the day); this could be noticed in the case of those who come to enjoy the work they do in the client services field, after finishing their studies. Or they leave the company for a job more appropriate with the bachelor degree they obtained.

## Conclusion

In this article I intended to compile a synthetic presentation of the civilizing process and of Norbert Elias's figuration and a short



presentation of the empirical data collected having figuration in mind. In addition, sleep was taken into consideration – the purpose was to underline the social individuality of this phenomenon which was considered for long time as an object to be studied by biology or by psychology, but through this preliminary finding one could notice that even presented as a physiological fact, even a small change in it's timetable can have major social implications. The aim of this last point was to sustain the importance of sociologic study of sleep and night time work through the lens of figuration, in order to construct new theories which have the potential of presenting new ways to understand the fundament of the society.

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## How do young people visit museums?

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### **The socio-cultural profile of the museum**

Museums are contradictory places, at least in Romania. On one hand, they benefit of a good notoriety and occupy some of the most preeminent buildings in a city. Visiting museums is an activity with high social desirability in Romania (CCCDC, 2006b). On the other hand, the visitation rate is low in Romania (CCCDC 2006a, 2010), and museums are frequently associated with negative attributes, such as boring, old and dusty.

The image on museums of a wider public is complex and heterogeneous, even if museums benefit from a significant trust capital, more than books for instance (Marstine, 2006, p.4). This could be associated with the variety of situations in the museum world. The inertia of some museums is extremely high and they seem to be 19<sup>th</sup> century organizations, while others are extremely dynamic and creative in terms of the public offer. Both theories of museum studies and best practices, confirm that the nowadays museum is a

complex organization. The educational role of a museum is stressed in most books on museum studies and governance published in the last decades, analyzing how this has wider implications on all the other activities of the museum: collection management, research, commercial activities and such (Edson & Dean, 1994, p.4-11; Malaro, 1994, p.81-82; Anonymous, 2001, p.91; McPherson, 2006, p.48).

What differs and evolved in the last decades is the vision on how to achieve the educational purpose of the museum. Another evolution is related to how the concept of education is decoded by the museums today. Peter Welsh (2005) considers that museums have been educational and they are becoming learning centers. The narrow approach of providing new information for increasing the knowledge capital of the public is transformed into a wider vision: providing a framework that would permit though complex interaction the socio-cultural development of the public. Jean Davallon points out that education is not limited to the acquiring of new information, but also to the shape of citizens in a certain social, historical and economic context (Anonymous, 2001, p.107). The museum itself is considered to have a profound social value besides the cultural value of the collections. This social value is structured in educational value, connecting value, experience value and economic value (NMA, 2011). Therefore, the impact of museums, although significant in terms of education, is far from being limited to it.

The French literature, more adequately, defines the educational function of the museums as the “animation” function, which could generate various expressions, including creative public events (Gob & Drouguet, 2004, p.50-51). Still, this context also is not wide enough to encompass the deeper meaning associated with museum education and museum mission. We also mention, that the Italian

literature stresses on other aspects, especially on the relationships with local cultural and contextual interpretation of the collections, considering that no universal model of museum should be considered (Bonacini, 2011, p.75-76).

No matter the way the present-day museum is considered, the perspective is visitor-centered (Opriș, 2008, p.105). We add the extended view – the visitor as part of a certain community, as an active socio-cultural agent. Further attention should be given that the visitors are extremely diverse, and the museum aims to involve as many of them as possible. It serves both individuals, but also many communities (Anderson, 2004). In this new context, issues of social responsibility in the context of economic efficiency greatly influence their activity (Robert R. Janes in Knell, MacLeod & Watson, 2007, p.134 sq).

In the contemporary society, from a visitor perspective, museums are objects of consume (Anonymous, 2001, p.12) – making visitor: cultural shoppers (McPherson, 2006, p.48). In the same time, at least for the American public, the social and recreational experiences in a museum are more important than the educational inputs (McPherson, 2006, p.50). Nina Simon (2010) investigates the participatory aspects related with the museum, both from the perspective of the organization, as well as from that of the public.

The inner perspective of the museum (i.e. museum professionals) on itself should be balanced with the expectations of the public. These could vary considerably, from visitor to visitor. Local and ethnic variations also exist. Summing the perspectives, the wide public sees a museum as a place of education, of cultural development, a central institution of the civil society (Karp et al., 1992, p.10; Kistemaker, 2006; McPherson, 2006, p.46-47), of entertainment and relaxation, place of discovery, a place of memory, a place for plural-view and self reflection (Lord, 2006, p.83), a tourism

destination (Gob & Drouguet, 2004, p.55; McPherson, 2006, p.48), and/or a cultural obligation (Gob & Drouguet, 2004, p.53-56). The type of experiences the public expects are one or more of the following: recreation, socializing, education, esthetical, celebration – remembrance, and/or emotional (Kotler, Kotler & Kotler, 2008, p.24, 303).

The last aspect we investigate referring to the public activity of a museum is its ideological orientation. Especially when the museums are widely recognized as socially and culturally involved actors, and they act accordingly, their message and impact are relevant for shaping their communities and their visitors. They also influence the reaction of the visitors and the way they respond and interact with museums (Karp, Mullen Kreamer & Lavine, 1992). The museum is no more a museum-monument, but a museum-instrument, serving humans and societies as François Dagognet argues (Anonymous, 2001, p.99-105).

### **The museum visitor: the perspective of the researcher**

Edson and Dean (1994, p.5) consider that in the United States museums were forced into researching their public in order to attract them and make them get involved, otherwise the museums existence would have been at risk. Jean Davallon presents a different perspective on the context of visitor research in France. He considers that in France visitor investigations are of a more recent concern than in the States, they are influenced by the American practices, but they are more related with the desire to “democratize” museums (Anonymous, 2001, p.107). It is worth mentioning that statistical figures tend to show an increase in the number of museum visits, but the social profile of the visitors is more or less the same (for UK see McPherson, 2006, p.47).



The results of the public investigation are incorporated not only into marketing strategies, but also into museum management approaches. Investigating the public is a must to better address the public, but Căsar Mentz draws the attention that there are two risks associated with satisfying the visitors: to sub-estimate the interests and level of understanding of the general public, as well as to conform with the “common taste” forgetting the broad museum mission: cultural development (Anonymous, 2001: 95).

Taking into account their utility (Zbucnea, 2005; Zbucnea & Ivan, 2008, p.50-55), visitors studies have been developed in museums around the world (especially in the UK and the US) since the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hein, 1998, p.42-48; Hooper-Greenhill, 2006; Screven, 1993a, p. 8; 1993b, p.5). The practice of visitor research was adopted on a larger scale in the 1970s in the United States (Screven, 1993a, p.8-9), and in the 1980s in some other countries, such as the UK, France and Canada (Gottesdiener et al., 1993, p.13; McManus & Miles, 1993, p. 26). In Romania, visitor studies are developed since the 1930, but their frequency and reliability are in most cases low until the last few years (Zbucnea & Ivan, 2008: 17-26). Still a high interest in such studies exists (Zbucnea & Ivan, 2008: p.35-36), and museums are becoming more professionals in the way they approach this issue.

Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2006, p.362) considers that in the present context, visitor studies developed a lot, but in the same time this field is increasingly controversial. Turning towards visitors involves not just modification in the way exhibitions and public programs are proposed, but also in the way professionals see museums and themselves. Max Ross (2004) investigated this second aspect, showing that, increasingly more, museum professionals consider themselves interpreters of cultural meaning rather than providers of cultural meanings and facts, but the shift is not yet complete.

Knowing its public is vital for any museum in order to better serve it and achieve its specific mission. Most museums have a quantitative/statistical approach – applying questionnaires on a regular base. Wider investigation based on questionnaire may reveal sociological aspects and complex situations, such as the influences of education and social classes on museum visits and museum-related interests. Still many aspects related with the actual behavior of the visitors are not investigated through quantitative research, or they are just superficially identified. Gob and Drouguet (2004, p.68) identify 3 main directions of interest: the motives, the behavior and the sociability in a museum (social interaction while visiting the museum).

Not just in Romania museum visitors are not so well understood, due to lack of comprehensive research. For instance, in Switzerland the situation seems to be similar (Anonymous, 2001, p.88), as, apparently, even in the UK which is normally given as an example of good practices in the museum field. Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2006, p. 363) considers that the best practices in the field are to be found in the United States, especially in the case of science and children museums. The variety of approaches goes from sociological interests and wide-scale studies, to small-scale and functional studies. Some might be developed at national level and involving a wide public, others are limited to a certain segment of the public.

When considering the functional studies developed by museums, a shift from evaluating exhibitions and their impact, to understanding visitors is to be observed (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006, p. 367-368). In the same time, shifts from quantitative studies to qualitative ones, as well as from observation to interviews are to be noticed. The turn towards qualitative research, especially interviews or even creatively-adapted research instruments, might be explained by a number of factors. The statistics are not very reliable, neither

in Romania (Zbucea & Ivan, 2008) nor in other countries with a longer tradition in investigation (Hooper-Greenhill, 2006, p.371). Shifts registered in viewing the way museums related to their visitors, and how the later should be taken into consideration when designing the public offer of the museum. There has been noticed an increased need of various information to better design the activity and reach the museum mission in a complex and dynamic socio-economic environment. Not the last reason would be the increased desire and need to understand visitors and the way they learn.

In the last three decades in the United States and more recently in Europe, increasingly more museums base their audience research on focus-groups being interested in the opinions and feelings of the visitors in order to better shape their public offer (Karp et al. 1992, p.8). Of course the results of focus-groups developed, or any other type of investigation, have to be correlated with other studies for better understanding of phenomena.

Kotler et al. (2008, 251) draw the attention that in order to be reliable, marketing visitor research has to be systematic, strategic, extensive and comprehensive. The types of research range from exhibition evaluation and visitor research to development research. The instruments available in each case are very diverse (Zbucea & Ivan, 2008, p.56-62). We also mention that research could target other groups, not just visitors (or non-visitors) but also employees, volunteers, or stakeholders. All these publics are extremely relevant for better developing the museum strategy.

Since our investigation is based on focus-groups, we will give special attention to qualitative research and especially to focus-groups. In the case of museums, where the environments and the visitors are not so well understood and their research is still at the beginning, more qualitative studies are recommended. The qualitative research methods mainly to be considered are (Kotler et al., 2006, p. 263):

- interviews: tactical plan, interview guide, open-ended inquiry, focus group (group inquiry with semi-structured research questions)
- open observation (reflection, note taking, synthesizing observations, discourse analysis)
- ethnographic research (participant observer, key informant observer)

Focus-groups, interviews in general, are not so easy to develop, especially in the case of museums – who do not benefit in most cases from employees qualified in sociology and market research.

Interviews are to be considered when investigating: to understand values, attitudes, motives and behavior of visitors or non-visitors, to identify hard-to-be-observed phenomena, to explore hypothesis and ideas, or to comprehend perceptions (Zbucnea & Ivan, 2008, p.118-121) In order to be accurate, several issues are to be considered during this type of research: group interaction, group or peer pressure, sensitivity to subject matter, depth of individual responses, fatigue of the researcher, continuity of information, experimentation with interview guide, observation, logistics, as well as cost and timing (Kotler et al., 2008, p.266). Biases associated with the researcher are a risk to all studies, but they may be even higher in case of interviews. Some other neutrality and objectivity issues could also arise, both in case of internal or independent researchers (Hein, 1998, p.61-62).

### **The behavior of young people in museums: a qualitative investigation**

As previously mentioned, the information on museum visitors in Romania is occasional and not so well documented. This circumstance also refers to a young segment of public. Statistics, the cultural consume barometer as well as various studies of the Center

for Research in the Field of Culture ([www.culturadata.ro](http://www.culturadata.ro)) present the following cultural profile for the young Romanian:

- in terms of general cultural consumption, young people are part of one of the next segments – *trendy internaut, socio-dependent young hedonist, male competitive culture, provincial culture, female evasionist* or *the metropolitan culture* (Chelcea & Dobracă, 2007, p.152). The first segment – of trendy internauts – is composed by people younger than 30 years, and 67% of them visit museums and exhibitions, especially history and technical ones. The second segment – of socio-dependent young hedonists – is composed by people aged less than 20 years, leaving in small cities or in rural area, with poor cultural infrastructure. Nevertheless, 33% of them consider that there is no need of cultural venues, such as theaters and museums. The third segment – the male competitive culture – is formed by men aged 21-40 years, leaving in urban areas and with low and middle-low incomes. Almost half of them visit museums, but rarely. The fourth segment – provincial culture – comprises high-school students and students, especially women, but is not limited to this age group, living in small towns or rural areas. They take part in local cultural events and 61% visit museums. The fifth segment – female evasionist – is predominantly composed by women aged 21-40, with no university degree, with small incomes, living in big cities. They are not so interested in museums, theaters or opera plays. The last segment mentioned – metropolitan culture – is very heterogeneous in terms of age. They live in big cities, especially in Bucharest, read more compared with other segments and are more culturally active. They prefer history, art and ethnographic museums.

Regarding the interest in visiting museums, young people tend to visit museums and attend theater plays or opera shows more than the rest of the population (CCCDC, 2010, p.8-10). The attendance figures for those who visit at least once annually a museum are as follows: 35% – 15-19 years old, 38% – 20 -24 years old, and 36% – 25-29 years old (the average at national level is 25%). High-school students and students present even higher figures. The cultural consumption barometer shows that the more the educational level, the biggest museum attendance (from 53% for college graduates to 69% for post-doctorate degree holders). Young people aged 25-34 declare in a much wider degree than other age groups that they would be more culturally active if they had more free-time (28%) (CCCDC, 2010, p.32).

The data presents the young people as a very important segment of the museum visitors. Therefore, better knowing them is a must. As observed, the visiting pattern was investigated by the Cultural Consumption Barometers (developed just until 2010), but qualitative information on museum visits, including detailed observation on young visitors, is scarce. Some museums did their own research, but results are not accessible and they are limited to that specific situation. Studies at national level are rare / inaccessible. The data we could reach present the following situation. A recent exploratory survey in Bucharest, Iași and Sibiu shows that the younger the visitor, the more likely is that s/he would touch the exhibits (when allowed) and use the touch screens (when available). The young Romanian museum visitors also have higher expectations in terms of interactivity in a museum compared with older visitors (Zbucnea & Ivan, 2013).

### **Methodology of the investigation**

To better understand the relations between young people and museums, a qualitative research based on focus-groups was

developed in October-November 2012, in Bucharest. This research was part of a wider investigation developed by the Romanian National Network of Museums, aiming to better fundament the plans for setting a museum of communism in Bucharest. Special thanks are to be given to Loredana Ivan, Mălina Ciocea and Alexandru Cărlan from the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration for their implication and constant support in the development and implementation of the research.

The main objective of the research was to understand how young people visit museums. Three main directions were investigated: associations with museum visits, what are their expectations from a museum in terms of visiting experience, what do they do / would like to do during their visit.

### **Participants**

The participants were as follows: 5 persons aged 25-35 in the first focus-group, 5 persons aged 20-27 in the second one. All the focus-groups were mixed from a gender perspective, but women were predominant. Most of the participants were university graduates, with a degree in economics, humanities or communication studies. They tend to have low and middle-low incomes. Another common feature of the participants is their general interest in museums and more frequent experience related to the museum offer, both in Romania and abroad. Therefore they, theoretically, have a more complex vision related with museums.

### **Associations**

Strong positive associations could attract visitors (more often) to museums. Therefore, this aspect has to be carefully taken into account by the museum communication and marketing strategies. The focus-groups suggest that the perceived associations are not

so multi-dimensional. Still we stress that this topic was just briefly approached in the beginning of the discussions.

Museum is often associated with objects, history and story. Both the presence of objects and the ideas they transmit are very important for all the participants expressing their opinions on the matter.

Ana tells:

*“When I look at the items I like to know their story, to hear their story, even some myths and legends, after all... It's a combination: (I am interested in) visual, but also to know the story behind them.”*

Even if many participants appreciate interactivity in a museum, they do not really expect that, associating the museum with a more static organization. Ioana declares about a visit in a museum, that she considers a positive example of museum practice:

*“... and it was a museum – there was no interactivity. Meaning: you entered the room, we saw the objects and explanations were given. But the way they explained gave value to the museum.”*

### **Expectations related to museums**

The opinions on past museum visits reflect what the participants expect from a museum. Some are learning-oriented while others are experience-oriented.

Traian (35) mentions about one museum visit:

*“I liked the privacy. I did not expect to have feelings so strong, especially because in the afternoon I went to the museum I was not prepared for something very emotional. Effectively, going there you have some feelings... I had the feeling that I understood what some people experienced in a certain situation – which is very important – I do not know – in my view...”*

Still the learning outcomes seem to be important for most.

For instance Ioana mentioned:



*"It was Wow! – meaning I would have remained there for hours; and if I was 10 years younger I would have liked it very much because that was a museum in which one learns" and later she considers "...I do not mind small and cramped spaces, as well as they offer me many, many – I love this assault of information! .... And if I can go with something at the end of the experience, it is enough."*

The perception of an exhibition is two-folded: cultural enhancement and relaxation / entertainment. We stress that most of the respondents want to understand the messages associated with an exhibition, therefore they mentioned the usefulness of a guide.

Generally, the participants appreciate at exhibitions / museums the confort and the feeling of discovering: see the exhibits at will – without crowding with other visitors, the presence of models illustrating phenomena in an interactive way, the ability to convey feelings and sensations, not just information, and the ability to tell stories. They consider that an exhibition has to make you discover new things, even after repeated visits. For example, Karin noted in this respect:

*"I do not really want to find out in the museum absolutely everything about the (new) artist. I may find something, an anecdote – to arise my interest, but not all the information. I prefer to leave (the museum) with curiosity – that I want a museum to stir up in me."*

In terms of content, the participants appreciate the variety of exhibits but too many objects make them get tired.

Mariana (29) was disappointed by the design of the exhibition (too crowded in terms of exhibits and not very varied) and by the personnel of the museum, but she evaluated globally:

*"I liked the idea of information. I went to find some stuff I learned something I did not know. That was good!"*

Liberty to choose how to see the museum is also important, as mentioned by Karin:

*“If there are no people in that room, the better, because I do not like to be imposed a route, chronological or whatever. And I want to figure out (the museum) how I can and I want it and not necessarily go through all the exhibits.”*

They also do not like the feeling that the museum personnel is watching them closely during the visit. A participant also mentioned the inappropriate behavior of the personnel talking loudly in the galleries, with no respect for the visitors.

The participants were quite critical referring to the museum message, considered to idealize the past or the people presented, and not critical enough. The lack of dynamism was also mentioned. One of the participants revisited a museum after 4 years and he remarked:

*“Nothing happened in 4 years”.*

They also appreciated in negative terms the way some visitors behave. It is worth mentioning that not all the participants were critical towards the museum, even if the visit proved to lack a long term impact on the participant. In the case of all the examples of museums visited, participants highlighted positive aspects, such as the wealth of the exhibition, or the atmosphere. Participants mentioned positively the nonconformism in exhibitions, surprising settings or the chance of actual interaction with the exhibits.

### **Behavior while visiting**

When considering the opportunities to visit a museum, the younger participants present a similar perspective: as part of school groups, both when visiting local museums and museums from other cities. The personal factors influencing the decision to visit a museum are: novelty of exhibition, curiosity and professional interest.

Still what they are actually looking for, how they behave in a museum and they evaluate the offer may vary. Claudiu says:

*"...mainly old objects. They're the first thing I see in a museum; old objects have a fascination ... more than the stories, texts or photos... I really like to look at them, study them, and see little signs of use. I do not know, I like to imagine stories and stuff like that about things and that's pretty much my main interest."*

Regarding the specifically stated expectations from a museum, some said they would like to impersonate the characters, in order to understand what they were doing, how and why. Some would like to try the exhibits. However, other participants said they would not touch the objects, only they would look with maximum interest and curiosity.

When visiting a museum, most of the participants try to see the entire show and to read all the labels. They also declare to be active and take part in the programs a museum offers: they ask for guided tours, if there is an audio-guide they use it, they touch objects when permitted etc.

Bogdan considers that

*"First of all the atmosphere in each museum (is important). This is what I am looking for: to feel leaving the city, to retain me there, to make me curious, to participate. To be another world, other relationship".*

Viviana (32) says:

*"I am looking, first of all, for information, considering all sources: objects, the group I visit the museum with. I would never visit a museum by my own. I debate with somebody on the picture, on the object".*

If the visit is rewarding, participants declare they are overlooking some personal distress. Somebody declares:

*"(getting tired) did not bother me. I really liked it, because it steered the curiosity. Let's see what happens, what's in the next room... Of course, I was very tired at the end of the visit."*

## Conclusions

The participants in the focus-groups do not represent the opinions and reactions of their generation. Still, they are relevant from the museum perspective of better approaching the visitors since they are part of the familiars of the museums. They visit museums more often than others, both in Romania and abroad. They have, therefore, more experience and interest in the topic as their peers and they might be looked upon as reference for other visits.

Curiosity is one of the main drivers into museums, both when considering visiting an exhibition, and when actually being in a museum. It is hard to separate the objects from the story/stories behind them. Participants prefer interactivity in relation with objects and in finding their story, but they are open to various ways to tell this story. In this context, they appreciate creativity and originality; even if they do not necessary expect that to happen.

Acquiring new information is very important for participants, according with their declarations on what they expect from a museum visit. Nevertheless, when remembering museums they visited in the past, all sorts of other aspects come to their minds except the messages. Aspects mentioned by the participants are the atmosphere, the interaction with other people in the room (museum personnel, companions or other visitors), the display, interactivity opportunities and others.

Interactivity is highly appreciated by the participants, but they do not necessary see it as a must in a museum. Some would even stay at a distance from the objects, probably considering them too valuable and special to be touched. Generally speaking, exhibitions are decoded in a personal key, and feelings and experiences are remembered more vividly than the gain of knowledge.

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## **Part 6.**

### **DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**



# **Power legitimating in Romanian identitarian discourses.**

## **The case of Schengen file in Romania**

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### **Theoretical framework and assumptions**

Our study looks at discursive strategies and practices in the construction of Europeaness in Romanian identitarian discourses. Our broader research interest is to investigate the construction of power relations in politicians' and media discourse. The multiplication of actors in the public sphere and its fragmentation lead to vastly different readings of power and authority. To this end, we have chosen the topic of Romania's integration in the Schengen Area, which has triggered vivid debates on the sources and effects

of power, on power legitimation and identity-building in general. Integration in the EU and, lately, joining Schengen have been hailed as modernization imperatives; discourses on this topic are essentially identitarian in nature. European arguments have been strategically employed in both politicians' and media discourse in order to build legitimacy in the public arena and to justify policies.

In Romanian public sphere the problem of European integration has become a turning point for identitarian (re)construction. Before 2007, the powerful ethos of Europe as an 'ideal', highly symbolic space of governance and political action was constantly employed by the media to reflect on the skills of the Romanian politicians to rise up to European expectations. The journalists took over responsibility to measure up Romanian political mores to those of Europe: "Invoking Europe in press campaigns functions as a strategy to question political class" (Beciu, 2009, p. 60). Later on, the Europeanization of the Romanian public sphere translates into a debate on the symbolic distance between 'us' and 'them'. Romanian journalists do not focus on European themes or take positions in European debates; they close in on the national space: "Self-reinvention 'within national borders' is a deliberative frame of European problems mediatization and is the starting point for media's positioning as a civic actor in the process of European integration" (Beciu, 2009, p. 61). For instance, in the press campaigns of the time (*Generația așteptată/Generația expirată*, Cotidianul, 2006, *Zece pentru România*, Realitatea TV & Evenimentul Zilei), the public problems raised in the debate on national identity are: country image and authentic elites who can trigger changes.

If we allow for a broader definition of ideology beyond the obvious statements in a text, to include "discourses and figures, concepts and images, theoretical positions and symbolic forms" (Kellner 1995, p. 59), we are justified in attempting a critique of

meanings and means in the journalistic discourse along with the more obvious choice of political discourses. Our choice has been motivated by our focus on the elites discourse in public context and its recontextualization in media discourse. “*Mass media build a deliberative agenda and/or a public problem recontextualizing ‘the event of the day’, giving it a general interest dimension*” (Beciu, 2009, p. 85). Media construct public problems by signalling their importance and by staging a debate, distributing voice and offering interpretations. Intellectual or elite discourse can facilitate dialogue across public spheres and mediate between public understanding and competing discourses. From the view of the media reflecting and serving society to its more radical counterpart of media managing society, social theory moved towards acknowledging the relevance of the interpretive schema of the public. A version of liberal functionalism still allows for the media playing a leading role in society, but seeing them rather as agencies of social integration than agencies of influence. While traditional liberal analysis emphasizes media democratic functions (watchdog role, information and debate role, representation of people to authority), the radical functionalist approach takes this argument towards the idea of media actively producing consensus (which involves the notion of ideological agency).

Integration in the EU is a permanent theme on the Romanian public agenda. Our assumption is that the accompanying theme of Schengen Area integration is re-contextualized as a debate on Romanians’ European identity and belonging. The topic of Schengen integration lends itself to expert discourse, given, on the one hand, the technicalities of the process and, on the other, the relatively low interest and visibility in both national and European media. In 2010, when France and Germany opposed Romania’s integration in the Schengen Area, the expert discourse

on technicalities of integration or causes and effects of integration postponement was the norm.

Our analysis was informed by the findings of the extensive study conducted by Bârgăoanu (2011) on the events in 2010. The study followed the framing of the topic in international and Romanian press, the social perception and the public debate and employed both quantitative and qualitative data. Notwithstanding that the two studies are different in their scope and methodology, we find that several themes and motifs are recurrent in the debate surrounding Schengen integration, while other representations and meanings are significantly different.

The formal, analytic, non-sensationalist approach characterized the media talk on the problem of EU integration in the early days of the process (Beciu, 2004). The result of the media use of normative, expert talk was a consensual situation where media practices could not innovate towards a debate on this public problem (Beciu, 2009, p. 86). However, several years after EU integration, expert talk is starting to be accompanied or even surpassed by identitarian discourses. The topic has been recontextualized along the lines: governance (good/bad political decisions; political competence, guilt and responsibility) and identity (European/national character, expectations, feeling of belonging). The consequence in public debates is that the cause-effect discourse gives way to a debate employing authorization (who has the competence to speak about this topic?) and moral evaluation (who has the moral right to intervene in the debate?).

Another assumption guiding our analysis is that discourses about identity are polarized: Romanian identity is measured up against European identity (in their analysis of nationalistic language in legal discourse, Kjær and Palsbro highlight that “the (re) construction of national identity is accompanied by a competing

discursive force, aiming at *the construction of a European identity*"; the two conflicting identity discourses, nationalism and internationalism, are engaged in hegemonic struggle – 2008, p. 600). In an article on discursive strategies and linguistic structures in French political discourse on Turkey's EU integration, Tekin finds that "the discourse that constructs Turkey's EU membership also constructs a collective European identity", through the core semantic strategy of construction of in- and out-groups (2008, p. 757). These findings encourage our expectation that political and media talk on 'full' integration in the EU will debate the relationship between Europe as a punishing institution and Romania as the victim of European arbitrariness or political incompetence (which we take as an illustration of the European core/periphery theme).

Our analysis is based on the fundamental assumptions of critical discourse analysis regarding the production of social reality through language (Fairclough, 1992; 2003) and on the discursive macro-strategies framework developed within the discourse-historical approach to the analysis of national identity (Wodak et al., 1999; De Cillia et al., 1999). In Fairclough's framework for analyzing practices of public dialogue (1999), discursive practice is regarded as a regulative practice (Do participants have equal chances to discuss?), as re-contextualization (relocation of discursive practices: see, for instance, the appropriation of European integration discourse as modernization imperative in the Romanian public space – Schifirneț 2011, 2012), as a space where identities emerge, as a constituent of action. In a study on the recontextualization of liberalism by Romanian intellectuals, and, more broadly, on the effectiveness of public space dialogue in contemporary Romania, Preoteasa (2002, p. 285) shows that "by focusing on the textual element of social practices, a discourse analytical perspective can both complement and advance social and political theory."

Our analysis of political discourse and its treatment in the media will allow some observations on the dynamics of public space dialogue. Fairclough (1995) discusses the ideological relations between discourses and socio-cultural practices; van Dijk (1993) analyzes ideological discourses and hidden power structures. In our corpus, which includes both political declarations and editorials, we expect to identify at least some characteristics of diplomatic discourse: discussion and negotiation of ideologies, assertion of power relations, discussion and communication of political differences (Bhatia, 2006, p. 174).

We conduct our analysis of discursive strategies and practices in identitarian discourses within the theoretical framework of the sociology of public problems (Gusfield, 1981). In Gusfield's view, the construction of public problems presupposes a public arena where competing definitions of a situation create the public problem as long as a certain agreement is shared (i.e. discursively elicited/requested) on the moral consequences of a situation. Cognitive and moral dimensions are essential for turning a phenomenon into a public problem. The moral dimension of a public problem "enables the situation to be seen as painful, ignoble, immoral. It is what makes alteration or eradication desirable or continuation valuable." (Gusfield, 1981, p. 9) Cognitive dimensions regard the facticity of the problem, but also the beliefs regarding the alterability of the phenomena. In order to solve the issue of symbolic power and authority in defining the problem, Gusfield introduces the concepts of *ownership* and *disownership*. "The concept of ownership of public problems is derived from the recognition that in the arenas of public opinion and debate all groups do not have equal power, influence and authority to define the reality of the problem. The ability to create and influence the definition of a public problem is what I refer to as ownership" (Gusfield, 1981, p. 10). The avoidance



of an alleged obligation to create or solve a problem is disownership. “The question of ownership and disownership is very much a matter of the power authority groups and institutions can muster to enter the public arena, to be kept from it or to prevent having to join” (Gusfield, 1981, p. 12). Two more concepts are needed to describe the content of the problem: *causal responsibility* (the facticity of a situation, what generates the problem), and *political responsibility*, which is a matter of policy (attributing guilt, solving problems), fed by a moral understanding of the situation. “The structure of public problems is then an arena of conflict in which a set of groups and institutions (...) compete and struggle over ownership and disownership, the acceptance of causal theories, and the fixation of responsibility” (Gusfield, 1981, p. 15). A consensus over the situation as such and over moral implications is then needed to treat a phenomenon as a problem. Gusfield’s framework offers several dimensions to our discussion. The problem of Schengen Area integration is discussed in either cognitive or moral terms. Expert discourses on integration technicalities favour the facticity of the problem; the moral dimension of the problem becomes visible in the debate on good governance. We expect causal and political responsibility to be debated and attributed in both political and media discourse. Ownership and disownership will be discussed in relation with power and voice negotiation (Who has the right to speak about the problem? Who avoids it?).

We do not take the interaction of the two instances of power, political discourse and media discourse, as struggle over representation of (political/social) reality, definition and meaning of events or public opinion influence. There are other forces at play in the public space: see, for instance, the study of Schröder and Phillips, attempting to “*complexify* the way we conceptualize the notion of definitional power in a mediatized society”, by looking

at citizens' critical reflection on both political and media practices (2007, p. 911). Taking political deliberation as an illustration of the interactional dimension of the public sphere, we are interested in analyzing the emergence of a deliberative space where public problems are created. We will track the dynamics of arguments regarding Schengen integration postponement in the public sphere. Raising a theme to a public problem is a matter of policy; for instance, "the way in which the press builds *public problems* around the European theme signals a certain positioning on the European agenda" (Beciu & Perpelea, 2011, p. 7). Announcing the theme to a public, allowing definitions and interpretations of the theme by various social actors, including the theme on the media and political agenda, initiating debates on the various meanings and implications of the theme are all stages in building further dimensions of the theme.

Our corpus includes reactions to the *sine die* postponement of Romania's integration in the Schengen Area. Following the letter of France and Germany to the European Commission in December 2010 which requested this postponement, the topic disappeared from the public agenda. Several weeks before the JAH Council in March 2013 the theme reemerged. Various politicians warned that several member states hindered the topic inclusion on JAH agenda. The President invited government officials to acknowledge shortcomings visible in MCV report and reassert their interest in Schengen. Government refused to discuss the two topics jointly and launched a warning that Schengen integration would no longer be a priority for the government if the issue of Romania's integration were not discussed in JAH Council. Treason accusations by opposition leaders followed. Several political actors were very visible in the public arena: the President, the Prime-Minister, the Exterior Minister, the Interior Minister and opposition leaders.

Our corpus is formed of thirty political declarations taken over by various media news platforms and 19 editorials treating the topic in online editions of major dailies, weeklies and blog platforms (contributors.ro, hotnews.ro, jurnalul.ro, revista22.ro, catavencii.ro, romanialibera.ro, gandul.info, zf.ro). We took political declarations at their face value because our main interest was to document the dynamics of the public problem of integration and not the reinterpretation of political declarations in the media.

Following De Cillia et al.'s framework of analysis (1999), we identified the topics in the debate on Schengen integration postponement. We also identified macro-strategies in the construction/deconstruction of identity and, finally, we looked at categories of legitimation (van Leeuwen, 2007). Our decision to focus on argumentative schemes, rather than on linguistic means of realization, is justified by our interest in the legitimation of institutions and social practices. We want to highlight how identities are produced through discourse, but also how they are acted out in social practices. Our research questions are:

- What discursive strategies are employed to construct Romanian (European) identity? Do (institutional, political, media) actors discuss themes from a European perspective?
- Which categories of legitimation for social practices are used in political and media discourses? How do politicians and editorialists ground legitimation of their positions as actors in a debate? What moral commitments are visible in media discourse?
- Which is the dynamics of the public problem of integration? What kind of public space results from these discourses? Does discussion on Europeanness as identity ideal translate into a Europeanized public sphere?

We have been able to identify the following semantic macro-areas in our corpus:

- The discursive construction of a collective (European/Romanian) fate
- The discursive construction/deconstruction of Romanians' Europeanness.

Under the first, the following topics were salient: citizenship (good/bad citizen, journalist/politician as representative of citizens), governance (good governance, public interest), political achievements and failure (full/partial integration, unattained goals), crises and internal/external threats, political virtues/values. We chose not to split the category along the lines: Romanian/European collective fate, because the topics are generally discussed as dichotomies (European identity runs counter to Romanian identity; Romanian and European identity overlap).

Many of the topics are reused under the second macro-area, but they are discussed with reference either to exceptionalism or conformity. Europeanness is either a threat or an opportunity; Europe is an (un)attained/separate/alien object. We expected another area to be quite frequent: the narrative of the ignoble past with references to integration as redemption from the Communist past and return to European roots. In Kaneva's view (2012), the rise of nation branding in former communist countries is "inevitably intertwined with post-communist identity struggles" (p.16). However, in our corpus, references to the past are sparse, and we have consequently included uses of political triumphs/failure in the second category. One explanation would be the relative distance of the Communist past; another, that integration is seen as one further step in democratization, and not as a reward for capitalist political choices.

We worked with the scheme of De Cillia et al. to identify which macro-strategies are employed in the discursive construction of identity: *constructive strategies* (reference to sameness and similarity, emphasis of differences, positive self-presentation), *perpetuation/justification strategies* (use of metaphors and arguments such as: “we are all in the same boat”, defense of problematic narratives), *transformation strategies* (change of meaning), and, finally, *dismantling/destructive strategies* (de-mythologizing elements of identity). Constructive and destructive strategies were most frequent, polarization of discourses (European vs. national) being probably accountable for this occurrence.

Van Leeuwen draws on Habermas (1976) and Berger and Luckmann (1966) to build a framework for analyzing the language of legitimation for social practices in context, understanding that “legitimation is always the legitimation of the practices of specific institutional orders” (van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 92).

We looked for the following categories legitimation (van Leeuwen, 2007, p. 91):

- 1. *authorization* (“legitimation by reference to the authority of tradition, custom and law”). We wanted to see which type of authority politicians and editorialists use: personal authority, expert authority, role model authority, impersonal authority (given by rules and regulations), authority of tradition or authority of conformity. The scope and aim of the two genres (official declarations and editorials) and the assumed position (politicians as representatives of the citizens’ political will, editorials as guardians of the public good) predicted the use of different authority sources by politicians and editorialists. Our previous research in relation to media discourses on professional migration showed that journalists’ loyalties and moral commitments vary

widely depending on the competing definitions, the interpretations and representations of the problem of migration. For instance, civic journalism can favor a policy approach (where the focus is on communitarian arguments) or a ‘citizen-as-victim’ discourse, where moral commitment is salient (Ciocea & Cârlan, 2012)

- 2. *moral evaluation* (“legitimation by reference to discourses of value”). We expected editorialists to resort to moral and ethical arguments, yet political discourses made use of this category, as well. We found this category to be particularly useful for the analysis of the public space produced as the result of the debate. For constructing the public problem of integration, agreement is needed on its moral consequences. In Gusfield’s view, moral assessment is what prompts political responsibility and, finally, action. Even the cognitive dimension of the problem relies on beliefs as to how phenomena can be changed. Our assumption is that reference to values will be used for reaching agreement, for building ownership of the problem and for justifying social action, given the identitarian finality of the debate.
- 3. *rationalization* (“legitimation by reference to the goals and uses of institutionalized social action, and to the social knowledges that endow them with cognitive validity”). We connected this category with ‘moral evaluation’ category, since both instrumental and theoretical rationalization to either moral reasons or the truth in general.
- 4. *mythopoesis* (“legitimation conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate actions”). We were not able to identify storytelling or mythopoesis in general. The visible explanation is that the typical structure of political declarations on the one

hand and the limited space of editorials, on the other, do not allow for storytelling. However, we chose to find our explanation by correlating this absence with the lack of reference to the Communist past. Memory is basically an ‘acting out’ of the past through discourse, a debate on meanings. For instance, the significance of the Romanian Revolution seems to have been fixed in collective memory, if we judge by the lack of debate surrounding the topic.

## Discussion

Given the prior visibility of the topic of Schengen integration in December 2010 – January 2011, the event in March 2013 is somehow an anti-climax which reflects in the topics discussed. For instance, while the initial crisis started debates on the causes of postponement, the discussions in March 2013 are more interested in attaching meaning to Schengen integration. Rationalization and authorization as legitimization strategies replace cause-effect schemes. We equate the employment of these empowering strategies with an internalization/appropriation of the topic by various actors.

Our first focal interest was on representations of Europe/Romania. The debates surrounding integration generally favor a geopolitical approach, with countries often appearing as actors. Early debates before integration saw the EU as the savior of a country which lacked training in the workings of democracy; later on Europe is demystified as a punishing institution, and Romania is represented as a victim of arbitrariness. Sometimes punishment is a result of culpability (“It is possible that the EU is not totally fair when postponing Romania’s integration in Schengen Area, but, according to the actors we analyzed, this position is justified

by Romania's incapacity to ensure a security climate" – Bârgăoanu, 2011, p. 138). In our corpus, *metaphors of war* and images of reaction and counter-reaction present the conflictual relationship between Europe and Romania ('we need to fight ...with dignity, not just wait, hands stretched'; Schengen as become 'a moving target'; Germany's Internal Minister 'has trespassed the limit of legitimate defense'; we have a 'feud against the EU'; Romania could become an 'unpredictable state' or a 'rogue state'). Deconstructive strategies in editorials use the same metaphors of war, rupture and discontinuity: 'defying the West', 'strategic victory', 'collision with EU values', 'boycott against the EU', 'dislocating Romania from the concert of Western Europe', 'the local gig and the European concert', 'resovietizing East-European space', 'blaming the West', 'Romanian blockade', 'explicit form of blackmail', 'several anchors keep Romania at bay with the Western world', '(Schengen) is the Aristocats club', the Exterior Minister is 'a poisoned pawn.'

Other pervasive metaphors refer to *voice* and *silence*. Finding voice involves being articulate in diplomatic talk, gaining support for concerns, defeating proponents who deny voice. Metaphors of silence and noise are quite frequent in the weeks preceding JHA Council, when the President wanted the Government to sign a letter detailing the political steps taken in order to set right the negative aspects in the MCV report. The (unsigned/lost/recovered/political) letter motif is instantly recognizable in Romanian public talk due to a political *comédie de mœurs* frequently invoked to describe the 'political circus.' It is easy for the Government officials to invalidate the President's idea by reference to the infamous fate of the letter in the comedy ('the letter game', 'signature ping-pong', 'a taste for letter-signing', credible/useless signatures, lost letters, vocal leaders). Political actors are generally defined by voices (Who has a right to speak in the country's name? Whose voice is more



audible? How do we silence eccentric voices?); silence is a political positioning as well (for instance, the Romanian Interior Minister declares the German Interior Minister ‘has lost an opportunity to keep silent’, although the keeping silent argument does not go well in Romanian politics, ever since Chirac told Romania and Bulgaria, back in 2003, that ‘ils ont manqué une bonne occasion de se taire’).

To what degree are Romanians true Europeans? And are there fundamental deficiencies or can they be healed by education? Is there a set of values at the core of Europeanness? *Exceptionalism* and *conformity* are topics frequently employed by the media in the discursive construction of identity: “In this Europe in which we have apparently integrated, there are several fundamental values... If you do not share them, you are accepted at the feast only as a mere distant relative... Let us take these values in turn: dignity, integration, democracy, the rule of law, separation of powers. The Romanian indigenous Parliamentarian (even some Europarlamentarians), the inhabitant of Romanian political moors, the Balkan crocodile and similar autochthonous species have a vastly different understanding of such concepts than prim Eurocrats, deeply submerged in European rules and regulations, backed by their own nations’ cultures. Same words, different conceptions... If we feel inferior, it is because we have lost track of Romanian state’s founding values” (Răzvan Oărășanu, *Despre demnitate și alte valori, în Europa*).

Sometimes Europe itself is represented as lacking in Europeanness and then moral evaluation of dialogue partners hints at integrity and telling the truth: “There is an intended (or not) overlap between adhesion to Schengen and ceasing labor market restrictions for Romanians and Bulgarians in 2014, there are media campaigns, populist political leaders appeal to less Europe... The Europe of populisms is advancing and in this context it is difficult

to have constructive discussions on extending free movement area. In the words of a Western diplomat, «in the question of Schengen we are dancing a hypocrites' ball. Us, Westerners, hide behind each other. While there is economic crisis, while unemployment is on the rise, this ball will go on» (Luca Niculescu, *Aderarea la Schengen: un bal al ipocriților?*)

Europe is generally an isolated, sometimes unattainable fortress. What hinders Romanians from entering this space is lack of congruous identity. Romanianness is often defined by surplus of (negative) national traits and shortage of European traits. Romania is isolated because of its foreignness. Positive or negative self-presentation and the emphasis on similarities or differences are strategies in an identitarian discourse which is the underlying theme of Romanian political and popular debates. Europeanness comes in various degrees (hard core and periphery, high and low orders) and, in order to gain access to the fortress within the fortress, Romanians have to exacerbate European traits (by fulfilling supplementary conditions, for instance).

In the President's declarations, Romania-the-state appears as a severe, dignified, even vehement person fighting for her rights against inequalities and mistrust, represented either by reticent member states or institutions. On the whole, the President's speeches employ *rationalization* with reference to institutional and legal factors (adhesion to Schengen area is an obligation). The idea of sacrifice is used recurrently: "The goal of entering Schengen area is fundamental for Romania and from this perspective no sacrifice is spared. Sacrificing our corrupt politicians is unimportant compared to our country's interest to be part of a solid European system" (President's declaration, 04.03). Europeanness is a result of Romania's adherence to principles against threats to its European character, which are both internal (unwillingness of unpatriotic,

corrupt politicians), but also external (reticent member states, European regulations and institutions).

Generally, Romanian leaders oppose the rationality of Romanian position (meeting technical criteria, complying with regulations, agreeing on European decisions) to the arbitrariness of the European view: "From that moment [of European states postponing the topic of Romania's adhesion to Schengen area], if unjustifiably and illegitimately no compromise is adopted, then this topic will no longer be a priority on the Government's immediate agenda. This does not mean we are no longer interested or willing, but those who wish to analyze things in more detail should invite Romania and Bulgaria when they feel the moment has come.... We are moving along, we are not making a drama out of it. We are interested in Schengen; we are not interested in being a party in a discreditable process" (The Exterior Minister's Declaration, 03.03). Target invalidation ('a discreditable process') and consequences downplay ('not making a drama') are employed as image building strategies (recovering status after losing face). Use of fortress metaphors (waiting at the gates of the fortress for an invitation to regain a right, rearranging priorities) is quite frequent.

Status recovery is also attempted by employment of the vassal-feudal lord imagery ("We shouldn't keep our head down... Romania is a full EU member... We must defend our dignity and honor" – Defense Minister's declaration, 04.03; "These people (the government) believe they are the country's owners. They administer Romania as if it were their own estate" – former Prime Minister's declaration, 02.03). Condescending views are mockingly accepted ("We leave it to Germany to find the moment it will consider fit to allow us into Schengen" – Interior Minister's declaration, 04.03).

Imagery of the body politic (connectedness, internal workings of the system, parts functioning independently) helps define

Europeanness of various member states as sameness (Romania needs to 'hang on to EU's hard core'). Partners can be delegitimized by means of destructive strategies ("Without wickedness, I wonder: if Romania is such a bad country it does not deserve to join Schengen, why are we first in the investments top? These are firms from Germany... There is hypocrisy between public and private discourse" – Prime Minister's Declaration, 05.03; "We have lived without Schengen before; we'll keep living" – Exterior Minister's declaration, 01.03). There is tension between private and public actors ("unfortunately Romanians' greatest enemies are Romanians themselves"). For instance, reparation strategies are attempted by the President with reference to personal traits (the Exterior Minister's opinions 'can be considered at best a positioning proposal') in order to save the public position (Romania being firmly interested in Schengen). On the other hand, the Prime Minister confirms the overlap between public position and private opinions. Role model authority of Western politicians is sometimes reversed in the case of Romanian politicians. Editorialists' criticism is pointed at individual politicians, with reference to personal flaws in character: "Our little Titus wants to give Germans a lesson... Skilled as we know him, the Romanian Exterior Minister has sown the seeds of discord in Berlin's cabinet... This stands proof of his brilliant machiavellianism... Our Titus is cool, indeed: he has pinned Germany down." (Sorin Ioniță, *Titus über alles*)

Another focus of our research was the use of *rationalization* and *authorization*. In editorials, a rationalization strategy (it would be moral to punish fraudsters and appoint officials whose morals are beyond doubt) functions as a counter-argument against the government because the editor questions the institutional authority of the government coalition and their goals. The embedded rationalization of the government officials (we ignore European laws because they

are imperialist, hence arbitrary) runs counter to the editor's own argument (the government ignore the higher commandments of the civilized world in favor of the dubious rules of our 'small Romanian universe'). Coalition with the government's view invalidates media authorization. See, for instance: "Public agenda is suddenly overflowing with trivialities, false topics or simply put manipulations meant to cover the government's shortcomings... Why wouldn't the redemption of the referendum's penal commissioner to an important position in the Government (the Chief of the Interior Minister's Control Corps) be defiance against Brussels and the civilized world in general, yet one more way for the Social-Liberal Union's leaders to signal to the 'High Porte' that we couldn't care less about their rules? And why do such political actions rejoice televisions' approval?" (Dan Tapalagă, *Tranchilizarea națiunii*).

In politicians' view, authorization comes from institutions and adherence to principles ('trust in the rationality and correctness of European decisions'). However, criticism refers to personal flaws rather than institutional competence. ("All this game, we are patriots but we do not do the right things for the country, shows the all-time-low of political discourse and responsibility in present leaders"; "No one sends the mace across borders. This is not the spirit of the Union"; "knowledge of customs within the EU can help polish off the rough edges"; "incapacity [of politicians] to understand EU parlance" – President's declarations). A problem of external politics becomes a discussion of personal flaws and merits (Who is a diplomat, who understands the workings of the Union, who represents the country's interests? The motion against the Government was called: 'Romanians into Schengen, Corlățean (Exterior Minister), out!').

Editorialists' authorization comes from expertise in the European political system but also from citizen authority. The journalist-citizen stance epitomizes the journalist as a citizen who

has knowledge about the principles of good governance: “This is no excuse for the anti-EU rhetoric of the ministers from Ponta government (but especially Crin Antonescu), yet we have to admit that Romanian politicians do nothing but imitate a type of increasingly successful discourse from other European countries. Charismatic masqueraders, parroting away in smart suits, leaders from anti-European populist movements are the Trojan horse biting into the core of an already staggering Union. For all of them, personal political interests take precedence over other objectives. A philosophy our governing body resonates with as well... And in this Trojan horse, joining the populists, trod along Romanians” (Vlad Mixich, *Lecția clovnului anti-european*).

For editorialists, political actors are authorized not by authority of the law or tradition, but, almost exclusively, by their ability to read the nation’s strategic goals and carry out people’s ideals. Good governance does not derive from solid institutions, but from the degree of representativeness of people’s wishes: “I do not recall the issue of ‘abandoning Schengen’ in the least mentioned at the government’s investiture, all the less so during elections. Government Ponta does not have a mandate for this... Neither the Exterior Minister, nor even the President of the state should have the right to reverse our external policy without a mandate. It is inconceivable” (Doc, *Cine decide abandonarea aderării la Schengen?*)

It is to be expected that editorialists will attempt to invalidate the authorization strategies of politicians. Politicians tend to employ expert and institutional authority, while editorialists counteract with arguments from the sphere of moral duties and evaluation of personal authority. In politicians’ declarations, the public persona plays up expertise and political authority; in editorials, the personal abilities and moral evaluation are of interest. However, in

conflictual talk, politicians evaluate political competence in terms of moral values and personal abilities.

Going back to the assumptions and research questions channeling our research, we can see that the media assume a critical, reflexive position towards political discourse and this stance characterizes media discourse on the topic of Schengen integration as well. Avoiding determinist explanations, media assume agency, give visibility to the problem and offer a space of deliberation for discussing the issue. The early expert, consensual talk on integration postponement gives way now to a debate on the meaning of integration and the European character of Romanian identity. The cause-effect discussions aiming at finding culprits and self-defense are replaced by talks on symbolic gains and losses, image building and negotiation of relationship with the EU. Contextual explanations (elections, the crisis) are downplayed by more permanent explanations (such as distrust in Romanian institutions and Europeanization deficit).

Political discourses remain contradictory in nature, discussing integration failure either as a result of EU unfairness or structural deficiencies in Romanian institutions. Authorization and rationalization are the main legitimation strategies used by political actors. There is no agreement on the moral consequences of the event or the cognitive or moral dimensions of the problem. Causal responsibility is briefly hinted at in the context of discussions on political responsibility. On the other hand, fight for ownership (power, influence, authority to define problems) is quite visible in political discourses.

At the time of the first postponement of Schengen integration, “Romanian public sphere did not pass the Europeanization exam: the messages circulating in the Romanian public sphere, even those aiming at ‘European,’ French, German public imagery, were

exclusively meant for internal consumption” (Bârgăoanu, 2011, p. 179). We find that several years later the European perspective is again missing from the debate. The relevance of the topic for European development is rarely hinted at. Contradictory messages regarding sources of authority, (non)-legitimate actions and actors, social action and moral evaluation point that there is no consensus over the public problem of integration as a step in building the European character of Romanian identity.

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# **Normalization of Romanian political discourse on Facebook. The Schengen issue**

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## **Introduction**

After the Second World War, global media landscape went through important changes. Mass communication outlets diversified, a large number of private media have emerged leading to an increased competition. As a consequence, audiences went through a process of fragmentation, and the need of capital lead to media *commercialization* and the rise of *infotainment*. In this context, television played an important role in the socialization of the public with politics. Television was first used in an electoral campaign in 1952 by Republican candidate Dwight D. Eisenhower (McAlister, 2007, p. 6). The rise of the new communication medium favoured

optimistic expectations regarding its capacity to contribute to the enrichment of democratic debate by enlarging audiences for electoral campaigns and promoting debates based on rational arguments (Blumler, 1970; Scupham, 1976). In time, politicians learned to use television in their own advantage. Television became the battlefield for political actors who relied on attacks towards opponents in televised ads, press conferences, talk shows or public discourses. In the same time, television promoted a shift of attention from parties to politicians as individuals leading to the personalization of political communication (Campus, 2010; Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004; Garzia, 2011; Hermans & Vergeer, 2012; McAllister, 2007; Van Zoonen & Holtz-Bacha, 2000). This trend is explained by the fact that central to televised communication are visual images, making it easier for television to broadcast certain information with the help of familiar personalities (Glaser & Salmon, 1991).

The recent years brought a new challenge to the media landscape with the rise of the Internet as means of information and political communication. The emergence of new media translated into a new form of media consumption. Traditional mass-communication outlets lost their gate keeping role over information. Citizens can access information from multiple sources at any time, and politicians have the opportunity to communicate their messages in a non mediated way with the help of personal websites, blogs, or Social Network Sites (SNS). In this context, a new wave of technical optimists has arisen, endorsing the *innovation* theory of political communication (Bimber & Davis, 2003; Gibson et al., 2003; Kaid, 2006; Klotz, 1997; Schweitzer, 2008). According to this theory, online political communication promotes a better quality of debate, through positive arguments and a less candidate focused approach. Therefore, online political communication gives more space for the debate of political issues, concerning community as

a hole. This theory is rejected by the advocates of *normalization* (Foot & Schneider, 2006; Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Resnick, 1998; Schweitzer 2011), who assert that traditional forms of political communication are also used online. The focus of political discourse is still on politicians rather than parties and political issues, and the negative trend is maintained. Normalization can be identified at several levels (Schweitzer 2011, pp. 311 – 314): a *functional* level, through which politicians' online platforms become more sophisticated, but lack interactive tools; a *relational* level that translates into the maintaining of traditional cleavages between politicians with greater resources and the ones with low resources; a *discursive* level through which communication practices used on traditional media are also used online.

Previous research (e.g. Geer, 2008; Hermans & Vergeer, 2012) has shown that online political communication is personalized and has the same degree of negativity as political discourse on TV talk-shows. Therefore, online political communication follows the patterns of discursive normalization. This paper investigates the discursive dimension of normalization in Romanian online political communication. The majority of studies on normalization, personalization and negative campaigning are focused on electoral periods (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 2010; Hermans & Vergeer, 2012; Kaid, 2006; Kahn & Kenney, 1999; Kriesi, 2012; Sides, Lipsitz & Grossmann, 2009; Schweitzer, 2011). This paper seeks to investigate empirical data in a non-electoral time in order to identify communication strategies used by Romanian political actors for gaining legitimacy and positive image capital. This approach is important considering the emergence of the *permanent campaign* (Norman & Mann, 2000), through which campaigning becomes a form of governing, where politicians and political consultants manage every action as being important for gaining electoral capital.

To our knowledge, there aren't any studies that focus on normalization of online political communication in Romania; therefore this paper will address this empirical gap. We will discuss normalization in relation to the debate surrounding the Schengen issue that has triggered heated debate between the governing parties and the opposition in the early months of 2013. The Schengen issue is of great importance for the Romanian political class, considering that a good management of this issue might bring them electoral capital for the forthcoming presidential election in 2014. It is also an important concern for the Romanian electorate because its outcome might influence the way they are perceived in Europe. In order to study discursive normalization online, we will use the *dispositif* analysis (Beciu, 2011; Nell, 1999) on both politicians' Facebook pages and televised talk-shows during February and March 2013. Considering previous empirical results on the personalization of online political discourse in Romania, which indicate an extended focus of politicians on the professional dimension (Hermans & Vergeer, 2012), we expect that this trend has maintained. Having in mind that politics means confrontation and conflict; we anticipate that the same negativity seen on televised talk-shows is present in online political debates. Consequently, our expectation is to see patterns of discursive normalization on online Romanian political communication.

### **Innovation vs. normalization in online political communication**

The use of the internet as means of political communication is a relatively new practice all over the world. The first politician who communicated through a campaign website was Bill Clinton in the 1996 American presidential campaign (Guțu, 2007, p. 113). Ever since then, online political campaigns has evolved, becoming more

sophisticated. The transition from *Web 1.0* to *Web 2.0* contributed to the enhancement of the communication flow. Nowadays, politicians can disseminate their campaign messages without the mediation of journalists and citizens can offer feed-back, decreasing politicians' control over their messages. As Gurevitch, Coleman & Blumler (2009) notice,

*"political actors must consider the possibility that their messages will be modified once they are launched into media space. The digital media environment does not respect the integrity of information; once it has been published online, others are at liberty to remix content, in much the same way as music fans are able to reorder and reconstruct beats, melodies, and lyrics"* (p. 172).

These characteristics of online political communication, namely *hypertextuality* and *interactivity*, have encouraged some researchers to assert that internet will improve the quality of political debate, shifting the attention towards more rational arguments (Blumler & Gurevitch, 1995). These assumptions are the starting point for the *innovation* thesis of online political communication (Bimber & Davis, 2003; Gibson et al., 2003; Kaid, 2006; Klotz, 1997). According to this theory, political communication is faster and more comprehensive, is direct and has a higher responsiveness, gives more space to the discussion of important issues, is less focused on politicians as individuals, and involves less conflict (Schweitzer, 2008, p. 451).

Such an optimistic approach towards the rise of a new mass communication medium is not new. As Van Dijk (2005, p. 3) noted, the emergence of a new communication technology is always accompanied by *utopian* and *dystopian* views, and similar expectations were expressed in relation to the emergence of radio or television. Therefore, in opposition to the innovation theory, other researchers consider that online political communication follows

the patterns as on traditional media, leading to *normalization* (Foot & Schneider, 2006; Margolis & Resnick, 2000; Resnick, 1998; Schweitzer, 2011). As opposed to innovation theorists, advocates of normalization consider that online communication outlets are important additions to traditional mass-media, but their role on enhancing political debate and the consolidation of democracy is arguable. Online political communication is still focused on the individual rather than on institutions or important issues, and carries a pronounced degree of negativity. Moreover, differences between parties with great resources (human or financial) and parties with less capital are still visible in the quality and complexity of online campaigns. On a *discursive* level (Schweitzer, 2011, p. 314), normalization means that online political communication is less focused on ideology or political issues, the attention being shifted towards politicians as individuals, leading to the personalization of online political communication (Hermans & Vergeer, 2012). Moreover, political actors continue negative attacks online, leading to the conclusion that online political communication follows some of the trends observed on televised communication. The focus of this paper is on the discursive dimension of normalization, therefore the main research question is: (1) Does discursive normalization apply to Romanian online political communication, leading to a personalized and negative discourse?

Personalization and negative discourse are not new trends in political communication. The shift of attention from parties, towards political leaders as individuals and the negative attacks between politicians are also present on traditional media and televised communication. Previous research (e.g. Geer, 2008; Hermans & Vergeer, 2012) show that online political communication tends to replicate the same practices as on traditional mass-media. However, new media reshape communication introducing a new



style of interaction (Beciu, 2011, p. 157) that could lead to some emergent communication practices. In this context, personalization might have different forms of manifestation on new media and on television. Therefore, our second research question is: (2) Which are the similarities and differences between political communication on Romanian politicians' Facebook pages and on televised talk shows in terms of personalization?

According to some authors (Rahat & Sheafer, 2007), the origin of personalization can be found in institutional and structural changes in society, that encourage the transfer of attention from parties towards politicians. Therefore, *media* and *behavioural personalization* (of both voters and politicians) are the result of *institutional personalization*. In Romania, the institutional change that enhanced personalization can be considered the introduction of the uninominal voting system in 2008, which favoured a tighter bond between political actors and the Romanian electorate (Teodorescu, Sultănescu & Sandu, 2009). Yet, some studies show that personalization in post communist countries is also the result of the lack of confidence in political institutions, which explains the greater importance given by voters to political personalities (Rose & Mishler 1994). Continuing the former example, Romanian electorate tends to resonate to leaders with exceptional qualities and who have the power to make a positive change in their lives (Teodorescu, Enache & Guțu, 2005, pp. 197 – 210), which in turn may lead to media and behavioural personalization.

Media personalization, especially on television, can be explained based on the fact that television operates with images (Glaser & Salmon, 1991). Therefore politicians should give more attention to the way they manage their public image on the small screen. Personalization is also an effect of the weakening attachment of voters to politicians (Dalton, McAllister & Wattenberg,

2000, pp. 37–54). As a result, politicians' personality plays an important role on the voting decision (Caprara & Zimbardo, 2004), and leaders appeal to voters based on perceived similarities (Garzia, 2011). Moreover, voters want to hold governments accountable for their actions (McAllister, 2007, p. 7). Thus, they need to evaluate public actors on professional performance, rather than on abstract notions regarding their political views and programs. In some cases, the evaluation criteria go even further, being based on non-political personality traits rather than on professional competence and performance (Kriesi, 2012, p. 826).

Referring to online personalization, some researchers (Hermans & Vergeer, 2012, p. 80) identify different dimensions of personalization, considering the kind of information that political actors privilege on their online platforms: *professional*, referring to their overall achievements as professionals; *home and family*, through which politicians focus on their personal life; and *personal preference*. One of the objectives of this paper is to investigate the kind of information privileged by Romanian politicians on their Facebook pages, in order to gain legitimacy and positive image capital. Therefore, the third research question is: (3) What dimension of personalization prevails on politicians' Facebook pages, compared to televised talk shows, and with what effect?

In what concerns negativity in political communication, this trend is often viewed as being perilous to democracy, considering that it diverts attention from important political issues, to an artificially limited agenda. In this context, the informative dimension of political communication, voters interest in politics and voter turnout decrease (Ansolabehere & Iyengar, 1995; Wang, Gabay & Shah, 2012). On the other hand, there are studies showing that negativity doesn't have a great influence over turnout, and that citizens make the difference between useful and irrelevant information

disseminated through negative campaigns (Lau et al., 1999; Kahn & Kenney, 1999). Geer (2008) considers politics as being mostly based on conflict, bearing in mind the high stakes involved. Therefore, political attacks are natural forms of political communication. The important thing is how useful the information presented is for voters, rather than the tone of the political messages. This assumption is also confirmed by studies regarding negative media coverage. Candidates with more negative press have better chances to winning an election because voters are more familiarized with them (Burden, 2002). Yet, results may also depend on the timing of negative attacks and the way the candidate, or politician responds to them. As a consequence, negative discourse is inherent to political communication, and the use of the internet may not contribute to its end. For example, in Romania during the electoral campaign politicians must follow certain regulations regarding the broadcasting of positive or negative campaign ads. They can not broadcast these kinds of ads outside the duration of the political campaign. Hence, the internet becomes a place where politicians can disseminate negative ads and messages, without infringing audio-visual regulation. In the same time, considering the unmediated character of online communication platforms, in opposition with constraints related to talk-shows (e.g. editorial view of the journalist, other politicians and guests discourse), the internet can be regarded as a way for politicians to freely contest and attack each other. But as personalization, negativity might also have different forms of manifestation on television and on new media. In this context, the fourth research question of this paper is: (4) Which are there similarities and differences between political communication on Romanian politicians' Facebook pages and on televised talk shows in terms of negativity?

The aim of this paper is to offer a view on discursive normalization based on empirical facts that may help identify similarities and

differences between political communication on Facebook and on TV talk shows. Based on these facts we will be able to determine if communication on Facebook in Romania follows the patterns of discursive normalization, and what new communication practices emerge from using this medium in politics.

### **Methodology**

This paper studies the discursive dimension of normalization on Romanian online political communication in a non-electoral period in order to identify communication strategies used by politicians to gain legitimacy and positive image capital. Romania is a fertile research field in this direction, considering the developments of the media from the last 20 years. In post communist Romania multiple private media groups have arisen, promoting a more open form of communication between politicians and citizens (Teodorescu et al., 2005, pp. 64 - 65). If in 1992 there was a single national television network, a national radio station with three channels, 10 national private daily newspapers and more than 800 local newspapers, until 1996, Romanian media landscape flourished with four private television networks with national coverage, two new radio stations and several newspapers. The year 2004 inaugurated the use of websites in Romanian political campaigns, and since then online communication outlets used by politicians have grown in number. Institutional changes along with the transformation of the media landscape and technological progress, determined important changes in the way politicians and the media discuss political issues. Nowadays, it is common for politicians to launch discussions on their online platforms, which are later debated by journalists from mainstream media. It is also common for politicians to use a more informal political discourse on their

social media sites (SNS), in order to promote a more open image of themselves. They talk about recent books they read, or movies they saw, or share their musical preferences with supporters.

The discursive dimension of normalization is investigated during the debate of the Schengen issue, which has stirred ample and fiery debates between the ruling parties and the opposition on February 1<sup>st</sup> – March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013. This subject was selected in order to study different ways in which Romanian political actors create a discursive identity on Facebook and on television in relation to important matters for the public agenda. In the early months of the year 2013, Germany, Netherlands and Great Britain stated that Romania is not ready to enter the Schengen area. According to Romanian politicians, this delay wasn't founded on facts, considering that the country accomplished the established conditions since 2012. Also, it wasn't the first time when Romania got a similar answer from other European countries. Therefore, the foreign policy minister declared that Romania's intention to adhere to the Schengen area may be reconsidered. In response, the opposition and the Romanian president declared that the ruling alliance doesn't adequately represent the country's interest. Other attacks from the opposition referred to the communist legacy of the main ruling party, saying that its representatives don't promote European values. Schengen is important for the Romanian electorate and political class because it triggers recurrent themes such as the overcome of the communist legacy, the inclination for occidental values and the promotion of liberty and the rule of law. Hence, a positive outcome of the debates over Schengen could offer legitimacy and positive image capital to political actors involved.

The first objective of this paper is to establish if Romanian political communication on politicians' Facebook pages is as personalized and as negative as on talk shows. In terms of personalization,

televised communication shifts the attention from the official standpoint of certain institutions (e.g. parties, media trusts) towards individuals (e.g. politicians, journalists). As a result, televised communication becomes personalised. This aspect also reflects on political actors' discourse, who tend to emphasize their personal viewpoint, in spite of the certified position of the party. Online political communication follows the same patterns, but certain aspects of this medium influences the way discursive identities are built. In the virtual realm, political actors play a double role: the official representative of the party, and the politician as observer (Beciu, 2011, p. 284). The same case applies to negativity on both media. Political actors try to use television or new media at their best interest, and sometimes resort to attacks towards opponents. However, television and new media have certain regulations that establish the limits of negative discourse, which in turn generates different mechanisms of negativity. Therefore, two secondary objectives were pursued:

- to identify the specific mechanisms of online political communication personalization and negativity.
- to investigate the kind of information privileged by politicians on their Facebook pages as opposed to televised debates. In terms of personalization, we studied the inclination of political actors to privilege information regarding their professional life, their family or personal preferences (Hermans & Vergeer, 2012). Regarding negativity, we investigated the use of political attacks towards opponents, and positive self-references.

In order to explore these objectives, we used the *dispositif* analysis (Beciu, 2011; Nell, 1999), a qualitative method that analyses the way various communicational resources (discursive, material, technological, logistical and symbolic) are used strategically to create an interactional space. These resources interact in order to

generate a communicational identity for the participants. By using the *dispositif* on both Facebook and talk shows we will be able to investigate the discursive effects produced and different communicational practices used on both media.

This research will examine two Facebook pages of two mainstream Romanian politicians, Victor Ponta (the leader of the governing coalition, The Social-Liberal Union - SLU, and prime minister of Romania) and Cezar Preda (one of the leaders of the main opposition party, The Democratic-Liberal Party – DLP), during 1<sup>st</sup> February – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013. We focused on information posted on “Timeline”, “About”, “Photos”, “Videos” and “Notes” sections, in order to establish the particularities of political discourse on Facebook. We investigated six research dimensions that emerged after a previous study of the analysed pages in order to reveal a certain degree of personalization or negativity of political discourse:

- the thematic orientation of messages, photos and videos posted, in order to establish the information privileged by the politicians;
- the practices of interaction with the visitors, to establish the degree of interactivity, and the introduction of special features that might reshape the image of the politician;
- the social space promoted – the discursive identity that the *dispositif* generates for the politician, his opponents and his followers, that supplements their social identity. Through this dimension we will investigate the degree of negativity of political discourse on Facebook;
- the type of discourse promoted – elements that suggest the personalization or negativity of political discourse (references to the professional life, home and family, personal preferences, political attacks, positive self-reference), enunciation strategies used;

- the compliance of the communication contract – the politician is consistent or not with his previous discourses, and adapts his discourse to the medium used. This dimension will help determine if political discourse on Facebook introduces new communication practices, and new image building strategies.

In addition, we analyzed televised talk shows from two important news televisions in Romania, Realitatea TV and Romania TV, during 1<sup>st</sup> February – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013, in which Victor Ponta and Cezar Preda were invited. More exactly, we studied sequences from ten talk shows, broadcasted during 17.00 – 22.00 o'clock, in which the Schengen issue was discussed, and where these political leaders were invited onset or participated through telephone intervention. This selection was made in order to identify certain strategies to build a discursive identity in relation to an important issue on the public agenda –Schengen file. We investigated eight emergent research dimensions that also reveal the personalization and negativity of televised discourse:

- the manner of interaction between the journalist and the guests of the talk show, and the manner of interaction between different guests. This reveals the degree of negativity, and the tendency of the politicians to present themselves as individuals, rather than members of a political group;
- the identity assumed by the politician and the identity attributed to citizens and political opponents;
- the type of discourse used – elements that show personalization or negativity, enunciation strategies. This dimension will reveal the discursive identity generated by the *dispositif*;
- the deliberative arena – the guests have the same airtime on the screen, or they are biased. This dimension will show how



- politicians use the *dispositif* at their own advantage to attack other guests or to present their own opinion;
- the visual scene – the way journalists frame the event;
- the statute of the journalist (e.g. commentator, evaluator, animator, mediator);
- the type of interaction promoted by the television *dispositif* (e.g. duel, debate, talk show);
- the compliance of the communication contract – the politician is consistent or not with his previous discourses, and adapts his discourse to the communication medium. This will reveal the specific communication practices through which politicians create a discursive identity on television.

### Data presentation and discussion

The results of the analysis show that politicians *offered little space to debate Schengen* on Facebook, even though it was an important issue on the public agenda. Even though it was a largely discussed subject on television and newspapers, on their Facebook pages, politicians chose to discuss other issues from their own political agenda. Even though Victor Ponta was very active on his Facebook page during the analyzed period, posting 108 messages in 59 days, there are only five references to Schengen. These references are mostly indirect and not assumed, consisting on quotations of other members of SLU who commented the subject. These citations were mainly attacks to the Romanian president and the opposition, stating that their attitude towards Schengen is not in Romania's advantage, and that the country shouldn't accept what they qualified an unfair judgment of other European states. Besides these indirect references to Schengen and indirect attacks, a small number of indicators of a negative discourse were found on Victor

Ponta's Facebook page. Political attacks are present, but are constructed on factual data meant to shed a negative light over political opponents. He uses an expert discourse, showing charts with data based on facts, in order to highlight his government achievements in contrast to last government's unsuccessfulness. In terms of enunciation strategies, he uses value judgements (e.g. "What a pity that Romania's cohesion funds weren't negotiated by Czech Republic, Hungary, Portugal, Slovakia, Poland, Latvia or Croatia's prime minister!" – indirect attack to Romanian president, who negotiated cohesion funds obtaining less money than other countries' representatives), ascertainment (e.g. "If you study the numbers, than the discussion form last days is clear") and interpellation (e.g. "For president Băsescu, CDS is a symbol of spring" – than posting a chart showing the positive evolution of Romania's Credit Default Swap). As a result, he assumes a position of power in relation to his political opponents, and he creates, by using ascertainment, a virtual connection based on equality with his followers.

On the other hand, Victor Ponta's Facebook page shows many indicators of discourse personalization. Even though he doesn't accentuate as much the home and family dimension on his "Timeline", he privileges information related to his activity as prime minister. In order to create an approachable image, on the "About" page he shares his personal preferences (books, music, sports, TV shows, blogs he reads) with his supporters. This is the only section where Victor Ponta uses confession (e.g. "I am taller than I look on TV, but less arrogant."; "I like both Garcia Marquez and Rafa Marquez."; "In my spare time, I am a rally national champion, and I was a basketball national junior champion.")). His personal preferences are also present on his "Timeline" as greeting messages addressed to athletes, artists and other important personalities of Romanian culture. Even though Victor Ponta disseminates party related messages

(newsletters, quotes from the Facebook page of SLU), what prevails is his image as a professional, who handles well internal political issues and promotes an open foreign policy.

The most privileged themes are those concerning his activity as prime minister of Romania, European and party issues. The majority of his messages follow subjects initiated by traditional mass-media (such as horse meat scandal, Schengen), but he also initiates other themes (foreign visits, establishing of constructive external relations with European leaders, positive aspects referring to his activity as prime minister). Related to the manner of interaction with his followers, Victor Ponta promotes an open communication, using the *Web 2.0* features of Facebook. In February 2013 he reached 70.000 followers, being in top five Romanian politicians most followed on Facebook (<http://www.facebrands.ro/category/125/Politica.html>, February 2013). He allows supporters to like, comment and share his messages, having on average 900 likes, 100 comments and 200 shares per message. Yet, followers can't live personal messages on his timeline, which shows his concern towards the control of communication on his Facebook page. The absence of this feature may also indicate a form of protection towards political attacks. The open character of communication on Victor Ponta's Facebook page is also given by the fact that he links his other online platforms (personal blog, website, Twitter and Linkedin account) and he offers followers the possibility to contact him by e-mail. He uses a large number of online communication outlets, which expand the number of citizens who can reach his messages. Likewise, he benefits from a lot of extra web design tools in order to personalize his "Timeline" and for making his Facebook page more attractive to viewers.

Considering the thematic of the content posted on Victor Ponta's Facebook page, the identity portrayed is of a *strong statesman*, with strong relations among powerful leaders in Europe. In

contrast, his opponents aren't as visible; there are only few references to them, mostly indirect attacks to their professionalism and the way they manage political issues (e.g. not managing well the Schengen issue, not being able to access more European funds). The image transmitted is of a weak and divided opposition, without a coherent discourse and unable of succeeding in political issues according to the interests of the country (e.g. a message referring to the election of the leaders of DLP: "I saw discourses of candidates that bring nothing new, nothing memorable").

In what concerns the status attributed to his followers, Victor Ponta creates a transparent and equalitarian connection, making the Romanian electorate his partner for better governance. He establishes a closer bond with his supporters, by resonating to the same issues. He writes congratulation messages for athletes or artists, posts cards on Christian and public holidays, he gladdens at positive results of Romanian football teams or other Romanian citizens with exceptional results in international contests. This attitude makes him approachable for the Romanian electorate, while giving him political legitimacy. Victor Ponta's discourse on Facebook follows the patterns of online political communication, being open and creating the image of a *user friendly prime minister*. His online discourse also respects and continues the communication contract set by other discourses of this politician, being in the same line with his party affiliation (social-democracy), but also his personal preferences. Yet, on Facebook, Victor Ponta is a lot more tempered as on television.

As opposed to Victor Ponta, Cezar Preda wasn't very active on his Facebook page, during the analysed interval. He posted 25 messages in 59 days, from which one referred to Schengen. He criticized the way the ruling parties managed the issue. This may be explained by the fact that in the same period DLP, Cezar Preda's party, went through internal elections for establishing the new leader of

the party. As a consequence, most of Cezar Preda's messages refer to this topic. His discourse is mainly negative, consisting ironies and attacks towards the ruling alliance - SLU, his adversaries inside the party - DLP, younger members of DLP who don't respect the party's history and positioning. Little evidence of personalization was found on Cezar Preda's Facebook page. He doesn't share personal information and he offers little professional facts. He speaks as a legitimate representative of the citizens, considering his function of member of the Romanian Parliament, and also as regional vice-president of DLP. Otherwise, Facebook is used to criticize political opponents' actions.

In terms of enunciation strategies, he relies on declaration (e.g. "I didn't nominate anyone. In exchange, I thanked all my colleagues from DLP for their trust, voting me as regional vice president"), obligation (e.g. "We have to look forward. Starting tomorrow, diplomacy should speck for the future of our party."), value judgement (e.g. "Crin Antonescu - one of the leaders of SLU a.n. - has to adjust to constitutional constraints.") and opinion (e.g. "I believe that DLP first of all needs to reorganize."). Cezar Preda assumes a strong position of power and knowledge as one of the most important leaders of DLP and of the opposition. His image is one of a *leader with verticality, experience and loyalty* towards the party and the country, who has the power and the legitimacy to evaluate other politicians' actions (party members or members of the ruling parties). In opposition, his political adversaries are depicted as dishonest, disloyal and not being able to properly represent Romania's or his party's interests.

In relation to his followers, he allows them to post on his "Timeline", contact him via Facebook messages, like, comment and share information he uploaded. But, he doesn't link other SNS to his Facebook page, and doesn't offer an e-mail address. He

doesn't have as many supporters as Victor Ponta, in February 2013 reaching only a few more than 1000 followers. In addition, he has on average 20 likes, 10 comments and 2 shares per message. His Facebook page is relatively new, being created in October 2012. Even if he seems to promote an open communication, the fact that he mostly relies on attacks meant to discredit political opponents makes his page a *one way communication medium* rather than a deliberative space. This may be explained by the fact that Cezar Preda still adjusts to the patterns of Facebook communication, not using this resource at its full potential. Still, his discourse follows the communication contract he established on previous occasions, having the same combative attitude on traditional media.

In comparison to Victor Ponta's discourse on Facebook, on televised talk shows his speech tends to be more negative. The attacks are direct, sometimes based on arguments *ad hominem* (e.g. "Bănescu, Romanian president (a.n.), is a lion on Otopeni and a kitten at Bruxelles."), he focuses on value judgements (e.g. "I believe that at this moment the president doesn't have the legitimacy to fight for Romania."), declarations (e.g. "I was busy with what happened in Italy, where over one million Romanians live."), rhetorical questions (e.g. "President Bănescu speaks for Netherlands against Romania?"). Moreover, he uses an expert discourse, based on facts and official reports in order to support his arguments. Consequently, he speaks from a power position, from which he assumes his discourse and positions himself as a professional. The image of the *powerful statesman* is also promoted on television, in contrast to his political adversaries, who are presented as weak. Yet, the way this image is built differs from Facebook, where Victor Ponta is more temperate.

During the analysed time, Cezar Preda's discourse on televised talk shows was less negative than on Facebook. His speech was rather defensive, trying to counter attacks from other politicians

and journalists invited to the same shows. He relied mostly on enunciating opinions (e.g. “I believe that now is the moment when matters are clear”), obligation (e.g. “They – Prime Minister Victor Ponta and president Traian Băsescu a.n. – must come together to the same table to discuss this issue.”), negation (e.g. “I don’t know if the president would do this and I don’t know what are you talking about.”), ascertainment (e.g. “I saw how things work.”). He also launched indirect attacks to the ruling parties, implying that they try to gain electoral capital from the discussions focusing on Schengen. However, this wasn’t a general trend in his discourse on television. In fact, he tried to distance himself from the subject saying that it is a matter that should be managed by the president and the prime minister. The image Cezar Preda creates is of an *observer* who tries to find the best ways to solve the problem discussed in interest of Romanian citizens. In terms of personalization, little evidence of this trend was noticed.

Overall, communication on talk shows in the analysed interval was more negative than on Facebook. This tendency is also supported by journalists, who use their personal opinions (e.g. “But mister prime minister, it seemed to me that he – Romanian president a.n. – was pretty convincing.”) or interpellations (e.g. “I don’t understand why you politicians see everything as electoral strategy.”) in order to spice up the debate. In this context, journalists play both the role of animators and mediators of the discussion, igniting debates and counterbalancing the dialogue with personal arguments, opinions or facts. There are little signs of discourse personalization, this tendency only being noticed from the way journalists sometimes conduct the discussion in terms of a verbal duel between politicians and, by doing so, accentuating the importance of politicians as individuals. A study on personalization on a longer period of time might offer more relevant outcome on this subject.

The results of this study show that during the analysed time frame, online Romanian political communication follows the trends of *discursive normalization*, confirming our expectations. As other researchers (Selnow, 1998) notice, the internet tends to integrate traditional media features, offering multiple possibilities from reading the newspapers and watching videos, to talking on the telephone. The same integration of traditional media communication patterns was observed during the analysed period. Political discourse on Facebook was both personalized and negative, depending on the overall strategy of the politicians.

Referring to personalization, both political leaders highlighted their *professional dimension* on their Facebook pages. Therefore, the trend identified by Hermans & Vergeer (2012) in the 2009 elections for the European parliament on candidates' websites was also confirmed. In order to respond to the Romanian public's expectations, who better relates to political leaders with exceptional qualities (Teodorescu et al., 2005, pp. 197 – 210), the both politicians created and promoted the image of *strong, experienced and visionary leaders*. In this context, Victor Ponta focused mainly on his achievements as prime minister, portraying himself as a *powerful statesman*, with important external relations and who embraces European values. In order to become more approachable for citizens, he also created a *"user friendly" image* by sharing his personal preferences, and letting them shape his activity as prime minister. As a consequence, besides his official assignments, he participated to cultural events or events related to sports. The *home and family dimension* was little represented in the studied time frame. On the other hand, Cezar Preda invested in the image of an *experienced leader and professional*, who has the needed vision for solving Romania's problems. But, unlike Victor Ponta, he didn't promote at all the home and family and personal preferences dimensions.



In terms of negativity of political discourse on Facebook, different approaches were observed in the analyzed interval. Victor Ponta was more focused on a rather positive discourse, having only a few indirect attacks towards the opposition and the Romanian president. On the contrary, Cezar Preda used Facebook to launch political attacks in order to consolidate his position as a trustworthy politician, and to gain control over his message, without the mediation of journalists. These results indicate that negativity is not absent in online political communication, but the degree of negativity may vary depending on the overall communication strategy of the politician. The presence of negativity is normal considering the combative nature of politics and the high stakes involved (Geer, 2008), and sometimes it is useful for political actors in order to better portray themselves towards the public.

Referring to similarities and differences between political discourse on Facebook and on televised talk shows, the results show that political discourse during February and March 2013 is rather negative on TV and less personalized. This is due to the fact that talk shows are often constructed as verbal duels between politicians, and journalists use several strategies to ignite disputes. As a result, televised talk shows often promote conflict determining public actors to resort to Facebook or other online communication platforms in order to freely express their arguments. On television, politicians have to adjust to journalists' editorial view, to other guests' attacks or interpellations. But online, they promote their own agenda and focus on issues they consider important. Therefore, they highlight aspects that advantage them, underline political opponents' faults and discuss from a power position. This trend was noticed on Victor Ponta and Cezar Preda's Facebook pages. Even though Schengen was largely discussed on television, they showed less attention to it. Hence, Victor Ponta chose to bypass

this issue by enhancing positive aspects about his accomplishments as prime minister. Thereby, he avoided a possible amplification of the conflict that couldn't bring him a positive image capital. This was also the strategy of Cezar Preda, who focuses more on topics related to his party and on political attacks, in order to consolidate his image of a strong and loyal politician. As a result, although the two politicians made use of the *Web 2.0* qualities of Facebook, they still tried to have control over their communication.

## Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to study discursive normalization on online Romanian political communication in a non-electoral period, set by the discussion around Schengen. Results show that political communication on Romanian politicians' Facebook pages may present patterns of a normalized discourse. In this context, the two Romanian political actors analysed resorted to personalization and negative discourse strategies online. Yet, the work presented focuses on a limited period of time that doesn't allow a great degree of generalization of the results found. Also, an extended corpus could allow a greater representativeness of results. The purpose of this study was to explore discursive normalization in a non-electoral time, in order to identify communication strategies used by politicians to gain legitimacy and positive image capital. From this perspective, the goal of the paper was attained, revealing that the use of the internet, social media sites and *Web 2.0* features doesn't necessarily mean that the nature of political communication changes completely. Nowadays, public actors have more communication resources through which they can disseminate their message without journalists' interference. They also have more space to debate political issues that concern them and society as a whole.

But at the same time, online political communication is exposed to contingency, considering that after posting information over the internet the politician loses control over the message and the way that information may be used by third parties. Therefore, online political communication is still liable to political attacks, or other strategies that may help politicians to legitimate themselves as political leaders or to gain positive image capital. In the same time, considering the widespread trend of weakening interest of citizens towards politics, it is expected that politicians will use personalization strategies in order to create a more approachable and open image. Considering the Romanian case, the normalization of online political discourse reflects both these general tendencies, but also specific trends that evolve from the way politicians use the internet as a medium for political communication. Some Romanian politicians still adjust to the communication on social network sites. Therefore, they might not always have the best communicational approach. Yet, bearing in mind the general trends in politics, which promote the use of negativity or personalization strategies, it is expected that patterns of discourse normalization to define online political communication in most democratic countries.

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## **Discourse analysis in French communication research**

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Discourse analysis appeared at the same time as computers and with the expansion of mathematical and quantitative methods it became present in all sorts of scientific fields, including human sciences. In France, linguistic theories were influenced by structuralism. Our main goal is to inquire how practices and theorizations in discourses analysis open ways to reflect the difference between qualitative and quantitative approaches.

First, it is worth discussing about the emerging notion of discourse analysis in France in the 1970s-80s, cross-referencing different schools in linguistics, sociology and philosophy of language, especially semiotics (Roland Barthes), pragmatics (Oswald Ducrot), dialogue analysis (Catherine Kerbrat-Orecchioni), sociology (Pierre Bourdieu), structuralism (Algirdas J. Greimas), and reception theory (Hans-Robert Jauss, Umberto Eco).

Second, we are interested to see how researchers in communication and media are using qualitative – and sometimes quantitative – approaches of discourses and media analyse.

Third, we will particularly consider the importance of conceptualisation and interpretation in discourse analysis, from an epistemological point of view. Interpretation is considered in Dilthey's works a characteristic of human sciences (explaining is different from understanding). But his views are criticized in different manners by philosophers like Paul Ricoeur, Gadamer and Alexandre Koyré. They suggest a new balance, even if we have different philosophies of science, human sciences have particular rules. Therefore, discourse analysis may reveal diversity and unity of human sciences.

### **Emergence of the notion in the 70th**

To *think* something and *express* it, what does it mean? We all know that the answers of the sophists, Aristotle, Ockham, Machiavelli, Descartes, Berkeley, Locke, Hume, Schopenhauer, Husserl or Wittgenstein are revealing different perspectives. We all know that we feel nearer of one or the other according to our education, our country of origin, our experience, our own representations of life. Nevertheless, the expression itself has its own history, a history beginning in the sixties with some debates in linguistics, philosophy of language and literature and it was pursued in sociology.

### **Linguistics and semantics**

Roland Barthes was certainly one of the pioneers of linguistics and semiotics in France. His perspective adds value mainly through his studies on *science of signs*, his reflection about texts, and through the definition of discourse as power.

Language is a way of constructing meaning and communication. We live through efforts and deceptions, dreams and happiness. All



these possible expressions of ourselves are like discourses speaking about our life, our myths, expressing who we are, who we would like to be, what helps us to live our lives better.

This point of view determines us to further analyze the text. A text, in a modern acceptance, is an effort to express something unsaid, a work in progress, sometimes a game with signs (Barthes, 1965, p. 13). A text is a speech addressed to someone. Therefore, scholars tend to use the term of discourse as it is more convenient. A discourse has as a main goal the influence on the interlocutor.

*“Our modern innocence talks about power as if it was one thing: on the one hand people who have it, on the other hand people who don’t [...] and yet, if power took different devilish forms? [...] Everywhere authorized voices authorize themselves to pronounce a discourse of power: an arrogant discourse.”* (Barthes, p. 10-11)

As language means expressing our thoughts, we must take into consideration the relation between message and thought. Language is a form of power, our decision to say something means that we are persuaded by the importance of our speaking, so that we are able to “break off” silence. Even rhetoric may be understood as a will of power, a proof that language may be stronger than truth.

Roland Barthes emphasizes on the great diversity of messages, not only the written ones. Barthes attaches respectability to any message: television pictures and advertising. He also refers to clothing and home design as he mentions that our intentions can be communicated through a great deal of manners. Simultaneously, linguists were grappling with the difficult question of what they named “text linguistics”, a difficult question in a period of triumphant structuralism. Since the beginning of thoughts about language, different levels are distinguished: sounds, signs, lexis, syntax, semantics, and text. And yet a text poses specific problems: it cannot be analysed in such a formal manner as a sentence. To

analyse formally a story, or an argument, or explanations, what does this mean?

Structuralism tried to identify recurrences in narrative structures, explicit oppositions in characters and actions, but other approaches were also important, pointing out limits of structuralism. We may note ideological analysis; psychoanalytical analysis who mentions that the meaning of a story cannot be reduced to an oppositional system, a story is always full of representations and feelings which cannot be described only with oppositions or marginal variations in the organisation of episodes.

### **Theories of reception**

The theories of reception gave a totally new meaning to the relation author-text-reader and considered that the reader has a significant role in the (re)construction of what he is reading. Accordingly, as reception analysis focuses on readers, Hans-Robert Jauss states that understanding literature is impossible without understanding how readers minds are working when they are reading a book, how their feelings and thoughts are progressing. Literature has the power of putting in words confused impressions, non-verbalised thoughts, unexpressed feelings, and simple intuitions. And these words allow a recovery of the reader's experiences, makes their meaning clear.

Literature provides words to express hopes and expectations, and therefore has an important social function, because what is said becomes a personal conviction, a representation of life, a direction to follow. "An aesthetical experience is not naturally opposed to knowledge or action" (Jauss, 1988, p. 14), on the contrary, it is an opening call to action. Reading is a manner to consolidate or stabilize representations, identify those we share, imagine new

norms, new sorts of reactions in interactions with others that we shall practice in real life.

Although Jauss' perspective is highly important in terms of communication and text, Umberto Eco's work and his notion of a model-reader are one of the most important references in the field. A reader is motionless, but very active inwardly. A book is full of silences, implicit, it is "a lazy machine" (Eco, 1985, p. 27). The reader has to imagine what happens between two chapters, or why this character has this reaction. A book has then a *model reader*, according to which the reader is able to fulfil the text with meanings.

### Acts of language

The third important linguistic stream that influenced discourse analysis was the theory of acts of language, coming from philosophical considerations about language. What is the exact power of our words? Some of them are powerful because they are official, or said by officials. But, as Barthes mentions, words have another power: speaking is a way of suggesting a space to our interlocutor. We have presuppositions, our thoughts stay implicit and hidden behind our sentences, but others understand perfectly what the only possible answers are. It is very difficult to contest a presupposition, but in Ducrot's terms, it may be impossible to avoid as "only what is said may be contradict" (Ducrot, 1998, p. 6). Also, we must always consider the importance of explicit texts, as what is not explicit may always be denied. A presupposition "receives effectiveness of speech and innocence of silence" (Ducrot, p.12). Interlocutors have intentions, opened or hidden intentions sometimes enter a role-playing game, and sometimes one of them is conscious of the game and the other one not. Also, relations between interlocutors are a part of the meaning of a discourse, understood as every possible verbal interaction.

## Sociology

Sociology has three interests in discourse: literature, enquiries and surveys. Literature because an author is the “social subject” of his text, surveys because sociologists need methods to interpret language when they are using qualitative enquiries or life stories as data, and at least they are interested in social interactions in dialogues.

In Aristotle’s relation author – speech – reader, sociologists valorise mainly the authors: who are they, from what stratum of society, how can they find time to write, money to live? Pierre Bourdieu considers that *art* and *economy* are homologous: wealthy people have more time to read, write, and express themselves. They possess criteria of good spoken and written skills. They can impose their type of literature, their criteria of beauty.

But sociologists are also interested in expression: how to analyse productions. Sociology needs a theory of discourse for its own works, and needs practical methods of discourse analysis to identify parts of an expression, suggest themes, and understand an intention. The speaker himself is a subject for sociology: he has an accent, a vocabulary, a position in dialogue, showing his social position whatever he tries to demonstrate. A sociologist is dealing with oral expressions more than written and the difference made by linguistics between language and speech is not relevant. Some people have some sort of speeches according to their education and place in society (Bourdieu, 1982, p. 41). The notion of discourse is then useful for sociologists, because every speech is important; every speaker is socially established, placed in a social context, taken in a power game greater than his own intentions.

A theory of discourse is applied to all sorts of fields: literature, politics, media, and advertising. Today, the term *discourse analysis*

is used to point out different manners on expressing the meaning of complete texts or speeches. One may try to understand ideological or psychological lines, presuppositions or attempts to intimidate, social implicit or research of an identity.

### **Approaches of discourses in communication research**

This great diversity of streams generating the notion of discourse explains our first question: is discourse analysis always a qualitative approach? A discourse is a speech, sometimes addresses someone, sometimes implies a personal expression and sometimes is an attempt to influence others. Methods of discourse analysis take into account the specific context, intentions of actors, and take place in scientific tendencies and schools of thought.

### **Methods in discourse analysis**

For Patrick Charaudeau, discourse analysis is born of very different approaches, but converges to a consistent representation, encouraging connection between disciplines: sociology, literature, psychology, psychoanalysis, philosophy, hermeneutic. This approach developed its own vocabulary and its notions (Charaudeau & Maingueneau, 2002). Dominique Maingueneau proposes a complete panorama of all sorts of methods, based on the different levels of language. Each level corresponds to quantitative or qualitative methods (Maingueneau, 1976, 2012).

Syntax may be rationalized as transformations of a basic form, permutations of usual components, or expression of an intention. A complete text may be heard as a selection of structural elements according to a well-known rhetorical ability or a dynamical invention of social actors playing a game or using a strategy.

Some researchers are specialized in automatic analysis of political vocabulary. For example, at the University of Aix-en-Provence, a software identifies words, counts them, adds associated terms, and if it is rare or usual in the context. A French president likes the word “obviously” and uses it when he lies. A non-elected candidate pronounces always the same speech, with the same words. Other politicians prefer the verb “want” (Nicolas Sarkozy) and others “do” (François Bayrou). Some of them use the word “business” (François Bayrou), others “people” (Marine Le Pen) and others “work” (Ségolène Royal). In the electoral campaign in 2007, Nicolas Sarkozy used the word “dream” on at the end. This word is one of the most employed by his political advisor, Henri Guaino.

Analysis of themes is common in discourse analysis. For example, what is said in media about Islam in France? Through research we may identify actors (politicians, associations, institutions), speeches related to the key players (Islam as resource to control suburbs, Islam as fundamentalism), and themes (integration, community, republican pact, occidental culture, democracy, women). Sometimes this sort of analysis joins forces with structural analysis to identify oppositions. Sometimes it is nearer of a semantic approach (connotations, semantic field). The model depends of hypothesis and problematic.

Some scholars are specialized in dialogue analysis (Orecchioni, 2005) and mention that in a dialogue people are acting with their words and speeches. Different replies receive a number and each part of the reply is put in a category: providing information, advice or intimidating, providing thanks or requests, or offering judgement, justification. After that, roles in the interaction may be highlighted and so the effects of the interaction, the established connection, the good or bad terms, the balance of power.

### Discourses and messages

In France, communication was certainly influenced right from the beginning by the language studies (Tetu, 2002) and by theories of reception: a message is not always understood according to the intentions of its sender. A journalist, as an author, has intentions and an art of argumentation. Greimas and Ducrot were present at the first congresses in communication and developed in these frame explanations about analysis of conversations, useful in analysis of television broadcasts or radio interviews.

Discourse analysis meets up with usual preoccupations in communication. A communication is made via different messages using different supports (posters, dialogues, reports, information, advertisement, websites, crisis communication, arguments to find funds for a NGO). A message is expressed (well or poorly), interpreted, understood or misunderstood. Communication is a social phenomenon taking place in a social context, between partners who know their places and their roles. Discourse analysis may be between the art of interpretation and the art of action, because a message always has an effect (on representations or directly on actions). Societies, like people, demonstrate their aspirations by speaking, and one of the most important spot of their expression is via the media.. Marc Angenot sees in media small stories about personal, national or community identities, trying to imagine a future (Angenot, 2002, 2004).

The importance of discourse analysis in communication has also its roots in some well known authors, frequently quoted in communication research. For example, Paul Watzlawick (1978) is talking about the truthfulness within a message and inquires if it is possible to communicate sincerely. Is it impossible because we are not always conscious of our communication; or because it is a risk to communicate sincerely? And we are hoping for words or acts from

our relatives or friends without a clear conscious of our wishes. We are all opaque, enigma for others and mystery for ourselves, even when we are trying to express what we think. And sometimes, a lie may be a necessity; this is way disinformation is an art, or a conscious strategy, as when we are trying to know a hidden fact. And so, we are leaving between two realities: on the first one, we have a consensus of perception; on the second, we can only give a meaning without certainty. Human relationship is a characteristic of this second reality.

Erving Goffman (1973) asserts also that communication is not always a self-expression. It is not due to individuals, but rather to society. Social life is not a spot for personal expression. We fear that others surprise our difficulties, our efforts, our indecisions, sometimes our failures. The “representation” of us is an elementary narcissist reflex. And it is also a social rule: details of our life are not interesting for others or may give a wrong impression of us or our group, our team, provoke criticisms or judgements. Do we live in a socially organized lie? Perhaps, but in the same time our silence about our internal fluctuations is a form of self-respect and a promise to others. We all have to demonstrate that our world is stable, rules with common values. And if we are faithful to others, they shall be faithful to us if we need it.

For Jürgen Habermas (1987) communication is never perfect and produces shared representations, shared representations produce common convictions, common convictions produce social values; social values manage individual and collective actions. An expression must be evaluated according to its effects in action.

Communication researchers are using a process like all human sciences. They have to choose a population, a corpus, define useful unities (sentence, couple question/answer, section, paragraph). They have to choose a level in discourses (vocabulary, semantics, themes, arguments, ideological propositions, representation of the



reader or the listener, context). They have to respect deontological rules (confidentiality, anonymity). A message is not simple information, but is full of all complexities of a human being. What is said and what is hidden? How does a dialogue take in account what is implied? How many sorts of influence are detectable? How does the chosen channel determine the discourse? What is the coordination level expressed in the discourse? Do the speakers have build norms of action in their interaction?

### **Are human sciences different from experimental sciences in their manner to be scientific?**

We can all remember Wilhelm Dilthey's distinction about what he named *sciences of spirit* in opposition to sciences of nature: to explain is not the same thing as to understand. Human sciences have to understand, and are interpreting sciences: we are approaching human facts only in our own conscience and every conscience is historic, because we are living in a particular country, a certain time and have unique experiences. Sciences of spirit have an historic reason (Dilthey, 1883). This distinction of nature is also a distinction of method. Firstly, comprehension is always synthetic and not analytical. To understand means to be able to give sense to any human behaviour. Secondly, we are never neutral when we are observing human facts. Sometimes we are not prepared to pay attention and sometimes we are anticipating with anxiety the slightest expression of others. We are always more or less benevolent. Our comprehension may be opened or closed. Thirdly, human and social facts are systems, complex realities and we have the temptation to select only what is easy to interpret. This point of view implies an original way of research: a quality of attention, a capacity to be off-centred, a global frame of mind, a great importance of hypothesis.

Dilthey's position has to be highlighted with his opposition to Auguste Comte: social facts are not similar to natural objects. For Auguste Comte (1974), each science is characterized by laws explaining facts. He suggests two sorts of sciences: fundamental and concrete sciences. Fundamental sciences are physics, mathematics, astronomy, chemistry, physiology, but also social physics, which is another name for sociology. And concrete sciences as botanic or zoology are useful to act, but not for comprehension, and for him, comprehension is a characteristic of fundamental sciences.

As very well observed by Henri de Lubac, positivism is not only a sort of epistemology, but a complete philosophy of life, a system of thought excluding transcendence (De Lubac, 1959). For Auguste Comte, humanity was at the beginning primitive, then theological, and at the end positivist. Even a science dealing with human facts has to be positivist if it is a real science. Sociology is the experimental science of societies exactly as physics is the experimental science of nature. Science must fight religious mentality (and particularly Christian mentality) because the distinction between temporal and spiritual has no relevance.

A text demands an interpretation, an understanding, but some researchers in human sciences are positivists and try to find a positivist approach of texts, giving a great importance to quantitative methods, mathematical models. Is a human science qualitative and comprehensive and an experimental science positivist and quantitative?

### **The important role of hypothesis, representations and mentalities**

Gaston Bachelard has worked on experimental sciences and put hypothesis and interpretation in an obvious place: data overwhelm logic, because our knowledge is fundamentally unfulfilled

(Bachelard, 1927, p. 10). Scientists begin with a law, and then consider implementations as details. It is a psychological structure, a sign of laziness, not a real scientific effort. Details, unexpected facts, nuances, are not margins of the law, but must be understood as a complication in a system: our conceptualisation is a human experience, a dialogue between representation and verification. Experimental sciences today are not working with examinable objects, even with a microscope. They are working with immensely great and immensely small, have to create instruments to observe what a scientist has first imagined as a hypothesis. As Bachelard observed at the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century “sciences are metaphysically inductive”, see the complexity in the simple, in facts, in examples (Bachelard, 1934).

Using tools for science is an important decision, corresponding to a peculiar mentality, asserted in the XX<sup>th</sup> century, but pursuing a movement began in the XVI<sup>th</sup> century, when Galilée decided to use a telescope as a scientific instrument to observe stars and planets (Koyre, 1957). The Renaissance saw the transition from a “contemplative science” to an “active science”. Platonicians considered that mathematics were the best tool to understand the world, because they are contemplatives and theoretical. A telescope is the tool of a mentality imagining an infinite world and a duty of curiosity, a legitimate and good curiosity, because the Christian God is working with men in their history, and not out of the world and out of history. For Christianity, if God created an infinite space, and gave the world to humans to work with, then tools are a part of human creativity, our world must be explored as far as possible and a telescope may let us see new stars. Today, all sciences are using tools and have to imagine first strong hypothesis which will be verified by the instruments previously built.

Experimental sciences are historic, not only human sciences. The history of experimental sciences shows a succession of rival theories,

competitions between different conceptions of nature in the same time. All were scientific in a way. But philosophies of nature and philosophies of science were different and conduct scientists to different choices of methods, experimental process or theories. The competition between researchers and groups is fundamental to understand the scientific movement and the collective dimension must be highlighted. And so groups of researchers are working during the same time with different and rival “paradigms” (Kühn, 1962). Sometimes one of them prevails, but even if a theory seems better, it never explains all things. And so, the different philosophies of science remain.

### **Interpretation**

In an empirical tradition, perception is the source of knowledge and we are going from a sensation to ideas. But for Whitehead (2007), our eye is educated and we always perceive in contexts already with meanings we automatically project on our sensations. In real life, our sensations are always embodied in actions, then they are immediately interpreted in the frame of our action, and so perception itself is already a construction, there is no pure observation. A perception is always in the same time interpretation and an interpretation is verification and debates. Debates allow identifying if my interpretation respects my object. And this is true in all sciences, human or experimental. But how one can describe an interpretative activity as a scientific process? What does it mean to interpret interviews, stories, reports, opened answers, and so on? In a scientific perspective, interpretation must be strict, must obey rules. On this topic, phenomenology or hermeneutic, even philosophical epistemology have propositions.

First, a reader or a listener has to pay attention to a first internal impulse of reception or rejection. Second, an interpretation needs

time: we do not understand the same thing at the beginning of a study and at the end. Third, as we saw with Bachelard, every researcher has to approve that he cannot verify all things by himself. We always have to have confidence in other researchers. Fourth, as we saw, we rest on methods to describe and analyse texts or meaningful expressions: identify unities, structures, arguments. And then an interpretation is in the same time an effort of detachment from previous representations and extracting to evidence an objective construction.

Errors may then interfere in interpretations. But can we still imagine that an interpretation is an immediate certainty like an infallible instinct? We know that it is actually still a representation of science, but we think that the researchers we present in our first and second part of the text direct us in another way. An interpretation is attention to signs, real kindness toward a subject, interrogation, assent, verification, hesitation, recognition, sense of unknown, ability to imagine, sense of plausible, caution, judgement. Every interpretation has a cognitive aspect, a part of conviction and an aspect of testimony (I know how much I am indebted in others' thought). The signs on which we are leaning may be as a progressively revealed secret, not a simple unequivocal data. Our interpretation depends on authorities we recognize. At last, hesitations are crucial: they are the opening to the unexpected, to the novelty of our understanding. A interpret is creating his constancy in his interpretation movement. For Dilthey, interpretation is characteristic of sciences of spirit, that is human sciences. For Ricoeur, this interpretative movement is in fact for all sciences, all scientific approach, human or experimental.

Experimental sciences, as human sciences, are a combination of strictness, imagination, debates, certainty, doubt, rational effort, attention, observation, interpretation, understanding, explanation, methods, theories, concepts, crisis, competition, jealousy, opposite proofs, constructions and reconstructions.

## Conclusion

We have argued in this conference that discourse analysis is as a qualitative approach in human sciences. In fact, discourse analysis is not always equivalent of a qualitative approach, some of them are quantitative (leaned on statistics and computing, in a very positivist point of view). And we saw that epistemology progressively integrated the importance of hypothesis, mentalities, history of theories, to explain the movement of experimental sciences. We have qualitative and a quantitative tendencies in human sciences and we have more or less positivist tendencies in experimental sciences. Discourse analysis may reveal not only diversity of human sciences, but experimental approaches too, and not only a diversity of philosophies of science, but the scientific rules and processes too.

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## **Part 7.**

### **MEDIA COVERAGE AND MEDIA REPRESENTATION**



# **Implementing a social policy in the health care sector: the media construction of the process**

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## **Introduction**

In the last decades media become an important vehicle of constructing and mediating the social experience. Medical subjects, either related to personal experiences like health and illness, or to social issues such as the health care system or policy, are very frequent in the current media discourse. In the same time, the information provided by the media on various health issues is a resource that people draw upon their decisions regarding health.

There are three broad categories of media studies: production, representation and reception studies (Seale, 2003). The present paper aims to explore the media production side of a health policy implementation, namely the public hospital decentralisation policy in Romania, which took place in 2010. Given the fact that no public debate was organised by the central institutions prior to the implementation, the media was the main channel through which the policy

entered into the public conscience. Its role in the process was crucial, as media became part of the policy-making process. The aim of this paper gains more significance when thinking about the importance of exploring the public representations of health issues in the media. Given the fact that media is an essential vehicle for influencing the public perception of health issues, becomes very important to see what messages are conveyed and how these health issues are framed in the media discourse (Green & Thorogood, 2004, p. 161).

The hospitals' decentralization process began in 2002, as part of the health care system reform, by undergoing an administrative decentralization of public hospitals. This led to hospitals' buildings being managed locally, but the financial, managerial, or human resources aspects were monitored centrally. This arrangement allowed for an inefficient functioning of hospitals in the context of the increasing amount of debt accumulated in time. In June 2010, the process was continued by decentralizing public hospitals with all their functional and structural components (Ministry of Health, 2010). More than 370 hospitals were transferred to local authorities in almost two months. Hospitals serving communities in cities and towns were taken over by the city halls, whereas the hospitals providing health services for districts areas were transferred to district councils. At the end of 2010, the decentralization of the National Health Insurance Fund (NHIF), the main financing source of the health care system, was accomplished.

In the context of the aim stated above, the questions I am trying to answer are: i) How this process of implementing the hospital decentralisation policy was constructed in the newsprint media (in terms of sourcing and producing the messages by the actors involved)? ii) How was the process framed by the various stakeholders, and in this sense what were the narratives employed? iii) Did these narratives change in the four months, and if so, in what way?

In a previous article (Popa, 2013) I have identified the main actors with a key role in the media construction of the process: 1. the central authorities, with a role in drawing, implementing and monitoring the decentralisation policy; 2. the local authorities (representatives of town/city halls, district and local councils) that had to take over the hospitals under their administration; 3. health care providers, i.e. managers and physicians in public hospitals and hospitals' spokesmen; 4. media representatives, i.e. journalists, columnists or media analysts; 5. other stakeholders, such as patients, representatives of advocacy groups, medical unions, voices from civil society. I will discuss the role of these stakeholders in sourcing and producing the news delivered in media and also their narratives regarding the process.

The process of implementing the hospital decentralisation policy was very complex and thus challenging to analyse, with many facets to explore: the process evolution and effects, actors involved and their understandings of the policy, or the media construction of the process. In a previous paper I have analysed the stakeholders' perspectives on the implementation of this process (Popa, 2013), identifying the main actors in media during the process implementation and exploring and comparing their discourses. The present study discusses the themes brought to the audiences by different actors involved, but the focus will be around mass media and its role in channelling information about the policy implementation to the audiences. Two processes will be envisaged: sourcing and producing the news delivered to the public. The focus will be also placed on how different actors have framed the process of decentralisation. The concept of framing gained more popularity in the last years than other similar concepts like agenda-setting or priming. Entman defines framing as a process of

*“selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (Entman 1993, p. 52).*

For the purpose of this paper, three relationships have to be addressed and explored: mass media – policy, mass-media – public institutions/bodies within the health care system and mass media – the general public. I will address them below.

Regarding the relationship between media and policy, Davidson, Hunt and Kitzinger (2003, p. 534) state that “media coverage is not simply a by-product of policy initiatives; it can be an integral part of how policy is formed and re-formed”. Moreover, media can influence the health policy development, by putting pressure on the policy-makers, or by reporting news in some way (Entwistle & Sheldon, 1999). Other studies are stating the same idea, that media can influence the health policy and the public debate around it (Wallack et al., 1993). In the case of hospital decentralisation policy in Romania, the role of media in the process was determinant. Judging by the messages delivered at the onset of the process, the intention was to target the public opinion generally and to witness and document the process evolution, and thus to construct a truthful story. Taking into consideration all the messages delivered in the four months, mass media became an active and involved actor in the process, contributing to its evolution and construction. The number of studies analysing the media coverage of a decentralisation policy in Romania is limited. For example, Gheorghita and Dragoman (2010) have undergone a content analysis on a Romanian review of political culture, in order to understand how the administrative decentralisation process, planned and debated for several years, was reflected in the review.

How accurate this depiction of the process was, is another intriguing issue to discuss. Seale (2002) is making a well-argued point, when talking about the inaccuracy of media in portraying health matters. He has analysed how inaccuracy occurs regarding the delivering of news in the health care case. One explanation is that media is trying to 'entertain, by stressing the sensational and the negative' side of the news presented. The newspaper journalists (and in fact all the journalists) are considered to embrace a different culture than the scientists, by being interested and representing different aspects of health.

In what concerns the second and the third relationship, between media and the general public, on one hand, and media and the institutions/bodies within the health care system, on the other hand, the literature is abundant. For the first relation, the discussion should first revolve around the agenda-setting theory. Studies show that media coverage influence what people consider important in the social and political agenda and also how they react towards events presented in media (Cook et al., 1983; Stroud & Kenski, 2007; Kepplinger, 2007). Other analyses, apart from the agenda-setting theory, show how the public is managed by the media, either by channelling some voices, by marginalising others, or by clearly showing the public their place (Coleman & Ross, 2010, p. 46). Not only that media has notable influence on the public opinion, but under some conditions this influence can last a considerable amount of time, as Albertson & Lawrence (2009) proved. Other studies document the different sides of the relationship between mass media and official institutions in the political, educational or health field (Cook et al., 1983; Walgrave, Soroka, & Nuytemans, 2008). The effects are different for various institutions, as shown by a study focusing on the media influence in the political arena (Walgrave et al., 2008).

The same relationship is present in the Romanian public sphere. The complex evolution of media institution in post-communist Romania and its influence in the social and political arena are analysed in many studies (Sandru & Bocancea, 2011; Sükösd & Bajomi-Lázár, 2003; Coman, 2009). The key role of Romanian media in shaping the public opinion regarding the EU accession is analysed by Szilágyi-Gál (2003). Some common deficiencies in media functioning were also mentioned, such as failing to provide various interest groups, professions and institutions with relevant information, or the political partisanship (Szilágyi-Gál, 2003).

Remaining at the key role that mass media had in the hospital decentralisation process, it is relevant to discuss how journalists envisage the locus of news and their relationship with the audiences. Regarding these two aspects, Heikki and Kunelius (2006) identified three types of discourses, by interviewing 149 journalists in media organisations of ten EU countries: classical professionalism, secular discourse and cosmopolitan discourse. They represent parallel views that journalists hold regarding their day-to-day practice, shaping the way they do their work. The *classical professionalism* places the locus of the news within the nation state and realm of politics and considers the news as a common good, of national interest. The journalist in this perspective is a detached observer, neutral mediator and critical commentator. He will embrace the task of educating the audience or explaining issues they write about. The *secular discourse* takes distance from politics and the system and assumes a market-driven position where the audience is dominant. The interest here becomes the everyday life of citizens and not the political events and actors. This discourse is sensitive to audience pressures, meaning that media will not pursue the subjects that are not eliciting the audience interest. Finally, the cosmopolitan discourse news is shaped by the international politics, business and institutions. The focus here is on the



politics, as in the first discourse, but on an international level. This discourse is characteristic for journalists working in foreign news organisations (Heikki & Kunelius, 2006, p. 70-73).

We will try to see which of these three discourses are apparent in the case of journalists documenting the hospital decentralisation process in Romania.

## Method

In view of answering the research questions, 106 articles relevant for the hospital decentralisation theme were retrieved from six leading Romanian dailies, in a period of four months (June-September 2010). In these months the process of implementing the policy was at its peak. The six dailies were: Adevarul (AD), Jurnalul National (JN), Romania Libera (RL), Gandul (GD), Ziarul Financiar (ZF) and Cotidianul (CT). Two criteria made the basis of the selection of these journals: the circulation figures and the intensity of covering the decentralization process. All articles covering the decentralisation theme, as the main or secondary subject, were taken into analysis, thus ensuring a comprehensive examination of how the process was depicted in these journals.

The articles were analysed using a mixed approach, mainly qualitative. More precisely, in the data collection stage the study deployed a qualitative methodology and in the data analysis stage a *concurrent mixed analysis* was used, which involves integrating qualitative and quantitative methods (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2004). In the analysis stage, data were explored through a thematic analysis, in order to inductively derive first the recurrent voices (sources) delivering accounts about decentralization in media, and second, their discourses. The distinct excerpts in every article were coded, and also the entire article (using the title), allowing for a

hierarchical code tree to be developed and subsequently applied to the entire content (see tables 1, 2, 3). Following the model offered by Green and Thorogood (2004, p. 179-180), the first stage of thematic analysis was then followed by the exploration of the *relationships* between the voices (actors) emerged and between their discourses. Also the *context* of the codes resulted was analysed. For example, one code emerged was ‘*Significances of decentralisation*’ (table 1 and 2). I was interested to see which of the actors made reference in their discourses to what decentralisation means, how important was this theme in their discourses, what were the actual significances given to decentralisation by the various actors and how this theme was linked with other topics in their discourses. This approach composed a static picture of the process, describing the main actors playing a part in it and the themes approached by them. The data was also analysed in a quantitative manner for grasping the dynamic of the process, i.e. its evolution in the four months of implementation. For doing this, several descriptors were used: distribution of articles in the six newspapers, type of articles, month of printing, article theme and whether the decentralisation theme was central or secondary in the article. Examples of inquiries for the quantitative analysis were: are the themes evenly present in the four months, in the six newspapers, or in the three main discourses (central, local and media discourse)? Are there themes that have emerged as a response to another issue raised by a different actor in the process?

Dedoose, a web-based application, was used for analysing the data in a combined manner (Lieber, 2009). The data relevant for media, actors at central level and at local level were analysed using the same methods. One important limit of the research is that all the voices were investigated through the media representation and not directly. Considering the fact that media makes a selection of the topics delivered, the limit of the research is evident, even if, in

most of the articles the official statements were directly rendered, by quoting them.

For assuring the validity of data, a comprehensive data treatment was applied, as Silverman and Marvasti (2008, p. 264) advise, i.e. nearly all the articles printed in Romanian national media on the decentralisation theme were selected for analysis. Also, an analysis of negative cases was carried out during the whole process of interpreting the data. Reliability was further assured by only one person processing the data and by using a mixed analysis approach. The careful selection of the research questions ascertained also the reliability of analysis.

## Results

In order to understand how media constructed the image of the decentralisation process, attention was first given to the news sourcing. Miller (1998) gave thorough explanations about how news in media are sourced, showing the complexity of the process. No matter what the subject of the news is, the sources have no passive role of just providing the information, but attempt as well to “use and manipulate the media in order to influence a wide variety of debates, agendas and audiences.” (Miller, 1998). This was obvious for at least two of the sources that provided information in the case analysed in this paper. The voices at the central level (mainly the Health Minister) and the local authorities’ voices were very active in trying to influence the audience in the sense they wanted, regarding the decentralisation process.

### The central level

From all the actors involved in the decentralisation process at the central level, the most dynamic was the Health Ministry

institution and its head representative. In what concerns this actor, the news travelled towards the media mainly in a direct and open way. The Health Minister assumed a very proactive and vigorous role in offering information about the process and explaining its evolution. Therefore, a lot of information was delivered through press conferences, many of them organised at the Ministry location. Because the local authorities reacted in the first stages of the process by refusing or postponing the signing of the documents that made the hospitals' transfer official, the Health Minister made a lot of official visits in order to personally discuss with the local officials the necessity of the decentralisation and to ease the policy implementation. Thus, many of the press conferences have been organised within the premises of various city halls or district councils. The Health Minister did not assign the task of informing the public to a press officer, as in other instances, but insisted to have frequent personal public appearances for achieving this goal.

Besides the Health Minister, other actors at the central level delivered public interventions regarding the decentralisation process. Several representatives of the Public Health Directorates were the most active, while fewer statements came from the representative of the National Health Insurance Fund and the Govern/Prime Minister. The thematic analysis of the discourses at the central level revealed the themes approached by the actors here (Table 1).

The type of framing the Health Ministry used for conveying the process essence is obvious when exploring the official statements. The very transparent intention at the central level was to inform the public about the process, to educate it and also to advertise the process.

**Table 1. Themes in the official discourses at the central level  
(descendant order of the codes and subcodes)**

Actor	Themes (codes and subcodes)
Health Minister	Significances of decentralization
	Human resource - New management - Salaries, staff expenses - Layoffs, unlock employments
	Announcing new measures adopted
	Decentralization effects
	Financial issues
	Technical explanations regarding the process
	Current state of the decentralization process
	The state of health system before decentralization
	Local authorities
Public Health Directorate	Current state of the decentralization process
	Significances of decentralization
	Financial issues
National Health Insurance Fund (representatives of)	Financial issues
	Hospital management
Government / Prime minister	Announcing new measures adopted

Providing information was an effective strategy to influence public opinion regarding this policy and its necessity. The Minister's public statements followed a pattern: their number was higher at the beginning of each of the four months, and decreased towards the end of each month. Many of these statements were abundant in technicalities about the process, i.e. explanations and figures describing the process evolution, such as: how many hospitals have already been delivered to the local authorities or figures about the human resource in these hospitals. Even more interventions provided information on what hospital decentralisation means and how it should be understood.

The qualitative exploration of the excerpts in this code makes the framing used at the central level even clearer. Some of the recurrent themes of the Minister are: decentralisation is the right to decide at the local level on the health issues of the community, decentralisation is not a political process (“it has no political colour”) but a real reform and decentralisation is the sure method to make the health system more efficient. References about the state of the health care system before hospital decentralisation were intensely made, in order to emphasize the real need to complete this process. This is a consistent category (or code) in the central discourse that cannot be found in the discourses of any other stakeholder. He presented in a colourful manner the critical situation of the health care system when he accepted the Health Ministry position:

*“I did not realise how bad the situation was with the health care system when I accepted the position. Neither Superman, nor Spiderman could enforce order in the Romanian health care system in the short time that I had until now” (GD, 9.07.2010).*

He also stressed that no central institution, no matter how efficient was, and no single person, no matter how skilful was, could manage more than four hundred hospitals in the whole country. Nearly all the official statements of the Health Minister have approached the subject of the present state of the health care system. The presence of this category is underlining the difference between the central discourse and the local one. The second one is not at all interested in the functionality and the efficiency of the health care system.

Other significant themes in the central discourse were the financial issues brought by the decentralisation process (i.e. the debts accumulated by the hospitals that the Health Ministry promised to pay before the hospitals were taken over by the local authorities), the human resource in hospitals (a complex code with sub-themes)

and the new measures taken that were announced and commented. The first one was a reactive theme, as the subject of financial liabilities was the most intense in the local authorities' discourse and the main reason for refusing or postponing the hospitals' transfer. The Health Minister constantly tried to reassure that the hospitals' overdue liabilities would eventually be paid.

Comparing with the other two actors – actors at local level and media – the review of the themes (or subcodes) in every category shows a much detailed and nuanced discourse at the central level. The themes approached are related no so much to the actors (although there is a subcode regarding the local authorities), but to the process. This one is presented and detailed in a very comprehensive manner (significances of the process, effects, measures, stage, technical issues), a feature which cannot be retrieved in other actors' discourses. The variety and the thoroughness of the themes approached is smaller in the case of other actors than the central authority.

### **The local level**

The actors delivering messages are the heads and representatives of the district or local councils and town/city halls. Somehow different from the central level approach, the local authorities' representatives delivered the information not so much in press conferences, but more through direct or telephonic interviews. The proactive manner of the Health Ministry of delivering information and news to the public is obvious when comparing the higher number of excerpts in the central officials' messages then in the local authorities' messages. The messages at the local level were channelled to the public through news, columns and opinion type articles.

The themes in the local authorities' messages were related to: how to make the new management of hospitals more financially

efficient, where to find alternative resources for the hospital staff payroll, conditions for the old managers to keep their jobs, future measures regarding the management and human resources in the hospitals. Many messages conveyed a negative attitude towards the Health Minister and Ministry. By far, the most heated theme in the local authorities' discourse and therefore, their biggest concern regarded the financial repercussions of the hospital transfer. Many of the statements were in fact announcements about delaying the local hospital transfer until the overdue liabilities are paid from the state budget.

The tone used at this level was less official than the central one. Going through the excerpts in this category, one can note that media articulate the local authorities' messages with some kind of sympathy and concern for the situation they are in. The local authorities' situation is presented not in a formal way, as in the case of the central institutions, but in an emotional way. In some messages, the emotions expressed by the local officials when talking about decentralisation are carefully described and sometimes inflated by journalists in their articles:

*"Any reform has to be properly carried out, and not in a hurry: «until that day you have to accept the hospital». I will not tolerate such a thing!" is shouting on the telephone the Head of the District Council and his tone betrays his concern. He is upset because a few days ago he had a face-to-face discussion with the Health Minister who tried to convince him to accept the District Emergency Hospital" (RL, 22.07.2010).*



**Table 2. Themes in the discourses at the local level  
(descendant order of the codes and subcodes)**

Actor	Themes (codes and subcodes)
Mayors or other representatives of city/ town hall	Financial issues
	Actions regarding the hospitals transfer (acceptance, procrastination, refusal)
	Measures to be taken, intentions for the future
	Health Minister or Ministry
	Significances of decentralisation
	Effects of decentralisation
	Reorganisation of hospitals
	Quality of hospital or medical services
President or other representatives of district councils	Financial issues
	Measures to be taken, intentions for the future
	Management and human resource in hospitals
	Health Minister or Ministry
	Actions regarding the hospitals transfer (acceptance, procrastination, refusal)
	Reorganisation of hospitals
	Significances of decentralisation and reform
	Effects of decentralisation
Governor or representatives	Quality of hospital or medical services
	Effects of decentralisation
	Reorganisation of hospitals
Old management of hospitals	Stage of decentralisation process
	Financial issues
	Effects of decentralisation
New management of hospitals	Change of management
	Financial issues
	Reorganisation and equipment of hospitals
	Hospital current situation
	Appointing the new management
Physicians	Significances of decentralisation
	Financial issues
	Management of hospitals

Other essential difference between the central and the local authorities discourses is the opinion regarding the political character of the decentralisation process. The Health Minister emphasised in every way that the process is not political:

*“We are not making political decentralization. Decentralization has no political colour; it is not orange, red, yellow or green [reference to symbolic colours of the most important political parties in Romania], it is done with people and for people.” (RL, 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 2010).*

He reiterated this idea in many of his press conferences or press releases. On the other side, for the local representatives, the political side of the decentralisation was clear and unquestionable. Even more, they interpreted the decentralisation policy as the Ministry trying to place the health care reform task in the responsibility of the local authorities:

*“«The central administration is not playing fair. They gave us the hospitals and urge us to do the reform in the health care system. This is a mistake. None of the previous Health Ministers had the courage to reform the system. Someone has to undertake the responsibility even if there will be political costs» stated the Mayor, which is also president of City Mayors Association” (AD, 24.09.2010).*

Remaining in the same category, one can identify the voices from the health care professionals, i.e. hospitals’ managers and physicians, directly involved in the decentralisation process. They convey a different picture of the process, as their counterparts. The central institutions’ framing of the process was formal, informative and optimistic about the future effects of decentralisation, whereas the local framing was full of complaints and pessimistic about the same effects. Opposed to these two, the medical professionals’ opinion was surprisingly positive, despite the negative personal consequences that decentralisation could bring for some of the managers

(as new managers would have to be appointed by the local authorities, after the hospital transfer). Regardless of these consequences, the health professionals' have seen the transfer as a solution for the hospitals' problems, with beneficial effects on the long term.

### **Mass media**

This is the category (code) with the most numerous excerpts. In the four months of implementing the decentralisation policy, the media was very dynamic in providing information about the process stages, in reporting news and opinions from different stakeholders, or commenting the process evolution. By all these, media acted as a witness of the process, and also as a stakeholder. The journalists, columnists and media analysts were the main voices in this category. One of the national dailies was very active in reflecting the process: *Adevarul* (AD) delivered a continuous depiction of the process, while all the others provided only occasional updates. Overall, the news was prevailing, in the detriment of columns, reports or opinions. In the first half of the interval (June and July 2010) the decentralisation topic was treated as central theme, illustrating the considerable interest the subject has gained. Articles treating the decentralisation theme as secondary alongside other themes regarding the health care system, have been published sporadically throughout the four months.

The examination of the excerpts in this code revealed two main categories: the majority of the excerpts neutrally reflected the process during the four months, by delivering factual information about it (see Table 3); much less excerpts come from articles giving voice to comments, either positive or negative, regarding the decentralisation.

The themes in the first category (neutral representation of the process) are related to all the main actors in the process: Health

Ministry, local authorities, hospitals and physicians. Other sub-codes here reflect the process in itself – the decentralisation in general, the implementation stage and financial issues brought about. Basically, it is a thorough portrayal of the process and actors involved. Yet, it is not a balanced depiction, as the utterances about hospitals and physicians are, by far, the most numerous, followed by the excerpts about local authorities and in a much lesser extent, the references to the Health Ministry or other central actors. Regarding the process, there is a surprising big number of excerpts analysing the current stage of the process (refusals, postponing or acceptance of the hospitals by the local authorities) and also the financial implications brought by this policy. Essentially, media have raised in the public attention an impressive number of stories of hospitals with their particular situation. Worth to mention is that, in many of these cases, media tried not only to provide factual information, but to construct either a single hospital story, or stories about all the hospitals in a city/district. A large number of excerpts pertain to articles devoted to case studies of hospitals, like this one:

*“The monthly cost of utilities for the public hospital in Deva is around five hundred thousand Euros in the summer time and one million Euros in the winter time. But this money does not exist in the budget of Hunedoara District Council. If decentralisation does not come with a proper financial solution, 99 percent of the hospitals will close their doors” (AD, 24.06.2010).*

In the second category related to how the decentralisation process is commented, there is also a misbalance between the positive and negative comments, with the second category much better represented. One media analyst commented:

*“This entire problem [managing the hospitals] is landing in the local authorities’ courtyard, and they have to face all the difficulties. All*

*the problems that the central authority doesn't manage to solve are thrown to the local authorities" (RL, 22.07.2013);*

*"The Health Ministry got rid of the hospitals' burden, by transferring them to the local authority. It is not surprising that the Ministry very much wanted this, as the money for managing the hospitals was always scarce" (journalist, AD, 29.07.2010)*

**Table 3. Themes in the media discourse**  
(descendant order of the codes and subcodes)

Actor	Themes (codes and subcodes)
Mass media	Neutral representation of the process
	Hospitals/physicians <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Changes in management</li> <li>- Board of directors</li> <li>- Hospitals reorganisation</li> <li>- Human resource</li> </ul>
	Local authorities
	Health Ministry and representatives
	Decentralisation stage
	Financial aspects
	Decentralisation in general
	Commenting the process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Negative comments</li> <li>- Positive comments</li> </ul>

Overall, the themes in the media discourse show that media embraced the local actors' point of view (i.e. local authorities and hospitals' representatives) rather than the central authorities' one. The simple fact of bringing to the public attention and discussing the local issues more intensively, suggests that media representatives were on the local actors' side. The prevailing of the negative opinions regarding the process and its implementation further emphasize this idea. Also one can notice a difference in the media

discourse when presenting the central authorities' statements, opposed to the local authorities' position and the case of hospitals involved. The warmer tone was used when depicting the situation of individual hospitals. A difference in the depth of media investigation is also present. The central statements were neutrally presented by quoting them, while the particular situation of various hospitals was documented and informed more carefully and deeply.

## Discussion

The messages reported in media on a given subject (hospital decentralisation in this case) are never just pieces of information expressed by various sources. Several other factors influence the message. One is represented by the particular agendas that media producers have, which influence what it is expressed in these messages (Seale, 2002). The main two stakeholders in the process analysed in this paper, the central and the local authority, clearly had different agendas at the beginning of the process. Two key ideas in the Health Ministry agenda were: the health care system will benefit from the hospital decentralization process and this process has no political character. Many of the interventions at this level offered a grid of interpretation for the public audiences, in order to know how to contextualise and understand this process. In the local authority agenda, other ideas were salient. The first one was the interpretation of the hospital transfer as an attempt of the central authorities to get rid of a problem (managing the public hospitals) they are unable to approach. The second one was the concern about the liabilities the hospitals will be transferred with, and the financial burden that will be placed on the local authorities' budgets. The manifest agenda of the printed media was to neutrally reflect the two sides of the story, but presented in a more colourful and

nuanced way the local perspective (authorities and health professionals). Differences appeared also regarding the ultimate meaning given to the decentralisation process by various actors. The discussion here revolves around the political character of the process. While the official central message was that decentralisation was not accomplished for political reasons, the local understanding of the process was clearly in political terms.

When looking at the actors delivering messages on the decentralisation subject, there are surprising findings revealed by the data exploration. First, the beneficiaries of the health care system, the potential patients in the hospitals transferred, had no voice in printed media, during the implementation process. Not a single clipping contained the patients' (or their representatives') opinion about the policy, or about its effects, from their point of view. Even more, none of the active actors in media spoke in the name of the patients. Media, despite the intention to be an equal witness, failed to defend the patients' view, too. In a way, this is to be expected, as citizens are not so visible in the national media as in the local or regional media. Ruusunoksa (2006, p. 94) shows that in the national public sphere, citizens have rather a symbolic role, despite the wish that they should be represented.

Regarding the themes approached, intriguing conclusions can be drawn from comparing the most and the less discussed topic in the discourses. By far, the most debated issue was related to financial implications of the hospital decentralisation. The less discussed topic regarded the quality of services in the hospitals and how this would be influenced by the transfer. For all the main actors involved (central institutions, local authorities' and surprisingly, even for the health professionals) this topic seems to be not worth to discuss, judging by the frequency of approaching it. Apart from the intensity of discussing a particular theme, the diversity of the

themes approached in the stakeholders' discourses similarly can reveal conclusions about how the process was constructed. There are actors building a very detailed picture of the process, as the proposed topics cover a wide-ranging problem area. The Health Minister and the Heads of District Councils brought up an agenda with many subjects, from intrinsic aspects regarding the process (technicalities, explanations, figures) to human resources and quality of health care. On the other side, the whole process is reduced to just a few issues in the physicians' or district governors' agenda (see tables 1, 2, 3).

Apart from the messages' content, how these messages are expressed can reveal further conclusions. I will address here the tone and the style used in the clippings, as highly relevant aspects for how the subject was framed. A discussion about the wording and the metaphors used by the various actors is available in a previous paper (Popa, 2013). Sometimes the tone used for conveying ideas was very emotional, using dramatic words. Such a tone and a style were used by media representatives when presenting the case of the local authorities and local medical professionals. Using strong words is a strategy that media often employs, in order to attract attention (Berry, Wharf-Higgins & Naylor, 2007). Presenting the news in such a way relates to sensationalism as a distinctive feature of mass-media. Kimball (1994) considers the sensationalism as an old feature of media that became more and more conspicuous in the last years. By presenting the different sides of the story in an emotional and explicit manner, the media professionals intended (in a more or less conscious way) to emphasize the extraordinary in day-to-day facts and events. This sometimes leads to interpreting the truth, as Stanus (2011, pp. 125-127) shows. In a paper regarding the relationship between local media organisations, politicians and journalists, Stanus argues that values like truth and objectivity,



central for the journalism practice, become interpretable and fuzzy concepts, subject to redefinitions and adjustments.

Media tries to transform any subject in a story and another way of doing this is to highlight the contrasts in it. Seale (2002, p. 40) named this “media-dramatized experience”. The fact that media delivered the information about the hospital policy implementation mainly through reports and case studies, allowed for building a plot, for adding features to the “characters” in it, and for emotionally emphasizing some facets of the process. All these made possible to construct many small stories of hospitals in different towns and cities, which built the general jig-saw puzzle of decentralisation.

The dynamic of the articles published in the four months can be explored by looking at how the themes, the tone and the frequency of the messages have evolved. The first observation is that there is more than one dynamic, one for every stakeholder present in the printed media. The intensity of the messages delivered by the central actor was very high in the first ten days of June 2010, and then the pace of the central discourse was relatively steady and even in the four months. The messages delivered materialised the intention of informing the audience about the process. The tone and the style of the clippings providing guidelines for understanding the process were almost unchanged. Things were not the same in the case of the local authorities. The public interventions in this area changed from a “victimhood meta-narrative” (Seale, 2003, p. 521) to accepting the role and responsibilities they were invested with. Two tasks in particular were rapidly undertaken by the local administrative officials: reconfiguring the hospitals management (by appointing members in the hospital boards) and planning measures for the near future in order to improve the hospitals functioning. The tone of the messages in this category is also changing in the four months. If, at onset of the process, the tone was inflamed and

hostile, at the end, the local representatives became more confident and empowering.

From all the actors involved in the process, the main focus of this paper was mass media and their role in rendering the process. Judging by the whole performance of the media representatives, one of the discourses identified by Heikki and Kunelius (2006), the classical professionalism, appears to be prominent. This is precisely the role manifestly assumed by the Romanian journalists in conveying the process of decentralisation. Several articles published at the beginning of the implementation process have stated the intention of media representatives to neutrally document the evolution and results of the process. The underlying idea in these articles is that mass media is an independent and autonomous institution, distinctive from various interests. Nevertheless, the present paper results show a partisan reporting at the local authorities' side. The fact that media in Romania has a history of being politically dependent (Coman, 2009) can explain this partisanship. The finding is consistent with conclusions in other studies: Through a study carried out on journalists in US and Austria, Plasser (2005) shows that "increasingly biased and partisan type of news coverage" is a danger to media reporting in media cultures with a longer history, too.

## Conclusion

The powerful influence of media in telling audience what is important and should receive attention has been stated many years ago. Many studies confirmed the idea since then. In this process, media is not only delivering factual information but, as Shaw and McCombs stated in the context of agenda-setting theory (1977), it creatively constructs the news and events portrayed. Two processes

are essential for media reporting of any event: selection and framing of news. The present paper focused on both.

The process of hospital decentralization that took place in Romania in 2010 was intensely covered by the media in the four month of implementation. Several actors actively contributed with clear roles and responsibilities to the process itself, but also to how the process was constructed in the printed media, by delivering information to audiences. The present paper comparatively explored and analyzed the narratives and framings of all these stakeholders, and finally focused on mass media, as a key actor.

Differences in themes, tone, wording, style and frequency of the messages belonging to the various actors could be noted, showing how the same process was perceived, represented and understood in such diverse ways. The framing was also very interesting to observe. Emphasizing the positive or minimalizing the negative are common strategies in framing a story, as Wallack et al. (1993, p. 71) show. The decentralization was presented as a vital process for the health care system and a solution for many of its problems in the central discourse. The local authorities' discourse was skeptical and sometimes even hostile at the onset of the implementation, but seemed to be empowered and confident to the end, while the medical professionals embraced the idea even from the beginning. The media representatives either neutrally reflected the process evolution, or commented in a positive or critical way the events. Several strategies used by journalists and analyzed in the current paper proved that media showed more sympathy for the local authorities' case.

Framing is also essential for attributing responsibility: "who the audience deems responsible for fixing the problem depends on how the story is framed" (Iyengar, 1994). In this case, the story was differently framed at the beginning and at the end of the process.

At the start, the news reporting on the events was framed in such a way that sympathy was generated for the local authorities' case, as they had to accept, almost overnight, the new responsibility given by the Health Ministry, without debate or proper preparation. This framing showed the central institutions that elaborated and implemented the policy were responsible for the problem, its consequences and all its later evolution. Later, to the end of the four months, the frequency of the messages showing rejection, hostility, refusal or guilt was decreasing. The local authorities, representing the stakeholder with the main role in accepting the hospitals, seemed to be more reconciled with all the future responsibilities and tasks involved by the policy at the end of the implementation process. Their discourse at the end of the four months showed they were moving towards integrating this change. Time has to pass in order to assess the real outcome of the hospital decentralisation policy. How beneficial is this decentralisation policy for the health care system, in terms of efficiency and quality, and how local authorities undertake their role is a question that will receive an answer in some years from now.

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# **Communicating science: how Romanian newspapers reflect archaeological discoveries**

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## **Introduction**

There is a widespread opinion amongst professional archaeologists in Romania that media is more concerned with reporting about spectacular discoveries in a spectacular manner. And that archaeology is usually reduced to the mere idea of treasure hunting: any archaeological discovery that does not involve a hoard of coins or jewelry of some kind has little or no chance at all to become a piece of news.

Actually, misrepresentation of archaeology and archaeologists' work is a recurrent matter of discussion amongst professional archaeologists throughout Europe. Recent studies focused on the relationship between media and archaeology have pointed out several causes of this phenomenon, providing useful insights both for scholars and journalists. (Brittain & Clack, 2007, p. 15).

As we know it today archaeology is a rather new discipline. It has acquired its “*droit de cité*” in universities across Europe during the second half of XIX<sup>th</sup> century; simultaneously, national and local associations for heritage preservation became increasingly active and influential in society, meanwhile the State grew more and more concerned with the institutionalization of national heritage (Diaz-Andreu, 2007).

It goes without saying that within every European society there are some particularities when it comes to the relationship between media and archaeology, particularities arisen both from the institutional history of archaeology but also from the general evolution of media.

In our case, the relation between popular press and archaeology goes back in time to the very beginnings of both the archaeology and the printed newspapers. In 1836 a newspaper in Bucharest (*The National Museum*) is printing the “story” of what historians of archaeology in Romania consider to be one of the first recorded archaeological researches conducted by a local: Vladimir de Blaremburg’s “Archaeological memories” (Păunescu, 2003, p. 20).

Since that era when amateur archaeologist –the only kind that existed– were able to tell, without any apparent limitation other than the official censorship, of course, their own version of archaeological expeditions – a lot has changed in the way popular press is presenting archaeologists and their work.

However, at first glance, two elements seem to have remained in place: the fact that archaeology is closely related to the idea of a “quest” and that one of its main appealing characteristics is associated with the concept of “novelty”. Also, dissimulated under a new rhetoric about heritage issues and public archaeology, archaeological findings are still presented as being relevant for larger

communities defined either by such words as “nation”, “people” or “local community”.

### Archaeology – a context

At an international scale, two major concepts have altogether changed the reference frame in which archaeologists are communicating the results of their work to the public and, subsequently the way in which newspapers are in their turn presenting archaeology related topics to their readers.

First, one has to consider Clarke’s so called “*loss of innocence*” (as cited by Brittain & Clack, 2007, p. 27) which was basically a major turn in archaeological thinking and thus in presenting archaeological results and data interpretation. At the beginnings of the XIX<sup>th</sup> century archaeology strived to become a recognized scientific discipline and every scholar emphasized the use of scientific investigation methods (stratigraphy, serialization of the artifacts, accurate registration of data, topographical surveys) meanwhile researches in archaeology were designed as to meet certain standards in this direction. Therefore, the image of a “scientific”, “objective” archaeology was spread not only amongst professionals, but also amongst large audiences.

During the last decades, at the academic level, alternative ways of data analysis were explored. Thus, new frames of interpretation have resulted, being concentrated on such approaches as the idea of multiple points of interpretation, reflexivity, and inter-textuality. (Brittain & Clack, 2007, p. 27)

However, as some scholars are pointing out, this image is still influencing the way media presents archaeology. The 19<sup>th</sup> century positivist thinking frame is much more easily to understand and to transmit than current *post-processual narratives of the past*. To this,

one has also to add the fact that new-wave archaeology is really difficult to transmit into plain, simple language, especially if we take into consideration that archaeology created for itself some kind of jargon, increasing the difficulty of communicating information in a comprehensive way. When reading in a popular journal about some “neo-eneolithic remains of habitations” (Spectacular archaeological remains at Enisala, 2013, para 3) almost everybody who hasn’t a formal training in history or in archaeology, will experience difficulties in understanding more than the article is about some extremely old human settlements.

Secondly, the concept of “public archaeology” (Merriman, 2004), widely spread in cultural policies developed across Europe, has its impact on communicating archaeology, especially from the viewpoint of those involved in research activity. Basically, the concept of *public archaeology* could be reduced to the idea that people – e.g. local communities – should benefit in some concrete way from archaeological research. In this point, the 19<sup>th</sup> century idea that archaeological findings are emphasizing the greatness of a nation has been replaced with a conception more focused on tangible results for community. Consequently, the idea of a benefit could be – for example – translated into providing the community with workplaces or with some kind of income generated by tourism, festivals, local celebrations, cultural animation, local museum, gift shops and a local manufactured industry etc.

As a consequence of the constant effort to reintegrate the European scientific circuit, archaeology in Romania is echoing – although in a different manner – all current issues of European archaeology. The communist legacy taken into consideration (Dragoman & Oanță-Marghitu, 2013), we obtain at least a sketch of current difficulties encountered by archaeologists and archaeology when they meet larger audiences: misrepresentations, difficulties

in surpassing communication barriers arisen from excessive use of specific language, and, last but not least, a changing relation between archaeologists and local communities.

### **Research design**

The corpus of the present study is entirely based on the on-line press. The research was conducted using two popular news platforms in Romania: hotnews.com and ziare.com. After eliminating irrelevant texts, a number of 20 on-line articles were selected. They were all related in a way or another to archaeological discoveries made in Romania that, during 2013 have become news-subjects. Afterwards, from this selection there were purposefully eliminated all those articles not specifically related to the general topic of “recent archaeological discovery”. In this way, although some references were made to archaeological discoveries, all articles dealing with extended topics on archaeological heritage – such as restoration projects, European programs, events like Open Days etc – were also retired from the corpus. Therefore, the final study corpus was reduced only to 13 articles, illustrating 12 different cases of archaeological finds. It is worth mentioning that some discoveries discussed within this study were largely presented also by other on-line sources. Some topics were even re-discussed a year later, without any addition in basic information, but merely with the intention to remember people about that specific discovery.

The corpus of texts was strictly limited to articles relating about archaeological finds. Nevertheless, when analyzing this corpus a larger frame was taken into account. First of all, a special attention was given to some aspects related to the context in which every text was produced. Therefore the chosen texts were contextualized and their meanings presented in close relation with the specific context

in which they were produced. Furthermore, multiple interpretations were considered, since archaeology is of interest for a wide range of stakeholders and not only for professionals interested in promoting the result of their work.

Secondly, the study combines latent and manifest content analysis. (Treadwell, 2014, p. 216). Thus the analysis was extended beyond those elements physically present within the text which are quite easily identifiable and countable. As a result, the deep structural meaning conveyed by the message was also taken into account.

### **Archaeological excavation between scientific research and “chance findings”**

Within the analyzed articles, words like “archaeology”, “archaeologist” and “archaeological finds” seem to cover a shifting meaning. Thus, from the viewpoint of professional archaeologists, two distinct universes exist: one of “real” archaeologists (having a formal academic training and a proper institutional recognition) and another, quite distinctive universe, consisting by self-designated *amateur archaeologists*, which are usually treated by the firsts as treasure-hunting adventurers and metal-detectors owners.

One of our research questions addresses precisely this issue of differentiating between trained archaeologists and amateur archaeologists and consequently between “real” archaeology as opposite to a sort of quest for treasures. Whether such a dichotomy exists in the way Romanian popular press presents archaeology, is to be seen.

Amongst the study corpus, 12 articles are focused entirely on recent archaeological discoveries meanwhile the remaining 8 are centered on results of previous excavations, related to a wide range

of topics from stolen and recovered heritage to landscape development projects. Within those 12 articles exclusively dedicated to recent discoveries, 3 are presenting archaeological finds that were made outside the frame of what is usually called research archaeology, be it “classical” archaeology or development-led archaeology. For referring to such discoveries made outside a solid, scientific planned research, the most frequent words employed in common vocabulary are “chance finds” or “accidental discoveries”. They are also the terms used within a scientific discourse by trained archaeologist.

However, newspaper articles define as “chance discoveries” situations that are in fact, considerably different both in their contexts and in their outcomes. One can argue that we face a shifting meaning of this expression, but a deep analysis would suggest other way. Words like “chance find” or “accidental discovery” are actually used to designate situations that don’t necessarily imply the idea of *chance* as the main factor of an archaeological discovery. What do they stand for, is pointed out by analyzing both the manifest and latent content of articles focused on recent archaeological discoveries.

Within this corpus of study only one article out of 12 refers to a serried of artifacts whose discovery was originated in a chance find. It is the case of a 3000 years old “treasure” discovered by a pupil on a field, while doing works related to agricultural production. The boy “stumbled upon several weapons, tools and jewelry in bronze, by chance”. (“3000 years old treasure discovered during agricultural labours”, 2013, para. 2). Following the advice of his history teacher, he announced the finding to archaeologists from the local museum. In their turn, aided by metal detectors archaeologists were able to retrieve several weapons, tools and bronze jewelry forming a “treasure” dating back to 1200-1000 BC. It is important to mention

that according to the journal, it seems that this situation was first characterized as *accidental find* by the press release issued by the local museum. The institution eventually claimed the archaeological deposit and it will subsequently study it, in relation with similar objects previously discovered in the same area. This is the only case within the present corpus where an accidental discovery is documented as being first named as such by trained archaeologists, and then transmitted as such by the on-line press.

Besides the case presented above, another two examples of archaeological finds are presented as accidental discoveries. But they differ in context and circumstances. Both of them are originated in non-scientific search, like the previous case. But this search, although not illegal, was, nevertheless, deliberate. The discoveries were made using metal detection tools by individuals designating themselves as “amateur archaeologists”. However, both the hoard of Ottoman coins discovered near Râmnicu Vâlcea in September 2013 and another hoard of 1471 medieval silver coins discovered in January 2013 are altogether presented as *chance finds*. In the case of finds discovered near Râmnicu Vâlcea we read that “the hoard of coins was discovered by chance” (Barza, 2013, para. 2). An important nuance is introduced when presenting the second hoard, found in Dolj county; an elaborated phrase construction is qualifying the discovery as an “accidental” one. But an attentive lecture reveals that, in fact, when stating that the discovery is a “chance discovery” the transmitter argues that all the required measures were taken in order for that discovery to be considered an “accidental discovery” in the eyes of the law, and as opposed to an illegal activity:

*“The finding was announced to the entitled institutions in the legally due term, following the procedures stated by the Government Resolution no. 43/2000 about the regime of chance archaeological finds, saying that any chance archaeological find must be declared to the*



*authorities and handover in maximum 72 hours after its discovery". (Cozmei, 2013, para. 5)".*

Furthermore, if we take a look into discoveries involving hoards of coins or objects having also an easy to see market value – in addition to their intrinsic historical value – we figure out that none of them is associated with research archaeology. Basically, three articles out of 13 present archaeological discoveries for which the market value is easily to assume. Two involve amateur archaeologists and are presented by popular press as *chance finds*. The other one is the result of an infringement of the law and is presented as such, within a context where the stress lays on the attempt of Romanian authorities to recover lost pieces of national heritage, “retrieved by a criminal group in 2003 and illegally exported” (Dacian coins recovered in USA, exhibited at the National Museum, 2013, para. 2).

On the other hand, all the other 9 recent archaeological discoveries associated with a context of research archaeology – usually salvage archaeology – are referring to graves, tools and ceramics. The idea that those artifacts might also have a market value is not conveyed in any way, manifest or latent. In addition to that, in some cases explanation given by professional archaeologists, using their complicated jargon is likely to convince anyone that there must be a solid scientific reason for any city hall to pay for excavating 1400 medieval tombs as in Brasov (Over 1400 medieval tombs discovered at the Black Church, 2013) or to document a settlement comprising a time span of several epochs such as eneolithic, Gulmenita culture dating back to 5<sup>th</sup> millennia BC, the first iron age, Babadag culture from the 8<sup>th</sup> c. BC and “recent” remains dated in XIV-XV c. AD. (Spectacular archaeological remains at Enisala, 2013, para. 3).

Basically, market value is associated with chance finds, meanwhile historical or, generally speaking scientific value is associated with research archaeology.

### **Archaeologists – amateurs and professionals**

Some considerations are to be made regarding the “amateur archaeologists” versus “real archaeologists”. First, of all, this distinction is never explicit, but it can only be deduced from different formulas.

Amateur archaeologists are generally described as “persons having a passion for archaeology”. When referring to a specific on-line community, ([www.detectiemetal.com](http://www.detectiemetal.com)) the words used are “persons with a passion for metal detection and archeology” (Cozmei, 2013, para. 5) (Barza, 2013, para. 5) and a “handful of people passionate about what we are doing, having set as our goal to encourage people to follow the law in the area of metal detecting and to hand over all found artifacts to the entitled institutions, according to the law” (Cozmei, 2013, para. 6).

When the word archaeologist stands by its own it refers to a trained archaeologist. Interestingly enough, when referring to archaeologists as a group, the word “team” occurs four times (Romeo si Julieta in varianta autohtona la Cluj, 2013), (Romeo and Juliette from Cluj impressed the foreing media, 2013), (Important archeological finding made on the highway Lugoj-Deva, 2013), (Roman Sarmizegetusa re-builted piece by piece by archeologists, 2013) meanwhile the generic constructions like, for example the following: “Also, archaeologists have discovered several pits for storing provisions” (Over 1400 medieval tombs discovered at the Black Church, 2013, para. 4) – occurs three times within 10 articles.

Whenever a specialist is quoted regarding an archaeological find, the journalists mention his / her administrative position (director of the museum, director of a research institute, the archaeological site responsible), academic titles (PhD, university professor) or the name of the job as it appears in legal documents (scientific

researcher). There isn't a single case when the quoted person is actually designated by the word "archaeologist", even if sometimes his affiliation to this profession is more than obvious from the context. However, context is usually leading the reader to assume that everybody interviewed about an archaeological find is an archaeologist by profession, and this is not always the case.

As previously said, the analyzed articles don't create a world in which "real" and "amateur" archaeologists are divided in two separate universes. The social reality, as shaped by the content of newspaper articles comprises both of them. When it comes to the content of analyzed text, the press seems to treat them equally. For example, when a discovery is made on an archaeological site, some important specialist – usually the scientific responsible of the site – is called to make a short statement about the importance and the signification of that specific finding. The same happens when the discovery is made by an amateur archaeologist. The two articles retrieved from hotnews.ro are quoting as an authority in the domain, the webmaster of an on-line platform dedicated to amateur archaeologists. Just like an archaeologist, he gives details about the context of the discovery and he provides the readers with an interpretation of that specific finding. His explanations about the hoards of coins discovered in Dolj county are forming an elaborated interpretation, which is presented to large audiences as a momentary attempt to explain how the hoard was constituted, until an official version, issued by archaeologist will be available.

*"The diversity of coins constituting the hoard and the mere fact that the coins was buried suggest a possible loot, following pillage and military campaigns during Michel the Brave, at the end of 16<sup>th</sup> century" explained for HotNews.ro Iuliu-Cristinel Pop a passionate of amateur archaeology and administrator of an online community of people passionate about metal detection and amateur archaeology*

*(...) This area was quite animated during 16<sup>th</sup> century (...). The explanation – yet unofficial, because an official position of archaeologists does not exist for the moment – would be the looting campaigns organized by the people of the hood; the coins were robbed from some Turkish during their retreat or even killed in combat; Turkish in their turn would have robbed the coins from local people, or more plausible – given the diversity of the coins, from the mercenaries composing Christian armies”. (Cozmei, 2013, para 2-4).*

### **Interpreting artifacts brought back from the past**

There are two major categories when it comes to identify the way in which the importance of archaeological finds is conveyed to large audience.

The first consist in attributing a level of importance to one finding or another. Such expressions as “important archaeological discovery” “spectacular archaeological remains” are included within the very title of some articles. Other references are made within the main body of the article, but they are usually scarce. For example, in the case of the remains of a “barbarian” settlement discovered near the Roman city of Porolissum, the archeologist – in chief considers that

*“Discoveries made here are not monumental and they are somewhat different from what we are used to find in the city. There are now stone-walls, not very much roman material used in construction (...)”. (Barbarian settlement discovered near Porolissum, 2013, para. 6)”.*

In this way, the lack of spectacular findings is associated with a low importance of the discovery, albeit the information offered by more than 700 small objects and an impressive quantity of ceramics will contribute to a better understanding of some scientific

issues (in this case, the nature of contacts between Romans and Barbarians). (Barbarian settlement discovered near Porolissum, 2013).

On the other hand, when a discovery is already presented as a “spectacular” one, but it does not have a relevant market value, the emphasis lies on the scientific importance of that discovery or on its richness, measured not in coins but in centuries of inhabitation revealed. (Spectacular archaeological remains at Enisala, 2013).

The second way of assessing the importance of a certain finding is to insist on its scientific value. Both interpreting the artifacts and putting information into a broader archaeological context is in 10 cases out of 10 the way to ensure that at least a certain “story” about the discovery was carried to larger audiences. Nevertheless, all the analyzed examples are failing in providing the reader with complete information in order to properly emphasize not only the importance of one or another finding, but in order to justify the effort, as well as the amount of money necessary to be spend on archaeological research.

### **Conclusions to a prospective research**

The main research question addressed the issue of differentiating between “classical” research archaeology and what the press started to designate as “archaeology of the amateurs”. The results of this analysis are pointing out that, chance finds, as presented by popular journals are mainly referring to two dimensions. First – the legal frame: any archeological find is qualified to become a “chance” discovery as long as it is declared to the authorities in due term. Second, such discoveries are actually enriching our common heritage, since they are handed over to the entitled institutions, become in this way a part of museum collection.

Archaeological finds made by chance are basically defined as finds made by others than professional archaeologists or initiated by others than professional archaeologists. This definition would not satisfy a trained archaeologist but, it is for sure producing consequences on the way archaeology and archaeologists are perceived by large audiences. In addition to this, except old cases of law infringement, no finding made outside the frame of scientific research is presented in other way than a result of a legal, even legitimate activity. However, the legitimacy of such an activity as searching for metals in the name of a “passion for archaeology” is not manifest, but latent. The topic is never lead beyond the value or the spectacular character of a specific find and. Therefore consequences of using “non-scientific methods” in discovering artifacts, which are usually increasing chances to destroy the “archaeological context” useful in interpretation – are never discussed.

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# **Frame analysis, emotions and social media**

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## **Introduction**

A crisis disrupts the social order, but more important, affects the interaction of stakeholders with the organization. In this way, crisis could be defined as “any problem or disruption that triggers negative stakeholder reactions that could impact the organization’s business and financial strength” (An & Gower, 2009, p.109) or as “perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies for stakeholders and can seriously impact an organization’s performance and generate negative outcomes” (Coombs, 2012, pp.2-3). Going even further, a crisis tends to damage not only the organizational goals, activities, but also the organizational reputation. That is

why it is important to explore crises response strategies, along with crisis frames, and media frames that can influence stakeholders' perceptions, reactions, and emotions (Coombs & Holladay, 2009). Well-known authors like Benoit, Coombs, Fear-Banks, Heath and Palenchar have highly contributed to the crisis communication field, and have argued for the importance of a qualitative, rhetorical approach. However, quantitative methods seem to be the latest trends (at least in U.S.) when it comes to publications in communication, or public relations journals (see the papers in *Public Relations Research*) and even when exploring framing (e.g. Cho & Gower, 2006). While these studies suggest relevant findings, and valuable insights for the field, their main caveat is the "cookie-cutter" nature of their mode of analysis. Experiments, surveys, or quantitative content analyses are by default methods unsuited for more than "scratching the surface" of a phenomenon, and are not useful for meaning exploration. As Schultz & Raupp (2010) argued a more complex perspective on crisis communication needs to take into account the interactive and inter-organizational negotiation of reality by affected organizations and stakeholders, overtime. Our argument is similar and our paper showcases: 1) the efficiency of qualitative methods 2) how adding emotions and emotions-as-frames as objects of study enhances framing and crisis communication theory; and 3) the importance social media when trying to analyze the interplay between media, public, and organization's emotions and frames.

### **Framing: more than a theory**

Framing theory stems from mass media theories (especially agenda setting). In the process of new producing, journalists are said to reproduce their own realities, and by doing so they create an artificial reality (Gitlin, 2003; Reese, 2001). This new reality is

thought to reflect the ideological, social, and political, boundaries in which journalists live and work. As scholars argue, news making is a socially constructed process (see Gamson & Modigliani, 1989; Gitlin, 2003), and it is possible to single out patterns that are embedded in news messages. This idea brought forward the concept of frames (introduced by Bateson, and further developed by Goffman). “Schemata of interpretation” (Goffman, 1974), frames are used by individuals to make sense of information or an occurrence (Goffman, 1974, p. 21), providing “principles for the organization of social reality” (Hertog & McLeod, 2001, p. 140).

Therefore, framing can be conceptualized as the means by which information is selected, excluded, and emphasized in news stories in order to promote a particular definition, interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or solution (Entman, 1993; Gilboa, 2008). Media frames are essential as they can play different roles. Frames define problems, diagnose causes (by identifying the forces creating the problem), evaluate (by expressing moral opinions) and prescribe solutions (Entman, 1993). Saleem (2002, p.134-135) notes that according to the literature on framing, media frames: can play a vital role in stimulating opposition to or support for an event or issue; provide moral judgment, causal interpretation and remedy/solution for media-focused problems; generally represent specific ideology, and that media frames including attractive words, metaphors, phrases and so on also help to determine the “tone” of media coverage of an event or issue.

Closely related to photography and cinematography, due to variables such as camera angle and perspective in the styling of a visual message (McCombs & Ghanem, 2001, p. 71), framing is a theory which has been greatly used in media and communication studies. McCombs & Ghanem (2001, p. 68) make a plea for the unification of agenda-setting theory and framing theory since the

former focuses on the impact of mass media content on the public agenda, and the latter, on the frames found in the media and the origins of these frames.

The framing process is also affected by the use of visual images (Messaris & Abraham, 2001, p. 215). Focusing on the analysis of three distinctive properties (analogical quality, indexicality, lack of an explicit propositional syntax) of the visual images of African Americans in the news, Messaris & Abraham (2001, p. 219) consider that visual framings are “more reliant on the viewer’s ability to make intuitive sense of implicit meanings” and that they convey meanings which might seem controversial if expressed verbally.

Photographic images play a significant role in framing some aspects of reality. The case studies mainly focus, on the one hand, on press photography depicting conflicts (Fahmy, 2004; Parry, 2010) and natural disasters (Borah, 2009), or on the other hand, on photographic images uploaded on blogs or Facebook accounts during election campaigns (Bichard, 2006). Having a high degree of self-presentation (Kaplan and Haelin, 2010: 62-63), blogs and Facebook provide the instruments for a visual framing of identity. There is a constantly negotiated flow between what should be made visible and what should be hidden in blog posts, a flow which is specific to the concept of a frame.

In political communication, blogs are used as framing devices since the locus of control remains with the politician blogger. They provide in-depth visual and verbal information justifying the candidate’s positive image (Bichard, 2006, 331). The research on blog posts shows that since candidates “need to emphasize current issues and appeal to voters with current imagery” (Bichard, 2006, p. 340) during election campaigns, their blog posts focus on the present (time dimension) with many featuring photos and/ or graphics (framing mechanism).

Thus visual framing through photographic images is important for two reasons. First, visual framing is closely related to the position of the point-of-view. The photographer, by making certain compositional choices (camera angle, focus and distance), highlights what is important (Burgin, 1982, p. 146) and therefore introduces bias. Second, photographic images tell a story about the social roles that participants assume in the process of promoting a certain issue.

The research on the visual framing has mainly focused on a quantification of certain variables: (1) three distinctive properties (analogical quality, indexicality, lack of an explicit propositional syntax, Messaris & Abraham, 2001); (2) framing mechanisms (media excerpts, graphics, and photographs, Bichard, 2006); (3) visual images (photographs, videos, drawings, animated texts, Gamson & Lasch, 1983; Zoch et al., 2008).

We consider that the analysis of photographic images should blend a quantitative and a qualitative methodology. Paul Verschueren's multilevel frame analysis (2012) of photographic images provides the framework of a blended approach, using three levels:

The first level implies an observation of the *scene* which consists of a process (action, event, state of being), some participants and a circumstance (setting, means, accompaniments). The analysis will focus on a quantification of the represented participants belonging to different socio-demographic categories, of types of shots (extreme close-up, close-up, medium close-up, medium, medium long, long, extreme long) and of types of angles (low angle, eye-level, high angle).

The second level implies a generalization of the scene into a *theme* which designates some prototypical representations assumed by the (political, social, cultural) participants in their self-presentation.

The third level focuses on a generalization of a theme into a *master frame* or *ideological orientation* with which the (political, social, cultural) participants' representations are associated. The theoretical debates over framing as well as the construction of a framing paradigm matured hand in hand with the need and the growth of research methods appropriate to identify different types of frames. Inspired from the social sciences' research methods, framing theory brought along its own methodology: frame analysis. A frame analysis can look at different types of frames such as natural, social, and institutional (Goffman, 1981); generic and issue specific frames (Vreese, Peter, & Semetko, 2001); or human interest, responsibility, economic consequences, conflict and morality (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; de Vreese, Peter, & Semetko, 2001). Moreover, frame analysis can employ both /either quantitative and / or qualitative tools. However, our current paper was written through the lens of qualitative philosophy.

### **Framing and crisis communication**

Nelson, Clawson and Oxley (1997) consider framing to be the process through which a source defines the main problem, underlying a political or social problem and draws a set of relevant considerations for that problem. Even if framing is usually associated with the manner in which media report on a topic, and consequently with the influential role that media play in the shaping of the public's perceptions and opinions about a particular issue, this theory has gained ground in public relations as well. Kirk Hallahan (1999, p. 228) considers that public relations practitioners, as media sources, engage in two apparently different processes in order to provide a story idea to a reporter and implicitly to stakeholders. Firstly, they "solicit interest in the story topic in itself" and secondly,

they assure themselves “that the story is slanted or framed in a way that is consistent with the source’s preferred framing”. Hallahan’s model of framing adapted to public relations focuses on seven frames: situations, attributes, choices, actions, issues, responsibility, and news. Framing has been used to identify and analyze the strategic messages created by public relations practitioners (Hallahan, 1999; Knight, 1999).

As Valentini & Romenti (2011) noticed, the notion of framing has gained momentum in crisis communication studies. Framing theory offers context to the investigations of media contents, issues and frames during corporate crises as well as to the relationship between media and public opinion (e.g. An & Gower, 2009; Coombs, 2012; Liu, 2010; Verhoeven, 2009). Moreover, in crisis communication framing has been used when investigating, developing and testing efficient crisis response strategies that would minimize the damage to an organization’s image (see Benoit, 1995; Boyd, 2000; Coombs, 2006a; Coombs & Holladay, 1996). However, these studies approached framing theory in their analysis more from an organizational perspective. Frames are thought to shape public opinion (Knight, 1999), but the framing effects process is not linear (organization to public), but more like a cascade (Entman, 1993), which means that publics often get their frames from the media more than directly from the organization itself.

The news frames provided by media during crisis situations serve as interpretation guidelines for different stakeholders, especially when the organization involved in the respective crisis adopts the silence strategy. At the same time, organizations should take into account two aspects: (1) media frames may emphasize some aspects of a certain issue above others (Valentini & Romenti, 2011, p. 361) and thus may introduce bias by omitting essential information about the crisis; (2) media frames may influence the public’s

evaluation of organizational responsibility for the crisis event (Cho & Gower, 2006, p. 420).

As, Coombs & Holladay (2004, p.97) noted, a crisis is “an event for which people seek causes and make attributions.” Since the public’s opinion, perceptions and impressions about the crisis and the organization are influenced by those media frames, it is essential to consider how media frames a crisis event, its cause, and who is responsible for the crisis (Coombs, 2006b). Moreover, it is important to shed light on the influence of news coverage on people’s perceptions and on the implications for response strategies (An & Gower, 2009).

Organizations should consider the types of frames that news media use in interpreting crisis situations so that they may adapt their future crisis response strategies to the information needs of different news practices. In the literature (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; An & Gower, 2009; Valentini & Romenti, 2011), five crisis news frames are mentioned: 1) *attribution of responsibility frame* – attributing responsibility for the cause or solution of an event, problem, or issue; 2) *conflict frame* – reflecting the conflict between individuals, groups, and organizations; 3) *economic consequences frame* – reporting an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have financially on an individual, groups, organizations, or countries; 4) *human interest frame* – bringing a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem; 5) *morality frame* – placing the event, problem, or issue in the context of religious tenets or moral prescriptions.

Gower’s study on business crisis news coverage (2009) revealed the following salience of news frames: attribution of responsibility, economic, conflict, human interest, and morality. The results of their study on 25 organizations facing crises in 2006 are consistent with Semetko, Valkenburg’s findings, namely “the more serious



the newspaper, the more likely the conflict and economic frames will be used" (An & Gower 2009, p. 111). The attribution of responsibility frame is predominant in crises focused on the preventable cluster and caused by the management. An (2011) used Iyengar's (1991) level of responsibility frame when examining the effects of crisis response strategies and news frames on peoples' reactions to crisis (anger and blame). Valentini and Romenti's study on the 2008 Alitalia's crisis before its privatization provided the following predominance of news frames: economic, conflict and attribution of responsibility, human interest and morality. The dominance of the economic frame is a consequence of Alitalia's financial situation and of the Italian government's mismanagement. The less salient frames, human interest and morality, were mainly used in employee relations and strikes/ protests issues (Valentini & Romenti, 2011, 364), in victim cluster news and in preventable crisis news with a high degree of controllability and intentionality (An & Gower, 2009, p.111).

As mentioned above, visual framing is also important as it provides insights into the roles assigned to different represented participants. The studies on the (online) press photography of natural disasters (e.g. Tsunami versus Hurricane Katrina) revealed the dominance of the following frames (Borah, 2009): (1) loss versus gain (images of the dead versus images of the survivors), (2) pragmatic (images showing the reality of the disaster in physical terms), (3) human interest (images of grieving citizens), (4) political (images of officials visiting the place of disaster). The studies on press photography for political conflicts have taken into account the stereotypical representations of women (Fahmy, 2004) or of minorities (Parry, 2010). The variables used in Fahmy's study on the Afghan women's portrayal in AP photographs were: visual subordination, point of view, social distance, imaginary contact, behavior

and general portrayal. The comparative analysis of the representation of the Afghan women shows that despite signs of visual subordination and framing stereotypes, women are portrayed as more involved, interactive, more socially intimate and symbolically equal to the viewer after the fall of the Taliban regime.

The final argument for the importance of framing theory in crisis communication research is offered by Cho & Gower (2006, p. 420): “the public perceives not the objective fact of a crisis event, but the fact constructed by the media or news releases from the party in the crisis. Framing or describing of a crisis may well influence the public’s evaluation of organizational responsibility for the crisis event. Thus, framing studies should be beneficial to crisis communication and crisis management.”

### **Social Media: new means of revealing frames**

The shift from Web 1.0 or “The Read Only Web” to Web 2.0 or “The Read Write Web” (O’Reilly, 2005) is also important to framing. Defined as “a group of internet-based applications” (Kaplan, Haenlein, 2010, p. 61), social media “build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0” and “allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”. The technological development emphasizes a change from Business-to-consumer (B2C) monologues to B2C2B dialogues and customer-to-customer (C2C) discussions (Brown, 2009, p. 134). This “many-to-many” conversation highlights “the interactive negotiation of reality by stakeholders” (Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011, p. 26). Organizations should “incorporate social media into their issues management” (Liu, Kim, 2011, pp. 234-235) because the social media platforms provide: (1) unfiltered and up-to-date information; (2) emotional support during crises, as primary motivations for using social media being

affiliation and interpersonal attachments. At the same time, organizations going through crises can use emotion-laden messages sent via social media platforms, the main purpose being “to foster trust and motivate publics to take positive actions”.

Within crisis communication literature related to social media, scholars took interest in three aspects: (1) the differences between traditional and social media in imposing differences in framing and attribution of responsibility processes; (2) the way journalists use social media in the process of news gathering; and (3) the way the publics use social media in order to receive information and to express their own feelings and opinions, or to disseminate information. This paper is not an argument for or against the idea that social media changed the basic processes of communication. We argue that what has indeed changed with this emergence is that social media offer a better way to observe how these communication processes take place (i.e. it constitutes an open window to the making of people's opinions, feelings).

Coombs & Holladay (2009) analyzed the effects of media channels (print and video news) and crisis response strategies (compensation and sympathy) on stakeholders' perceptions and reactions to a crisis (organizational reputation, negative word of mouth). They found virtually no meaningful difference between the use of video versus the use of print, or sympathy versus compensation. In other words, both print and video news produced similar responses among the stakeholders. Schultz et al. (2011) continued the line of research proposed by Coombs & Holladay (2009), and analyzed the effects of various crisis response strategies via traditional and social media on the publics' perceptions of reputation, as well as the effects of these crises responses on the publics' secondary crisis communication (sharing information, leaving a message), and reactions (willingness to boycott). The message had a

main effect only on secondary crisis reactions. Reputation, secondary crisis communication and reactions were mainly affected by the medium (newspapers / blogs / twitter) and not by the message (crisis response strategies – information / apology / sympathy). Furthermore, again, opposite to what Coombs & Holladay (2009) found, the crisis strategy of information resulted in less negative crisis reactions, than the strategy of apology or sympathy. Secondary crisis communication was the highest in the newspaper condition, which is against the popular argument that the social media viral character makes messages easier to share (by the click of a button) aggravates the crisis. Even so, it may be that what people share and talk about the most are newspaper articles, not blogs or Tweets (Schultz et al., 2011). Moreover, Twitter users were more likely to share messages than blog users and non-users of social media. Another important result of their study was the finding according to which crisis communication via twitter led to less negative crisis reactions than blogs or newspaper articles. These findings related to social media bring up the need to research more types of communication, information seeking, and information sharing that occurs between publics' like Tweeter users. This may bring an answer to what Schultz et al. (2011) asked: why twitter users share the newspaper article more than anything else?

An answer may have just been provided by Bandari et al. (2012) through their study of news diffusion in social media and prediction of online popularity of news articles. For example, Bandari et al. (2012) proved the predictability of popularity of online news articles (which ones get to be shared and how many times they are shared) is not related to their content.

During crisis situations the public increasingly turns to social media. Palen (2008) found that especially during disasters the use of social media became an emergent and significant form of public

participation and backchannel communication. For example, during the crisis at Virginia Tech, and during the Southern California wildfires, in 2007, social media (Facebook, Wikipedia, etc.) were being used by survivors, friends, family and others looking for information (Palen, 2008). Microblogging sites like Twitter are increasingly being used in emergency situations as means of communication broadcast by people who are “on the ground” (Vieweg et al., 2010), or as means of communication and organization of “digital” volunteers (Starbird & Palen, 2011). Now more than ever, social media became an emergent and significant way of communication in crisis situations for those involved like, emergency managers, volunteers, survivors, but also for the general public looking for information (White, 2012).

Traditionally during a crisis, information was disseminated by officials in a unidirectional manner through their websites, or through traditional media, such as television or radio. All this changed with the emergence of information and communication technologies, such as social media. Publics switched from only passive consumers of the information to possible creators (Sutton et al. 2008). Engaging in intense sometimes exclusive social media communication is gaining prominence especially in times of crisis situations, such as disasters, or acts of violence but not only (Perng et al., 2012; Sutton et al., 2008). Social media are adopted more and more not only by people at risk in the crisis, but also by traditional media – eg CNN is relying on the public (Reporters, monitoring social media etc) (Palen et al. 2009). As Sutton et al. (2008, p. 1) noted when studying the 2007 Southern California Wildfires, “social media supports ‘backchannel’ communications, allowing for wide-scale interaction that can be collectively resourceful, self-policing, and generative of information that is otherwise hard to obtain.”

Moreover additionally to being a preferred communication channel, social media also make peer-to-peer communication and public participation and influence more visible, as the communication taking place in social media leaves digital traces that persist, diffuse (Sutton et al., 2008, p.1). Therefore, social media are argued as a key medium of crisis information and become a vital part of the crisis communication. Information seeking and self-organizing behaviors taking place through social media became more noticeable and easier to trace (Palen et al. 2009, p. 468) and easier to access and to store for research purposes.

### **Emotions-as-frames**

Recent research, inspired from emotion psychology field argued that frames are not only ideological constructs; and that in some situations, especially in crisis ones, information is framed through an emotionally influenced process that further determines reactions, evaluations, and even the social construction of reality. Cognitive psychology research defines emotions as “organized cognitive-motivational-relational configurations whose status changes with changes in the person-environment relationship as this is perceived and evaluated (appraised)” (Lazarus, 1991, p. 38). These emotions are driven by different relational themes, and vary depending on how the crisis is appraised by the public (Lazarus, 1991). Therefore, it can be suggested that different emotions can promote different degrees of message processing (Nabi, 2003). The increased emotional intensity can actually narrow even more the attention focus, making relevant events seem even more important and basically retaking the cycle. In practice this greater affective reaction (causing more reduction in focus, resulting in an even more extreme view) triggers agitation. According to Nabi (2002; 2003),

emotions can serve as frames for issues. For example, emotions make certain information more accessible and guide subsequent decision-making. The “emotion-as-frame perspective” is based on the “repeated pairing of certain emotions with particular ideas or events eventually shapes the way in which one interprets and responds to those events that in turn affect one’s worldview” (Nabi, 2003, p.227).

Cho and Gower (2006, p. 422) consider that the human interest frame, stimulating emotions, appears in the coverage of an organization’s crisis. Cho and Gower’s findings show two situations: (1) in the case of natural disasters or uncontrolled events (accidents), the people’s emotional response leads to “less attribution of organizational blame and responsibility”; (2) in the case of intentional acts (organization transgression), “the level of emotional response to the victims does contribute to assigning blame and responsibility to the company”. They showed that the human interest frame influences participants’ emotional response, and that it was a significant predictor of blame and responsibility in a transgression crisis.

These research studies brought forward the value of emotion-as-frames concept and its potential to explain the process through which public perception around an event is built; as well as the reason for which, in some cases the attribution of blame and responsibility is done rapidly and less rationally.

The literature review on crisis communication and emotions (see Kim & Liu, 2011, p. 234) highlights the following emotions that organizations have embedded into their crisis responses: alert, anger, contempt/ disgust, confusion, fear/ anxiety, relief, sadness, shame, and sympathy/ compassion.

Even if we have mentioned several important actors in the framing process (media, politicians, policy makers, foreign leaders, PR practitioners), social media enable every user to generate

and control his/ he own schemata of interpretation on certain issues. This lack of control over content is one important aspect mentioned in the European Communication Monitor (Zerfass et al., 2012, p. 45). European communication professionals consider that compared to five years ago, they have more touchstones with their publics (83.5%) and less control over their message (41.4%).

The honeycomb metaphor used for social media functionality is significant in this context (Kietzmann et al., 2011) since it provides an insight into the seven building blocks which empower consumers to express their emotions (anger, irritation, sadness, empathy, surprise, fear, disgust, etc., Kim, & Cameron, 2011, p. 840) regarding a certain issue. The central block is *identity*, which represents the extent to which users reveal their own identity (name, age, profession, location, etc.). During crisis situations, most attackers remain anonymous and organizations have to respond to such severe attacks. Thus communication professionals should shape their own organizational online communities whose users' identity should be known beforehand. Around the central block of identity, there are six peripheral blocks which highlight several functions that users have (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 243): *presence* (the extent to which users know if others are available), *sharing* (the extent to which users exchange, distribute and receive content), *conversations* (the extent to which users communicated with each other), *groups* (the extent to which users are ordered or form communities), *reputation* (the extent to which users know the social standing of others and content), *relationships* (the extent to which users relate to each other). Due to this complex functional structure of functionality, social media have had "an increasing role in the social construction of crises (...) and in the social deconstruction of crises by corporate actors" (Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011, p. 20).



## Conclusion

Through the current paper we set to present the main trends in the way framing theory and methodology has been so far applied in crisis communication research. From what we showcased several main points should be emphasized.

First, most studies were based on experiments or surveys. In this way, scholars obtained the participants' reactions which revealed the way they framed the crisis. While those studies bring valuable results, the specific methods limit the results to lab settings, or hypothetical situations, because they cannot capture the publics' actual reactions and feelings.

Second, these studies used mostly and preferentially quantitative content analysis. This had the advantage to empirically confirm the existence of some already-known frames, but was not able to catch possibly new types of frames, thus limiting the field of social representations involved in a crisis. We argue for a more in-depth analysis through qualitative content analysis, in order to better reveal the sophisticated game of social construction of reality.

Lastly, these studies showcased that during a crisis, mass media lost its traditionally privileged place in which it is the main actor in the process of constituting public opinion. The social media work like an informal public sphere (Habermas, 1989) or a micro-public sphere offering room and unlimited access to everyone and anyone for dialog and debate. However, these debates are not done through purely argumentative techniques specific to classical public sphere, but through the direct expression of emotions, confessions, bits of arguments. In this context, emotions-as-frames models and propositions show that in social media emotion is viral and it may bring along a new typology of frames in need to be further researched.

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# **Web Content Analysis and news sites: Advantages and limitations**

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## **Introduction**

Blogs, podcasts, social networks, wikis, mobile applications and games are redefining communication channels, as well as communication theories and practices. This context imposes new or adapted research methods. Research can be done using qualitative and quantitative methods. These methods are also applied in an online environment, very often with new adaptations of traditional ones. Thus, online qualitative methods and techniques can refer to web interviewing, online journaling, online research communities, social network monitoring, focus group bulletin boards, mobile qualitative research and virtual immersion (Mora, 2010), and can also include Facebook focus groups and online ethnography. Mora presents the advantages and disadvantages of these methods. For communication studies, these methods mainly address the actors in the communication process, and not the processes of communication and news (information) production/consumption itself. In

such situation, the quantitative methods and techniques are often used to test hypotheses and confirm findings from qualitative research. Online samples that are representative and large enough are used, but mixed mode research is also used, where mixing different data collection modes is a must.

On the Web, however, content is paramount. Content on the Web must refer to a lot of platforms and should be measured according to each of them. Content on the Web consists of multimedia elements, interactivity and links. Therefore, this paper addresses issues related to the Web content of news sites, and to the methods that can be used to analyze it. The notion of “content” is changed in the context of the Web, as well as its analysis. Content analysis is a qualitative and also a quantitative research method. Using this research method in the context of the Web, we deal with new aspects and ways of working. Parker, Saundage, and Lee (2011) talk about quantitative content analysis and qualitative content analysis. They consider that qualitative content analysis can be useful for social media discourse analysis, to identify research questions and units of analysis which can not be preconceived. Four aspects of the Web content analysis (Web CA) are important from a qualitative perspective (Parker, Saundage & Lee, 2011): 1) defining the research objective and unit of analysis; 2) selecting the content; 3) analyzing the content; 4) interpretation of the content.

Web content analysis refers to quantitative aspects such as: sampling method, sample dimension; coding scheme; methods for analysis and interpretation of the data. But also in this situation, qualitative aspects are involved. Since these issues cannot be fully delimited, this paper will consider both aspects, with the purpose of analyzing news sites.

Content analysis is traditionally the most appropriate method to research various topics in communication and journalism



studies. The digital content found in journalistic activities, and the possibilities offered by the Internet for various types of communication, impose some particularities regarding content analysis. Thus, the specificity of the digital content must be considered. This paper presents the particularities and specificity of Web content analysis, considering: 1) the main particularities of the research method, both quantitative and qualitative; 2) ways of implementing it; 3) case studies of Web content analysis applied to news sites.

This paper discusses methodological aspects related to the implementation of Web content analysis for news sites. Based on a review of specialized literature regarding Web content analysis, we examine several case studies related to news sites, and shows how this research method was implemented, depending on the research objective. As Parker, Saundage, and Lee (2011) argued, defining the research objective is a qualitative aspect. The paper considers the steps taken by researchers using this research method, and argues that this method must be reconsidered in Web specific conditions. The paper has some recommendation for the four qualitative aspects of Web content analysis (Web CA), as they are discussed by Parker, Saundage and Lee (2011): 1) defining the research objective and unit of analysis; 2) selecting the content; 3) analyzing the content; 4) interpretation of the content, in the analyzed case studies.

In this paper, the “news sites” are defined according to Schuth, Marx, and de Rijke (2007, p.17): “A (news-) site is a source that produces news-articles. [...] Usually the author who wrote the article is mentioned, as is its place of origin. All news-sites also state the date and time of publishing”. The news site is considered as a site whose objective is to broadcast news and to present information. It has been frequently associated with traditional television, publications or radio stations. Downie (2010) adds to these characteristics and points out the newest possibilities of sites, to use aggregators

and news feeds. News sites also record important values using traffic indicators, which can track unique visitors and record the number of views.

### **Content analysis as a research method on the Web**

In media and communication studies, content analysis on the Web remains an important research method to analyse various phenomena. Three directions are formed in this domain.

- Many researchers and authors consider that conducting a content analysis on the Web requires *a redefining or a re-thinking of the main elements of traditional methods*, such as: comparable units of analysis, fixed coding schemes, and random sampling.
- Another opinion is that the content analysis method on the Web needs to be *completed with other research methods*. Thus, social network analysis, audience research and web site analysis could be used (Bartholomew, 2010). Herring (2010) considers that the traditional research method of content analysis on the Web has the characteristics that belong to computational techniques. Link analysis is part of Web content analysis, as is computer-mediated discourse analysis or theme/feature analysis. This approach is drawn from the conclusions given by Herring (2010). She proposes an expanded Web content analysis that considers both discourse analysis and social network analysis.
- Also, the third direction regarding content analysis is oriented to *specificity of this approach on the Web*. This is based on the fact that content analysis describes both Web content and Web links. Depending on the diverse and different types of sites, Web content analysis (Web CA) as a research

method is adapted to the specificity of the Web and to social media sites.

McMillan (2000) shows how researchers apply Web CA, and considers issues such as: formulating research questions / hypotheses, sampling, data collection and coding, training/ reliability of coders and analyzing / interpreting data. All these stages are met on the Web, as well as in the traditional approach. However, McMillan (2000) shows ways in which this method is adapted to computer-mediated communication. Regarding these stages on the Web, McMillan (2000) gives several important guidelines for Web CA and online news analysis. She shows that formulating the research question and objectives raises several challenges compared to traditional media, because newspapers and broadcasts have linear content and messages are sequenced. The linearity is replaced by hypertext, and many other ways of reading text on the Web. Moreover, the Web has a multimedia content and many combined media characteristics. Despite all these, Web CA still describes the characteristics of communication, but in an emerging medium. As it is known, two main aspects are very important in the content analysis research method: data and the coding scheme. Both aspects must be considered in the Web context. Both quantitative and qualitative criteria of Web CA are found in data selection, collection and coding, or in the analysis. Data on the Web (as pages, online articles, multimedia content, social media posts, etc.) are found on various sites, and generally with the help of search engines, or other standings or statistics.

Search engines give us many lists of findings depending on the keywords relevance and number given by the user. So, as one qualitative aspect, the researcher must analyze and include different criteria to select a particular search engine list. Another option is to select data, especially sites and pages, using sites for the audience

on Web. In this situation, pages and sites are clearly organized based on different quantitative indicators, such as: unique visitors or numbers of views. As it can be noticed the processes of selection the units of analysis and data collection of Web must be evaluated both using quantitative and also qualitative criteria.

In a particular research we should consider not only the database of selection, but also the type of data we chose to have. Thus, data on Web has a textual or numerical structure, but it is also found as video or audio sequences, images or animation. Each type of data has specific characteristic that should be consider by the researchers in their research analysis. Analysing the characteristics of each type of data represents also a qualitative aspect. Researchers should define and refine, for each selected data, the set of characteristics they look for, depending on their research objectives. It is obvious that the qualitative aspects are combined with quantitative aspects in the data selection and collection.

Data on Web also refers to various types of interactions and links (Mahrt & Scharkow, 2013). The two authors address issues related to collection, measurement, sampling, data analysis and inferences, interpretation of data or data accuracy on the Web. Accuracy in the research depends on the qualitative aspects of the data. This is because, on the Web, data is “bulky” and researchers should consider carefully the alternative approaches, methodologies, tools and techniques to keep data clean and proper selected for research purposes. The analysis of digital media data is a difficult and tricky process.

Not only the selection and collection of data on Web consider qualitative aspects, but also the data coding and analysing. Web content analysis is mostly based on the coding and analysis of multimedia digital content, and hyperlinks. Herring (2010) argues that Web CA is not just about analyzing text and images, like in

the traditional media, but also about hyperlinks, and interactivity. Interactivity is materialized by the interactive discussions generated by text and image. Coding the text is done like in the traditional media, but the specific content elements of the Web should include qualitative aspects of analysis and coding, and also the researchers' arguments. In this case, we can discuss especially about links, and time as components of the Web content.

Time is another dimension that should be considered in Web content analysis. This dimension requires an iteration of all analyzing processes, to keep the data accuracy. Time dependence of variables related to Web sites can diminish the sample size (Herring, 2010). Time is a key aspect for online news analysis, due to its timeliness and the degree of renewal. Often, a very short period of time is used in the Web-based content analysis for news sites. Considering the period of time of the analysis, researchers include also qualitative criteria. Thus, they formulate arguments and collect evaluations for a specific period of time, and also following the iteration of data.

Regarding collection, coding and analysis of links, much more qualitative aspects need to be included by the researchers, such as choosing a software tool for counting links, of type "in" and "out". In such situation, different tools may provide different results. Therefore, researcher should select and filter the obtained results, to be analyzed. For this reason, the links analysis is also conducted through network analysis techniques. Another qualitative aspect refers to selecting those links "in" and "out" relevant for analysis. Important links can be evaluated only by the researcher according to the research objectives.

All these aspects mentioned here are identified by the Parker, Saundage and Lee (2011) as "selecting the content", and represent a qualitative stage for Web content analysis. Data collected from the Web are now ready to be selected in representativeness samples,

and organized in a coding scheme. The key issue for Web-based content analysis is still sampling and the unit of analysis. McMillan (2000) shows that the researcher has two primary sources from which to develop a sampling frame: “offline sources and online sources”. Both have several difficulties that must be considered. Offline sources are very quickly out of date. Online sources can be based on search engines, which can give a list of sites based on several criteria. In such situation, search engines offer a sampling frame, and raise the problem of the use of appropriate keywords to find the corpus. Moreover, both qualitative and quantitative criteria are used. Thus, the keywords chosen are qualitative aspects, and the findings can be counted as qualitative data.

Both computer coding and human coding are combined for a sampling frame. As a sampling method for online pages and news, random sampling and also stratified sampling (in case of assuring all categories) can be used. Also, using many search engines is necessary to test the validity of multiple sampling methods (McMillan, 2000).

“Representative” news sites and pages need to be considered in Web analysis, like in traditional media. Sampling techniques are also applied to identify a “representative sample”, even if a sample from the total population is difficult to be selected. This quantitative aspect that refers to sample dimension should be correlated to other qualitative aspects, such as: the geographical virtual space, linguistic virtual space, period of time, and the relevance of the findings.

In traditional media, the unit of analysis can be the word count for articles, column dimension for pages, image dimension and broadcast time. For online news and the Web, the multimedia nature of the content introduces new measurements, but also a lack of uniformity (McMillan, 2000). In most cases, the unit of analysis is

the Web site or the Web page (frequently the homepage). Based on these units of coding, other sub-units of analysis may be used, such as articles, images and interactive features. Moreover, we should consider the type of site under analysis and its categories.

Categories of sites are considered as comparable units of analysis. For instance, we can have studies that use time-based, user-based, site type-based or event-based units of analysis (Herring, 2010). Also, each site category has several specific characteristics related to its design / layout, multimedia content and operating mode. These characteristics influence the coding scheme. They can be grouped to define a minimum and fixed coding scheme that can be applied in Web CA. Commonly, a site has characteristics from various categories of sites, but its objectives define the main category, and also the fixed coding scheme. The others characteristics of the site must be considered as flexible variables that may occur. The flexible variables of a site can be seen as qualitative aspects of the content analysis on Web. The coding scheme used by this method is created both with fixed variables, and also with flexible variables. Aspects related to “discuss analysis” can be included in a coding scheme, as elements of interaction with the user. Not only the frequency but also the tone and vocabulary used can be coded using the encoding scheme. Thus, in the coding scheme both qualitative and quantitative content aspects can be included. Interactivity aspects of a site, the communication between site and users are subject to qualitative interpretation. On a Web page, researchers should identify and code the interactive and communication elements as qualitative aspects.

Moreover, units of analysis can also be the links or the web network rather than individual pages or sites. The themes on the sites and the linkages are explored as well as the content. For instance, Gibson (2011) brings into question the analysis of links to

determine the central theme in a period of time. Also, in the case of links as unit of analysis, the quantitative aspects are compound with qualitative aspects in the coding scheme. For instance, we can have the total number of links, “in” and “out” links”, but also links from different categories of sources, such as: sites in the same category, blogs, social media sites, forums, etc. Moreover, we can consider only the most important links, those coming for instance, from the mainstream media.

The research objective, as qualitative aspect in the content analysis on Web, can help to choose comparable units of analysis. For instance, the usage of Web CA in research from media and communication studies addresses issues such as: relationships between social media and mainstream media, or blogs and social media as a communication platform. The comparable units of analysis are news sites, blogs, or mainstream media. Thus, we can compare the homepage of a news site with the first page in a print edition. Another example can be a television show, that it is analysed both in traditional and in online environment. Web content analysis can be oriented to various and specific platforms, such as social media platforms, Facebook or Twitter. Each of these platforms has different characteristics that can be counted, and others that can be ignored by the researcher. All these characteristics are grouped in the coding scheme as quantitative and qualitative aspects of the analysis. In such situation, the unit of analysis should be reconsidered. For instance, the Facebook content analysis method is applied using several analytics tools and refers to quantitative aspects, such as: post categories, types of posts (such as short and long posts, questions, links, photos or videos), or also to qualitative aspects related to effectiveness of posts (such as ways the fans are engaged with content, topics that lead to most interactions and engagement, users’ sentiment).



As in the traditional process, the content analysis on Web considers also the coding scheme. This is an important part of the research that combines qualitative and quantitative aspects. Moreover, the coding scheme in digital environment has some particularities. Thus, the coding scheme created by the human in the traditional approach can be used as an automated process in digital research. The coding scheme in Web CA is more complex. Sometimes, its implementation should consider certain situations and variables that can not be identified in advance, unlike in the traditional media. Moreover the specificity of each category of sites may require coding new variables. A fixed coding scheme is impossible in many cases (Herring, 2010). This is an important limitation of Web CA. Generally, the qualitative aspects of the analysis are difficult to be estimated in advance, quantified and also automated, as we have argued here. Hence, the difficulties in testing the coding scheme may also appear. A coding scheme based on chosen units of analysis has to be tested for its reliability. Regarding this aspect, McMillan (2000) noticed that very often, checking reliability of the coding scheme is based on traditional tools, such as Holsti's index, Scott's Pi or Spearman's index.

Hesse-Biber and Griffin (2013) suggest that mixed methods are possible solutions for data selection and collection on the Web, and also for analyzing and interpreting data. The mixed solution may be beneficial for online news analysis, and solving particular issues that can not be quantified. Hesse-Biber and Griffin (2013) consider that traditional offline methods of study online may have major implications for the praxis and findings of social science research. They state that mixtures between mode and type of method (qualitative / quantitative) can vary. Internet-mediated research has grown a lot and also affects content analysis, so they also explain the barriers and limitations of the usage of new technologies for social science

researchers (Hesse-Biber & Griffin, 2013, p. 45). These limitations refer to content analysis and they address problems such as data collection, data representativeness and representative samples, and how online data can be generalized to a population, when the population is changing all the time. Moreover, Hesse-Biber and Griffin (2013) refer to one case study, where Web-based content analysis is used in combination with other methods, namely in-depth interviews and online questionnaires. They also highlight another case study that addresses social network analysis with online research techniques for hyperlinks. Thus, hyperlinks are used as a unit of analysis in the content analysis on Web.

In sum, authors emphasize that analyzing and interpreting data obtained through Web CA involves both quantitative and qualitative aspects, but also manual or automated processes.

### **Ways of implementing Web content analysis**

Data obtained in content analysis are frequently analyzed using a statistic analysis, manually, as in the traditional manner, but also through an automated process. The automated method for Web CA generally, also use metrics such as: article counts, impressions, message uptake (Bartholomew, 2010). Even if the content analysis on Web is appropriate for the automatic process of analysis, there are situations when the qualitative aspects can not be counted and the manual processes are needed.

For instance, special situations are found on the social media platforms or on the blogs, which not only take into account the corpus, but also the reactions generated through it. Thus, “sentiment analysis” on social media platforms is better undertaken by researchers rather than automated processes, usually in a qualitative manner.

In the tradition of media studies and communication research, text is the most important type of data considered in content analysis. Still, doing content analysis using various texts found on the Web can be an automated process. Thus, regarding the approach for conducting content analysis, Neuendorf and Skalski (2010) stated that in the scientific papers there are two main methodological approaches to content analysis: human coding and computer coding (Computer-Aided Text Analysis – CATA). The two authors mentioned the vital contribution of human coding techniques for a computer-aided text analysis approach, in terms of: (1) creation of content analytic schemes that could then be transformed in a CATA algorithm; (2) measurement of constructs and the not yet adequately devised CATA indicators; (3) ongoing validation of CATA measures (i.e. idioms) evolve over time.

When having multimedia content, video sequences and images gain important role in the web pages of news sites. Thus, the methods of text analysis should be accompanied by other methods. Neuendorf and Skalski (2010) described content analysis in terms of description, prediction, explanation and control of the human-computer communication. The automated processes of content analysis are based on various software, either commercial software or free online software. Thus, a completed analysis and also automated implies numerous types of software, dedicated to the characteristics of each type of medium. For instance, the software for text analysis uses algorithms for keyword searches and dictionaries. Computer-Aided Text Analysis software works with pre-set dictionaries, but also with custom dictionaries created by users. The software for image analysis uses algorithms dedicated to identify pixels, areas of colours or graphical elements. Moreover, in the text analysis both quantitative and qualitative aspects should be considered, such as the sentiment analysis.

Although in computer-aided text analysis, the text is the principal element, Neuendorf and Skalski (2010) argued that an interdisciplinary approach and also a complex methodology is needed for effectiveness. The complex methodology also involves sentiment analysis, text mining and similar word-pattern discovery. The automated processes of text analysis based on computer, consider measurements, such as: frequency of words, average word length, concordances or the keyword in a context. In addition to these quantitative aspects, Neuendorf and Skalski (2010) revealed that in the content analysis for online communication, qualitative aspects are included, and they refer to interactions. The qualitative aspects also refer to the fact that in studies on computer-mediated communication (CMC), there are differences between online text and naturally written text (Abbasi & Chen, 2008). As it can be seen, the current literature reveals various aspects and details related to content analysis, and automation processes of multimedia content.

Sjøvaag and Stavelin (2012) also considered the automated processes for content analysis on Web for news sites. They show that the automated processes are helpful for large quantities of data and claimed for a combination between automatic coding methods and traditional content analysis techniques.

### **Web content analysis research method for news sites**

It is already known that media and communication research, and also digital research, are interdisciplinary. Thus, methods, approaches are all put in the context of Web and computer-mediated communication. As a requirement when conducting Web content analysis in media and communication studies, researchers integrate different methods, depending on the type of multimedia content, the type of site analyzed and also in accordance with the research

objectives. Considering these issues, the current paper refers to news sites. This section discusses aspects of Web content analysis, on which scholars debated on regarding the research of news sites.

As the content analysis method is commonly used in media and communication studies, it is itself the subject of research. Thus, Riffe, and Freitag (1997) considered the importance of content analysis in media and communication studies in the *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly Journal*. Their study, during 1971 – 1995, examines the ways of implementing content analysis for news editorial content. They noticed that studies that have addressed this method used increasingly sophisticated statistical analysis, and included qualitative aspects. The qualitative aspects of content analysis method are more found in the case of the Web content. The content analysis takes new aspects generated by the specificity of Internet and Web characteristics. Web and computerized content analysis raise new important issues, such as new forms of content and new alternatives to human coding.

McMillan brought to the forefront the content analysis technique for Web content. She specifies several themes that are subject to the content analysis approach for the news, such as: diversity, commercialization and utilization of technology on the Web. McMillan (2000, p. 80) stated that “content analysis has been used for decades as a microscope that brings communication messages into focus”.

McMillan (2000) used a selected list of communication journals and reviewed any articles that applied content analysis to the Web, passing through five stages: defining a research question, sampling, coding, checking reliability and interpreting data. She noticed that the sample size varied dramatically, but the majority of the studies analyzed between fifty and 500 sites. In many cases, researchers analyzed all sites in the sampling frame, and most studies collected

data in one to two months. Regarding the context units for coding, McMillan (2000) noticed that a Web site is frequent, although a web site is sometimes only one page. Thus, she noticed the variance in defining the unit of analysis and selecting the content for this method. She noticed that coding units used are very different, and the most common coding unit was “content categories”, defined by the goals of the study, structural features of the Web site, interactivity or “demographic” characteristics of sites. She showed that choosing the coding unit is a qualitative aspect of this method.

McMillan (2000) stated that the analysis and interpretation of data in the content analysis research method is descriptive. Her findings coincide with those of Parker, Saundage, and Lee (2011) on the qualitative aspects of data analysis. Also, she evaluated findings obtained using content analysis and identified the main themes: diversity, commercialization and technology usage.

More recently, Khang, Ki, and Ye (2012) presented trends in social media research from 1997 to 2010; in advertising, communication, marketing and public relations disciplines. Their research is also based on the content analysis research method. It is already fashionable to study social media, when researching problems of media and communication. Khang, Ki, and Ye (2012) argued that the impressive research conducted on social media will be significant in the future in the elaboration of new theories. They considered research articles as units of analysis. They show that in the social media area 58.5% of the research methods are quantitative methods, 19.7% are critical methods and only 15.6% are qualitative methods. In all analyzed articles by the three authors, content analysis was used in a proportion of 26.4%. Khang, Ki, and Ye (2012) found that the mean sample was 16,414 for content analysis of messages posted on forums, discussion boards and so on. It can be notice that research methods have changed a lot due to Web

2.0. The Web as a subject of research brings many challenges for content analysis. This method now deals with links, characteristics of non-linearity, interactivity or multimedia elements, and has a Web specific – mixed mode of operation. Researches on Web 2.0 and social media bring more qualitative aspects for content analysis method. These platforms and sites are based more on discussions and debates, and are more suitable for qualitative approaches, like discourse analysis, sentiment analysis, or interactive content analysis.

In an online news context, the Web-based content analysis focus is on the whole site, but also on the Web page, as a unit of analysis. Due to the large size of a news sites, and their high update frequency is more appropriate to use web page, a section, or an article as units of analysis. The criteria of the coding scheme refer to multimedia content, site structure or functionality, page usability or design features. The content analysis on the Web considers more specific criteria, related to the Web site / page content, but also related to its features, such as: structure, design or functionality. It can be seen that features of design and functionality of the site are part of qualitative variables of the coding scheme. Because of this, the method needs to be accompanied with other complementary methods (Herring, 2010).

In the content analysis on Web, qualitative and quantitative aspects for interactive content, sampling, unification and data coding are also approached by Wang (2006). He explores the topic of Internet research in media and communication studies. His study addresses one aspect – the sample size for content analysis of the Web. It is known that the most frequent approach for sampling frames in content analysis implementation is to use search engines or site and Web page directories. Regarding qualitative aspects, Wang (2006) showed that researchers have a convenient sample

using search engines. He also noticed that the quantitative aspects depend on those qualitative, such as “research objectives” and “unit of analysis”. Thus, the author notices that sample size and method vary, mainly depending on the research question. He considers that it is useful to have a sampling guideline or some assumptions for sampling the Web content. So, he refers to qualitative criteria for a proper sizing of the quantitative analysis for the Web content. In these terms, Wang (2006) concluded that the sample size in content analysis must consider the “sensitiveness” or variability of the variables; such is the use of multimedia that seems to be much more “sensitive” than others, according to sampling tests. “Sensitiveness” can be considered as “qualitative aspects” of content analysis.

Hester and Dougall (2007) have also been preoccupied by the sampling of news on the Web, and are interested in applying content analysis to online news for a news aggregator, i.e. Yahoo! News. They compared different sampling methods and sample sizes for analyzing news content on an online news aggregator. They continued the discussion about the sampling decision based on McMillan’s (2000) findings, that the sampling decision is a limitation in Web-based content analysis. Following this track, Hester and Dougall (2007) asked about the representativeness of samples for online news content. Their approach is based on traditional media research, and for online news, they also considered the constructed week sampling. Hester and Dougall (2007) evaluated the constructed week sampling for online news and compare this technique with the other two sampling techniques, which are simple random sampling and consecutive day sampling. Thus, the authors analyze five sample sizes for one to five weeks. For each period (one to five constructed weeks) fifty samples were considered. These samples are compared in terms of accuracy and representativeness of online news for six months of content. Thus, accuracy



and representativeness of data in a period of time were evaluated in a qualitative context by the researchers. This is another situation when quantitative aspects are combined with qualitative aspects in content analysis method. Hester and Dougall (2007) also used eight different content measures: four measures addressing news categories, and four measures addressing the multimedia dimension of news (e.g. average length of story, average number of photos, average number of videos and the average number of “most popular” stories). Hester and Dougall (2007) conclude that at least two to five constructed weeks are needed to accurately represent online news for six months of content. The conclusions of their study showed that online news content must be sampled differently from the traditional media. Thus, in general, two constructed weeks are needed, and the sample size should be much larger to allow reliable estimation of content in a population of six months of newspaper editions. However, for some online news content, as many as five constructed weeks may be needed depending on the type of variables being analyzed. Moreover, both simple random samples and consecutive day samples should be avoided. As a general rule, variables with high variability need larger samples. Variables with high variability found by Hester and Dougall (2007) were “most popular stories” and “odd news” and they need at least five constructed weeks to represent six months of content. Variables with low variability found by Hester and Dougall (2007), such as news in the categories of politics, world news and business met the efficiency criteria for sampling with just two constructed weeks.

The problem of sample representativeness and sampling decisions for online news are often found in the literature and the decision of representativeness and sampling are based on qualitative aspect. The study conducted by Connolly-Ahern, Ahern, and Sevvick Bortree (2009) takes into consideration solutions of

sampling frames for electronic news and analyses the representative dimension of the sample size. They started by considering the fact that news has a weekly publication cycle and also consider, as did Hester and Dougall (2007), the constructed week sample. As sources of data in an online environment, Connolly-Ahern, Ahern, and Sevic Bortree (2009) indicated sites (e.g. news aggregators, social media sites) and databases. The three authors stated that in the traditional media, the most represented sampling technique is stratified samples of constructed weeks. Also, they noticed that sampling for traditional and online news media is substantially different. Thus, in an online environment a greater number of constructed weeks are necessary to evaluate six months of online news. They discussed sample size for electronic news source archives, considering different sampling methods and sample sizes to represent a year worth of information. As can be noticed decision for sample size and sampling method is also based on qualitative data.

Researchers in the communications field often used constructed weeks to provide representativeness. This procedure is considered better than simple random sampling. However, in media sampling, Connolly-Ahern, Ahern, and Sevic Bortree (2009) showed that the sample is more representative if it is constructed on weeks on a quarterly basis rather than constructed on weeks on a full-year basis, due to the articles, news and press release business cycle. Thus, constructed week by quarter samples were generated for eight and twelve weeks. The three authors also noticed that representativeness of samples varies greatly by the content area. In an online environment, the number of constructed weeks must be larger than for traditional newspaper content (only two weeks to represent a full year of content), thus they can cover the variation of events in this environment. Even if sampling seems a problem related to

quantitative data, it is conditioned by the qualitative data, such as the type of traditional newspaper.

Automated processes for analysing and interpreting data in Web CA method for news sites are discussed by Sjøvaag and Stavelin (2012). They present a specific approach for content analysis of online news. The two authors use qualitative and quantitative measures, combined with automated computer-assisted analysis. Like other authors, Sjøvaag and Stavelin (2012) showed that content analysis for online news needs to be redesigned according to its features on the Web. Thus, automated processes can help in the analysis process by extracting and processing large quantities of data. Sjøvaag and Stavelin (2012) revealed a new design for content analysis of online news, based on a combination of automatic coding methods and content analysis for television news. They gave several recommendations regarding content analysis implementation for online news and stated that all characteristics of news sites can be included in the coding scheme.

Sjøvaag and Stavelin (2012) recommend to “operationalize the research question”, so that the quantitative measures can be completed with qualitative measures and qualitative content analysis of case studies within the analyzed sample. Only in such situation the coding scheme can be designed properly. Regarding the coding scheme, the authors recommended the use of previous coding scheme for online news, because it has already been validated. However, for a codebook on online news features, an inductive design is needed (Sjøvaag & Stavelin, 2012, p.223). The codebook is also required for automated analysis. The sample needs to be clearly defined and in contact with its storage place. Thus, data can be extracted directly in the automated processes. The authors recommend that data should pursue a database dump, API access or an index-file, otherwise it is necessary to have a web crawler (Sjøvaag & Stavelin, 2012, p.223).

In automated processes, the programming languages have an important role to work with desired elements. In this case, the programming language needs to address the HTML (Hypertext Markup Language) structures in the Web pages. The testing phase is relevant for the success of the process. Combining computer-assisted coding with manual coding can be useful, but can also bring limitations to the analysis process, through removal or adjustments of variables. The advantage of this solution is given by the automated collection of interactive elements in content analysis, such as: number of internal or external links within a text, the number of comments, the number of updates and other interactive elements.

Effective coding also refers to continuously reviewing the code-book for the coding scheme. In comparison with traditional news media, Web space is not limited. Thus, Sjøvaag and Stavelin (2012) showed that online news is thematically more varied. Regarding content analysis of online news, they stated that the presentation-al format of online news affects the research design. The authors argued that online news has general characteristics (in terms of news as a genre, as a communication form, journalistic standards and institutional practices) and specific characteristics in an on-line environment (e.g. technological platform – CMS, interactivity). Sjøvaag and Stavelin (2012) described a specific difficulty for online news codification concerning the latent variables that are needed to be coded retroactively, such as interactive and multimedia features. As can be noticed the qualitative aspects of the method are considered by the two authors, and discussed as limits. In their study, they noticed that an analyzed news site was limited in its use of interactive elements, external links, embedded video and audio. Interactive elements and continuous elements (video and audio) of content always must be evaluated considering and qualitative measures. Sjøvaag and Stavelin (2012) also noticed that

the news was short – 260 words, and appeared with a frequency of about 200 per day.

The literature review revealed us the specificity of the content analysis on the Web for news sites in the: data selection using search engines, news sites or pages as units of analysis and takes into consideration sub-units of analysis, multiple constructed week samples and usage of mixed methods to analyze multimedia content and links. It is preferable for a coding scheme to be constructed on variables with low variability (i.e. quantitative variables). High variability implies larger samples. This means the qualitative variables used in the coding scheme determine samples much more important as dimension.

Studies regarding research methods used in scientific journals have already been done, as it was presented in this paper. The current paper has the advantage of presenting case studies for news site analysis, and how to conduct a content analysis research method with such purpose. We comment on the ways news sites were analyzed through a Web-based content analysis research method.

### **Case studies on the implementation of Web based content analysis for news sites**

#### **Case study 1**

Maier (2010) applied Web-based content analysis to news sites and examines how online news differs in its coverage from newspapers, network television, cable television and radio. His study evaluated different stories from both news Web sites and mainstream media. In addition, the study examined differences in news topics between institutional news Web sites and “new media”, represented by blogs and social media. Maier (2010) found that 60% of the top

stories on news Web sites covered the same topics as covered by mainstream media and less than a third of news stories hyperlinked by blogs and social media corresponded with top mainstream media stories. The research problem and the general conclusion of this study showed that audiences are turning to news Web sites. This topic was studied by Maier (2010) through content analysis of 3900 news stories. The unit of analysis was news sites: NYTimes.com, BBC News (international version), Reuters.com, Foxnews.com, USAToday.com, Washingtonpost.com and ABCNews.com. For each site, content was collected each week day on a rotating time schedule. Eighteen months of news were covered by the study. The sampling process was based on the Journalism's News Coverage Index. The sample was "illustrative" and not representative of the selected media. The topic of each story was measured by the percentage of news that the storyline consumes in any given week. For social media and blogs, the percentage of links was used. A list of the top five linked-to stories was compiled from Monday through Friday. The study also considered the timely perspective of the differences in news.

### Comments

This case study approaches news topics on news sites and shows aspects of Web content analysis that are related to units of analysis and the sampling process. Qualitative aspects of the method were considered for the analyzed sites and also for the coding scheme. Time is included as a qualitative variable of the news. For sample size and period of analysis qualitative aspects of the method were revealed. The research objective of this study is to analyze the online news and their diffusion in newspapers, network television, cable television and radio.

## Case study 2

Himmelboim and McCreery (2012) identified the patterns of interactive features in news media websites related to professional aspects, such as the relationship with audiences and medium-related practices. These categories can be considered in the content analysis coding scheme. Thus, the first framework for categorizing interactive features was based on the relationships between news media and the audience, and the categories were: consuming content, influencing content, and passing content beyond the news site. The second framework was based on the type of features – textual or visual. The conclusion of this analysis was that news organizations focus on applying interactive features that allow users to interact with content, but without the ability to influence it.

## Comments

In the coding scheme, the authors considered the interactive features on news sites and their approach was based on the user perspective regarding news content. The coding scheme used 23 features, grouped into two categories. The first category was based on the relationships between users and content, and referred to consume, influence, and forward content. The second category was based on the conceptualization of features as text or visual. A multiple regression analysis was run to analyze the data. The study treats the interactivity in news sites and focuses on the coding scheme in the Web content analysis. The qualitative aspects of content analysis refer to identifying the patterns of interactive features in news sites, and to their coding. Researchers create frameworks for classify and group the interactive features in category. The framework considers qualitative aspects of content analysis (i.e. the relationships between news media and the audience, and the feature of reading news). The coding scheme includes the qualitative aspects

of these relationships and features. The research objective in this study is the relationship between interactive features in news media websites and professional aspects

### Case study 3

The third case study that I will discuss here was conducted by Larsson (2012). He explained characteristics of interactivity for news sites, using Web-content analysis. The author was interested in analyzing the use of interactivity by Swedish newspaper websites. He used a topology that groups interactivity features into four types, given by Chung (2007): 1) human interactivity group – refers to elements that facilitate interpersonal communication. (e.g. chat, discussion forums, ‘email-a-friend’ feature); 2) human – medium group – refers to elements that allow users to express their personal opinions. (e.g. email-links to journalists, reader news tip, reader blogs, reader news, pictures, etc.); 3) medium group refers to users choice options in experiencing news stories. (e.g. video streams, news graphics, mobile version of site.; 4) medium – human group – refers to users’ possibilities to customize news to their liking (e.g. customizable content, RSS feeds, email-alerts, SMS alerts). Based on this typology, Larsson (2012) classified the interactivity features and then applied statistical analysis to test the interactive features of the news sites. He also studied previous research on this topic, known in other countries. Larsson (2012) considered that news site content, particularly inclusive interactivity, as a form of content, is influenced by external and internal factors of media companies. These factors were threatred as independent variables: newspaper size, media ownership, region and competition within region, length of web presence and number and age of staff. The analyzed population consisted of 106 newspaper websites. Data regarding newspaper size, media ownership, region and competition within



region was gathered from other sources. Data regarding number and age of staff and length of web presence was obtained by means of a questionnaire. Larsson (2012) used sampling, coding and context units to guide the analysis sites in Krippendorff's terminology. Homepages were used as sampling units. Any interactive feature presented and/or linked to the home page was coded. Also, the 'news-specific' features of interactivity in the headline news story were considered. Each interactive feature was mentioned as present/absent. Coding units (variables) were based on the typology described above. The author found 34 coding units: 5 for human interactivity, 14 for human-medium, 10 for medium and 5 for medium-human. The influence of interactivity features was analyzed using statistics (multiple regressions and mean comparisons).

### **Comments**

The research objective is the use of interactivity by the newspaper websites. This case study illustrates the research method specificity with regards to interactive content and discloses the advantages and limits for sampling and choosing variables. Implementation the content analysis method in this study considers qualitative aspects, such as: selection the unit of analysis and selection of interactive features based on relationships between users and Web pages (i.e. headline news). However, the analysis is entirely quantitative.

### **Case study 4**

Carpenter (2008) analysed citizen journalism and its practices regarding external sources and relying on routines. She noticed that citizen journalists used more unofficial sources and they are also not so tied to routines in journalistic practices. She analysed articles on online newspaper and online citizen journalism sites. Carpenter (2008) used content analysis to reveal particularities of

online journalism and citizen journalism. The unit of analysis was a text article from the considered sites. The articles consisted of editorials, blog posts, columns and opinion articles, and they were only taken from homepages for a one day period. Only considering articles from the homepage assured the uniformity of coding. The online citizen journalism sample was constructed from seventy-two sites. The sample of online newspapers was based on the restrictions that the online newspaper must comply to. The articles in the citizen journalism sites were collected every day for one month. For articles in the online newspapers, the period of time for data collection was every day for one week in the same month. Thus, a constructed one week sample was collected for online newspapers. A constructed week is a randomly selected week. The author firstly identified 6485 articles from both online newspapers and citizen journalism sites, but she only worked with 500 articles from online citizen journalism sites and 500 articles from online newspapers sites. Carpenter (2008) selected 72 online citizen journalism sites and 50 online newspapers sites. In the end, after deleting unusable articles, 480 articles from online newspaper sites and 482 articles from citizen journalism sites were included in the sample. For each article, the source was coded based on a verb of attribution. The inter-coder- reliability was tested using Pearson correlation coefficient to determine ratio level. The reliability of nominal level variables was 1.0. Scott's pi computation was selected for nominal level variables. Inter-coder reliability ranged from .83 to 1. The conclusion of this study was that there are differences between online citizen journalism sites (smaller publications) and online newspapers sites (larger publications).

### Comments

The study addresses aspects related to units of analysis, uniformity of coding and sampling for Web content analysis in the

case of citizen journalism. Qualitative aspects of content analysis method, in this particular study, refer to selecting sites (72), selecting the unit of analysis as articles (editorials, blog posts, columns and opinion articles in homepages), selecting sample (the online newspapers must be matched to each citizen journalism site city), variables coding and data collection (thus, the sources within each article were counted based on a verb of attribution). Data analysis was run exclusively through a quantitative approach.

## Discussion

Considering the literature reviews and the case studies analysed here, we conclude that the quantitative criteria of analysis most considered in the research studies on Web content were: 1) population, corpus or analyzed database; 3) sample dimension (size) and method of sampling; 3) coding scheme; 4) data collection data analysis.

*Advantages* of content analysis method on the Web for news sites can consider the following guidelines, both for quantitative and qualitative aspects. Analysing data using the coded scheme is usually based on statistical methods. Thus, the reliability is tested by statistical coefficients of correlations, such as Pearson, Scott, Spearman. Content analysis on the Web considers the time in the sampling procedure, and takes into consideration the constructed week sample. Another advantage of this research method is that it can be used to analyze many aspects of a news site, different topics, both on technical level and revealing the relationship with the public.

Regarding the *limitations* of this method, for using on news sites, we can consider the methodological problems involved with the Web, especially hyperlinks. In most situations, hyperlinks are ignored in content analysis for news sites. This means that the way

in which the text is written for the Web is ignored. Thus, the most important characteristic of the articles on the Web, their nonlinearity, is treated through elements of interactivity and interaction with the user, and not through hyperlinks. In fact, hyperlinks are treated in network analysis, but both research methods address Web content. The week publication cycle of the news is correlated with the sample dimension and this also can be a limitation for Web-based content analysis.

Another limitation is given by the sampling procedure. In most cases, the subject of research and the unit of analysis are homepages and the articles in the news site. The sample considered in research studies is based on lists of sites that are offered by search engines or other rankings. Sometimes, sample is obtained in a qualitative step and followed by a quantitative one. The constructed week sample for analysis can also vary from case to case, and this situation produces differences in analysis.

The coding scheme for news sites is based on different variables, such as general characteristics (news as a genre, news as a communication form, journalistic practices, journalistic standards and institutional practices), and specific characteristics in an online environment (technological platform – content management system, interactivity, multimedia content). This diversity must consider different techniques to run a content analysis. Web-content analysis may need to develop new techniques and procedures that belong to other research methods, and thus to be able to analyze the interactive content, especially links, multimedia content.

The quantitative and qualitative aspects in Web content analysis cannot be treated separately. They are combined in the research steps when analysing news sites.

In sum, the methodological approach for Web content analysis changes according to specific features on the Web. Moreover, it is

required for Web content analysis to be used in combination with other quantitative and qualitative research methods. Also, Web content analysis should be conducted according to the specificity of the social media platform.

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## **Part 8.**

# **INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION**



# **Three Countries, One Profession: Comparative Analysis on Evolution of Journalism Culture in Post-Communist Poland, Romania and Moldova**

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## **Introduction**

The concept of journalistic culture is linked to editorial culture, culture of news production, ideology/occupational culture. All these concepts are used to describe the diversity of journalistic values and practices, helping to understand the unitary professional identity of journalists. As Epp Lauk (2009, p. 70) argues more and more researchers associate the concept of journalistic culture with Western journalistic standards which became a kind of “civilizing” rules for the profession in transition. Therefore, it is assumed that

impartiality, objectivity and accuracy are values in the process of universalisation, and Western/"liberal" journalism model is adopted or is going to be adopted by all countries with older or newer democratic regimes. In this context a few basic questions are unavoidable: Do these values exist in the new democratic countries? Can the concept of professional culture be generalized? Could all journalists have a common professional ideology? The recent comparative journalism studies seem to give a positive answer to these questions. According to Thomas Hanitzsch the "transfer of ideology," from the West to the East, is ineluctable. Although some cross-national researches have shown "that substantive differences continue to prevail, and that professional views and practices of journalists are deeply colored by national media systems", these studies "have become one of the most fascinating sub-domains in the field of journalism studies, and researchers in this area increasingly adopt a comparative perspective" (Hanitzsch, 2009, p. 413).

The comparative journalism studies between West and East or North and South are much more numerous than those between East and East. Their absence is conditioned by the assumption that there are common patterns that characterize a particular geographic area, and a comparative study would only re-confirm these models. The Western researchers' fascination to align "other" models to an "ideal type" has distorted the reality of journalistic "peripheral" cultures such as the Eastern European ones. Labels like "former Communist countries" and "Europeanization of East" are not sufficient to build homogeneous categories and models on journalistic cultures. E. Lauk explains the failure of many West and East comparative journalism researches by the fact that:

*"(...) the western experts did not have an adequate picture of the traditions and history of local journalisms and of the level and content of journalists' education. They also tended to underestimate the pro-*

*professional experience of their local colleagues. They seemed to believe that nothing but propaganda journalism had existed in these countries until the collapse of communism swept it away, leaving an empty space to be filled up with a new professional culture” (Lauk, 2008, p. 195).*

The analysis presented in this paper<sup>1</sup> is an attempt to overcome the comparison with the “ideal type” Western model. However we can not avoid Western model concepts so prevalent in all of the Eastern journalistic researches occurred after 1990s. We propose a comparative description of journalistic cultures in Poland, Romania and Moldova in terms of five socio-professional categories: professional education and journalists’ practices, gender, income, affiliation and journalistic roles. For this comparative analysis we use the results of five qualitative and quantitative research projects, such as: Media Act (2011), A. Stepińska and S. Ossowski’s study (2009), Professional Culture of the Romanian Journalists (2010), Worlds of Journalism (2008), and Moldovan Journalists in Post-Communist Societies: Professional Roles, Values and Representation (2006). Our analysis starts from the hypothesis that each of these countries, with separate communist and post-communist histories and different media systems, has distinct journalistic cultures, which, although geographically can be classified as cultures from Eastern Europe, professionally exhibit unique characteristics. We also assume that the generalization of these journalistic cultures highlights only some global trends of development of the profession of journalists, but do not reveal an Eastern model. These hypotheses require some research questions: What was the evolution of the journalistic profession in these three analyzed countries since

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the 1990s? What are the similarities and differences between these journalistic cultures? To what extent can we generalize the obtained data? How did political and economic developments in post-communist period influence the evolution of Polish, Romanian and Moldovan media markets?

The answer to this last question is one which shows much more differences than similarities between the three analyzed countries. Compared with Romania and Moldova, Poland can be considered a successful model in implementing the principles of democracy and market economy. Since 1990s Poland's annual growth has continuously increased with over 5%, especially after EU integration. According to Bajomi-Lázár *et al* the

*"(...) political changes in 1989-90 were followed by economic transformation in the early 1990s; and liberalization and privatization, along with Poland's access to the European Union's structural funds after the country had joined the EU in 2004, triggered economy recovery" (Bajomi-Lázár et al, 2011a, p. 1).*

In the economic crisis time, Poland was the only country in the region which did not request external financial assistance managing to maintain a positive growth. In these favorable conditions for development Poland has managed to build a competitive media market where foreign investment did not delay to appear. As Bogusława Dobek-Ostrowska comments after the 1989 transformations

*"(...) new private media companies started to appear in the Polish press market. State radio and television were transformed into public service organizations in accordance with Western models of broadcasting and the dual system was introduced" (Dobek-Ostrowska, 2011a, p. 195).*

In spite of many arguments about engaged journalism and politicization of Polish media, it has remained pluralistic and free (Freedom House, 2011).

The Romanian case is quite the opposite of the Polish. As an EU member state, it has managed to build a market economy which accelerated economic growth and increased foreign investment. Over the past twenty three years, poverty has been significantly reduced in Romania and a functional democracy was established (Bajomi-Lázár, 2011b, p. 1). Only in the recent years of recession, Romania had to put a brake on many of the economic and social investments. The economic crisis has forced Romania not only to take some steps back, but also revealed many problems that could have been solved after EU integration, such as infrastructure, medical services, education, and corruption. Romania's debt of 26 billion USD cut any hope for development and stability. In this context in recent years the media market experienced a significant drop. Out of the five media groups (Media Pro, Intact, Adevarul Holding, Realitatea and Ringier Romania) which monopolized almost all Romanian media, nowadays only Media Pro majority-owned by Central European Media Enterprises is profitable (*Grupul media CME...*, 2012). Even though Romania is a relatively large country in terms of population, its media market is underdeveloped. As Manuela Preoteasa (2011) observes the Romanian media market has evolved in a direction in which business model is a hybrid one and imitates the Western model. It resembles the "influence" model where political profit is more important than the economic one. Furthermore the lack of public service policies has weakened the role of public television, which has left a gap filled by private actors. As a result the high concentration of media market in Romania has decreased the public mission of journalists and has weakened the media status which according to the 2011 Freedom House report is partly free (Freedom House, 2011).

Among the three analyzed countries, Moldova is the less comparable example. Republic of Moldova is a region "in perpetual

transitional stagnation” (Dura & Popescu, 2007, p. 278). After 1990s when liberal-democratic reforms had made some progress, Moldova lost the enthusiasm of the first post-communist decade, particularly because the Party of Communists returned to power in 2001. Nowadays Moldova is a country with a low level of democracy which is not yet consolidated or guaranteed by a well-developed post-modern society. Economically, Moldova remains the poorest country in Europe, its evolution being chronically undermined by the Transnistrian “frozen conflict” supported by Russia. On such a background, Moldova failed to accelerate political and economic reforms. Despite the government's pro-European rhetoric, the democratic progress of Moldova was and is at best modest. Consequently, the evolution of Moldovan media system is not difficult to predict. Lacking wide impact, being submitted and captive to political interests, the media system can not be considered totally pluralist or independent. Apparently, the situation has improved since 2009 when, with the change of political power, the competition increased in the Moldovan media. Romanian and German media trusts have made the largest investments in the media market, approximately 10 million euro. This investment changed the media infrastructure and has imposed to the public media new competitive standards. Although the media system seemed to improve, Moldova reaching after six years of censorship the partly free press status (Freedom House, 2011), in less than one year a part of Romanian investors left the market.

### **Professional education and activity**

During the communist period, the Polish, Romanian and Moldovan journalisms were categorized as a ‘creative activity’ domain, while the journalist was considered a writer; but then, the



social processes that take place nowadays came to form a different kind of journalism. The profession has become more technology-ridden, while the professional activity and the skilfulness of the journalists are most often evaluated according to superficial criteria. Every editorial office has its own professional standards and requirements. Journalists make use of their talent, vocation and skilfulness not only in journalism, but also in politics, economy, public relations and publicity. The separation of journalism from the literary-creative process and the technological development of this activity has been reflected first and foremost in the quality of the journalistic contents – it became more simple from the vantage point of style and language genres to adopt Western style of factual reporting -, and secondly, especially in the case Romania and Moldova, it has negatively influenced the public which manifested a lower trust in media.

Unselective access of various categories of professionals in journalism, which began in 1990's, and the refusal of media employers and employees to recognize the importance of journalistic education have led to deprofessionalization. According to Nicolae Tudorel

*“(...) in Romania it is considered that journalism is learned better while working in newsrooms. (...) The self-taught journalists believe that a journalist should not have specialized studies and a college diploma is not necessarily a prerequisite for a position in a newsroom, where there is no experience. Young journalists usually have more education than older people” (Tudorel, 2008, pp.194-195).*

This attitude towards journalism education can be partially identified also in the case of the Polish professionals. As Lucyna Szot concludes the college education “is not a prerequisite for a young journalist's employment” (Szot, 2009, p. 472). However, contrary to stereotypes about journalism as a liberal occupation, the

labor market in Poland is not open to dilettantes without a solid 'general' education and the diversity of specialized professionals is conditioned by the variety of media contents. Complementary to university courses, the journalists attend short-term specialized trainings organized by outlets and vocational schools. This common practice, often found in Romania also, is a form of balancing the theoretical content offered by universities through practical exercises. Moreover, these courses are a mandatory condition for employment. In these circumstances it is obvious that the majority of Polish journalists have higher education but not the journalistic one. The results of Media Act project (2011) found that from eighty-two surveyed journalists who have a university degree, only 36% have completed journalism studies. The research conducted by Agnieszka Stępińska and Szymon Ossowski in 2009 presents similar data. Thus, every third person in the survived group of 329 journalists from nationwide outlets has journalism education, most of them from electronic media (Stępińska & Ossowski, 2011, p. 19).

In the case of Moldova, the substitutes for college education have become short courses in specialized journalism organized by media NGOs (see the case of School of Advanced Journalism).<sup>2</sup> The number of professionals who were able to finish such training increased from year to year; although, a qualitative leap in terms of professionalism took place only in 2009, when the first foreign investors appeared on the Moldovan media market. These

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<sup>2</sup> In September 2006, the Independent Journalism Center in Moldova launched a project in journalism education named School of Advanced Journalism. This project, designed on postgraduate journalism programs around the world such as School of Journalism and Media Management Caucasus (Georgia), Media Plan Institute in Sarajevo, Novi Sad School of Journalism (Serbia), Caucasus Media Institute (Armenia), Macedonian Institute for Media and American University in Bulgaria, propose to train twenty graduates of journalism and journalists with experience working each year according to Western journalism standards and practices.

investments changed the media infrastructure that has been digitalized and increased the competition among the media and journalists. However, being still quite underdeveloped and captive to political and business interests, the Moldovan media market is prevented from a dynamic development of pluralism of opinion and media diversity. The higher journalistic education system does not help any professional development of journalists. Moreover, this is considered a factor that prevents the journalistic vocational training because of the mediocre quality of journalism studies.

Contrary to the Moldovan case, the Polish labor market is very competitive and dynamic. It requires a solid background and professional experience. Flexibility and multiskilling competences are essential in an environment where 90% of working time is dedicated to collecting and disseminating news. According to L. Szot the high level of competition allows

*“only 10–20% of journalism graduates to work in the profession (...) each year. Other graduates, though they try to work in the media, often leave to enter different occupations. Some of them find employment in organizations related to journalism (e.g. public relations, press offices)” (Szot, 2009, p. 473).*

As the author said, the low level of employed journalism graduates is registered especially in small towns where there are fewer opportunities for media development. On the other hand, as P. Bajomi-Lázár *et al* (2011a, pp. 21–22) explain competition and ownership changes have put (economic, political, editorial) pressures on Polish journalists. As a result the practitioners turned from creative people into media workers who produce serial journalistic contents.

Professionalized in editorial or academic environments the Romanian journalists prefer to be multi-specialized and to develop their work skills in various types of media. The ability to have more

specializations enables them to be mobile and professionally demanded. As the Professional Culture of the Romanian Journalists research project (2010) illustrates, in the Romanian newsrooms the journalists' activities are diverse and extremely demanding. Being asked to work 47 hours per week, reporters and editors make 25 journalistic contents a week on average. Meanwhile, editors in chief and their deputies edit over 150 journalistic texts. The most significant part of the journalistic activity is divided between information gathering and investigation and news production. They provide much less time to presenting and design/layout and editorial coordination and management. Pressed by time and editorial policy, the Romanian journalists often ignore the rule of information verification from at least three sources. More than half of journalists from local and national newspapers verify the information at least 10 hours per week, while 65% of broadcast journalists check information on average 5 hours per week. The most interested in information checking are journalists from news agencies, media and weeklies specialized in investigations.

The professional practices of Moldovan journalists are fairly similar to those of their Romanian colleagues in Romania, such as gathering, verifying, drafting and disseminating information. However, in the case of Moldovan journalists there has been highlighted a type of activity rarely seen in the Romanian practitioners – teamwork. As claimed by N. Angheli-Zaicenco (2007, p. 6) “(...) most of the journalists have claimed that their media contents (...) are based on information collected by the editorial teams. This rate appears to be highest among local media”. Also, the Moldovan journalists neglect the practice of verifying the information, caused most often by the lack of transparency of public and private institutions and the constant and deliberate obstruction of the right of access to information. The Moldovan professionals, mostly

journalists from local media, are considered generalists. Lack of specialization is caused by inadequate/generalized faculty education and fewer opportunities on the job market.

## Gender

The feminization of the journalistic activity is one of the factors that characterizes the profession in all the three analyzed countries. However, more than in Poland, in Romania and Moldova journalism is a deeply female occupation, consequently in these countries the gender influence is more difficult to determine. In spite of that, it is an established fact that most often women journalists hold non-executive positions as reporters and editors and in some cases (see Moldova) do not participate in the decision making process. Most Romanian and Moldovan women working as journalists have less than 35 years, while the average age of their male colleagues is 40. These data are available exclusively for offline media journalists. As concerns the average age of online media journalists, it is considerably lower, although the proportion of women and men is preserved. As the Media Act project results showed the proportion of Polish women in the overall population of journalists is equal to 46%. A journalistic culture research conducted in Poland two years earlier by A. Stępińska and S. Ossowski among 329 journalists working for nationwide media gave a slightly lower percentage – 41% (Stępińska & Ossowski, 2011, p. 18). These studies pointed to the fact that most women work in news agencies and monthlies, and in a lower proportion in online media and weeklies. Men constitute the majority in all surveyed segments (except agencies) and in case of monthly magazines, radio and television, their number can surpass several percent. To standardize our data, we intend to analyze the gender role

in journalism on four general aspects: conditions of employment, career, specialization and income.

The hiring process is the least important catalyst that influences gender differences in journalism. For example, 86% of the Moldovan journalists who participated in 2006 in a research about journalistic culture refused to support the idea that the gender factor influences their access to the profession (Vasilendiuc, 2007, p. 7). However the small number (6%) of men journalists who thought that gender factor had helped them to enter the profession, talked about positive discrimination in favor of men which have been shown by editors in chief to re-balance the proportion of men and women in the editorial offices. On the contrary, women journalists who argued that the gender factor has helped to enter the profession have presented other arguments, such as physical attractiveness, lack of family obligations or family relationships and friendships with the editorial staff. In the case of Romanian journalists, the preferential hiring practice is not a recurrent one. However more than half of the surveyed journalists from the Professional Culture of the Romanian Journalists research recognized that they had been confronted with situations when media employers have taken decisions based only on their personal preferences and not on the editorial ones (Vasilendiuc, 2010, p. 194). Thus the employment practice based on friendship exceeds the gender factor.

If in the employment process the gender has an insignificant importance, in the journalistic career it is more pronounced. Greater number of men who occupy leadership positions creates an imbalance in the gender representation. This situation discourages women to achieve a higher hierarchical status. Thus, the Media Act research project confirms that the Polish journalistic occupation is dominated by men. The difference between male and female representation among journalists is not large, but deepens with the

increasing of the rank position. Accordingly, women in executive positions are in the minority. An illustrative example can be the Polish public television Telewizja Polska S. A. which has sixteen regional stations throughout the country. Currently only in the case of four stations, the director of the branch is a woman, and men carry out this role three times more.

Furthermore in the journalistic profession there were highlighted some social stereotypes that emphasize gender discrimination. Below we present some of the stereotypes identified in the discourses of the Moldovan journalists:

*“although women become more prominent in journalism, it remains a male profession that requires an ascetic life, manhood and sacrifice, which is more difficult to achieve for women”; “my boss hires only men because they know better to write; they understand better the economy”; “a man is stronger, more confident in communication with the information sources”; “if a man leads, the woman in any case remains in the second-hand position, even if she is a good professional”; (and) “it is not profitable to take women to the newspaper, they remain pregnant” (Vasilendiuc, 2011, pp. 87-91).*

The specialization of journalists is generally not affected by the gender factor, because in most of the media outlets from Poland, Romania and Moldova the journalists accept any topics. However, there is a thematic division of labor, which often depends on the gender factor. Thus, issues related to politics, economics and military belong to men, and topics aimed at social, cultural and family issues are assigned to women. There are some situations reported by the women journalists from Romania when they had been constrained to give up subjects that may jeopardize their physical health (Vasilendiuc, 2010, p. 195). In the case of women journalists from Moldova, the discrimination based on topics is explained by the fact that the editors preserved the Soviet journalistic conventions,

when women were inclined to accept cultural and social issues, and men were more interested in politics, economy, military and sports. As one of the Moldovan interviewee explained:

*“(...) the topics for men and the topics for women do not exist as a matter of editorial decisions, as it is rather a psychological problem. (...) For example I do not see a woman who could deal with politics” (Vasilendiuc, 2007, p. 8).*

In terms of revenue, although there is an officially established salary for all employees with the same editorial position, in 2006, in the opinion of the Moldovan journalists, men had higher salaries than women. The reasons were various, from the top positions men detained in the newsroom to some Soviet-style clichés when it was considered that men work more or “they have a family”. Even if this payment gap issue still applies today, the differences were substantially reduced. Practically as in the case of the Polish and Romanian journalists, such discrimination is practically nonexistent. The only criteria determining the salary of journalists are the quality and especially the quantity of journalistic contents they produce.

## Income

The examined researches have revealed that the Polish, Romanian and Moldovan journalists' incomes correspond to a generalized pattern on journalistic earnings. Thus, there are two extremes describing the incomes of journalists. Firstly, the VIP journalists or the leading journalists who are part of the administrative board of media companies sometimes earn 15 times more than the anonymous journalists who represent the vast majority of the profession. As B. Dobek-Ostrowska (2011b, p. 34) mentions, a lot of these journalists do not have a permanent contract of employment, therefore, they have other types of contracts or provide



for their own one-man companies which lead to a lack of economic stability in the profession. Secondly, there is also a visible disparity between journalists from big cities and regional or local ones. Urban journalists are better paid than those from regional or local media. The latter do not earn their living from journalistic profession only. Moreover, it should be mentioned that in the last few years the economic crisis was one of the factors which has changed the journalistic incomes in Poland and Romania. Moldova can not be aligned to this model; it represents a unique case. In the following paragraphs we will present the analysis of income and employment reports in the three countries during recent years.

In 2008, the minimum wage for a Romanian journalist was about 200 euro and the highest salary could exceed 3,000 euro. Three quarters of reporters and editors from the national and local Romanian media, who participated in Worlds of Journalism project, were remunerated monthly with sums between 300 euro and 800 euro. The situation was different for Romanian journalists who held leadership positions in national private media organizations, whether it was print or broadcast media. Their monthly wage varied between 1,300 euro and 2,500 euro, and for 1.7% of them the sum could exceed 3,000 euro (Vasilendiuc, 2008, p. 13). Around the same period (2006-2007), some of the local Moldovan journalists earned eight times less than the lowest paid Romanian journalists. The Moldovan journalists' monthly salaries varied from 25 euro to 300 euro. Their wages depended on the types of media they were engaged in. In state media the incomes were 90-120 euro, but salaries often came with delays. In some private media the salaries exceeded 400 euro. On this background an extremely small number of journalists usually were satisfied with the earnings (Vasilendiuc, 2007, pp. 4-6).

In this context, it should be noted that, at that time, the salary was not the only form of income for Moldovan journalists. There

are several forms of remuneration. The most common practices were fixed salaries and agreement wages. Also, there were bonuses that the Moldovan journalists received on several occasions (national holidays, new materials, won contests). In private media the journalists who had individual employment contracts received fixed salaries negotiated with the administrative structures of media institutions, plus bonuses offered depending of the professional achievements. However, the remuneration of journalists was not stable, but varied depending on quantity and not quality of journalistic outputs. Excluding wages, agreements and bonuses, the Moldovan journalists also received money for direct or hidden advertising. The journalists did not advertise only products or services, but also had to produce ordered items, especially during elections.

Although not at the same level, some of the local Romanian journalists were forced to attract publicity in order to have their articles published. Their number is difficult to estimate because this practice was not regulated. However the majority of the Romanian journalists legally employed in private or public national media had *“individual work contracts on indefinite time periods and/or royalties. They are monthly paid on fixed salaries (negotiated or established by the employers) in accordance with the functions/positions they detain in the editorial office, to which there are added the enhancement pay-rises and bonuses for supplementary work hours. The decision making employees detain also signed management contracts, confidentiality contracts or loyalty contracts on definite time periods”* (Vasilendiuc, 2010, p. 191).

According to A. Stępińska and S. Ossowski before 1989 in Poland most journalists were permanent employees, a situation considerably opposed to the present wherein only about 20% of journalists from all media and 60% of TV journalists have private

contracts (Stępińska & Ossowski, 2011, p. 20). Many journalists are not even part-time in the editorial offices. Full-time journalists in most cases work for dailies, weeklies, magazines and radio. The lowest level of job satisfaction has been declared by journalists who work in television because of their part-time contracts. As mentioned in the study conducted by these authors, the salary is a motivating factor in journalism for 80.4% of journalists from weeklies and only 54.3% from newspapers and magazines. A more balanced response was recorded from electronic media journalists – approximately 67% (Stępińska & Ossowski, 2011, p. 23).

The economic crisis has significantly changed both the structure of the journalistic profession and the earnings of journalists. The revenues of VIP journalists decreased in some cases up to 50%, although the wage difference is maintained between them and the most of the anonymous journalists. In 2010, 65% of the Romanian journalists who took part in Professional Culture of the Romanian Journalists research confirmed that their salaries were reduced by 15-20%. Their incomes varied between 250 and 700 euro. Only about 1% of journalists earned more than 2,500 euro. The Romanian journalists from the national press earned three times more than the local media journalists. In the same time, the electronic and online media professionals have double salaries compared to their written press colleagues. The largest discrepancy in wages was recorded between reporters and editors. In 2010 the best reporter had a fixed salary up to 500 euro and an editor in chief's salary exceeded 3,000 euro. However from the financial point of view, the most uncertain situation was for freelancers; most of them remained without incomes. The Romanian economic crisis has not broken the journalistic freelancing activities, but drastically reduced the number of 'independent journalists'. It also created a high mobility in the profession due to layoffs and wage delays.

As determined by the monthly magazine “Press”, Polish commentators from nationwide dailies and the editors-in-chief of news programmes had the highest earnings in 2011 (Kowalczyk, 2011, pp. 16-17). Their salaries were between 4,300 and 4,800 euro. The following top positions are held by journalists from weeklies such as “Polityka” or “Newsweek Polska” with revenues of 2,500-3,600 euro and reporters from public radio and television which had up to 2,000 euro per month. The revenues of experienced full time journalists from online media exceeded 800 euro. As Media Act research project shows these relatively high wages involve journalists working for prestigious nationwide media. The earnings of journalists from local media are much lower. It varies between 400 euro and not more than 1000 euro. This is a reflection of the diversity of professionals, which consists of a narrow group of highly-paid journalists and a majority with the unstable and unsatisfactory economic situation.

Despite all expectations, starting with 2010-2011 the salaries of Moldovan journalists have increased considerably. This development can be explained by several major investments that have been made in the Moldovan media market by Romanian and German media groups (Reinstein Media Management Germany, Realitatea, Adevărul Holding), about 10 million euro. These investments, which among others have improved technologically the Moldovan media and have revived the public television, have professionalized the activity of journalists’ as well by increasing their professional requirements/standards. In order to motivate journalists, media organizations have increased their wages. However the major changes that occurred in media widened even more the disparity in the salary level between local and national media journalists. A private national media journalist earned about 500 euro, but his salary was doubled if he was an editor-in-chief of a national newspaper.

The new confidentiality and loyalty clauses for work contracts have allowed to some journalists to reach a very high salary (1,500 euro) as compared with the average earning in Republic of Moldova that does not exceed 200 euro. The Moldovan journalists from the local press continued to receive low wages. For some of them it was up to one minimum salary (72 euro).

### **Professional affiliations**

The professional association is not an indicator of professionalism in the journalistic environment in any of the studied countries. Professionalism is seen as a collective value rather than an individual one. It does not have any feature of the journalistic profession or group norms. This leads us to the idea that among journalists there is a lack of solidarity and self-regulation. The current situation is complicated by the fact that different generations of journalists coexist in the media. Older generations are more homogeneous, conservative and associative in such activities, while younger generations are more heterogeneous, mobile, pragmatic, and professionally unassociated.

The Worlds of Journalism research (2008) showed that only professionals who practice journalism for more than fifteen years had belonged to the professional organizations and associations. Meanwhile, young journalists, representing both national and local media, had expressed their disinterest to professional affiliation. This attitude is confirmed also by the recent survey Professional Culture of the Romanian Journalists (2010). Thus, to the question 'Are you a member of any organization or association that is primarily for people in journalism or the communications field?', 86.4% (from the total of 594 respondents) admitted that they had never attended such activities and only 13.6% had participated at

least once every year to the organizations' meetings. However, more than half of the surveyed journalists from private and local media were interested in socializing with their peers but these relationships are more personal than professional. According to P. Bajomi-Lázár this situation is caused by the lack of "*journalism association with a national reach*" (Bajomi-Lázár, 2011b, p. 14), though there are many small organizations that try to regulate the activity of various professional groups of employers or employees such as The Romanian Press Club (an organization for media owners), Local Press Owners, The Romanian Broadcasting Association, Botoșani County Association of Professional Journalists, Journalists Society Galați, Journalists Union of Hungarians in Romania etc. In these conditions, it is easy to assume that the self-regulation is more a goal than a guild obligation. The high number of various professional codes (there are ten ethic codes in Romania) is not a barrier for journalists in prioritizing organizational objectives (ratings, circulation, advertising, revenue) instead of professional ones. The growing number of Romanian practitioners confuses the term 'public interest' with ratings. Meanwhile, the professional associations are becoming more passive to the growing number of ethical violations registered in the TV media. As an old generation journalist noted after a media scandal about violation of a person's private life, the Romanian journalism failed to self-regulate (Racheleanu, 2012).

Poland has a self-regulation system stronger than the Romanian one. Although the number of journalists affiliated is quite small, there are three associations totaling at least 30% of all Polish journalists: the Association of Polish Journalists, the Association of Journalists of the Republic of Poland and the Catholic Journalists' Association. The total number of Polish unions and professional associations is about ten. As P. Bajomi-Lázár *et al* affirm in the

MDCEE Country Report – Poland (2011a, p. 20) this large number of professional organizations is a sign of fragmentation of the journalism community. Moreover, as the same authors write:

*“professional solidarity among journalists seems to be lacking, and the journalism community is deeply divided along ideological, social and generational lines (...), as a result journalists seem unable jointly to defend their common interests against political pressure”* (Bajomi-Lázár et al, 2011a, p. 20).

Even so, compared with other countries in the region, in Poland the media accountability tools function better. In addition to legal and professional instruments supporting accountability of media such as Broadcasting Act (1992), Chapter of Media Ethics (1995) Journalists Code of Conduct (2002) etc., there are also some organizational structures that monitor their implementation. One of them is the Council of Media Ethics which includes academics, media producers and representatives of journalists. According to Michał Głowacki and Paweł Urbaniak the “Council of Media Ethics can make statements and issue opinions, but does not have any legal basis to apply sanctions after a violation of ethical standards by the mass media” (Głowacki & Urbaniak, 2011, p. 136). Its work is supplemented by a professional magazine “Press”. It analyzes the developments in the Polish media market by addressing to diverse specialized audiences as journalists, advertisers, marketing, and public relations professionals (Głowacki & Urbaniak, 2011, p. 137).

In Moldova, the majority of journalists are part of professional organizations, whether it is the Union of Journalists or other types of specialized national and international NGOs (Women’s Media Organization, United Nations Press Club, Environment and Tourism Journalists Association, Center for Investigative Journalists, etc.). However, their membership in the professional unions and associations is not an indicator of professionalism, but

rather an assurance that they belong to a particular professional group. In general terms, the Moldovan journalists do not trust any professional organization because of their inefficiency in protecting their interests and lack of independence from the political system (Vasilendiuc, 2007, p. 10). Most media organizations have an ephemeral existence in terms of professional involvement. Lack of financial resources creates greater functional difficulties. Many NGOs are formally registered; they have very few members and are not engaged in any specific professional activity. As A. Sîrbu mentioned the

*“(...) main cause [of unaffiliated journalists] is lack of solidarity, passivity and journalists’ conservatism regarding social initiative, due to divergence of interests between media owners, on the one hand, and journalists, on the other hand, many of whom are politically affiliated or sponsored from foreign sources” (Sîrbu, 2001, p. 83).*

For these reasons, self-regulation has a conjectural, limited and local character and is encountered most often in newsrooms. Low self-regulation leads to a lack of self-protection of journalists from the internal and external pressure factors and limits their professional cohesion.

### **Professional roles**

The creation of dozens of journalism schools and professional organizations, as well as strengthening the academic education in journalism have produced visible effects in the structure of the journalistic field, and namely professionalization, feminization and rejuvenation of the journalists’ guild. The Polish, Romanian and Moldovan practitioners have tried to take over the Western press model. They wanted to reconstruct their professional identity following the norms and values promoted by the objective



and unbiased journalism. The researches examined in this study have shown that these changes occurred only at the narrative level. This means that journalists assume, without effectively putting into practice, the Western values of the journalistic profession. The practitioners claim that their values are public right to information, unrestricted freedom of the press, protection of human rights, fight against corruption and abuse of power. They appreciate the professional values as objectivity, fairness, truth, honesty, professionalism, creativity and credibility. The majority of journalists see themselves as watchdogs and teachers who educate the public, opinion leaders and defenders, supporters of social change and the main supplier of information. Nevertheless, the profession is still in transition to professional values and norms accepted by all professionals, to standardized and homogeneous work practices, to responsible and non-political media (Gross & Kenny, 2010, pp. 11-19). In order to illustrate the previous statements we will present three examples of the professional roles which have been assumed by Polish, Romanian and Moldovan journalists in their professional practices.

### **Polish Journalist-Citizen and Disk-Jockey**

Being placed constantly under the pressure of strong discourse about professionalism, the Polish journalists promote a socially responsible image of their profession. Even what Jerzy Olędzki (1998, p. 277) says that the journalists worry about increasing deficit of social respect shown towards their occupation confirms the assumption that media professionals want a social status which will give them a symbolic power position in society. The recent journalistic culture survey shows that an average of 60% of journalists associated their activity with helping people and influencing public opinion by dissemination of information on issues of common

interest (Stępińska & Ossowski, 2011, p. 24). The same percentage of surveyed practitioners considered that the journalists' mission should be related with highlighting of social problems and motivating citizens to act in the public sphere. In order to give the public an example to follow, they act as active citizens who select the journalistic contents according to their instrumentality for social groups that they support. These professionals form the media agenda invoking the public interest and social importance of events. At times, the role of active citizens "turned out to be a requisite tool of communication with the electorate" (Sula, 2008, p. 153). The politicization of this role is determined by political interests putting pressure on media. On the other side, the results of the Media Act research project indicate on another journalistic role related to the economic pressure exerted on journalists by media owners, the entertainer or "disk-jockey" (W. Pisarek, *apud* Coman, 2003, p. 146-147). The media disk-jockeys practice a shallow entertainment journalism based on scandals, sensationalism and trivialization of media contents. This role is the result of increasing competition on media market and enhancement of struggle to attract advertising providers. The disk-jockey role was most easily assimilated by young journalists. According to B. Dobek-Ostrowska (2011b, p. 45) young journalists have a more permissive vision in terms of professional standards because of their lack of skills and base professional knowledge. However we can say that media commercialization and tabloidization have not compromised the social mission of journalists, as happened in other Eastern European countries.

### **Romanian Journalist-Politician**

One of the most important roles that have been assumed by Romanian journalists is that of politician and substitute for the political institutions. Although recent research shows a moderate

attitude of Romanian journalists towards the political area, they do not hesitate to use media tools and public power to create parallel institutions with the government. As shown by Worlds of Journalism (2008) research results, the Romanian practitioners did not have a clear ideological orientation and they did identify themselves with political parties or politicians. However, less than fifty percent of male journalists working in national media were 'very interested' in politics and about two thirds of these journalists supported liberal values (Vasilendiuc, 2008, p. 13-14). The involvement of journalists in politics is not conditioned by their 'distrust towards state institutions', as they tended to state in the journalistic researches. Their interest is rather conditioned by what Hallin and Mancini (2004, p. 21) named 'political parallelism' which characterizes the Romanian media system. As P. Bajomi-Lázár observes in a MDCEE Report about Romania,

*"(...) political parallelism as measured in terms of the extent to which the media reflect the major political cleavages in society and the extent to which advocacy journalism prevails, as is shown by the close link between media 'oligarchs' and the political parties, as well as government pressure on formally independents outlets" (Bajomi-Lázár, 2011b, p. 20).*

The dependence of journalists on various groups of economic and political interests is so deep that they do not hesitate to express their political affiliation or praise politicians (not just in election campaigns) for various rewards. Being a highly mobile profession, journalism does not offer many opportunities for long subsistence, so the journalists prefer to lose the status of objective reporters than that of employees. They use the journalistic career to refocus on other areas, so that the rewards they receive for their obedience is often a new profession and politics is one of their favorites. As a result the role of politician that some journalists

play in media becomes a reality after the completion of their journalistic careers.

### **Moldovan Nepotist-Journalist**

The journalistic profession in Moldova develops in a media market which is almost unprofitable. This financial vulnerability reduces journalistic standards of work. Even the recent media digitalization by injecting foreign capital of approximately 10 millions euro has not changed these facts. Journalism remains a deeply politicized profession where friendships are more important than public information. Journalism based on friendships has become the norm since the early '90s, when the media was detached from state censorship and began to form its own agenda. With the limitation of state control the media had lost government subsidies and was forced to seek other funding sources. The Moldovan journalists had increased their income by making 'friendly services' for example by promoting some political parties or denigrating uncomfortable politicians and businessmen. Sponsorship was not necessarily the only profit. Personal relationships with officials were valued more than other benefits. Because of restricted access to information, these contacts were the only form of news gathering. As the Moldovan journalist Cornelia Cozonac put it in 2006,

*"(...) nobody gives you information on the tray. (...) You have to pull by the tongue your sources. This is done at certain meetings, night out, for which the journalist should spend a little. If you meet with an official, of course you have to serve him with a cognac or a good lunch or dinner, which costs you. (...) Sometimes we try to help our sources with different services when they are in need, sometimes we give them some paper, for example, or help them to write something or to do some reports, that's everything that a journalist knows how to make"* (Vasilendiuc, 2011, p. 194).

The results of the *Moldovan Journalists in Post-Communist Society* research (2006) showed that Moldovan journalists considered friendly journalistic relations a condition of their professional success (Vasilendiuc, 2011, p. 140-141). Moreover, they did not believe that these relationships could reduce their credibility as journalists. It should be noted that this type of journalistic practice has become a survival strategy in a society where informal relations based on family, collegial and friendship links are prosperous.

## Conclusions

Although comparative analyses involve more challenges and their achievements require a contextual knowledge of all compared subjects, their findings have a higher quality value than that of mono-cultural studies. Thus the main conclusions that emerges from our comparative analysis of the professional cultures of journalists from three Central and Eastern European countries do not necessarily change theories in the construction of professional identity of journalists in post-communist countries, but at least they validate our hypothesis that journalism from post-communist countries has not a unitary evolution, revealing an Eastern model, and it does not aim the same Western professional ideal. In the following, we will summarize some of the major similarities and differences between professional cultures of journalists from Poland, Romania and Moldova.

The shaping of the new post-communist journalistic identity was quite difficult in Romania and Moldova. In the early 1990s in both countries journalism was regarded as a liberal occupation practiced by various professional groups (engineers, teachers, doctors etc.) with no specific education in the field. The editorial office was considered the most effective place to professionalize

journalists. It was believed that “many brilliant journalists have never been to a journalism school, whereas quite a few of those who have, do not really make it into this profession” (Ulmanu, 2009, p. 482). The “ideology” of talent and innate vocation has dominated the journalists’ discourse, valuing amateurism and minimizing any attempt to professionalize. Any change was seen as an attempt to destabilize the professional activity or to marginalize and remove the old generation of journalists who dominated the editorial offices (Tudorel, 2008, p. 194-195). After the 2000s the journalistic profession in Moldova entered a prolonged hibernation, determined by the political context (return to power of the Party of Communists), while Romanian journalism went through a process of commercialization and excessive tabloidization, losing its social mission. In the case of Polish journalism, the post-communist period represented a return to its cultural roots. A long tradition of writing and reportage was an important background on which it was able to renew the advocacy journalism. Although engaged journalism did not disappear, the competency-based occupation and objective reporting were much easier to put into practice due to the legalization of Polish samizdat press, an activity which was completely missing in communist Romania and Moldova. Therefore we can say that what Romanians and Moldovans built, Poles just rebuilt. As a consequence, professionalization of Polish journalism had less evolutionary syncope and from the beginning established its development objectives. Poland is one of the three analyzed countries which introduced the formal criteria for access to the profession (e.g. university degree in journalism) and proposed a legal definition of the journalistic profession. Although the Polish journalistic community is quite fragmented due to generation differences, it has managed to strengthen professional self-regulatory levers. The competition that have been imposed by foreign investment in

Polish media have consolidated even more professional environment by developing professional standards that can be observed in significantly higher quality of journalistic contents if we compare with Romanian and Moldovan media.

The main changes that have been recorded (at different levels) in the past two decades in the evolution of journalism profession in all three compared countries are feminization, rejuvenation and professionalization of journalistic occupation. In the Moldovan and Romanian newsrooms, the number of women in subordinate positions increased steadily since 1990s. The deep feminization of profession has removed gender differences. Nowadays, you can even speak about a balance in representation of women and men in executive positions. Not the same thing happens in Polish editorial offices where men exceed women journalists. The feminine niche media are the only areas where women have priority. Regarding the rejuvenation of journalistic profession, this factor is driven by high levels of job mobility and insecurity. As a profession in transition which develops in a media market constantly in change, journalism in Central and Eastern European countries does not provide a stable workplace for employees. This occupation is seen as a bridge towards a “more serious” activity such as politics, advertising or PR. The celebrity journalists, who have higher salaries than most anonymous practitioners, have the best chance to change their job with a well paid one in a professional environment that offers security and stability. From this point of view it is easy to assume that in countries like Romania and Moldova where journalistic activity is not sufficiently self-regulated, professionalization is an individual choice. In other words, ethical compliance is determined by the organizational and editorial environment where journalists are working. The more politically engaged media is, the greater the pressure will be on journalists.

Based on these findings about the evolution of the profession of journalist in three countries from Central and Eastern Europe during the last decade, we could highlight the ambiguity that frequently occurs in the journalistic culture studies whereby post-communist countries are placed on the same scale of comparison. With the increasing number of such type of researches it is becoming more obvious that they have over-sized the effects of the Western standards, roles and values on the professional practices of Eastern journalists. Contrary to these observations, all journalistic culture studies show that journalists from this region have identified themselves in their professional narratives with Western journalism model. In this context, the following question is compelling: Why do self-perceptions of Central and Eastern Europe journalists align with those of their fellow journalists in the Western world, yet Eastern journalism is still so very different? The most plausible explanation may be the following: the ambiguity in the perception of the journalistic field is caused by the fact that without being elite, the journalists assume elitist roles. They claim to “exclusivity in protecting powers, independence of action and the right to control” (Tudorel, 2008, p. 197). Basically, journalists overestimate their professional activity. In their practice they are legitimated by the authority they have on the public. Although claiming to have the same professional roles as those of Western journalists, they define them differently and put them into practice as their employers require.

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**Intercultural communication in the 21st century:  
Multilingualism, new media and technology:  
divide or bridge for building a socially intelligent EU**

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**Introduction**

In the knowledge society it is expected that society, through its various communities, will function more intelligently and will thus become better. What is then understood by the term the knowledge society? For the public discourse the term is interchangeably used with *information society* or *information age* the idea behind

those terms being the revolutionary change in mankind's progress in the last five or six decades. This change has led to the fact that the main assets of today's organizations are now intangible, such as knowledge, good will and visibility that are related to their human resources and also to the larger publics of the organization, and not tangible as related to the fixed assets, such as property and equipment. The usage of the terms can be traced back to Daniel Bell's book *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting* which was published as far back as 1973 in which the author spells out, for the first time seemingly, what was a more or less an agreed upon assumption: "the roots of post-industrial society lie in the inexorable influence of science on productive methods" (Bell, 1976, p. 378). What Bell actually used was the term *information society* thus launching it to the general popularity it gained in the 90s of the last century alongside with the accelerated development of the internet and information and communication technologies.

In order to gets access to benefit of the knowledge society and to become part of the process of knowledge sharing and knowledge generation it is quite obvious that both individuals and societies need a language or languages of understanding. This is of particular relevance to such relatively newly developed structures like the European Union (EU) whose institutions spend about 1 billion Euro per year on translation and interpretation (METANET, 2012, p. 4) in order to maintain its policy of multilingualism and become thus more transparent and, therefore, more accountable to its stakeholders. There are lots of questions about the necessity and efficiency of having such huge expenditures when they ensure only a fraction of the whole area of information required for translation. Research funded by the EU has been looking into ways to overcome linguistic barriers in a structure that from an economic

point of view makes sense and encourages the development of business relations, but which culturally is still finding its best ways to continue.

Language learning is obviously one solution, but how many languages would be practical to learn in a structure in which there are officially 23 languages and more than 60 are used for everyday purposes by the people living and doing business in the EU? What is the most effective way to develop language skills that enable such a process? How can technology enable the process of linguistic acquisition and what would be the costs at societal and individual level for such options? The findings META-NET (2012, p. 12) showed that online content in other languages than English has increased in the EU, in Asia and the Middle East. Forecasts report that by 2015 Chinese internet users will increase and overtake English language internet surfers. One of the challenges these trends will be causing is the endangering of some lesser used languages. In other words a networked society would favor languages such as English or Spanish while many other European languages could get to the periphery of such a society thus weakening the global position of the EU by being against one of the main goals of the EU society which is enabling equal participation of each of its citizens irrespective of their language.

Another solution to the barriers to human understanding and contact raised by the many languages spoken in the EU would be the agreement to use one of the prevailing languages – which for a large number of reasons – is unacceptable due to the political and economic implications of such an agreement. It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss why this is so, however one can easily refer to the unhappy attitudes of the French or the Germans towards what they consider as an overuse of English, with Angela Merkel even proposing in the draft election manifesto of her Christian

Democratic Union party that German becomes a working language of the EU next to English and French (Irish Independent, 2013).

This paper will explore some of the issues related to multilingualism and technology use, briefly discuss some methodological options, present the results of a small scale qualitative investigation and of the impacts that we consider to be important for the awareness of decision makers in the educational field.

There is a strong pressure on most areas of social research to be based on quantitative analysis as seen in Ritchie & Lewis (2003, pp. 14-18). The use of data that is based on some statistical interpretation is considered to be much more reliable because both the data gathering process and its analysis are perceived as more objective. There is a relatively long line of argumentation that discusses the relevance of qualitative and quantitative research as used by the hard core sciences and by the softer ones, the social sciences and the humanities. Beyond this interpretation of qualitative research as being more subjective and therefore, not necessarily more unreliable but, possibly rather more restricted in scope, there is also a historical component that Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p.1) underline as strongly connected to colonial studies and thus related to a metaphor for colonial knowledge and power. In their *Handbook of Qualitative Research* Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 4) underline that qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right even if it is difficult to define due to its transcending disciplines and fields of study. There have been many attempts to define qualitative research and a lot of concepts and assumptions have been drawn into the discussion. On the side of methods and approaches that are characteristic of qualitative research, such as case studies, interviewing, observation, visual methods, interpretive analysis, politics and ethics, participatory inquiry, a large literature has been and continues to be written.



Referring to the North American research tradition, Denzin and Lincoln (2003, p. 3) consider that there are eight moments in the development of qualitative research that overlap and co-exist even today. Those moments are: *the traditional* (1900 – 1950); *the modernist*, or golden age (1950 – 1970); *blurred genres* (1970 – 1986); *the crisis of representation* (1986 – 1990); *the postmodern*, a period of experimental and new ethnographies (1990 – 1995); *post-experimental inquiry* (1995 – 2000); *the methodologically contested present* (2000 – 2004); and *the fractured future*, in the present times. “The eighth moment asks that the social sciences and the humanities become sites for critical conversations about democracy, race, gender, class, nation-states, globalization, freedom, and community.” Starting from this complex historical heritage of qualitative research Denzin and Lincoln offer a working definition: “Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world.” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 3). We draw on this definition of qualitative research in our empirical research as applied linguists who teach languages to business students and who are concerned about our students’ effectiveness in the international labor market in which they are competing individually while their organizations are competing for market share. We can only hope that through our research, limited as it obviously is, we can contribute to the clarification of the view on how the new media and technology support fast and meaningful language learning. In this respect, following the guidelines of Denzin and Lincoln, we used two approaches to collect our data: an interview with master students and focus groups with employers from multinational companies located in Bucharest, in an attempt to get a better understanding of the reality of improved language skills for better

economic performance. We also hope to strengthen the pool of recommendations to Romanian policy makers in the field of education towards the need to have a more flexible curriculum that allows an increased amount of soft skills to equip students with portable and transferable skills for the knowledge society.

### **Lingua franca and international English**

English has become the main language of communication in the world today in all areas of life; economic, social and cultural exchanges are more often than not conducted in English. We could therefore call it the lingua franca of the global village, a status strengthened by its increasing usage in the contemporary social media, to the detriment of the mother tongue, as well as of all the other world languages. This status of the English language was explored by Janina Brutt-Griffler who came up with a new concept, *World English*, in 2002. She identifies “four central features of the development of global language”: the econocultural functions of language; the transcendence of the role of an elite *lingua franca*; the stabilization of bilingualism through the coexistence of world language with other languages in bilingual/multilingual contexts; language change via the processes of world language convergence and world language divergence (Brutt-Griffler, 2002, p.110). Thus, the development of English is a consequence of its increased usage in the global economic, scientific, technological and cultural markets, and it is linked with the democracy of linguistic choices, as it is nowadays learned by all socio-economic groups, not just elite, as in the past. At the same time, world English is used in parallel with local languages and it spreads worldwide; moreover, new varieties are created. World English, in Brutt-Griffler’s words, is a direct result of Anglo-American and Western hegemonic claims of

the world; its spread is the result of both imperialism and the fight against imperialism (Brutt-Griffler, 2002, pp. 62-86).

In another book, also published in 2002, *Teaching English as an International Language*, Sandra Lee McKay proposes the term “international English” which includes all speakers of all the varieties of English that we know. “International English is used by native speakers of English and bilingual users of English for cross-cultural communication. International English can be used both in a local sense between speakers of diverse cultures and languages within one country and in a global sense between speakers from different countries” (McKay, 2002, p. 132). The term “international English” is also used in *A Concept of International English and Related Issues: from Real English to Realistic English*, published by the Council of Europe. It includes “native speakers of English, speakers of English as a mother tongue (with all its dialects), speakers of new Englishes /worlds Englishes/ indigenized/ nativized varieties” (Seidlhofer, 2003, pp.8-9) and is proposed to be used interchangeably with (in brackets, where the terms first appeared, as cited in (Seidlhofer, 2003): “English as a lingua franca” (Gnutzman, 2000), “English as a global language” (Crystal, 1997), “English as a world language” (Mair, in the press), “English as a medium of intercultural communication” (Meierkord, 1996), “world English” (Brutt-Griffler, 2002)

Seidlhofer (Seidlhofer, 2003, p. 11-12) discusses the status that international English has in national curricula across Europe from four standpoints: functionally (this underlines the role of English in the world), conceptually (this involves people’s perceptions and attitudes towards English as a global language), linguistically (how it looks and sounds) and pedagogically (what teaching of international English means and its differences from teaching English as a foreign language). Seidlhofer emphasizes the “overtly consensus-oriented, cooperative and mutually supportive” character of

International English. Moreover it lacks a normative character; when used, the “let-it-pass principle” is at play (Seidlhofer, 2003, p.15). The cross-cultural element of international English should also be mentioned; consequently, its teaching should not take into consideration idioms or linguistic varieties that are not important for international communication (Seidlhofer, 2003, p. 19). In a change of language learning paradigm, classes should focus on the teaching of “language awareness”, as opposed to English as a modern/foreign language, “to provide a basis which students can learn from, fine-tuning subsequently (usually after leaving school) to any native or non-native varieties and registers that are relevant for their individual requirements” (Widdowson, in Seidlhofer, 2003, pp. 22-23). As a conclusion, the main advantage of teaching “international English” is its inclusiveness, and therefore its democratic character. Its main disadvantage: the challenge of containing a multitude of language varieties.

As shown by Marinescu (2013), English language learning should be adjusted “to the larger scope of education at a European level, which should include intercultural education and education for democratic citizenship, with the help of technological tools” (Marinescu, 2013, p. 390), with a shift in focus towards general language awareness rather than (or together with) learning for proficiency. Therefore, the basic preoccupation of language professionals should be not to mechanically teach grammatical and vocabulary structures, but on increasing learner autonomy. In this context, a great role is held by the use of new media and technology in the classroom, as well as (and especially) by making use of the learners’ knowledge and skills acquired informally and non-formally. Obviously, assessment of international (or world) English needs to be strictly connected with learning strategies, therefore should be composed of self-assessment, peer-assessment, together

with teacher assessment, and should expand beyond pure language assessment, to include intercultural elements (Marinescu, 2013, p. 391).

### **The role of new media and technology in language learning**

As more and more English language learning is done in the virtual world and English language structures are acquired more often than not unconsciously through informal education; also, as life-long learning programs nowadays take place in the same virtual environment, we should question to what extent this new paradigm influences language learning. Moreover, we should consider that English is learned and used along other languages (mother tongue included), in a world in which multilingualism seems to be a good answer for the intercultural communication problems of Europe, and in which language technology is seen as a possible connector among the various languages.

The Report *Globalization, Modernity and Language: New Perspectives in Language Education* (Williams, 2012) identifies several meaningful ways in which new technologies can impact on language learning. The first element is networking of individuals and organizations across space, thus contributing to a reconfiguration of the relationship between time, person and place. Then, the infinite ways in which digital materials can be used. But perhaps the most important one is the fact that mobile technology enables individuals to assume responsibility for their own learning, thus boosting their confidence and their self-esteem, it helps make “the shift from modernity to reflexive modernity”, as teaching is no longer just a “process of delivery” (Williams, 2012, p. 44).

However, the EU telecom sector that would foster and accelerate the impact of new technologies on language learning and

language use facilities is still fragmented and weak. Compared to the US or to South-East Asia or China it is unable to innovate and to invest. The result is service of a poor quality both to businesses and individuals as “networks suffer from lack of investment, lack of integration across Europe, and lack of resilience” (Kroes, 2013, p. 3). It is then important to have a wider and stronger ICT sector to support European companies in their efforts on the global markets with better search engines, social networks, and increased connectivity for every product or service they offer – from financial services to cars, from healthcare to language services. This is an area for political decision making both at the EU and at every member state’s level.

### **Research findings: questionnaire and structured interviews**

In order to present a clearer image on perceptions existing towards the use of general and professional English among today’s students and young professionals a series of small scale interviews were conducted in the months of May and June 2013 with a total of 54 students of the Master’s Program *International Business Communication*, with the Bucharest University of Economic Studies, and followed by a questionnaire, in June 2013, with the same students. In this way, both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to validate the findings.

Some data referring to the respondents include the fact that there were 12 men and 42 women, the gender balance could not be controlled as it corresponds to the participation in this program. Out of the 54 respondents 52 are between 20 and 35 years old, one is in the 35 – 45 age group and one in the 45 – 60 age group. Only 49 identified their last degree or certification: 45 as a bachelor degree and 4 a master degree. Concerning their area of work, these

are very diverse: most respondents worked in customer service or tourism (7), marketing (6), accounting (5), and sales (4). Fewer worked in translations (3). The rest were working in other domains.

Some questions referred to the self-assessment of the respondents concerning the four skills in their General English language level and in their Professional English language level (Reading, Listening, Writing and Speaking). We wanted to find out to how many years in formal and informal education this self-assessment corresponded (*Did you study English in school/at university? How many years/semesters?* ; and: *Did you study English at a private institution/with a private teacher?*), whether the respondents had a certificate to prove their English level (*Do you have any English language certificates to prove your English level?*). Regarding their hopes and wishes for the future, the questionnaire and the interviews included questions referring to taking an English course/exam in the future and their desire to study other languages as well as which courses/certificates and which languages and why.

In addition to English, the next spoken foreign languages are French (33 answers) and Spanish (24). Less spoken are Italian (9) and Russian (7), Portuguese, German and Romanian (5 each), followed by Turkish (3), Chinese and Hungarian (2 each), and Korean, Arabic and Afrikaans (1 each). Most respondents studied English for 12 years in school (35), with 14 respondents having studied up to 8 years and 3 respondents just under 4 years. Moreover, 47 respondents studied English at university as well, and 30 people studied it for more than 4 semesters. In addition to that, 18 respondents also took extra courses (most of them general language courses or courses towards certification) or studied with a private teacher (compared to 34 who did not). 28 respondents have certificates to prove their English level and 21 do not; most of those are Cambridge (12), TOEFL (3), IELTS (2) and a bachelor degree in languages (12).

When asked whether they would like to take an English language course in the future, the greatest majority of the respondents answered affirmatively (34); however, quite a lot of them do not consider this a necessity (17). Out of the ones who seek to obtain a certificate, 12 consider a Professional certificate, 10 a Cambridge type one, 6 a Business English one; other responses include IELTS (1), TOEFL (1) and British Council (1). If we compare these answers with the ones on seeking an English language certificate, we can see that the answers are similar. Thus, 32 people answered they intend to take a certificate in the future, with 14 seeking a Cambridge one and 10 IELTS, whereas only 4 seeking to obtain a TOEFL. 19 people do not wish to take an English language certificate in the future.

The greatest majority of the respondents (50) envisage the study of another foreign language (or more) in the future, compared to only 3 who do not. The most desirable languages for study are German (18) and Spanish (16), closely followed by French (12). Russian is next with 9 answers, Italian (6) and Portuguese (5). Greek and Turkish receive 2 votes, as well as Romanian and Chinese, and Japanese, Arabic, Azerbaijani, Dutch and Welsh are considered by one person each.

Most of the respondents believed their professional English skills are below their general English skills. Thus, taking speaking for example, if 7 people believed they use General English at an excellent level and 31 respondents believe their General English speaking level is “very good”, when it comes to Professional English, 4 people answered “excellent” and 25 “very good”. The rest of the respondents moved to “good”: from 14 (General English) to 23 (Professional English). “Average” has one more answer: from 2 (General English) to 3 (Professional English), whereas “not too good” and “acceptable” have 0 responses on both counts. The same



trend can be seen for Writing: 27 (“very good” General English) and 9 (“excellent” Professional English), compared to 24 and 7.

A question referred to the support that new media and technology (such as Facebook or twitter, etc.) can bring to the learning process. A set of the same questions were asked in the interviews. Both quantitative and qualitative research findings show that the people who believe they can help exceed by a few those who believe they do not: 27 (23 “a lot” and 4 “very much”) to 24 (19 “a little” and 5 “very little”). Some of the answers in favor of the social media helping language learning include: “I believe that in order to learn a new language one needs practice. Not by reading (...) but talking to other people and hearing them as well”; “You can connect to the people who speak the language you (want to) learn and exchange knowledge”; “If you only read the comments you will start learning something”; “If you have foreign friends you can talk with them on the social media that helps your vocabulary”; “All media can improve language skills”; “Feedback is good”; “Social network encourage multi-cultural contacts, but the environment is not very formal, the language used might not be the correct one”.

Some of the answers were not in favor that social media do help language learning: “The social media use mostly English, so I do not think it can help me with other languages”; “Many people write incorrectly”; “The use of social media can help you in achieving a basic level in language learning but that is not English”.

### **Research findings: focus group**

The importance of multilingualism and intercultural communication skills as a prerequisite for employability in today’s demanding business environment was further assessed by organizing four focus groups with 21 human resources (HR) professionals in

charge of recruitment at four reputed global companies headquartered in Bucharest.

We used this qualitative research method as we consider it allows the possibility for all participants to share their thoughts, feelings, attitudes and ideas on the researched subject. We believe the focus group technique provided authentic data, which helped develop deeper insights than other methods. People were able to build on one another's responses and come up with ideas they might not have thought of in a face to face interview, and, more importantly, participants acted as checks and balances on one another by identifying factual errors or extreme views. Thus, we could get a clearer picture of their beliefs and opinions.

The companies we targeted are active in business process management and outsourcing (1), IT (2) and wholesale retailing (1). We chose these companies because they support one of the issues we address in our article: multilingualism. Their status as multinationals involves the knowledge of a wide range of foreign languages besides English, while subsidiaries of foreign companies in Romania require English and consider knowledge of the language of their country of origin an advantage and large scale Romanian enterprises again expect their employees to know only English besides Romanian.

The focus groups were organized in June 2013 and were based on a set of 12 open ended questions addressing issues such as: the importance of English as a condition for employability; level of English required; general versus professional language knowledge; language skills required – speaking, listening, reading, writing; relevance for the CV of language courses taken and language certificates acquired; ways in which new media and technology (such as Facebook, Twitter etc.) can support language learning and reasons why (not); relevance of employees' awareness of intercultural

differences and of their intercultural communication skills. At the end of the discussions the recruiters we talked with were asked to make any other comments they thought necessary for the issues discussed.

One point to remark at the outset of the analysis of the focus groups findings is the fact that the answers of the HR professionals in the various companies are in total accord, with slight variations in degree and, occasionally, wording. Moreover, they show that the assumptions we made are validated by real life recruitment practices. These include knowledge of English as a pre-requisite, with another European language an advantage and overall positive ways in which media and technology can impact on language learning.

All HR professionals declare knowledge of English to be a selection criterion. The level varies from at least B1 to C1-C2, according to The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The recruiters at the outsourcing company accept a B1 level for the average employee, since their working language is another European language like German, French, Italian, Spanish etc. which has indeed to be B2-C1. Here too however, people in middle and upper management are required C1-C2 levels. For the rest of 3 companies the level of English has to be at least B2, with C1-C2 for middle and upper management as well. However, knowledge of other European languages improves employability chances.

Asked how important language certificates (IELTS, CAE, BEC, TOEFL) are for employability, recruiters remarked that they can be an advantage, however they are not a condition. This does not pertain to the importance of the certificates as such, but rather to the fact that part of the job interview is a discussion in English and/or another foreign language the position requires, usually carried out with a native speaker. Like the interviews conducted with students of the Master's Programs, the questionnaire on which the focus

groups were based also included an item on the ways in which new media and technology impact on language learning.

Some reasons the HR professionals gave for a positive impact were that they are a way: to get more comfortable with the language by using it, to gain confidence and fluency “I believe that every way to practice a foreign language is good and helps you familiarize yourself with it, practice is essential”; or to network across cultures, to identify and understand cultural differences “Social media provide greater visibility of and easy access to different cultures by interaction with people of different nationalities. They help increase understanding of cultural differences”.

Some reasons for a negative impact were: perpetuation of incorrect use of the foreign language, particularly of grammar and spelling, as well as use of informal register. “Practice has shown that these social media impact negatively on foreign language knowledge, particularly when it comes to written communication. We as employers expect people working in our company to use the foreign language correctly both when speaking and writing”. “Ideally, one starts using social media when one has acquired a certain level of proficiency in the respective language, thus gaining practice and fluency”.

Concerning the extent to which employees’ knowledge of cultural differences and their adequate conduct during intercultural encounters is important HR professionals told us that their respective companies give it particular attention. The outsourcing company has every new employee attend an intercultural training and organizes workshops on intercultural issues on the premises regularly, as “this is important to facilitate smooth collaboration internally, among subsidiaries of the company in various countries as well as externally with our customers”. Moreover both the outsourcing company and all the other companies use online

platforms such as Globesmart for intercultural sensitivity training of their employees.

An additional comment made by the professionals in our focus groups was on the particularly good foreign language skills Romanians have. It was remarked that this linguistic advantage provides Romania with a competitive edge. Due to it, although the costs are higher, companies outsource their business process to Romania rather than to other countries like India or Egypt. “This is a huge chance our country is not exploiting enough – it could bring huge benefits both for employability and our country’s brand image”. Our respondents also mentioned that over the last seven years the number of languages required and used in multinational companies in Romania has increased.

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

Our study, though limited in terms of numbers of people questioned and range of backgrounds both of students and of companies, nevertheless allows us to draw some relevant conclusions.

- Wide digitalization of the European Union states, if supported by solid and coherent investments, can have positive effects on finding effective alternatives to individual language learning and the increase in the number of multilingual people. However, there are serious concerns regarding the negative effects on lesser used languages (Romanian included) and the cultures they represent.
- The new media and technology support fast and meaningful language learning only to the extent to which the individuals have a good motivation to use them meaningfully and the education system as a whole encourages this type of learning.

- International English, including intercultural education and education for democratic citizenship, is undoubtedly the future in terms of English Language teaching. It seems to be closer to the learning style of today's younger population, as it departs from a more traditional grammar based and proficiency oriented vision. Moreover, it suites the life-long learning program in their greatest majority having a strong online component. However, at this point we cannot foresee to what extent learning of other languages will follow on the same path. What we can certainly emphasize, though, is the absolute necessity of complementing English learning with at least two foreign languages, beside one's mother tongue (as various documents of the EU and the Council of Europe indicate). In the 'Guide for the development and implementation of curricula for plurilingual and intercultural education' a group of authors with the Language Division of the Council of Europe include more than speaking several foreign languages besides one's mother tongue plurilingual competence – it is understood to include classical languages, regional or minority languages and migration languages. Moreover, in the same document, intercultural competence includes the idea of understanding "otherness" and of mediation between different members of cultural groups: "Plurilingual competence refers to the repertoire of resources which individual learners acquire in all the languages they know or have learned, and which also relate to the cultures associated with those languages (languages of schooling, regional/minority and migration languages, modern foreign or classical languages). Intercultural competence, for its part, makes it easier to understand otherness, to make cognitive and affective connections between past and new experiences

of otherness, mediate between members of two (or more) social groups and their cultures, and question the assumptions of one's own cultural group and environment" (Beacco, et al., 2010, p. 8). Thus it is part of a self-reflective exercise which learners of languages need to continuously make.

As shown in our research, there is a clear need to have a more flexible curriculum that allows an increased amount of soft skills to equip students with portable and transferable skills for the knowledge society. Consequently, assessment also needs to be made in an adequate manner, including self and peer-assessment components, that should complement teacher evaluation strategies. To exemplify how teacher assessment can be used in innovative ways in language learning, we would like to mention Lenz and Berthele who, in the 2010 Council of Europe document, pointed to the assessment's strength, as it "lies in their flexibility and their adaptability to the contents actually treated in class; they can also consider particularities of the learning conditions and other relevant aspects. Moreover, teacher assessment is a suitable means to accommodate alternative forms of assessment, such as portfolio assessment or dynamic assessment building on multiple and frequent sources of information on the students" (Lenz & Berthele, 2010, pp. 15-16). Moreover, the two researchers include assessment of the "mediation skill", defined as the activities carried out by a third person who makes communication possible between two other people (Lenz & Berthele, 2010, pp. 17-18). Also, the same document gives the example of *The Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters*, an instrument developed by the Council of Europe's Language Policy Division as a specific addition to the Language Biography of the European Language Portfolio, and dedicated to the development of self-reflection and the assessment of intercultural competence at the same time (Lenz & Berthele, 2010, p. 28).

In conclusion, in this paper we explored some of the challenges raised by foreign language learning, including through new media and technologies, challenges clarified through the use of both qualitative and quantitative research. We presented the results of a small scale qualitative investigation and the impacts that we perceive as critical for the awareness of decision makers in the educational field.

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# **Pre-Service Teachers' Intercultural Communication Competence**

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## **Introduction**

Diversity, as everywhere, poses challenges to Finnish, Japanese and Turkish educational systems, which are fairly different from each other in both cultural and educational aspects. There is no doubt that issues of diversity may be one of the biggest challenges that education and teacher education faces today (Delpit, 1995; Nieto, 2006). In spite of the growing number of immigrant students

in schools all over the world, research shows that teachers usually lack the information, skills and sometimes motivation necessary to cope successfully in culturally heterogeneous classes (e.g. Taylor & Sobel, 2001). However, teachers' intercultural competence is one of the most important factors that facilitate quality education for all students.

Many prejudices established in childhood (Tajfel, 1981) are quite resistant to change. Teachers' own identities play an important role in their professional practices, and teacher education has often failed to sufficiently motivate students to examine their own histories, self-concepts and attitudes or ideas about diversity (Cochran-Smith, 2003). This preliminary study investigates Finnish, Japanese and Turkish pre-service teachers' intercultural competence and its relationship to their culture, experiences, and personal and professional identity.

Bennett and Bennett (2004, pp.147–165) have developed a theory which explains the cognitive development that people go through when living in different cultural environments. In the ethnocentric stage of the intercultural process (denial, defence and minimisation levels), people experience their own culture as central to their reality. At the denial level, people are ignorant, indifferent to or neglectful of cultural differences. At the defence level, people evaluate differences negatively. At the minimisation level, people recognise cultural differences superficially. In the ethnorelative stage, (acceptance, adaptation and integration levels) people experience their own culture in the context of other cultures. People develop from recognizing and appreciating cultural differences to be able to employ alternative ways of thinking and frames of references. Furthermore in the development process, people internalize more than one cultural worldview into their own. After reaching this stage the individuals have flexibility in solving

intercultural conflict and are open to complex realities (Endicott, Bock, & Narvaez, 2003).

### **Personal and Professional Identity**

Teachers' professional identity is rather a complex concept. The personal, professional, and cultural elements of a teacher's identity are interconnected and continually reconstructed through historical, cultural, sociological, and psychological influences (Cooper & Olson, 1996). Not only teacher training or teaching experiences shape teacher's professional identity, but also the personal and professional identities developed through one's life (Beijard, Verloop, and Verment, 2000). In that respect, identity is a moving intersection of inner and outer forces. Past events and experiences in the personal life of teachers, such as early childhood experiences, are intimately linked to their professional role (e.g. Goodson and Hargreaves, 1996). All these form a personal cognitive interpretation framework for the professional conduct of teachers (Keltermans, 1994; Beijard et al., 2004). When discussing multicultural encounters at school, teachers should become more conscious of their own positions and how their life experiences may influence a given situation. In that respect, intercultural professionalism would require teachers to be willing to reflect upon any conflicts they have encountered and consider how their ideas, likes, dislikes, and fears affect their interpretations of their students (e.g. Li & Li, 2005; Talib, 2005).

### **Cultural Concepts of Self and Identity**

The concepts of self and identity are often used interchangeably in the literature on teacher education (Day et al. 2006). On the other hand, identity can be defined as who or what someone

is, the various meanings people attach to themselves or the meanings attributed by others (Beijaard, 1995, p. 282). Identity has an impact on the self, as identity is also the publicly presented self. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991, 1998), individual and collective culture has a great effect on the individual's concept of the self. Markus and Kitayama reveal that in Western cultures, as in Finland, individuals tend to be independent and self-contained. Their inner attributes are the most significant in regulating behaviour (Markus & Kitayama, 1998). On the other hand, there are societies in which people feel that they are more connected and less differentiated from others. Such an "interdependent self" can be found in Japan, China, South America and also in Turkey. Cultural heritage and personal frameworks are transferred and reinforced through institutions such as the family, school, and society.

People shape their emotional experiences within their culture, through their upbringing and in their relationships with the people around them (Nias, 1996). In collectivist cultures, child-rearing emphasizes conformity, obedience, security, and reliability whereas in individualist cultures, child-rearing emphasizes independence, exploration, and self-reliance (Triandis, 2001). However, in a global and mediated world identities are fluid rather than fixed. Young people have more repertoires available to shape their identities than ever before. Nevertheless, they can construct their identities from the options made available by their culture and social environment (Appiah, 1994).

### **Self-Esteem and Self-Enhancement**

People evaluate their own self-worth (self-esteem) to what extent they view themselves being good, competent and decent. Kelchtermans (2007) sees that teachers' professional identity consists of five inter-related parts: self-image, self-esteem,

job-motivation, task perception, and future perspective. In our paper we are looking at pre-service teachers' self-esteem that could be understood as an evolution of the professional self in interaction with others.

Cultural differences regarding self-esteem and self-enhancement has been the subject of a great deal of research and generated significant controversy (Brown, 2008; Brown et al., 2009; Heine, 2003; Muramoto, 2003). Scholars (Heine, Lehman, Markus & Kitayama, 1999) argue that self-enhancement is not a universal and absolute nature of the human psyche, but a tendency among individuals from an independent cultural context. Muramoto (2003) claims that in a collective society such as Japan, individuals use an indirect self-enhancement process in which in-group members mutually protect and enhance each other's self-esteem. In other words, they enhance their self-esteem through the eyes of others, because the mutual interdependent relationship is dominant. Modesty, one of the guiding cultural norms among Japanese, affects behaviour and thinking. The Japanese tend to take a negative view of those who regard themselves in too high esteem (Brown, 2008).

### **The Teaching Culture in Turkey**

If in the North and Western Europe, teachers enjoy high respect among the general public, in Turkey they are perceived quite in an opposite way. Because of the low socio-economic status, heavy workload, lack of opportunities to improve professional knowledge and lack of job security, highly qualified Turkish students tend to choose other professions (Deniz and Sahin, 2006). However, changes in the Turkish economy have created an increasing need for qualified teachers, fact that can be seen in the academic system'

efforts. There are ten departments in Faculties of Education for the professional training of teachers for primary, secondary and high schools. These departments train teachers for different subject areas and class levels. Only graduates who have finished four-year programs other than that from the Faculties of Education can apply for post-graduate teacher education programs.

Large numbers of applicants and the great popularity of teaching make it possible in Turkey to provide enough competent teachers for schools. Primary and secondary teachers graduate from a four-year B.A. or B.S. degree program. The popularity of teaching also means that those who apply for teacher education are highly motivated (Yoshida, 2005; Simola, 2005; Deniz and Sahin, 2006).

## **Method**

We have examined the intercultural communication competence through three categories: intercultural sensitivity and experience of differences, pre-service teachers' personal and professional identity and critical and intercultural education and reflection. The participants consisted of teacher education students (M: 29, F: 133) from Turkey.

In order to investigate the intercultural communication competence we used 92 items, based on different theories. They were classified into 3 dimensions A) intercultural sensitivity and experience of differences (25 questions), B) pre-service teachers' personal and professional identity (42 questions), and C) critical and intercultural education and reflection (25 questions). These were further divided into specific areas. The first group of questions inquired about (A1) ethno-centric stage (denial, defense and minimization); and (A2) ethnorelative stage (acceptance, adaptation and integration). The second group of questions inquired about (B1) self-conception



and self-esteem, (B2) discipline-oriented and conservative attitude, and (B3) inter-relational attitude (social relationships at school). The last group of questions inquired about (C1) attitude with mission awareness (the teacher's personal collegial reflection) and (C2) social responsive attitude (critical pedagogy). There were 28 questions dealing with background variables as well. The questionnaire of the study was presented to the students in Turkish and English to ensure that the translations would be as accurate as possible. The questions were randomly ordered on the questionnaire sheet. Participants were asked to rate items concerning their attitudes and beliefs across a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Data was analyzed using SPSS Version 20. First, descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were calculated and analyzed. The Cronbach's alpha for selected items was calculated to see if an acceptable alpha was obtained for the chosen items. The Cronbach's alpha for the total data was .715 after eliminating insignificant variables. The statistical dependence between background variables and the scales' scores was examined using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). Pearson correlation was also computed among the dimensions. The results of the qualitative study exhibited factor loadings between .68 and .81. Reliability of the scales yielded an alpha of .78.

## Results

Our research revealed that there are three components of intercultural communication competence: intercultural sensitiveness and experiences of differences, appropriate personal and professional identity, and sufficient critical international education and teacher reflection. The three dimensions are divided into 7 sets of

areas. Each item is shown in the table below (Table 1). Intercultural communication competence is a sum of these attitudes. The scores show significant differences among pre-service teachers in Turkey.

**Table 1. The Mean Scores of Components of International Communication Competence**

Competents	Mean Scores
A1. Ethnocentric attitude	3.51***
A2. Ethnorelative attitude	3.70***
B1. Self-esteem	3.30***
B2. Conservative and discipline-oriented attitude	3.25***
B3. Inter-relational attitude	4.25***
C1. Mission awareness	4.20***
C2. Socially responsive	4.13***

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ , \*\*  $= .001$ , \*  $p < .050$

By analyzing the association of variables we see that some of these attitudes show interesting correlations. The Turkish pre-service teachers who have a high ethnorelative attitude tend to have a high inter-relational attitude. Those who have a high ethnocentric attitude tend to have a high conservative and inter-relational attitude. Regarding Turkish cohorts, there is a correlation between an ethnocentric and an ethnorelative attitude; those who are ethnocentric are also ethno-relative. The participants who are inter-relational can be both ethnocentric and ethno-relative, but an ethnorelative tendency is stronger. Those who have high self-esteem and those with a more conservative attitude also tend to have an ethnocentric attitude or vice versa. High self-esteem is correlated with conservative attitude and inter-relational attitude. The association is stronger between self-esteem and inter-relational attitude.

Among all, the ethnorelative attitude can be the one core value which includes intercultural communication competence. The data also showed that there are some significant correlations among expected independent variables (B1, B2, and B3). There is a strong correlation (.701) among the independent variables (B1, B2, B3) and these explain .492 of the ethnorelative attitude. The model indicates that a conservative attitude does not affect the ethnorelative attitude significantly; however, self-esteem and inter-relational attitude have significant effect on the ethnorelative attitude.

We would have expected that personal and professional identity, including self-esteem, conservative attitude and inter-relational attitude to have an impact on pre-service teachers' intercultural communication competence. However, the relationship is partial and it depends on where pre-service teachers are studying. We might say that pre-service teachers' cultural and social background and the content of teacher education influence their attitude more than do these independent variables.

Turkish students have the high ethnocentric attitude among pre-service teachers in the three countries ( $M=3.51$ ). They show the highest scores in all of the 6 items which show differences. They have a strong anti-immigration attitude. Turkish pre-service teachers accept many immigrants from Arabic, African, and east European countries and construct accordingly the attitude towards immigrants.

Data shows that Turkish pre-service teachers have the highest ethnocentric attitude. Although Turkey has a more diversified society than many other countries, the environment does not necessarily decrease the ethnocentric attitude detected in this study. The respondents of this questionnaire are university students who have had access to higher education; therefore, they might attribute their success to their efforts and hard work. Consequently

they may loathe those who do not seem to try by all means to go up the social ladder. The fact that there is high economic disparity and consequently access to education in Turkey, according to OECD research, might have an impact on peoples' attitudes in this country. Turkey is the 29<sup>th</sup> in the Gini index among 30 OECD member countries in mid 2000s. This shows that Turkey has more income inequality than does many other countries. The access to higher education usually is in accord with this tendency.

It can be seen that some inconsistent tendencies among them have highest means on ethnocentric attitude. This is probably because they have conflicting values inside. They are idealistic to some extent as the ones who will lead the society in the future, but on the other hand they might not be able to accept those who do not try hard or who do not share the same values as them. When the percentage of those who advance to higher education is limited, privileged people might show such a tendency.

In a homogeneous country like in Japan, people's life styles are quite similar and it is hard for people to accept different behavior and ways of living. People in such a highly context culture have an invisible code to behave or react, and it is not easy for newcomers to be a member of the society.

## Conclusion

The social and cultural characteristics of countries are important to understand their intercultural communication competence. Turkey is highly developed among Muslim countries; however, economic and social disparity is severe. Pre-service teachers show a significant difference in all 7 elements of intercultural competence.

In this study, it was attempted to examine the impact of pre-service teachers' personal and professional identity (self-esteem,

conservative attitude, inter-relational attitude) on their intercultural communication competence. However, it was found that personal and professional identities only partially influence intercultural communication competence, and the patterns of impact were different among those in the country. It means culture and social environment have an impact on pre-service teachers' intercultural competence. Turkish pre-service teachers show complex associations among the variables; they tend to have a higher ethnorelative attitude when they have higher self-esteem, higher inter-relational attitude and higher conservative and discipline-oriented attitude. It might be considered that a good teacher education program for coping with diversity is very important. Interaction with people of different backgrounds will be an essential experience for those who are hoping to be teachers, together with communication skills in a foreign language. We need to further continue our more in-depth investigation to find out the impact of their culture, experiences, and personal and professional identity on pre-service teachers' intercultural communication competence.

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## **Part 9.**

### **COUNSELING STUDIES**



# Career counseling in the postmodern Era

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## Introduction

Rapid changes in people's lifestyle and career planning arising from the socio-economical changes, the technological advancement, and the information explosion at the beginning of the 21st century have brought career counseling theory and practice to a crossroad. People rarely remain in one job for their lifetime nowadays (Savickas, 2006; Watts, 2008). New careers requiring new skills and attitudes are constantly emerging, and career counseling has to keep abreast of these developments, if it is to remain effective and relevant in postmodern society (Watson, 2004; Savickas, 2006). A lot of voices from relevant institutions and organizations claimed that people in the developed economies change careers for an average of five or more times during their career lifetime, while Savickas asserts that individuals, particularly in the United States, born between 1957 and 1964 may change ten jobs from the age of 18 to 38 (Savickas 2006). Undoubtedly these figures cannot generally be applied to all social contexts. However, the general trend globally is for employees to migrate between jobs more regularly

(Kriwas, 2010). Short-term assignments, rather than permanent contracts in the same firma or enterprise are becoming far more common. Also, there is an urgent need to examine the growing gap between what is currently offered in training and the skills needed to carry out a job successfully (Maree, 2010).

The idea of a small core of permanent employees, a sizeable group of practitioners whose particular and sought-after skills are bought, and a large number of temporary workers was predicted to become common place by year 2000 ( Hughes, 1997). However, to keep abreast of technological changes, employees have to become lifelong learners, receive ongoing training, acquire the skill to adapt to rapidly changing career contexts, and deal with repeated transitions. Hence, they have to acquire cutting-edge skills associated with the latest technology to remain relevant in a highly competitive job market. The realities of the 21st century labor market should therefore dictate assessment strategies and guide feedback to clients. Multi-skilling, for instance, is crucial. Clients should be encouraged to become critical thinkers, to 'make meaning' in their lives, to express their narratives, to be creative problem solvers and skilled decision makers in order to become employable, to be able to deal with the construction of a self and to design a career, instead of merely be trained linearly for one specific job (Kriwas, 2006). These narrative processes produce the identity capital of self knowing and liking individual's life stories. Individuals may then utilize their stories to cope with uncertainties prompted by occupational transitions and to work with instability, to create holding environments and to become more whole. Career counselors using new methods in career counseling can play an increasingly important integrating role in the effective facilitation of careers in situations that constantly require new skills and increasingly compel employees to use their work to be developed more whole (Savickas, 2012).

## The turn point

### Career

At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the career guidance and counseling profession is being confronted with a range of challenges caused by a change in the world of work and a more holistic understanding of careers. In this century of great social and economic change, of challenges and subjectivity, of risk society, of ongoing uncertainties, of the abolition of traditional values around the concept of employment, career counseling plays a special role. In this very different context, the adequacy of traditional approach to career counseling, career development and career assessment has been questioned (Beck, 1992; Kriwas, 2006).

Undeniably, the economic and social developments have provided changes at multiple levels. In the first instance, the nature of work itself is changing. As Savickas stressed, a shift has happened from isolated, individualistic working conditions to more temporary contingent work. This shift requires from workers to demonstrate flexibility in their career course rather than stability (Savickas, 2012). Particularly the development of digital revolution at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century caused a new social arrangement to the work labor leading to temporary work, which replaces the permanent work and affects a lot of workers on international level.

(Kalleberg, Reskin & Hundson, 2000) The “de-jobbing provoked by the global economy has produced the insecure worker, including employees, who are called temporary, contingent, casual, contract, freelance, part time, external, atypical, consultant, and *self employed*”(Kalleberg, in Savickas, 2012, p. 13). As the form of work changes from stability to mobility reflecting the needs of labor market of post traditional societies, in the same way the form of career interventions must be changed (Kriwas, 2006).

Within the last decades we have gone through radical changes in the workplace due to the socioeconomic developments which subsequently have a great impact on the forming of individuals' careers. The current structure of the labor market, which stemmed from all these changes, deprives workers from a secure base on which they would organize their lives and does not provide them with positive future perspectives (Kriwas, 2006; Amundson, 2008; Savickas, 2009). Furthermore, a great shift has occurred in the concept of "career", which could be briefly described as follows: In the past, career was perceived as an objective measure connected with a linear career development. Currently, it becomes a relatively subjective measure, related not only to work and vocation but also to additional life roles (Hartung, 2005; Kriwas, 2006; Savickas et al., 2009).

Increasingly, approaches based on constructivist principles such as individual agency, relationship, meaning making, storytelling and narrative are being developed and encouraged. All of them have as key idea that people largely make sense of their experience and present them to the counselors in the form of stories. Such approaches elevated the client's position from passive recipient to this of active agent and changed the counselor's role from the expert to the one of facilitator, curious inquirer and attentive listener (Kriwas, 2006). Even the term "career development" should now be conceptualized as "life trajectories" which individuals construct their lives.

As careers are becoming increasingly turbulent, traditional career counseling services, which mainly focused in supporting clients and students with making a career decision, are considered to be no longer appropriate. In the recent years, career theory and practice has been challenged to re-construct themselves in order to remain relevant in the post-modern world. The main important challenge is to create an identity for career theory and practice that

will be congruent with post modern world (Watson & McMahon, in McMahon & Watson, 2006).

The context and the multiple influences of an individual's career or work are the main concerns of the postmodern approach. The assumptions underlying the postmodern career development process model are that people cannot be separated from their environments, there are no absolutes, human behavior can only be understood in this context in which it occurs, and individuals define themselves and their environments (Brown & Brooks 1996). So, the individual is viewed as a part of social and environmental-societal systems and is involved in lifelong career development (Patton & McMahon, 1999).

Due to the emergence of constructivism, social constructionism and systemic approach in the postmodern era, contend that knowledge is relational and that theory can be situated in a social framework, the conception of career changes. The person – environment fit is replaced by the conception of career, which embraces contextual conditions, in which individuals relate to, interact with and find meaning through social experience (Kriwas, 2010).

### **Career counseling**

The mentioned alternations challenge traditional views of career and career development necessitating new ways of thinking in practicing career counseling. Career counseling is no longer a singular process that is focused on making a job choice; it is instead, a range of intervention to deal with psychological issues that accompany the client's career concerns (Herr, 1997). It focuses no longer only on helping the individual to make a "wise" professional choice. On the one hand, the undeniable today proximity of personal counseling and career counseling introduces new variables into the research scope of the latter such as, intercultural and

intracultural otherness, nationality, diverse settings, race etc. On the other hand, in the framework of lifelong learning, a continuing intervention of socio-political character becomes necessary at an interpersonal level, that takes into account the diversity of individuals, their personal and social needs as well as the conditions of the institution in which it operates. (Kriwas, 2006; 2010; Askitopoulou & Kantoglou, 2011).

Career counseling theory and practice between the end of 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century reshaped from an objective enterprise to an interpretative science and has produced ten noteworthy innovations, which demonstrate its entry to the postmodern era.

*First*, the new labor market in an unsettled economy required from the side of the workers a view of career not as lifetime commitment in the boundaries of one job, even in the same institution. (Savickas, 2012). In that sense Arthur and other researchers stressed that boundaryless career attributes to inter-organizational career mobility and extra-organizational career support has often been neglected (Arthur et al., 2005). The stable post-industrial world of work no longer exists and security and stability in the workplace are no longer guaranteed, while new life skills and attitudes are constantly emerging. So, career counseling has to keep abreast of those developments, if it is to remain effective and relevant to the postmodern society (Maree, 2002; Watson, 2004; Savickas, 2006). That means that since individuals cannot maintain their employment, they must maintain their employability and actively manage their career through adaptability, intentionality, life-long learning and autobiographical reasoning. The emerging practice of career counseling seems to take the general form of constructing career through small stories or thin descriptions, deconstructing and re-constructing the small stories into a large story or towards rich and



thick descriptions, co-constructing intention and action to begin the next episode in that large story.

*Second*, the person-environment fit was replaced by the enablement and affirmation of diversity (Askitopoulou & Kantoglou, 2011). *Third*, starting from the last decades of the previous century logical positivism started giving way to subjective perspectives and meaning making began to emerge (Savickas, 2006). *Forth*, recognition of the importance of context and the culture, with the unstable work world marks a move toward life designed counseling and the importance of narratives. *Fifth*, in the fourth economic wave identity rather than personality and vocational personality types is fore-grounded, and the tendency is to help people make sense of their lives, to construct their career, which provides the rationale for identity. According to Savickas a stable identity includes knowing one's story, having a clear and stable picture of self, and understanding the world of work (Savickas, 2008). *Sixth*, career development and career construct is no longer considered separated from the personal development. It took place a move towards a closer integration of these two domains. (Peavy, 1993; Beuke-Galm, 2009; Kriwas, 2010). *Seventh*, the realization that career theory has provided objective guidance techniques, which practitioner increasingly had to combine with subjective techniques derived from counseling theory and apply them on their practice. *Eighth* a shift has occurred from the past dominant model of the self, that career counselors used for purposes of assessment and testing considering a self as a matrix of interesting elements (trait, factors, dimensions, variables) formulated by Peavy as "psychometric self". This characteristic is now perceived as a more "agentic self" and "storied self" (Peavy, in Sexton & Griffing, 1997, p.125). *Ninth*, we can talk about a shift from objectifying the clients by psychometric criteria, to a preference biography and meaning-making (Kriwas, 2010).

*Finally*, a great shift has occurred in the concept of “career”, which could be briefly described as follows: In the past, career was perceived as an objective measure connected with a linear career development. Currently, it becomes a relatively subjective measure, related not only to work and vocation but also to additional life roles (Hartung, 2005; Savickas et al., 2009).

### **Career research**

Career research is confronting with the similar problem of re-shaping itself as it has been dominated by methodologies based on the positivist paradigm of the modern era and has been mainly quantitative in nature.

Psychology, including career psychology, is mostly a product of the modern era. More recently there has been evidence in career psychology of a shift to the postmodernism by the emergency of “constructivisms” (constructivism and social constructionism). Some authors assert that although “this shift towards postmodernism is particularly evident in career theory and career practice, where constructivist approaches have been influential it is less evident in career research, where modernist approaches still predominate” (McMahon & Watson, 2007; Kriwas, 2010).

Speaking about both of career research paradigms (modern and post-modern), I do not intent to promote one form over the other. Indeed, there are profound differences between modern and post modern approaches in regard of their theoretical and philosophical origins. However, it could be ineffective and over simplistic to oppose or contrast modernism with post-modernism focusing on these differences in a competitive sense. The term is not “anti-modern” (Kvale, 1992, p.7). Instead, we can consider their potential complementarities of the two epistemological paradigms. That could be a very provocative challenge for career research in

the post modern era to appreciate the different and valuable contribution of both, and where possible to assume a collaborative rather than an oppositional stance and discuss how career development research can be strengthened by considering the tenets of the two eras: modernism and postmodernism (Gergen, 2001; McMahon & Watson, 2006, 2007).

### **The Counselee**

The role of the client is redefined as an active agent in both processes, in career counseling and career research. The client is engaged in the elaboration of career narratives and the co-construction with the counselor in the creation of meaning. Savickas (1993) suggests that changes in career counseling redefine the practitioners as co-authors and editors of career narratives. Instead of diagnosing, assessing and matching, the practitioners authorize careers with narrating coherent stories, enrich career with meaning by identifying themes and tensions in the story line and help clients learn the necessary for the next episode in the story skills. From this perspective, career counseling is a reflective process of assisting clients in creating self, through writing and revising biographical narratives which take place in a context of multiple choices from a variety of options and constraints. The shift moves from emphasizing career choice to empowering self-affirmation and improving decision making.

When individuals actively participate in the creation of their own reality, the result is that individuals will create their own personal story in relation to their experiences. Language and dialogue are fundamental to the development of meaning and knowledge for the personal story. The personal story is uncovered, and a new reality is constructed through dialogue between the client and the counselor. This process is referred to as co-construction, in the

sense of synergetic, where the counselor is involved with the client in a collaborative process that relies on linguistic dialogue between the client and the counselor (Askitopoulou & Kantoglou, 2011). In the process of co-constructing one's story, lost experiences are remembered and other experiences are either amplified or muted. In practice, one's story and his preferred future shift to accommodate one another as past and present life events are experienced in new ways. The client's narration during the counseling process of past experiences, current meanings, and future actions is the story that reveals self-knowledge (e.g., interests, abilities, achievements, motivation and self-realization).

### **The counselor**

The above mentioned changes referred to the shift in the world of work and the re-conceptualization of the meaning of career resulted in a new theoretical conceptualization that concerns counselors as well. Career researchers and career counselors sought approaches for conceptualizing the moving from matching individuals with occupations, for developing individual careers and also for defining how individuals construct their career into their life course. A new perception of the career counselors' role is being formed as it mentioned above. (Watzlawick, 1984; Savickas, 1993, 1994; Peavy, 1998; Colling & Young, 2000; Herr, 2001; Brott, 2005; Amundson, 2006).

As the counseling profession has adapted to the changing needs of society, it has developed approaches to theory and practice that give counselors the necessary flexibility and depth to work with people living in a multicultural society faced with a broad spectrum of concerns and conflicts. Counselors ought to develop a unique ability to help others work through transitions in a changing, pluralistic world, where there are age-related developmental

transitions, family, career, spiritual transitions, transitions related to social-cultural-political factors. Nevertheless, a new perception of the career counselors' role is being formed, so that counselors are not only viewed as career experts but also as facilitators and "co-constructors" supporting personal development and life designing as a whole. Instead of portraying themselves as masters of truth, they are creating a space where those involved can speak and act for themselves. (Watzlawick, 1984; Savickas, 1993, 1994; Peavy, 1998; Colling & Young, 2000; Herr, 2001; Brott, 2005; Amundson, 2006)

At this turning point for career counseling two questions are raised. Firstly, what skills should the new counselor have? Secondly, what are the professional paths the counselors come from? Savickas defined four useful attitudes for the career counselor: 1) concern; 2) curiosity; 3) confidence; 4) control. *Career concern* means that an individual has a future orientation and invests in thinking and planning for the future. Appropriate counselor interventions should encourage the client to look ahead to imminent vocational tasks and transitions. *Career curiosity* denotes an inquisitive and exploratory attitude with regard to understanding how one's self-identity fits into the world of work. Career interventions promoting client curiosity include discussions of extrinsic and intrinsic motivations, practicing goal setting, and encouraging involvement in exploratory experiential activities. *Career confidence* refers to the individual's anticipation of successful outcomes related to her or his intentional efforts. Counselor interventions promoting confidence include encouragement, affirmation of client strengths, role modeling, and active problem solving. *Career control* means that individuals feel capable of and responsible for constructing their careers. Counselor responses that promote the career client's sense of control include encouragement, affirmation of client strengths

and modeling optimism regarding career development outcomes. Finally, counselor can use innovative, exciting and respectful ways of being useful to clients, who wish to find deeper meaning in their lives and support clients, while they reflect on the ways they negotiate with transitions, write their life stories and design their lives.

### **Epistemological approaches that have a significant impact on career counseling**

The underlying and dominating paradigms, that of modernism and that of post-modernism, in career counseling inevitably had an significant impact on its theory and its practice. To clarify this aspect I will begin the next section by referring briefly, first to the development of career counseling on theoretical and practical level in regard of these approaches. Second, I will focus on two vary important postmodern career development and career counseling models, which espouse previous attempts in the same theoretical orientation and are created by Savickas et al. (2009): Theory of career construction and Life design paradigm.

### **The modern/ quantitative approach to career counseling**

Watson contends that career counseling and career research have for some time been hamstrung by the belief that the greater the extent to which the results of a research can be based on empirical methodology in terms of quantitative methods, the more validated and valuable they are (Watson, 2004). In that sense, at the beginning of the 20th century, career counseling has had an objective (positivist), quantitative orientation. The rapidly changing career situation, however, demands a contemporary approach that requires career counselors to follow the shift occurred, and to adapt their academic discipline to accommodate these changes. Far

too often, there is little evidence of the development of decision-making capacity; indecision and lack of realism in career choice are perpetuated. An approach that regards clients as the sole experts and authors of their own lives appears to be a better basis for helping clients negotiate with transitions, choose careers and design their lives. Counselors should attempt to be useful to clients by, for example, offering space where clients can discover their personal characteristics, develop and share past and current experiences as they attempt to navigate transitions and transcend the weaknesses of the past and present. The latter threaten clients' chances of making a decent living, establishing social connections and becoming self-determined (Blustein, 2010), as for example designing successful lives and making valuable social contributions (Savickas et al., 2009).

### **The postmodern/qualitative approach to career counseling**

The shift to qualitative assessment strategies and techniques has grown significantly over the past few decades and parallelly to the above mentioned changes. These changes have an impact on the working life and have prompted innovations in career counseling and practice. In considering these rapid changes, it's clear to the workers that they find themselves in a situation, where they are facing challenges arisen in the world of work. Within this context became vary obvious the assumption that workers must be able and responsible for directing their personal career development over their life span.

Postmodern theoretical assumptions about career counseling are derived from the interpretive paradigm described by, among others, Savickas (2005, 2006, 2007) and Hartung (2007). These assumptions are based largely on Savickas' (2005) fundamental contribution, namely Career Construction Theory, which blends the

major career counseling theories (Parsons Theory Traits-Factor Approach, Theory of Work Adjustment, Holland's of Vocational Personality in work environment, Supers' Self concept theory of career Development, Gottfredson's Theory of Circumscription and Compromise and Social Cognitive career Theory, Sociodynamic Theory of Peavy) into one comprehensive theory, which emphasizes the interpretative and interpersonal processes, through which individuals impose meaning and direction of their vocational behavior. It uses social constructionism, which is pertinent to the qualitative approach, as a meta-theory aiming to re-conceptualize the vocational personality types and vocational development tasks as processes that have possibilities, not realities that predict the future. The general aim of narrative career counseling is to help clients script their own life story – an approach that is suitable for helping clients explore personal meanings and find holding environments. An attempt is made to facilitate personal agency by viewing clients as active agents in their own personal development and by emphasizing clients' emotions and passions (Savickas, 2005, 2008; Leung in Athanasiou, & Ersbroeck, 2008; Maree, 2010 ).

### **Savickas' theory of career construction counseling**

As mentioned, the Savickas' approach uses the theory of social constructionism according to which knowledge and meaning are actively constructed through social interaction and relationships within a specific context through the intervention of the language. The meaning an individual attaches to a specific experience is accordingly inseparable from the context in which the actual experience takes place (Palladino Schultheiss, 2005; Maree, 2004).

The Savickas' theory of career construction views the individuals' career as a potential central part of their life and emphasizes the construction of career meaning in a unique context. In this



comprehensive theory Savickas mainly incorporated Super's innovative ideas (among others) with a constructivist perspective to help counselors comprehend client's career problems. It implies that individuals have the opportunity to identify the manner in which they want to fit a career into their lives. The focus is on career choice, adaptability and development as integrated processes. The four core concepts are emphasized: life structure, career personality, career adaptability and life themes (Savickas, 2005, 2008). Savickas argues that career construction not only offers a sound theoretical framework for understanding occupational behavior, but also provides a counseling strategy and methods that clients can use as they strive to achieve self-completion and make social contributions through their work (Savickas 2002, 2005). Career construction theory views the counselee from three perspectives: individual differences in traits, (the differential approach or person-environment fit), development tasks and coping strategies (the developmental approach) and psychodynamic motivations (life themes and the narrative approach) and acts on theoretical as well as in practical level as a meta-theory, which melds and blends the three above mentioned core perspectives into an overarching theory of postmodern approaches in occupational and vocational behavior.

Savickas and Hartung attribute this success to the attention afforded to and development of the following four vital dimensions of occupational and vocational behavior, namely (1) life structure (the assemblage of work and other roles that constitute a person's life); (2) career adaptability strategies (the coping mechanisms used by individuals to negotiate developmental tasks and environmental changes that accumulate in the course of a lifetime); (3) thematic life stories (the motivations and driving forces that pattern lives); and (4) personality style (personality traits such as abilities, needs, values, interests and other traits that typify a person's self-concept).

Career construction theory uses the narrative paradigm to transform these four theoretical dimensions into practice, and comprises a constructivist career counseling strategy and methods that encourage clients to (re-) author their lives and career narratives. In achieving this, they enhance the clients' opportunity to experience work as a personally meaningful endeavor, as a context for further development, and for making a social contribution (Savickas, 2005; Hartung, 2007)

In sum, in Savickas theory several dominant perspectives on occupational behavior and career are fused into a single meta-theory that takes into account: (1) life structure and career adaptability (*how* people organize their life roles and deal with career developmental tasks); (2) life themes (*why* people move in a particular life career direction), and (3) vocational personalities (*what* traits a person possesses) (Savickas, 2002, 2005; Hartung, 2007).

### **Life Design Counseling**

The Life design is a new postmodern approach in the counseling. Before Savickas' Life Design Counseling model, which is strongly related to his theory of career construction, there have been at least three most important – among others- life-design models for counseling, which implement the theories of self-constructing. The models are: 1. constructing a life that works (Cambell & Ungar, 2004); 2. Applied concepts of life planning (Zunker, 1998); 3. Life-long self-construction (Guichard, 2005).

The first model (Campbell & Ungar, 2004) facilitates individuals' movement through seven underlying phases: (1) knowing what they want; (2) knowing what they have; (3) knowing what they hear; (4) knowing what is limiting them; (5) planning their preferred future; (6) growing into their story; and (7) growing out of their story. The second one, Zunker's model, uses postmodern

techniques (e.g., lifeline, collage, role identification and fantasy) to help individuals design their lives. Interactive group discussions that focus on the personal application of these techniques enhance the life design process (Zunker, 1998). Core point of both models is the construction of meaning through communication. What the Guichards' model, the third one, concerns the core question is how individuals can be helped to direct their own lives in their own human societal context. According to Guichard in order to answer this question, three major propositions (sociological, cognitive and dynamic-semiotic) need to be articulated.

The life design model of Savickas et al. (2009) maintain that a new social arrangement of work poses a series of questions and challenges to people who attempt to be useful to others as they develop their working lives (Savickas et al., 2009). The model endorses five presuppositions about people and their work lives: contextual possibilities, dynamic processes, non-linear progression, multiple perspectives, and personal patterns. Thinking from these five presuppositions, some scholars and researchers have created a contextualized model based on the epistemology of social constructionism, particularly recognizing that an individual's knowledge and identity are product of social interaction and that meaning is co-constructed through discourse. Because the life design framework for career counseling puts into practice Guichard's (2005) theory of self-constructing and Savickas' (2005) theory of career construction – both of which describe occupational behavior and its development – it is structured to be life-long, holistic, contextual and preventive.

Savickas in a last work asserts that his model represents a paradigm according to Kuhn perception of the terminus. The word paradigm stems from the Greek word “paradigma” (παράδειγμα), which refers to anything e.g. tradition, value, use etc., which has

validity for a concrete period. Kuhn describes a paradigm as a set of practices, which define a science at any particular period of time. It is a conceptual model that is widely accepted by a community and is usually widespread view of best practices: “for career intervention, paradigm means the general pattern of practice, which includes many specific examples. Within a paradigm of practice, specific instantiations do not follow a rigid pattern; rather each realization of the general conceptual model shows a flexible and creative application of the abstract template” (Kuhn, 1996, in Savickas, 2012, p. 15.)

Individuals who need to adapt to continuous change have to develop various skills that can facilitate adaptation, not only in their careers, but also in their lives (Schrader & Coetzee, 2006). Career and life planning should be an action-oriented, constructive process that can be executed in accordance with other aspects of an individual's life, such as personal beliefs and needs (Greene, 2006). A career may be viewed as a central part of life design, not an isolated part of a person's life, and should therefore be integrated into the individual's lifestyle instead of being de-contextualized. Through a process of life design, the individual is given the opportunity to develop a preliminary scheme or framework in which relevant concepts and ideas, specifically with regard to his or her life, can be incorporated (Bunker, 1998). One should consequently not focus on career development in isolation, but rather design a life that can be experienced as satisfactory by the individual and that can be redesigned as needs, interests and experiences change (Campbell & Unger, 2004).

### **Benefits and limitations of the postmodern career counseling approaches**

Postmodern approaches of career counseling can present numerous benefits, as well as several limitations, which counselors need to be aware of in order to be able to decide, whether they should use them at the counseling practice or not (Kriwas, 2011).

During the last period, we are going through an intense socio-economic crisis, particularly in Greece, which results in great levels of anxiety for the individuals regarding the present and the future of their career and their life as well. In our view, this is exactly the point in which a great potential to use new approaches could be revealed due to the fact that they face counselees holistically and they also bring the vital role of meaning making into prominence. In fact, they tend to acknowledge the value of the multiple subjective reality interpretations emerging through counselees' narratives related to rapid transitions and change experiences. The main benefit these approaches present is obvious "If there exist multiple ways to interpret one's own diverse life experiences, different life perspectives and designs become possible" (Savickas et al., 2009, p. 5). Another feature of postmodern approaches refers to the emphasis given on counselees' empowerment, regarding career management as opposed to a deficit model presented at most traditional methods (Stebbleton, 2010). In the current period, this aspect is of additional significance, because it helps to broaden individual's perspectives and not limit them, for instance, through the simplifying process of connecting counselees' traits with the ones characterizing the work environment. Furthermore, the incorporation in counseling practice of elements from other approaches such as Happenstance Learning Theory (Krumboltz, 2009, 2011) could contribute to the development of essential skills such as flexibility, positive thinking and action taking which could consequently help counselees manage in creative ways career difficulties they face.

Nevertheless, there are several limitations narrative-based approaches present. First, narrative-based approaches are more time-consuming than the traditional approaches because they explore counselees' issues in a greater depth (Kriwas, 2011). This could have an effect on some counselees' satisfaction level from counseling

intervention, especially those who seek for immediate solutions to their career difficulties (Stebbleton, 2010). It is also quite reasonable that through the current economic crisis the high cost of an extensive intervention such as narrative counseling, could prevent counselees from choosing that type of career counseling. Secondly, it is a quite difficult attempt for counselors to use narrative career counseling with counselees who can hardly articulate their personal narratives, for example children who have not reached the developmental stage of typical functional thinking (Kriwas, 2011; Reid, 2005). Finally, until now, there is a lack of special training on new career counseling approaches, a fact which prevents many counselors from using them (Stebbleton, 2010).

Regarding research, use of narratives is presented with problems of validity and generalization as opposed to the traditional quantitative research methods: "Although the value of narrative as a research tool is supported by many researchers, its validity and reliability remains at a personal level" (Kriwas, 2011, p. 36). The previous objection generally refers to qualitative research methods, mainly because they utilize very small samples. However, Peavy (1998) highlights the fact that narrative research approaches aim to describe ways with which people emanate meaning from their experiences and not to test hypotheses or validity of the narrated experiences. New approaches have received severe criticism due to the lack of research examining their effectiveness, as opposed to numerous findings regarding the effectiveness of instruments and techniques based on traditional methods (McIlveen & Patton, 2007).

Quite a few studies show that postmodern approaches produce positive outcomes for counselees. For example, an experimental survey (McKay, Bright, & Pryor, 2005) showed that the implementation of career counseling at a group of students using chaos theory of careers had equally positive outcomes with a

traditional trait-and-factor approach used at another group of students. Moreover, positive outcomes were sustained to a longer period concerning the control group. It is also interesting that one month after the chaos career counseling intervention, the students' scores at dysfunctional career thoughts, continued to decrease whereas career decision-making self-efficacy scores continued to increase. In a qualitative research (Reid & West, 2011) that used samples of career counselors ( $N = 8$ ) and young counselees ( $N = 10$ ) with various characteristics (e.g. students during educational transitions, unemployed) participants' feedback notes on the implementation of life design career counseling intervention (Savickas et al., 2009) were examined. Counselors evaluated positively this counseling approach making notes such as: "It was a powerful tool which helped me to encourage counselees think deeper and in unexpected ways". Quite positive was the feedback given by counselees, as well: "Yes, definitely useful... It helped me think more than taking rush decisions (Reid & Scott, 2010; Reid & West, 2011).

Another interesting study (Rehfuss & DiFabio, 2012) aimed to present life and career narratives development in a sample of Italian entrepreneurs ( $N = 82$ ) as a result of life design approach (Savickas et al., 2009). Participants in the control group showed a shift in their career narratives and moved towards the determination of specific themes. In contrast, participants in the comparison group (without receiving any intervention) expressed stable narratives at the same time.

### **Convergence of modernist and postmodernist career development and career counseling approaches**

The rapid changes, particularly what the world of work concerns, resulted a challenge not only for the of career research, as mentioned above, but also in career theory and practice to revise

and reinvigorate themselves in terms of convergence, in order to remain relevant in the postmodern world. Attempts at integration of career constructs, both theory and practice, like career assessment, career information, career counseling interactions have been located from the beginning of 1950. These attempts included interdisciplinary integrative frameworks, theorists' integration of others' theories into their own developing new theories, which based on previous theories (McMahon & Watson, 2007). Research and practice reviewed by Savickas and Lent (1994) showed that not all of theorists are in agreement about the need for convergence, its definition, and the form it should take. Some of them were rejecting the concept of convergence and recommending the reformulation of existing theories. Some other authors also expressed concerns about the necessity of the convergence, stressing that each theory includes parts of career development and leaves out others. In addition, to these oppositions to the convergence of the career theories in regard of some career constructs, like career standardized assessment, career information, matching and cost-effectiveness of career interventions needed for their examination quantitative procedures. Therefore, all of these constructs were identified as a part of a modern approach (see Sampson, 2009). Although there are advantages and disadvantages of convergence, nowadays emerges an obvious integration of the approaches, modernism and postmodernism, what career theory, research and practice concerned. (Sampson, 2009; Cameron, 2010; Sherepis, Scott-Young, Harry-Daniels, 2010).

### **Conclusion-Implications for practice and research**

In the last decade changes in the career field have been making new demands on counselors. Recent trends have challenged counselors to reexamine and clarify their role instead of helping



clients see meaning in their careers, accept responsibility for their actions, being able to adapt to new demands, find new holding environments, and design successful lives. As Savickas said, the crucial element of 21st century is the importance of empowering clients to design lives that are experienced as satisfactory and that can be redesigned as needs, interests and life experiences change (Savickas, 2010). Thus, clients should, after career counseling, be better equipped to start confronting the complexities of negotiating a career pathway and become motivated to realize specific goals that could stand them in good stead in their career and life development (Kriwas, 2010).

It seems necessary, especially through the crisis period we are going through, that the postmodern approaches would be gradually incorporated in career counseling practice. Their main strength is that they take into account the framework of social multiplicity in which vocational behavior is formed. However, it is crucial clear models of implementing new career counseling approaches to be constructed in order to help counselors understand that they do not only appeal to researchers and theoreticians. Additionally, there is a great need for well-structured training programs to be created so as counselors could use them successfully.

Concerning the counseling process, an eclectic approach is strongly recommended according to specific counselees' needs and various situations. Counseling could begin with a traditional counseling approach and afterwards could be reinforced with more dynamic methods such as narratives and metaphors (Amundson, 2006). In addition, a combination of quantitative and qualitative tools of vocational assessment is suggested due to the fact that counselees' fractals are often so complex that counselors have to use as many tools as possible in order to reveal them. However, they would rather be used for meaning construction than for vocational "diagnosis". Also, it is

essential that counselees would be prepared to invest in learning experiences generated from unexpected career situations.

Future research should focus on inquiries such as the following ones: Which type of relationships exist between narratives and identity? Which research methods could be implemented to explore multiplicity and happenstance in career? Which are the appropriate methods to teach counselors the postmodern career counseling approaches? In the future, research on the effectiveness of postmodern career counseling approaches need to be continued. Last but not least, it is worth mentioning that mixed methods research (Creswell, 2009; Hanson et al. 2005; Sarafidou, 2011) could contribute to the formation of a clear picture regarding non linear dynamics of transitions as well as provide the possibility of combining quantitative and qualitative data in the same study in order to examine holistically a career theory, practice and research problem.

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# **Academic coaching – a human development chance for building future carriers**

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## **Introduction**

As a result of hypertechnologizing, the communication process merging with the fundamental life changes that the human race has experimented in recent years. When it comes to socio-economical

activities, coaching imposed itself as an efficient tool for personal and organizational development through communication, engaging and valuing the latent resources (knowledge, skills, abilities) of human beings. It is a result of the willing to gain as many personal/organizational successes as possible in the professional, social, spiritual, emotional, financial and many other realms of life.

Knowing and using this dynamic range of opportunities generated a broad human competition, an open market with specific requirements, demands and supply of services, with applicants (customers) and specialist practitioners (coaches). The present reality of coaching results show that people, regardless of age, sex, training, status, career, need this type of personal approach to defining and developing their present and future with their own resources that need, in their turn, to be activated and recovered. Nevertheless both the value and the performance coaching can offer are unknown to many organizations in Romania. Therefore, getting acquainted with and promoting coaching, especially in media, can be an option. This article is intended to present some conceptual, methodological, instrumental aspects of the recent reality of coaching in Romania, by focusing on five major directions indicated by the generic titles of the paper's five chapters: 1) Coaching – concept and methodological approach; 2) Coaching and other forms of personal development; 3) Coaching versus training – the realities and challenges of Romanian society; 4) Coaching – reality and challenge in the academic world; 5) Coaching – a qualitative research within the academic environment of the National School of Political and Administrative Studies – Bucharest.

### **Coaching – concept and methodological approach**

The term “Coaching” appears for the first time in the business environment based on the notion that employees are not some



simple “intelligent machines”, but rather unique machines that deserve to be treated in a unique way. Gradually, the word “coaching” was developed as a concept covering several approaches from various fields such as sports, health, psychology (Merlevede & Bridoux, 2004).

Jenny Rogers defines coaching as a process in which “the coach works with clients to achieve speedy, increased and sustainable effectiveness in their lives and careers through focused learning. The coach’s sole aim is to work with the client to achieve all of the client’s potential – as defined by the client” (Rogers, 2004, p. 7). This definition is based on six principles that can help coaching differentiate from other similar disciplines: 1) *the client is resourceful* (the client has all the resources he needs to solve his or her problems); 2) *the coach’s role is to spring loose the client’s resourcefulness*; 3) *coaching addresses the whole person – past, present and future* (similar to the anamnesis process in which the coach receives some additional information); 4) *the client sets the agenda*; 5) *the coach and the client are equals*; 6) *coaching is about change and action* (behavioral and thinking patterns).

Joo (2005, p. 468) proposes the following definition of coaching: “as a process of a one-on-one relationship between a professional coach and an executive (coachee) for the purpose of enhancing coachee’s behavioral change through self-awareness and learning, and thus ultimately for the success of individual and organization.” An updated coaching matrix requires also to focus attention on one hand on technology and on the other hand on the relationship between the client and the coach, while centering on interpersonal communication (based on trust and rapport) and less, if at all on influencing and training (Parkin, 2010). The coaching is described as “a collaborative and egalitarian relationship between a coach, who is not necessarily a domain-specific specialist, and

Client, which involves a systematic process that focuses on collaborative goal setting to construct solutions and employ goal attainment process with the aim of fostering the on-going self-directed learning and personal growth of the Client” (Grant & Stober, 2006, in Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011, p. 74).

In essence, *coaching* is a heterogeneous synthesis of principles, methods, theories and techniques successfully translated from psychology, management, personal development and even professional sports, primarily for the purpose of fulfillment of the human being on multiple levels: professional, social familiar, emotional, spiritual, financial, etc.

Broadly speaking, coaching is addressed to people who want more and better, both individually and in joint living and working environments: family, group / team work, organization, community, etc. In other words, *coaching is useful for anyone that wants achievement, performance improvement, personal and professional development*. Therefore, coaching can be a “journey to self” and, at the same time, an opportunity for change, a transformation process accessible to all people, whether professionals (coaches) or their clients. It is a road mapped with confidence, wisdom, patience and passion ([www.dynamic learning.ro/coaching](http://www.dynamiclearning.ro/coaching), Retrieved, May, 2013).

In the narrow sense, *coaching* is addressed to organizations, entrepreneurs, managers, leaders, teams, and especially people who are willing to evolve and change in their personal and organizational life. In terms of interaction with the subject there can be individual or group coaching.

A process of coaching might be triggered by desires and aspirations of life, by seeking solutions to personal and organizational development, a need for fulfillment and personal satisfaction and professional performance consistent with its own resources

(knowledge, education, skills, etc) that must be efficiently and dynamically activated at different times of life. Such problems arise from: a personal career destination, important decisions about personal and / or professional experience, education and studies, personal development and career success; specialized professional advice on a profession or job offer other aspects of career (i.e. feeling anxious about job interviews and getting one's first job, difficulties at work, periods of unemployment, retraining, job change, lack of satisfaction and professional fulfillment, etc.) inevitable major life changes (e.g. losing a loved one, or an important material good; life dilemmas, depression and personal dramas, conflicts and crises, love / couple relationships, getting married/ a divorce, etc).

While facing various problems on the dynamic personal route of one's private or professional life, from childhood to adulthood, every human being was and is assisted and advised by the social environment in which they were or are immersed into: family, school, friends, human and social communities, etc. Such networking, support and counseling for the personal development of every human being, is a form of traditional coaching.

In the context of contemporary society, fierce competition, globalization and virtualization, life and activity over-technologization, multiple and dynamic changes that occur at levels encompassing personal life, human communities and at a macro socio-economic level, the traditional coaching are not sufficient. There is a need of other forms of guidance and assistance for personal and group/organizational development in all environments where any person, at favorable moments and situations, can find modern coaching tools and specialists.

In order to solve various problems, such as those above, one can trigger a process of coaching, with steps and effective tools, with results expected and guaranteed to gain performance in the personal

and organizational life, ensuring a balanced individual satisfaction and fulfillment of the individual / organizational resources that one has available. Such a coaching process requires specialized care that can be provided by expert coaches directly and indirectly by their specific training in the different coaching styles: training, mentoring, counseling, tutoring, etc.

When asked what is coaching, Dingman (2004, in Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011), identified six general steps for all types of coaching listed over time: formal contracting, relationship building, assessment, getting feedback and reflecting, goal setting and implementation and evaluation.

According to Jones & Gorell (2009) the coaching process can contribute to a number of benefits, both for individuals and for the organization. Thus, the authors describe the following steps in the development process: introduction (knowing your customer and identifying appropriate intervention situation), initial brief (identification of needs and outcomes), first meeting (building rapport), planned sessions (plan actions, reviewing steps) and review re-contract or closure (review success criteria, review results). These steps can be kept in a single session as well as over several others.

At the beginning of the 1980s, Paul Hawkins (Hawkins & Smith, 2006) has come up with the CLEAR theoretical model, a model that addresses both supervisors and trainers. This model implies following these simple steps during the coaching process: agreement (identifying customer needs, rules on the conduct of the meeting or meetings), stage listening – *listen* (building rapport), *explore* (target identification, required resources), *action* (setting and following a plan) and *review* (review issues set and checking them).

From a methodological point of view (Bacon & Spear, 2003), coaching requires the following general steps: mutual knowledge (coach – client), diagnosis, coaching plan developement (for the

client) based on diagnostic results, implementation activities coaching, periodical feedback, evaluating coaching activities.

The main requirements include: 1) voluntary initiative of the willing entity (person / group / organization, etc.); 2) personal acceptance between the subject and the coach; 3) transparency, trust; 4) discretion. Depending on the type of coaching, benefits may be liable: strategic, organizational, interpersonal skills development, quality of life.

To measure the coaching outcomes, De Meuse, Dai & Lee (2009) propose two forms of evaluation: formative and summative. The summative assessment program measures the results of a formative intervention program, while formative evaluation means carrying out an evaluation of the entire process relating it to the initially theoretical established program. Usually, the summative assessment is the most common because in this way the contribution of the coaching intervention programs can be measured.

Since coaching is similar to a general conceptual approach to the complex issue of protecting personal and organizational life on many human activity areas, understanding the concept and the utility of coaching tools must take into account its typology, as generated by the key areas it can be applied in. The main types and uses of coaching are listed below.

*Team coaching* – addresses organizations aware of the need for team performance. It is geared towards improving the functional structures of organization and human resources involved, helping to overcome critical moments and interpersonal barriers  
*Organizational Coaching* – is for organizations that have an integrated view of performance and strategic development processes. This type of coaching targets the development of employed human resource and of organizational culture; *Managerial Coaching* targets the managers and coordinators from the executive level of any

type of organization. The approach of such a type of coaching is based on creating an intimated agreement among personal values, abilities and professional skills involved in the adult development process; *Career Coaching* focuses on the achievement of a professional goal. This type of coaching implies individual or group/team training (sessions) according to the career type: individual or organizational. *Life Coaching* appeals to people who have a complex vision of life and wish or propose to realize positive changes in their social and personal life, in the individual and organizational career. *Business Coaching* appeals to business people and managers and it has as objective creating and developing success visions for companies/organizations/ and business they conduct.

The coaching process is a conscientious relationship generated and maintained by a specialist generically called “coach” and a client (person / group of people willing to get involved in such a process). For such a relationship, the interested person or group of persons need (s) to be aware that there is a wide portfolio of personal / organizational issues, that might constitute a challenge in terms of approach. A professional coaching process can be effective in developing the person / organization only by identifying the spectrum of issues needing to be addressed.

A *coach* is a person specialized in *coaching*, a person close to their client, fully dedicated to their client success and which, with their knowledge and experience, helps them to define and achieve their goals and aspirations in different fields. Therefore, a good coach should master a *successful combination of skills*: being successful *mentor* (who trusts their client's potential through training and who, through their experience, helps the client to define goals and to take on a relevant lifestyle); being a successful *manager* (that supports the client to establish intermediate stages and assures the client that their actions are consistent with their objectives);

a personal *trainer* (who provides permanent *feedback* to the client and gives them support to improve their performance); a discreet and competent personal *adviser* (to whom the client may trustfully share his personal problems and the obstacles that they may face on the way to their objectives).

According to the International Coach Federation, a study published in 2012 (*ICF Global Coaching Study*), statistics on the number of coaches in the world show a total of approximately 47,500 professionals who come from a variety of fields: psychotherapists, former executives, athletes, lawyers, business academics and management consultants.

Taking into account the background and context of the coaching session coaching sessions can take place in a *formal setting* (most times) that requires a specially designed office or room, depending on the number of participants in order to meet certain working conditions (quietness, privacy, space for exercise, lack of interruptions, etc). It can also be organized in an *informal setting*, one able to facilitate a needed change of perspective (e.g. a challenging context for a client needing to overcome their limitations or a context prone to facilitate a revealing experience for the client). In terms of number of participants, a coaching session may be divided into *individual coaching* (client and coach) or *team coaching* (team and coach).

As a process, the meetings / coaching sessions involve a structured approach to the coaching dialogue in order for the coach to bring the client in a position where they are prone to formulating their own goals, to find their own solutions and resources, with the aim of guiding and empowering the client in the direction of their own development and performance. The *coach* launches its challenges to the client through questions and leads them to explore their mind and soul as they never did it by themselves.

During a coaching session, the *coach* addressed questions meant to support the client to perceive life from a new perspective, unreached before, other than their own subjective perception. The client acts vigorously, just as “player on the field”, after the answers they provided for the coach's questions open a reveling path to the objectives they have been pursuing. The stimulating environment of a coaching session must be characterized by the coach's challenges, they address to the client, such as: *does performance defines you? Do you seek satisfaction in all or most of the possible plans of your life? Do you like to be among the best in your field?*

### **Coaching and other forms of personal development**

There are similarities and differences between coaching and other interventions such as mentoring, counseling, mentoring programs, consulting or training. Starting from the specialist (Neale, Arnell, & Wilson, 2009), its role in coaching is to establish an objective according to customer priorities and identify resources while a mentor “splits” a pattern of actions and ideas based on its experience in order to replicate them. Regarding counseling, its role is to explore and treat a range of psychological problems. Compared to coaching, consulting involves diagnosing the situation and providing 3-4 solutions to the identified problems, as well as discussing them in order to identify the best solutions. Last but not least, a trainer shows how to fulfill an action, while providing resources and assisting in the implementation that one person carries.

Neale et al. (2009) believes that the mentoring program is different from coaching from the perspective that mentoring is a process where the mentor shares his experience and methods used in achieving goals similar to those of the “student”. In differentiating counseling, the authors (Neale et al., 2009) emphasizes the idea of



treating negative emotional issues (stress, anxiety) that hinder the healthy development of the individual. The authors also point out tendency to spend much time on the past and the way in which the past generated the present issues. The difference between coaching and training is to provide the participant a new set of techniques and methods to improve aspects of his/her personal or professional life.

With regard to the difference between coaching and other types of intervention, Rogers (2004) identifies several differences. As to the coaching and psychotherapy, the author starts from the client's condition. Thus, problems of psychological order are tackled in psychotherapy or guidance, where psychological skills are required for the coach. In this case, the casuistry is more complex and requires fathoming the problem. Nevertheless, the boundary between these three interventions is fine so that the conceptual delimitation presupposes fathoming the subject due to contextual factors. In what regards the differentiation between training and coaching, Rogers (2004) proposes the operationalization of training from the perspective of the set of techniques that are delivered to the client in order to gain information and to develop a range of skills. The trainer is designed to explain a technique and to assist the customer in learning while in the coaching case the client is the one who identifies their own resources in order to achieve the objective.

Coaching is closest to mentoring. Mullwn (1994, cit. in Joo, 2005) defines the mentoring program from the perspective of the relationship between two people, the person is sent to the other person's experience by presenting techniques and share patterns. Joo (2005) highlighted the main differences between coaching and mentoring in terms of six dimensions (Table 1).

**Tabel. 1 Comparison Between Mentoring and Executive Coaching (Joo, 2005)**

	Mentoring	Coaching
Purpose	Diverse from socialization to management development	Improving through self-awareness and learning
Coach	Internal senior manager	External professional
Coachee	Diverse from lower level employee to high potential	Mostly executive and higher level manager
Process	Less structured and lack of mentor expertise	Systematic and structured
Focus	People centered	Issue and/or problem centered
Duration	Can last for a long time	Short-term

The comparative analysis of coaching and of other similar ways or professions meant to help individuals reach their potential highlights differences on the level of perception of services offered, and the purpose of the results of the interaction. Such comparative analyses of coaching versus training, advising, counseling, mentoring, tutoring, psychotherapy and other forms of personal development are presented in the following table (Table 2).

**Table 2. Coaching vs. other personal development methods**

No	Main differences between coaching and other personal development methods	
1	Training	Coaching
	is performed based on a predetermined thematic agenda; it usually delivers information from outside the specific interest of the client, that the client might or might not integrate; it rarely involves feedback and follow up.	the coaching client is working according to their own agenda, with a flexible schedule with a custom approach to their needs / objectives; client is involved, is accountable and operates with their own inner resources.
2	Counseling	Coaching
	it focuses on difficult and restrictive aspects of the customer; investigates their past; facilitates and ensures understanding of the causes of the analyzed problems.	it is an ongoing development process focusing on what works, on the strengths of the client and improves their performance; it focuses both on present and future solutions; it focuses on new skills and actions.

3	<b>Consultancy</b> it provides assistance / expertise in a specialized field (financial management, IT etc.); it provides specific information and technical solutions for a job.	<b>Coaching</b> it approaches the client while respecting their expertise and focuses is on their personal characteristics; it is based on establishing a relationship with the client in order to empower them; it deals with vision and creativity, with converting the client's weaknesses into opportunities.
	<b>Mentoring / tutoring</b> it provides the standards, norms, values of the profession or organization and it is focused mainly on career; it provides tips and advice on the client's strategies and the action plans; it creates the client's future relying on the experience and wisdom of other people.	<b>Coaching</b> through coaching, the client explores their values, visions and standards; the client creates the future based on their own experience and in the wisdom they had gained, they give their own answers, because they are the expert in their life; the coach's role is to accompany the client in their approach to showcase themselves, to guide and to sustain them through the art of conversation, through specific techniques and interpersonal skills.
5	<b>Psychotherapy</b> it focuses on understanding the client's problems, their feelings and history of events; it calls for reflection and envisages improvement progress.	<b>Coaching</b> it approaches the client in terms of personal development; it focuses on the present, while future-oriented, solution-oriented and action-oriented refer to the performance.

The above comparative analysis shows that each of the methods mentioned may be needed at various points in the personal development of a client (individual, team, organization), but coaching and professional coaches are permanently needed in order to highlight the real potential of the resources available to a customer need coaching and professional coaches.

### Coaching versus training – the realities and challenges of Romanian society

Currently, in Romania, training plays an important role in the training and development of adults. Results and expected effects at both individual and organizational level are not immediate. They can be reached in time, but without a warranty of personal development performance, as demonstrated by the successful use of coaching. The authors find it therefore necessary to consider a comparative approach, more detailed of coaching versus training. Analysts and coaching professionals in Romania identified ten differences between training and coaching, which we reproduce below (acquisition and adaptation of [www.coaching-essence.ro](http://www.coaching-essence.ro), Retrieved, Sep., 2013).

**Table 3. Differences Training – Coaching**

No	Training	Coaching
	Major differences	
1	To train is to instruct, it is a process of transmitting information and developing skills. The professional who provides specific training, is called, according to COR (The Occupational Code in Romania) an instructor / a trainer.	Coaching, translated as “practice” is a process of enhancing the performance generated mainly by the change of perspective, of how to think and act in a certain context; The professional who provide coaching services, is called, according to COR, a specialist in coaching activities, or simply coach.
2	Information is transmitted through specialized training while developing professional skills and targets.	A coaching process does NOT involve transmitting specialized professional information.
3	The training aims at developing and evaluating general skills and / or specific as a result of practical training.	A coaching process does NOT ensure developing neither general nor specific skills.
4	The trainer must be expert in the field in which the participants / trainees are being instructed in.	A coach does NOT need to be an expert in the areas of skills development; A coach must be an expert (a passive energy trigger client) in areas of personal development, without providing knowledge and developing skills.

5	Training beneficiaries are called participants / trainees.	Beneficiaries of a coaching process are called coaching clients.
6	A training tool does not aim to ask questions that would impact participants / trainees.	A coaching process aims at asking impacting questions.
7	The trainer does not help the students / participants to establish specific personal approach; the road ahead is the default curriculum for the program / course with references and adjustments resulting from the consultation with / proposals from the learners.	Coach helps the client to take the following steps: setting targets -> enabling resources -> establishing a strategy for action -> achieving the objective.
8	The training is NOT aimed generating dynamic and creative state of mind, it increases the skills of performance oriented learners towards immediate success.	The goal of a coaching process is to generate a state of effervescence, dynamism and creativity of mind oriented toward increasing the client's performance, in order to facilitate him reaching success easily, rapidly and surely.
9	The role of a student / participant in the training process is that of a "disciple"	The role of a coaching client is that of "a performer" training to succeed.
10	The essence of training is learning	The essence of coaching is self discovery and efficiency generated by a new way of better thinking.

The above comparative analysis shows that both coaching and training are necessary and can be successfully used at various points in the career of a person / organization. But the real potential to showcase their available resources needs coaching and professional coaches.

### **Coaching – reality and challenge in the academic world**

In terms of educational coaching, there are a limited amount of research proving the importance of coaching as a predictor of academic performance of students (Matsumura, Garnier, & Resnick, 2010). However, the authors argue the importance of coaching in the training and learning from teachers. Nonetheless, the most frequently discussed is the importance of program development

impact and the importance of training their teachers. Olivaro, Bane, and Kopelman's 1996 study (in Passmore & Fillery-Travis, 2011) draws the attention on the importance of coaching relational learning. Their results showed a 88% increase in productivity after following eight weeks of coaching after completion of training.

Coaching can add value to the professional development and the results of the teachers. They acquire a range of knowledge and skills to teach in a style that directly contributes to growth, that furthers itself in the academic performance of pupils and students. In the study by Neuman & Wright (2010, in McCollum, Hemmeter & Hsieh, 2011), emphasized the importance of coaching in comparison to the routinely performed classes. Results showed that using coaching principles to supplement the information provided in the course, contribute to the professional performance of teachers. The contribution of coaching to education determines an innovative teaching style that would allow students to better engage in learning (Jones & Turner, 2006, in Jones, Morgan & Harris, 2012). However, the value and performances of coaching and their current reality have unmapped elements for many of the human organizational community environments in Romania, especially in the university education and training / human development of students environments.

Student years, a beautiful but anxious period, accompanied by worries regarding the professional route are often ignored in the literature and practice of specialist advisers for a successful future career. Therefore, the requirement for career counseling services for students, and for complex ways of personal development, adapted to their needs, are priorities of the universities where students participate in training forms, master and doctoral. Such diverse and multiple services should be found not only in institutions conducting trainings, public employment services, job counseling,

voluntary or community field and the private field, but also in universities.

Various analyzes in Romania, in career counseling of the students highlight the lack of a coherent theoretical framework, a proper methodological support and the lack of a global perspective, bringing together aspects of psychological, pedagogical, sociological and management regarding career counseling. Besides universities in Romania, there are some autonomous functional structures for career counseling for students and even faculty engaged in personal and career development of students. Such structures with generic names like “Center for Counseling and Career Guidance” (or “Center of Career Counseling and Professional Guidance”, etc.) have important functions, responsibilities and activities regarding students' career.

From the generous portfolio of duties and responsibilities that a Center for Career Counseling and Guidance from a university has, it appears that many of these relate to personal development activities and actions of the students, and even of teachers and the training for the future career of the students. Diverse forms of personal development (training courses, workshops, counseling, consulting, etc.) are completed by academic coaching type activities / actions.

Jim Griffith, founder of the great international coaching network Griffith Coaching Network, believes that the role of academic staff (professors, readers, lecturers, assistants, etc.) in an academic coaching process must be similar to a “coach” helping students to learn rather than teach them. The academic coaches must pursue efficiency, usefulness and learning performance. A variant of educational coaching is coaching for the dissertation. The aim of coaching is focused on two areas: improving lifelong learning for teachers by conducting seminars and courses and learning strategies to redefine teaching practices. There are other types of

coaching: cognitive (clinical supervision in assisting teachers to develop practical thinking) and peer coaching. In practice there are also coaching processes led by expert coaches and friends.

Compared to such requirements, surveys on the academics from Romania do not support the idea that the academic preparation of students (initial, master, doctorate), which is intended as a preparation personal and career development of students, is using a support integrated modern teaching. There are specific elements of university education that integrate successful personal development methods and techniques using modern communication technologies. There are, however, few results in academia, regarding the use of coaching and other ways oriented towards students' personal and career development (e.g. training, workshops, consulting, etc). The specific results identified in academia belong to certain structural components of universities, such as counseling and career guidance centers (with various names – see examples above), or to student associations (e.g. Resource Center for Student Organizations – CROS / [www.cros.ro](http://www.cros.ro)). These findings may represent an important first step in the knowledge and use of coaching for students, therefore a successful case study in this field will be demonstrated further on in this paper.

### **Coaching – a qualitative research within the academic environment of the National School of Political and Administrative Studies – Bucharest.**

#### **Research objectives**

The purpose of this qualitative study of master and graduate students is to identify how is defined the coaching, and its main characteristics. It also aims to identify the differences and basic similarities between this form of personal development and training, mentoring and counseling. The participants' perception on the advantages



and disadvantages of this process can contribute to build a better conceptualization of the coaching, especially on its contribution to the educational environment in a higher education context.

### Research method

During a period of four weeks, a group of ten students and master students from the National School of Political and Administrative Studies (further referred to as NSPAS) were contacted about participating at a meeting to discuss about coaching. All participants were invited to get involved after being informed on the research topic. Consequently, their participation was voluntary. The used tool was a semi-structured interview grid consists of 25 questions. The interview took an average duration of 30 minutes and aimed to obtain qualitative information necessary. Participants' responses were noted and analyzed through content analysis. First, the interviews were fully read to understand the essence and tone of the interview, subsequently were identified similarities and aspects that could differentiate responses. The authors chose such a method motivated by the fact that qualitative methods are valuable, especially in that it provides a deep understanding of the defining elements of the coaching related to their own experiences. In this context, the purpose of this exploratory qualitative study was to gather information and describe the key features of the concept *coaching* as the group of bachelor students and master students perceive it.

### Results

The term *coach* places nowadays an important place in a variety of fields so that it determines a variety of meanings in order to explain or understand what it means. In this respect, knowing this dynamic field requires defining some conceptual issues and

approaches. When asked what coaching is, participants defined the construct as a process, a method with the role of developing positive aspects or problem solving: “Coaching is a combination of principles, methods, theories and techniques drawn from positive psychology, pedagogy, philosophy, management, personal development, performance sports, shamanic methods that are intended to harmonize with the environment and people around you. The main purpose of coaching is to harmonize man and what he is deep down inside as referring to resources, talents, and values, with what he wants to accomplish personally, professionally, in his family, emotionally, spiritually and partners.” (male, master's degree student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS).

Thus, we can say that this form of intervention is a source of personal and organizational development, like a training: “as an athlete needs a coach to achieve maximum performance, so a person who wants to ensure achieving goals needs coaching. In other words, coaching is a practice where the person focuses on one aspect of life he wants to develop, in order to feel accomplished and satisfied.” (female, student, 3<sup>rd</sup> year, NSPAS).

Regarding the effectiveness of this process, participants assigned an important role to the relationship between coach and client, followed by the importance of using proper scientific techniques: “Effective communication becomes a tool for coaching. Thus, regardless of the type of communication (verbal, nonverbal, and the combination of both) it still occurs. It depends on the coach's use of this resource.” (male, master's degree student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS).

According to the theoretical approach, the process of coaching involves (Hawkins & Smith, 2006) following the five steps in achieving all aspects of the process. Thus, based on the answers obtained, participants identified five dimensions of the process “coaching sessions can take place over several meetings related to

the nature of the session (of the “problem” in view). Establishing a “contract” between client and coach, a schedule of classes, and the session itself. “(female, master's degree student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS).

Internationally, coaching has become an area of broad interest to all categories of customers (individuals, teams, organizations, etc.) and specialists (coaches) professionalized / certified) in coaching, there is a valuable resource portfolio (institutions, schools, associations, companies, experts, literature, methodological guidelines and practical) for the successful use of modern coaching facilities: “There are many methods and coaching schools in the world. The best of them help you – as coach – facilitate learning and transformation, rather than direct it. Questions and active listening techniques are now the main means of doing it “(male, master's degree student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS).

Successful coaching is meeting the needs of individuals on various aspects of life: meaning, value, mission and purpose; performance; continuous development; standards and excellence; results; synchronization with the rhythms of development imposed by different situations; evolution, progress and self confidence resulting from it; control over the direction of the evolution, responsibility and involvement in their own conscious development – strategy instead of chaos, structure instead of amorphism / lack of form, harmony instead of stress, communication and trust in life partners and activity etc. Thus, concerning the benefits of following a coaching process, here are listed: personal and professional fields, broadening the perspective, accessing resources (information), “The advantages are that, in a certain situation, by setting a target (with help from a coach), you can have a clear vision of what you intend to do. Access to information, emotional resources “ (female, master's degree student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS). Asked about the disadvantages, participants listed addiction to the coach, paying an

important amount of money: “it is more expensive than training” (male, student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, SNSPA), “The downside is that it works “locally”, it cures the effect and not the cause, for instance certain emotional problems” (female, master's degree student, 2<sup>nd</sup>, NSPAS).

Regarding the importance of coaching in academic environment, this process has the role of mentoring, of directing the professional and personal development and also to motivate, to encourage participation in such activities: “it supports the student to decide what it is that he wants, to distinguish between desires and goals and to decide which are the objectives” (male, student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS).

Regarding the importance of the role of a coach in universities, participants highlighted the need for a coach or for teachers specialized in coaching “His role would be to motivate, to help students be determined in achieving academic performance.” (female, master's degree student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS) .

In the differentiation of other methods of intervention, participants considered that, unlike training, mentoring or counseling, coaching is a useful process in determining future strategies (both personally and professionally), it is a fast process and it provides problem management solutions: “Coaching is not therapy, therapy generally addresses the patient's past and his trauma and seeks healing. It is not consulting either, since in this case the consultant analyzes the situation and gives proper advice. Coaching is not mentoring, when someone more experienced shares his success and teaches the client how he can succeed. Coaching is more results-oriented, more focused on the present situation and on the client's future. It is a co-creative partnership, equal.” (female, student, 1<sup>st</sup> year, NSPAS).

Regarding the role of communication in the process of coaching, most participants have given a great importance to communication

between coach and client: “The secret of effective coaching is an open relationship between the people involved. Coaching involves developing a relationship whose ultimate goal is to stimulate the client to set and achieve professional goals. Basically, through coaching, the coach involves his clients in a simple process of personal discovery, in order to improve the work undertaken. Still, it is not easy for a coach to be able to develop his client's skills and improve his customers' performance.” (female, student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS).

Also, the bilateral character of communication contributes to an effective coaching process, the participants considering relevant a bilateral communication between coach and client: “There should be a bilateral relationship. And this for the simple reason that feedback provides understanding and reception of the message in good conditions, the adjustment of the message to the characteristics of the receptor, social adjustment through flexible roles and functions performed by the receivers” (female, student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS).

Regarding the impact of the coach's personal experience, this is a key aspect in the development of coaching: “The coach's experience can sometimes have negative influences in the process of coaching. If unpleasant personal experiences have a negative impact on a coach, these issues can sometimes affect interpersonal communication. It depends on how he is able to control his resources optimally” (female, master's degree student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS).

The international coaching experience has shown that coaching addresses mainly organizations, entrepreneurs, managers, leaders, teams, and especially people who are willing to evolve and change in personal and organizational life.

Value and performance in coaching also involve unknown aspects for many human communities and organizational environments in Romania, especially in university education and in training / human development for students.

Students' life, beautiful but full of anxiety, accompanied by worries concerning the profession, is often ignored in the literature and practice of specialist advisers when discussing a successful future career. For this reason, the necessity for career counseling services for students, the complex process of personal development, adapted to their personal needs, are priorities in academic environments where students participate in university courses, master's and doctorate degrees. Such diverse and multiple services have to be found in universities, not only in institutions conducting training, public employment services, job counseling, in the voluntary or community sector and in the private sector."Career counseling refers to services and activities intended to assist individuals of all ages and at any stage in their lives, to make educational, training or employment choices and to achieve a proper management of their own career " (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2004, p.10).

The analyses of the results of such investigations, including that undertaken in the respect of this article, will prove us that the Coaching process should be a necessary "training" also for students, an additional alternative for personal and professional development for university education and career. It can be a practical support harmoniously joined with training, consulting, mentoring, tutoring, psychological counseling or psychotherapy. Using these tools in university educational environments can be made with the assistance of specialists trained / certified / recognized as "coaches" (teachers / or partners), also and/or within undergraduate / master studies with updated coaching theme.

In the narrow sense, coaching is addressed to organizations, entrepreneurs, managers, leaders, teams, and especially to the people willing to evolve and change in personal life and organizational life. In terms of interaction with subject, coaching can be individual and

group. Depending on the number of people accompanied, coaching can be individual, for a group, or for a team. Coaching can be internal when coach is part of the organization which has the subjects, or external, providing the advantage of neutrality. Depending on where the request comes, coaching can be assumed when accompanying request comes from the subject, or prescribed, when demand comes from the management of the organization (male, student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS).

The role of coaching in academic environment is relevant in terms of participants intention to attend such sessions, the reason being unique to each of them. The achieved results, show the desire to participate at such sessions during the studentship with the purpose of identifying a future role: "I think this process should be aimed at people who want to improve their job performance." (Girl, student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, SNSPA). "I suppose that would be targeted to the applied theoretical knowledge achieved over the years of study. And if my assumption is correct, then consider necessary the progress of the coaching processes in all universities in Romania. There are many graduated students who find it difficult to find a professional "way" adequate to their education" (male, student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS).

Regarding the desire to participate, from their responses, we find interest from the subjects for the participation in such coaching sessions: Yes, I think it would be an opportunity and an occasion to develop myself, personally and professionally" (girl, II-nd. grade master student, SNSPA). Promotion in academic environment will contribute to academic performance, also having impact to personal life. The two issues are in interdependence with strong bilateral influence on each other. The offered answers claim that the promoters of a coaching process in academic environment are the teachers, the participants or the coach: "The coach himself and those who participated in such sessions, aspect could be checked

also by qualitative aspects of academic performance” (female, master's degree student, 2<sup>nd</sup> year, NSPAS).

## Conclusions

Several analysis of the Romanian academic environment on student career counseling highlights the lack of a coherent theoretical framework, a proper methodological support and the lack of a global perspective, bringing together aspects of psychological, pedagogical, sociological and management of career counseling.

When relating to such requirements, the Romanian university environment showed no general support to the idea that the academic training of students (initial, master, doctorate, etc.) is designed as a personal and career development training of students, using a modernly integrated teaching support. There are specific parts of university education that successfully integrate personal development methods and techniques using modern technologies for real and virtual communication, as well as computer tools and specific tools (certain type of counseling, tutoring, mentoring, etc.) for the elaboration of regular and final (graduation) assessment of university training essays.

There are however only few results pointing to the use of coaching and other ways towards the personal and career development of the students (eg training, workshops, consulting, etc) in some academic environments.

The results successfully complement the qualitative research did in support of some conceptual and methodological elements of coaching, and support the argument in favor of using coaching as a tool for personal development in the organizational environment , with priority in the university, along with other interventions such as mentoring, advisory, consultancy, training and others.



Overall, coaching is a process in which subjective experience is central to this form of intervention for personal human development, including members of academia (students, master students, professors). The responses of the participants in the qualitative research provide key information that can lead to a quantitative approach a perspective. The results of this study and other qualitative studies will contribute to the need for understanding the successful use of coaching in academics. However, the qualitative study conducted is limited in terms of responses from a small number of participants, which does not allow generalization of the results to help support the development of a general conceptual in approach and use of coaching in academics. Also, a future approach will be considered and validated grid interview to use a standardized instrument.

However, there are only specific results in academic environments showing the use of coaching and other ways of personal and career development (eg training, workshops, consulting, etc.) of students. The specific results that were identified in the academic environment belong to certain structural components of universities, such as career counseling and guidance (with various names – see examples above), or they are due to student associations (e.g. Resource Center for Student Organizations). These punctual results may represent an important first step in knowing and using coaching for students, so we'll still present a successful casuistic in this area.

The obtained results add up to existing definitions and conceptualizations of coaching. Overall, coaching is a process in which subjective experience is central to this form of intervention. The qualitative approach to this subject contributes to the overall *status quo* of coaching conceptualization, definition and operationalization. Participants' responses provide key information that may lead to approaching the subject of the matter from a quantitative perspective

as well. The results of this study as well as other qualitative studies contribute to an understanding of what academic coaching means.

Finally, the synthesis of qualitative research undertaken in a group of students and master students of the National School of Political Studies and Public Administration, about the concept of coaching, highlights the answer given by one of the participants (female, master, second year, SNSPA): “The stages of coaching are: conscious evolution – understanding, self-awareness and overcoming limits; achieving performance in a particular context as well as defining and reaching the level of individual excellence”.

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## **Part 10.**

# **STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**



# **Advertising campaign storytelling for different product categories. A comparative study of local and global brands**

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Connecting consumers, brands, and products through advertisements is always based on a good understanding of their message. Therefore, advertisers constantly develop ad formats to make decoding ads easier, not to mention inform the target about product function and brand image. However, aside from this, one question remains – what is the best way to create a commercial without boring the consumers? Behind every brand and product lies a story that may be told differently, using narrative strategies. Consequently, to approach the process of creating advertising stories, this paper will investigate narrative landmarks as shown in TV ads, as well as the relationship between brands, products, and main characters, and identify the different strategies or techniques of successful campaigns.

First, I will present the main features of the story telling in general, to differentiate between fictional narration, as in literature,

and nonfictional, as in advertising. Even the distinction of fictional versus non-fictional is debatable here I chose to discuss it to more effectively clarify the goals of the current paper.

Second, I will describe the particularities of stories in advertising and their contextual meaning. This section will focus on the relationship between brands, products, and consumers, and it will analyse the extent to which stories can be flexible. Furthermore, this will lead to discussing narrative strategies. We aim to discover compelling and creative techniques of wrapping product or brand stories in appropriate formats.

Finally, this study will compare local and global ads according to narrative features, and explain the way Romanian advertising develops, with an emphasis on the commercial formats. This part of research will connect stories to product categories and discuss the associated to specific narrative techniques. At the end, I will make some suggestions about the best narrative features of an ad to be successful.

### **Perspectives on story evolution**

Studying story evolution implies understanding the meaning, who tells the story, and definitely, who the reader may be. We do not intend to collect the most frequent definitions of storytelling, but to select terms that lead us to easily identify the connections between storytelling and advertising. Briefly, any kind of story relies on facts, characters, and the basic process of storytelling. Therefore, discussion on these concepts should specifically emphasize the aforementioned terms. One of the simplest perspectives belongs to Escalas, who asserts narratives involve “one or more episodes consisting of actors engaged in actions to achieve goals” (1998, p.273). A few years earlier, Chatman had researched the aspect more



thoroughly. He described the classic view of *histoire* and *discourse* in narratology by distinguishing stories from characters: “each narrative has two parts: a story (*histoire*), the content or chain of event (actions, happenings), plus what may be called the existents (characters, items of setting); and a discourse (*discourse*), that is the expression, the mean by which the content is communicated” (1978, p.19). Obviously, event order and the relationship between them was one of the main aspects, when analyzing either “plot” or “story,” or the other dichotomy, “fabula” versus “subject,” discussed by the Russian formalists. Forster (1972, p.35) defines the story as “a narrative of events arranged in their sequence – dinner coming after breakfast, Tuesday after Monday, and the only plot-related difference consists in “the emphasis falling on causality” (p.93). In the first case, chronology organizes the story, whereas in the second one, causality establishes a relationship between events. In terms of plot, Stern (1994) identified four significant aspects of any kind of narration: progression of temporal events, conflict, characters, and outcome. Here, the term “conflict” reflects each situation in which something disturbs characters from their routine for different reasons: creating discomfort, unpleasant feelings, or needs. Such circumstances motivate consumption and justify the narrative format, raising ad dynamism. Characters are strongly connected to action because they can completely change the flow of the events through their roles and, besides, they are labelled based on facts.

Vladimir Propp (1928) identified 31 categories of characters and classified them into: the opponent, donor, and helper; the princess and her father; the dispatcher; the hero; and the false hero (see Propp, 1970). Later, Greimas (1966) ordered these characters into pairs: the hero and his search for an object; the sender and the receiver; the helper and the opponent. Thus, researchers regarded characters as entities with bodies and hero destinies. Given that

stories and storytelling continuously diversify, researchers also improved their theoretical approach, defining character in innovative ways. For example, Margolin (1983, p.7) stated that character is “a general semiotic element, independent of any particular verbal expression and ontologically different from it”

### **Someone tells a story**

In everyday interactions, everyone has a story to share, enjoys being listened to, and likes to take part in the process of storytelling. There are no limits or personal restrictions, because every story generates new content and cannot be rejected after the first listening. Besides, stories are not deemed inappropriate in any field. In a hyperbolical way, according to Mathews and Wacker (2008, p.12), “Storytelling is ‘embedded’ in almost everything we do as individuals and as business”. Furthermore, as Mossberg (2008, p.195) stated, organizations develop stories in their work “to create a corporate culture”, which means connecting employees by sharing the same experiences through storytelling. People feel good when they communicate within an organization, because they spend most of their time there and, often, their business was also born around a story. They just keep telling stories that become true life. Similarly, Stephen Denning (2006) argues that the business narrative field can considerably influence the business action according to positive or negative message tone. Sometimes, a story communicates the narrator’s identity, conveys values, anticipates events, leads people into the future, and enhances the brand. However, according to Denning (2006, p.47), “when introducing storytelling [...] a sharp focus needs to be kept on the business purpose being pursued, as well as on the different narrative patterns associated with different purposes”.

Advertising is a business, as it entails working for clients, with clients, to raise sales and improve brand image. In other words, storytelling is a way of life, because people improve their knowledge relying on other life stories and their own (authentic) involvement. Bruner (1990) noticed that stories constantly create meaning and, therefore, cross cultural borders. This makes us wonder – what are advertising stories about? Most of them bring the consumer back in time to the moment the brand was created; others describe product features or simple interactions between product and buyer. In essence, stories help consumers understand “brand personality” and place products in experiences that integrate them in real life. Compelling stories help consumers consider products worth buying and feel comfortable about owning and using them. Nevertheless, a product can most simply be defined as an element that identifies a problem and trying to fix it by offering some type of solution – medication, a simple water-bottle, or a specific service. Advertisements promote product features that solve any kind of problem, often through the intervention of a hero who changes opinions, attitudes, and even rejects prejudice.

Whenever a brand intends to distribute a message, it relies on history and a specific aura that create a particular relationship with the consumer. These, along with brand loyalty, awareness, associations, perceived quality, and other assets, form brand equity as defined by David Aaker (1991). For example, there is always a reason behind naming and branding products; this often turns into a story and becomes part of brand equity. Other times, brands communicate only through narrative advertisements, given brand authority and past performance. For example, the way Guinness advertises is a story in itself, according to John Simmons (2006, p.15): “Storytelling became the natural mode for Guinness’ tone of voice while Jon Potter remained global brand director”. The entire

philosophy related to this brand is to write stories in various forms of books, emails, videos, newsletters, instead of delivering simple information.

When consumers have a story to tell, it becomes part of their experience and perspective on life (Shankar et al., 2001; Stern, 1998) to deal with different situations. Sanjay K. Nigam (2012) studied “the storytelling brain” and concluded that “functional imaging will likely point to a neuroanatomical basis for compelling storytelling ability” (p.567). From his viewpoint, narration relates to people’s integration into society or community, organization of knowledge in a minimal mental toolbox, and association between experiences. According to Wen-yeh Huang (2010), “because people use stories to understand the world, what goes around them, and who they are as individuals or members of a society, narrative becomes an effective marketing tool” (p.309). Therefore, storytelling is one of the most successful means to sell products and inform consumers.

Basically, people choose to think and express themselves through stories because they can more easily attract the audience by saying, “Let me tell you something!” Each advertisement is an invitation to a specific world where brands and consumers can become connected to the extent that they exchange values through stories. The issue is how effective a story could be, so that it influences consumers’ opinions on brand image. Frequently, a brand shares its own story, but other times stories are created in narrative ads to enrich brand image and to build a relationship with consumers.

Throughout the years, the debate around narrative levels developed constantly from Genette (1980) and Bal’s (1981) to Nelles’ “horizontal” and “vertical” embedding (1997). According to Nelles, when a story is told by two or more narrators without changing the diegetic level, we face “horizontal” embedding, whereas telling a story by two or more narrators changing diegetic levels creates

“vertical” embedding (apud Hühn et al., 2009, p.302). *Diegesis* is an ancient Greek term that defines the process of telling a story by a narrator. In advertising, the relationship between brand and consumer influences narrator implications, very often subjectively, given the story authenticity. Telling a story as if it were true increases consumer trust toward the brand; consequently, the narrator should be very aware of the influence on consumers. According to Loebbert (2005), the core meaning of authenticity is commitment and engagement.

### **Storytelling with a mission**

One of the roles of storytelling in advertising is positioning, which helps brands associate to symbolic perceptions and historical events, specifying the reason for purchase. Strongly connected with this aspect are revitalizing archetypal brand dimensions, which empower them, conferring credibility and authentic. Not every story has deep cultural roots and brings consumers so close to their origins as do mythical ones. Sal Randazzo (1995) develops the concept of “brand mythologies,” identifying the most relevant levels on which this concept works. He concludes, “in today’s more competitive marketing environment, most brand mythologies go beyond product-based attributes and benefits; they are also function on a more emotional level by providing important psychological and emotional benefits” (Randazzo, 1995, pp. 122-123). Advertising not only develops old myths, such as Cupid, the Hero, the Adventurer, or origin myths, but also creates new ones around repetitive characters – for example, the Marlboro cowboy, Santa Claus, Ronald McDonald and so on.

Aside from this mythological view of brands, narrative ads also describe the way products can be used, their functionality and

efficiency. Commercials often explain brand origins and evolution to justify their values and qualities. Origin stories also place brands in specific cultural contexts based on archetypes and primary characters. What is the role of these story archetypes? According to Storr (1983, p. 16) “archetypes have an organizing influence on images and ideas manifested through stories in myths, legends, folktales, fairytales – all of which are stories”. In the hybrid field of advertising, rediscovering archetypes relies on product benefits and spiritual connections with the consumer’s world. Therefore, behind many advertisements lie not only entire mythical stories, but also primordial images treasured by brand authority.

To create a relationship between consumers, products, and brands, storytelling organizes sequences of any kind of TV advertisements through an efficient chronological approach. Consumers must be taught how to use and buy products, which is ensured by the informative and demonstrative functions of advertising. Each story follows the evolution of the main conflict and, usually, the bigger the problem, the more useful the product is depicted.

In the context of rapid marketing transformations, storytelling aims to optimize sales and profits because consumers are better appealed to in dynamic ways, by using social media tools and new technologies. Joe Pulizzi (2012) stated that the “content marketing” means the evolution of marketing into publishing. In the case of the campaigns advertise services as well, commercials stress on compelling relevant content that emphasises brand authority in response to competition. Corporations can only be advertised by creating stories around people and engaging them.

Also, a story engages the audience completely and influences consumer behaviour by placing them in the right place at the right moment. The consumer is not an outsider or an witness anymore, because he/she is emotionally involved in events

and discovers situations very similar to real life. According to Mathews and Wacker (2008, pp.12-13), a commercial is successful if “a significant number of people need to be able not only to *find themselves* in it, but also to find themselves in the audience”. Basically, the role of storytelling can be broadly debated in the advertising domain. However, as it mainly focuses on brand image and the consumer’s relationship with it, narrative patterns represent means of decoding commercials and grounding them in credible experiences.

### **Global and local strategies of telling good stories**

Global brand circulation usually consists of standardized messages conveyed in different countries; consequently, they usually ignore consumers’ cultural backgrounds and their personal relationships with products and brands. International companies want to control the communication process; however, the standardization of global branding is only theoretical, because people interact with brands and become good decision-makers and they need proper information. Therefore, as stated by Marieke de Mooij (2011, p. 18), “there may be global products, but there are no global people. There may be global brands, but there are no global motives for buying these brands. There may be global markets, but most consumptions patterns are local”. Also, globalization only reaches the economic aspects of the world, as long as consumers and markets localize brand perception. This happens because domestic brands answer directly to the needs of local consumers, and, second, because brand communication appeals to consumers through emotional and symbolic means. In the latter case, analyzing target receptivity and its cultural background leads to local strategies of good storytelling. Consequently, we believe telling stories is a

relevant feature of human beings, but the way it is done, within a specific cultural paradigm, is rather local.

We are wondering what is global and what is local in some narrative ads. First, classic myths could at any time be recognized in various narrations as relying on archetypes and heroes. For instance, the myth of magician, behind whom we guess the influence of the Greek god Hermes, is the core of many detergent or cleaning product campaigns. Mr. Proper, Batman, and Superman are all heroes inspired by Hollywood, so their actions and stories must be magical and highly efficient. Second, advertising created its own heroes by associating products with a particular brand personality who, sometimes, justified the birth of the brand (McDonald's, the Marlboro cowboy, Santa Claus, Mercedes). Third, some product categories and companies maintained the same strategy throughout the years and across the world (e.g., Procter & Gamble). Their stories fit into a clear, simple pattern: 1) initial stage: a problem appears and must be solved; 2) development stage: the product is the solution to the problem; 3) final stage: the consumer returns to the initial happy mood thanks to the hero's magic touch.

As for local story-telling strategies, they involve historical, mythical, literary, and other cultural aspects of every specific market. In this case, local legends, fairy tales and ancient myths wrap the story in a familiar frame that make consumers feel at home and ensure brand authenticity. For example, Romanian consumers adopted the celebration of Valentine's Day on February 14<sup>th</sup> in the case of global brands, such as *Merci bonbons*, while local chocolate *Rom* is still connected to the ancient love celebration *Drăgaica*, February 24<sup>th</sup>. The younger generation belongs increasingly to "the global village" (McLuhan, 1964, p.225), while the middle-aged and elderly continue to uphold local traditions.



Even if cultures are so different and consumers behave as if they lived in a “Tower of Babel”, advertising found a way to weave global and local influences and the results of this process are g-local campaigns. To this extent, narrative strategies offer the chance of placing the local core of the event in a global frame, and, sometimes, domestic fairy tales are re-written by using meta-textuality and inter-textuality. Brands thus gain many advantages because people relate the product to familiar, compelling stories. Because people learn to understand the world through stories (Escalas 2004), as consumers, they integrate the product and the brand into a particular world that is very close to everyday experience. Glocal storytelling strategies make consumers accept local and global perspectives on the events with very personal meaning, strongly influenced by the cultural market. One of the most concise definitions of glocalization, understood as hybridity, reveals that “hybridization is the making of global culture as global *mélange*” (Pieterse, 2009, p.83). This mixture joins local and global landmarks, establishing a kind of tolerance between the two in terms of revealing some similarities and accepting some differences. This is why the advertising context may be the same (in terms of story, topic, narrative structure), but the creative execution suggests multiculturalism through glocal strategies. Pieterse looked for many other concepts that effectively describe this “global *mélange*” such as *syncretism*, *creolization*, and *mestizaje*. The last one is the Latin American term for “boundary-crossing mixture” (Pieterse, 2010, p.327). According to Pieterse, glocalization makes cultures more compatible helping the transition between global and local features and this could explain the wide circulation of a story.

### **Method and sample**

This paper aims to present the specific narrative formats of TV ads created for different products and services for local and international campaigns by recording important aspects such as story types, visual and verbal narrators, main characters, the relationship between local and global influences, and the narrative patterns. Our sample includes 100 commercials that equally belong to global and local brands, and that were selected according to the following criteria: 1) the advertisement is made for TV, is a video advertisement, and tells a story; 2) the advertisement was created for the most relevant brands on the international market and in Romania during the last five years, 2009 to 2013; 3) the advertisement (spot) develops the story on both visual and verbal levels in at least three scenes; 4) the selected advertisements cover as many product categories as possible to offer a full view of storytelling strategies.

We aimed to capture brands of different market reach and at different growth stages. We also accounted for a range diversity to compare for strategies. Table 1 below shows our sample structure based on global and local brands distribution.

Table 1. Research corpus

No.	Product categories	Global brands		Local brands		Total number of ads
		Brands	Ads number	Brands	Ads number	
1.	Cell-phone networks	Vodafone (7), T-mobile (2), Orange (2)	11	Romtelecom	1	12
2.	Non-alcoholic beverages	Old Spice (1), Coke (4), Sprite (2), Pepsi (1)	8		0	8
3.	Alcoholic beverages	Beer: Heineken (2), Stella Artois (3), Peroni (1), Carlsberg (2) Vodka: Absolut (1), Stolinskaya, (1) Finlandia (1)	11	Beer: Timișoreana (2), Ciucas (2), Silva (1), Ciuc (1) Brandy: Unirea Wines: Zestre Mureștar (1), Domeniile Sâmburești (1)	9	20
4.	Automobiles	Toyota (2), Mercedes (2), Audi (1)	5	Dacia (3)	3	8
5	Coffee, chocolate, tea	Jacobs (1), Milka (1), Snickers (1)	3	Rom, Kandia, Plafar	3	6
6.	Biscuits, bakery	Oreo	1	Eugenia	1	2
7.	Dairy: milk, yoghurt, ice-cream	Magnum, Activia, Danone	3	Napoca, Napolact (2), Rarăul (2), Covelact de țară (2)	7	10
8.	Financial services	Raiffeisen (2), BCR (2)	4	Banca Transilvania (3), CEC (2)	5	9
9.	Cosmetics, fragrance, timepieces	Rolux, Gucci	2	Farmer, Gerovital	2	4
10	Spices	Maggi	1		0	1
11.	Cooking oil		0	Untdelemn de la Bunica (2), Unisol (2)	4	4
12.	Mineral water		0	Izvorul Minunilor (2), Bucovina (2)	4	4

No.	Product categories	Global brands		Local brands		Total number of ads
		Brands	Ads number	Brands	Ads number	
13.	Paté		0	Paté Sibiu (1), Paté Bucegi (2)	3	3
14.	Electronic department stores		0	Altex (2), Flanco (2)	4	4
15.	Construction stores		0	Dedeman (2)	2	2
16.	Underwear		0	Jolidon	1	1
17.	Software and internet search	Google	1		1	2
	Total number of ads for global brands		50	Total number of ads for local brands	50	100

Analyzing the distribution of brands on product categories, we notice that alcoholic beverages and mobile-phone companies dominate. First, their campaigns run on TV the most frequently; second, their brands prefer the narrative format to a greater extent than those of other categories. A correspondence between global and local product categories could not be found, as the local brands are promoted on the Romanian market from 2009 to 2013. The brand distribution reveals to which extent food, electronic department stores, beer, and banks are more present in Romania than other categories. Table 1 presents a few differences between global and local in terms of product category distribution. Cooking oil, mineral water, pâté, and electronic department stores are specific to local brands, that could mean that consumers started to appreciate local producers. Furthermore during the past five years, hence, the economic crisis, Romanian advertising frequently created campaigns for the aforementioned brands; consequently, the research corpus mirrors this aspect.

The corpus was sequentially collected over the past 5 years by using different methods depending on the markets commercials and the way they were broadcasted. Advertisements running on the local market were directly collected from the most important TV stations between 2009 and 2013 (PRO TV, Antena 1, PRIMA TV). Commercials created for international markets (such as T-Mobile, Old Spice, Rolex, Gucci, Heineken, and Stella Artois) were selected from the Romanian online advertising database [www.IQads.ro](http://www.IQads.ro), which belongs to IAA Romania (International Advertising Association Romania). Information is efficiently structured on this website, which eased the research process – for example, by media (TV, outdoor, print), advertising agency, production house, run time, and creative team. Considering differences between media channels, the research sample is doubtlessly

made only of TV advertisements running all over the world, including Romania.

As for our research method, according to Bryman (2008), content analysis is central and applicable to a wide variety of media, among which advertising. We chose content analysis due to its potential to organize data and provide evidence on both visual and verbal levels, on the one hand, and group the data in categories, on the other hand.

## Findings

*What are the narrative formats of the commercials included in the research sample?* Book and Carry (1970) identified the following list of most common TV formats; this list can be easily recognized today in other formats: story-line, problem solution, slice-of-life, fantasy, suspense, special effects, chronology, testimonial, personality, spokesman, demonstration, satire, and analogy. According to Nelson (1973), the number of TV commercial formats outlined by Book and Carry decreases to seven if we focus on who tells the story and how. Consequently, Nelson's list includes the story, slice-of-life (a short, essential moment in a character's life), testimonial, announcer, demonstration, and song-and-dance commercial types. Later, Hilliard (1976) analyzed the formats of TV commercials and found the now-classic straight sell, testimonial, humor, music, dramatization and others. Basically, all formats describe specific relationships between brands, products and consumers, the latter reflected as main story agents.

Identifying a range of narrative formats depends on the criteria used by the author to classify them. In the current research we use the following criteria: 1) the relationship between magic and reality, between subjective and objective aspects. Fairy-tale, legend

and animation are the main formats of this category. In terms of transforming reality, parody presents the product story through irony and, eventually, meta-textuality. Events are not really credible, but they are funny and entertaining; 2) conflict development and its final revelation. In this case, stories could be identified as mystery, game and problem solution, even game-play; 3) order of events and their distribution across time, prevalent in the chronology, biography, ritual, and recipe story format; 4) narrative planes and story complexity illustrate formats that first develop alternative or parallel narration. In case of alternative narration, two or more stories connect at some point, and facts describe different aspects of those stories. Contrastingly, parallel narration separately presents two stories that can develop a connection in the end. Second, meta-commercial or meta-ads could be described as focussing on how to create an advertisement, or, more easily explained, as stories about other stories. Third, puzzle-stories highlight different situations with apparently no connection to each other until the end. Such types of narration rely on event fragmentation strategy similar to slice-of-life but, at a first sight, lacking mutual meaning. The final message of the ad makes sense and the puzzle conveys much information and many associations in a very short time. Table 2 displays the most frequent formats found in our corpus:

**Table 2. Narrative formats found in the research data**

No.	Narrative formats	Global brands – number of ads	Local brands – number of ads	Total number of ads
1	Chronology	16	13	29
2	Slice-of-life	12	9	21
3	Biography and history	4	9	13
4	Parallel narration	6	0	6
5	Fairy-tale	5	2	7

No.	Narrative formats	Global brands – number of ads	Local brands – number of ads	Total number of ads
6	Legend	0	6	6
7	Recipe	0	5	5
8	Puzzle	2	2	4
9	Ritual	1	1	2
10	Play-story/game story	1	1	2
11	Parody	0	2	2
12	Mystery	2	0	2
13	Meta-commercial	1	0	1

Approximately half of our corpus uses either a chronological format or slice-of-life to tell stories, which means most events are presented based on a timeline. Chronology category refers to respecting the order of events without missing any scene or sequence of the entire narration. This format heavily relies on causality, because an action from the previous scene provokes an immediate reaction. For example, in a Jacobs Krönung commercial with the title *Neighbours*, a young couple, who has just moved into a new house and is still unpacking, makes coffee and takes a break. A few minutes later, neighbours are attracted by the smell of coffee and ring the bell to welcome the young family with flowers and fruit. Soon, other neighbours drop by just to enjoy the coffee. As for slice-of-life, the idea is quite simple and useful to highlight short moments from consumers' lives, such as lunchtime (Murfatlar – the ad named *Zestrea*), the end of a football game (Snickers), or one's first kiss in school (Eugenia).

Legends, fairy-tales, ritual (or mythical) stories do not appear as often (15%). Romanian commercials prefer legends as the narrative technique that explains product origins, especially in the case of beer (Ciucas) and mineral water (Izvorul Minunilor, Bucovina).



For example, Izvorul Minunilor ran a campaign with deep mythical roots for long time, weaving a Northern-European fairy-tale with a Romanian legend:

*How long have they kept on hating each other, the Emperor of Fire and the Ice King, until love... Until out hunting, the heir of the Fire Emperor tracked down the magic Unicorn. And he passed through the fairies' woods, through the valley of Weeping, right to the heart of the mountains. And so the Prince met the most beautiful of all creatures: the Ice Princess. And their love – a miracle – a spring that lasts forever. The world has changed ever since, but the spring still murmurs. Wonder Spring – legend water.*

The meta-commercial format deserves to be discussed, because actors and actress play their roles and directly express that fact that consumer is watching their performance. The campaign name leads us to the ad's conclusion and title: *It's just a commercial, not a real love story*. In a suggestive example, a young man tries to convince a beautiful woman he loves her by chasing her through the city. Whenever the woman crosses a street and there are puddles everywhere, the man offers his clothes, one by one, to protect her beauty. On the way, the young lady rejects his conversation (*Can we just talk?* he asks) by reminding him of the real purpose of their chase: *But, we are in a commercial*. Obviously, she is a French woman and he an Englishman, as their accent and language suggest.

To sum up, narrative formats heavily depend on event succession in time and the relationship between story sequences. Therefore, our selection of narrative ads followed this idea.

*What kind of narrative techniques did the researched campaigns develop?* To analyze commercial narrative techniques, we first identify the reference criteria used to delineate them, and then analyse their message to reveal overall meaning. The scientific literature (Neumann & Nüming, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Currie, 2011) approached

this topic, relying on text segmentation, plot, sequential narrative dynamics, chronological ordering, continuity or discontinuity, narrative perspective, and focalization. For online and TV advertising, discontinuity versus continuity, linearity versus nonlinearity of text, embedding technique, and text segmentation are the most significant criteria that deconstruct types of dynamic storytelling. This substantiates two ideas: first, that narration is both visual and verbal; second, that it is framed by the relationship between product and service, brand, consumer, and viewer. The following table (Table 3) clarifies this.

**Table 3. Narrative techniques used in our corpus**

Narrative strategies	Global brands – number of ads	Local brands – number. of ads	Total number of ads
Fragmentation	11	7	18
Evens order	8	8	16
Anticipation	7	7	14
Metamorphosis	6	5	11
Retrospection	2	8	10
Event disruption	6	0	6
Inter-textuality	1	4	5
Embedding	1	3	4
Ellipsis	4	0	4
Repetition	0	4	4
Bricolage	2	1	3
Suspense	0	2	2
Introspection	0	1	1
Alternation	1	0	1
Metatextuality	1	0	1

The most common narrative technique is *fragmentation*. This is understandable given the necessary speed required to convey

the story and achieve the core purpose of connecting narration with consumer needs. Fragmentation occurs in a consistent set of ways: interruption of the music score, challenging juxtapositions achieved through unexpected edits – contrasts of style and imagery; non-linear narratives by changing the order of events; jumping narratives, achieved by unexpected shifts of contexts. A special type of fragmentation occurs in a Romanian commercial for Orange mobile: a teenage girl sends a series of love letters to a classmate who seems to ignore them. Scenes vary between school locations – in class, at the library, on the playground. In the final scene, the recipient of these letters responds by sending the image of a flower made of love notes he received from her. This commercial juxtaposes different settings to convey the meaning that love messages can be sent anytime, anywhere.

*Event succession* is a narrative technique associated with chronology, biography and even slice-of-life, because it requests a fine control of causality and sequentiality. An example of *succession* and *anticipation* is Google's "Parisian Love" commercial, which reveals how an American finds love in Paris and develops the relationship with the aid of Google. He searches for information about France, Paris, cultural ideas, and the ad could be termed a "Google Love-Story" fuelled by asking and answering questions online.

*Anticipation* and *retrospection* are directly related to time, because the first technique offers details about future events, while the second one returns to the past for better explanations. Retrospection often describes the history of the brand or the relationship between the product and its producer. Sometimes, this technique brings the spot in the fairy-tale world (*Once upon a time...*)

*Metamorphosis* consists in transforming the product or consumer into something else for different reasons – for example, a football player becomes a very upset lady due to hunger. Snickers

brand becomes a solution and the ad message supports this narrative format as well, stating *You're not you when you're hungry*.

*Event disruption* refers to narration that is interrupted, lacking continuous time. When the gap between years or epochs is considerable, we can recognize *ellipsis*. *Embedding* can be present as telling a story in the context of another story, often through retrospection. Repetition specifically points out product qualities, retelling the same fact to persuade consumers to buy the product. The script may vary, but narrative structure remains unchanged.

According to J. N. Schmidt (2005, p. 215), *bricolage* inherently disjoints or reassembles content based on a separate value set – it means “putting together disjointed elements of narrative arrangements according to the outward criteria of selectivity, interactivity, and versatility”. Bricolage is not a straightforward way to tell a story.

Using *suspense* to tell a story means creating a moment of high tension to appeal to consumers. Such dramatic stories involve the product in solving the problem or conflict. *Introspection* refers to a story told in a very subjective way, in first person, with emotional attachment on the part of the narrator, who carefully analyzes him- or herself. *Alternating* narrative planes complicates the story on the one hand, but also illustrates connections between present and past, different facts, and even product and consumers, on the other hand. Usually, this kind of technique needs more time to develop the story.

*Inter-textuality* and *meta-textuality* often correspond to fairy-tales and legends whose stories have been adapted to the campaign purposes. The story-line could be the same, but either the product is involved, or the consumer becomes a hero in daily life.

In sum, narrative techniques describe the complexity of each storytelling format in keeping with different kinds of criteria such as structure, time of events (retrospection, anticipation), causality, event continuity, and relationship with other stories.

*Who tells the story* According to Mieke Bal (1981), the narrator ‘tells’ the story and has an implicit relationship with depicted characters. Bal (1981) highlights differences and connections between doing, seeing and saying, and maps borders between storytelling techniques. From Genette’s viewpoint (1980), the narrator can be *heterodiegetic* (third-person, objective manner) or *homodiegetic* (involved in the story, usually first- or second-person). In both cases the story could be told by an *extradiegetic* narrator (placed outside the narration, like a camera) or an *intradiegetic* one (inside the narration, at the same level with the characters).

Because stories are told on both verbal and visual levels, Thompson-Jones (2007, p. 80) believes “the cinematic narrator is an implicit visual narrator of the story from the inside, or from a fictional point of view”. In addition, Seymour Chapman (1990) argues a cinematic narrator resembles a visual guide whose role is to present events and to enrich their meaning while they are constantly developing on-screen. In this sense, the narrator is a witness to the events, which readily fits the third-person perspective adopted in television commercials. George Wilson’s perspective (1986) deemed the narrator an agent responsible for showing images, an image-maker.

Basically, our research focuses on the verbal narrator in relation to the cinematic because, many times, images replace words and facts speak for themselves. Verbal storytelling is more relevant for this study, whereas cinematic narration definitely represents global brands, as their campaigns run worldwide in standardized fashion. Besides, subjective storytelling (verbal intradiegetic and homodiegetic) offers more credibility than other styles. As Matthews and Wacker (2008, p. 162), asserted “audiences suspend credibility in the case of fairy-tales” leading us to objective narration. Nevertheless, subjective intradiagetic narration demonstrates

the level of engaging consumers in the story. They participate in characters' actions, empathize with their feelings, and better communicate with brands whose products answer to both rational and emotional needs. As for the cinematic narrator, images should transmit the message very clearly and the story should result from the succession of frames and the way product is used. Sometimes, music accomplishes the story, helping the audience to make connections with past experience or other stories.

To conclude, the narrator is not a simple voice, as he tells the story within a context and based on campaign purpose. Subjectivity and objectivity are keys to the audience engagement by conveying the right message.

*Who is the hero of narrative advertisements?* Almost every story stresses on finding a solution to a very urgent problem that really bothers the potential consumer. Initially, commercials developed the story only around the consumer and the product; later, narrative techniques and formats found new possibilities to create heroes. In fact, anyone can be the hero as long as he/she provides a solution and captures the attention of the audience. In most cases, the brand is represented as an abstract idea, which turns into a challenge for advertisers in creating a convincing, relevant story. The product brings credibility and builds the relationship with the consumer. We identified several types of heroes, which link to wider, often global, and local campaign strategies. The consumer seems to be the voice of most narrative commercials created for local brands, whereas global brands almost equally entrust consumers and characters with compelling narrations. Brand places third in our hierarchy, proving the balance between all three agents of advertised communication. Buyer and product are not important factors in our findings, which mean the global audience really knows the brand and does not require an informative, objective campaign,

but an emotional one. The situation is completely different for local brands, where engaging consumers requires interacting with the product. Commercials are more personalized: therefore, the hero could equally be the brand, the buyer, or a compelling story character. The country of origin (Romania) is the hero in only one instance – *Gerovital cosmetics*, which stresses the importance of the producer by saying *Let's bring Romania home!* In this case, consumers experience the product at first hand and discover the brand in a very dynamic manner. Given that the main character is also the narrator, in the case of a subjective storyteller, the consumer-hero accomplishes several roles at the same time, which depict him or her as a wise decision-maker.

In sum, the brand is the hero for specific product categories (mobile phone networks, banks, electronics), whereas consumers and products as heroes depict more day-to-day needs that require being tested and directly used (beverages, food).

*Between globalized and localized campaigns.* We chose to investigate global and local campaigns because our sample is divided into two brand categories, global and local. Therefore, we are dealing with standardized and localized campaigns and, sometimes, a mixture of the two that was defined by another term, either globalization or hybridization. Hybridization in a global environment is a notion that caused the dilemma of *diversity versus uniformity*. According to George Ritzer (2010, p. 255) “a cultural hybrid involves the combination of two, or more, elements from different cultures and/or parts of the world”. The present research aims to analyze the balance between global, glocal, and local features in the case of both brand categories. Our findings show that the core difference relies on glocal features, almost absent in standardized campaigns (only 5% of the corpus), but higher (13%) for Romanian campaigns in the case of local brands.

Remarkably, international brands do not ignore local features, meaning they are interested in adapting their message to the local market. What are the main factors of localization? First of all, the brand “speaks the consumer’s language” and follow his tradition, religion, cultural values, and even political values. In terms of glocalization, commercials develop contemporary stories on Ur-myths (for example, the Trojan horse in the case of Stella Artois, *Vive la vie lejere*), cultural roots (the Austrian Waltz in an Italian ad for Toyota or in a Romanian ad for Timișoreana beer. Consequently, glocalization offers more freedom of choice in telling a good story by mixing familiar market features with global tendencies so narrative structure becomes more complex and not that creative.

## Discussion

First, there are few similarities between fictional and non-fictional stories, considering that advertising tries to convey a message inspired from the reality to raise brand credibility, as Mathews and Wacker (2008, p. 122) argued: “One lesson to be drawn from this is that a good story can-and in fact should-contain elements of truth (...)” Each story includes a conflict and follows a narrative line to solve it. The story also comprises the product and leads the target audience to it. Fictional stories occasionally follow this pattern, as it happens in fairy-tales and legends, because truth is magic and relative. Sometimes, the gap between fictional and non-fictional stories is difficult to be seen and there are certain product categories where magic truth better appeals to consumers. For example, Transylvania Bank created a character, the male fairy who makes dreams come true. In fact, advertising borrows everything it needs from the literary field but adjusts the format to its purpose. Narrative techniques and formats illustrate the best connection between literary and commercial fiction.



Second, the features of advertising stories could be identified based on the previous investigation of research variables that reveal various aspects of narration. The starting point of this discussion is time compression of the events, counting few seconds (at TV 20-30 seconds). This means a high level of dynamism and a fine selection of the most significant and persuasive episodes for the brand image and the product presentation. The next issue refers to the storyteller, the one who makes the story valid. This is why a balance between verbal and visual narration is mandatory, since the audience should easily and quickly understand the message. The main hero is responsible for the product presentation, either in a direct or indirect manner. The hero transmits authenticity to the audience because the story is plausible and, sometimes, represents a real model of consumer behaviour.

The last aspect of our debate focuses on the relationship between storytelling agents (consumer, product, and brand) during storytelling. We identified several possible relationships available in advertising stories: 1) any of the advertising agents could be the storytellers; 2) consumer treasures the brand and participates in maintaining its image at the best standards. In addition, he/she collaborates with the brand in this case; 3) consumers get involved in product presentation as using it during the plot. They are the masters because the product is in their hand; 4) brand controls the consumer by offering a really tempting product. Basically, the brand is the master in this case.

## Conclusion

Storytelling in advertisements requires specific rules in order to properly appeal to the audience; also, storytelling aims to establish a successful relationship between brands, consumers, and products. Interestingly, the main difference between advertising stories is

not the topic or the product category, but the narrative techniques (patterns), which make spots memorable. The more creative the ad structure is, the more interesting its message becomes. Besides, products and brands are part of the consumer's everyday life, being strongly connected to each other. Also, storytelling connects past, present and future. The past is the brand history, its roots, and, sometimes, a myth explaining the brand origins. This is the most efficient framework for an advertising legend, a fairy-tale as fictional story, biography, or simple historical scene. The present describes the way consumer interacts with the product and brand authority. In this case, chronology, slice-of-life, recipe, and other kinds of simple narration techniques help the audience to meet the product. Finally, the future refers to the audience's expectations and the best promises of the brand. This aspect of the story can be imaginative because it reveals the perspective and possible product influence on consumers. Therefore, parallel narration, game-story, and dream-story are often preferred to convey consumer expectations.

To sum up, storytelling in advertising campaigns running for the local market is mostly oriented to past and present, because Romanians recover their identity and history by using subjective narration. This is also substantiated by the use of retrospection as narrative technique. As for the global market, commercials constantly highlight the moments of consumption and expectation, relying more on the power of images rather than words. Certainly, anticipation, alternation and ellipsis emphasize this time balance. Therefore, the best storytelling strategies in advertising definitely emerge from the way the storyteller tells the message, engaging the consumer and enlivening the brand. Finally, we could say that an advertisement displays the same actors, but in different roles and stories.

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# **The evaluation of cause-related communication through qualitative research, a gateway to sustainable planning of communication campaigns**

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## **Introduction**

The formula of public relations evaluation relies mostly, especially in practice, on media coverage measurement and analysis. However, when it comes to cause-related communication how much gets published is significantly less important than what and how it gets published in the media. In addition, there are KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) established for public relations programs that go beyond the quantitative success level of the campaign. Hence, it can be assumed that qualitative research can show great value not only in measuring the effectiveness of a cause-related communication program, but also in discovering new qualitative KPIs, and so, in improving future programs.

This study emphasizes on the significant gap between theory and practice in the field of public relations measurement and evaluation. Although the literature and the research make a considerable effort to combine quantitative and qualitative methods for a comprehensive evaluation, the breach continues to exist, for the following (but not limited to) reasons: quantitative results are more easy to measure, quantitative metrics give more immediate results, most programs undergo very strict effectiveness supervision – results are wanted fast, and in figures – qualitative research to measure effectiveness requires more resources (time, people, money) and more time span to prove effectiveness. Along the standardization of evaluation in public relations, these are classical problems in the field which can be both tackled with the use of a landmark qualitative evaluation matrix that can prove the value of qualitative research for the cause-related public relations field.

Moreover, the study analyses cause-related communication programs not as a mean to an end – designed to fulfill a corporate social responsibility (CSR) or a business objective – but as an end in itself, as perceived and used by public institutions, NGOs, and in this instance, by one of the European bodies: the European Commission (EC) – Directorate-General for Health and Consumers (DG SDANCO). *Cause-related communication* is a term that defines the communication program of an organization, group or individual towards a cause that ultimately serves the community benefits. As opposed to *cause-related marketing*, understood as a “commercial activity by which a businesses with a product, service or image to market builds a relationship with a cause or a number of causes for mutual benefit” (Adkins, 2004, p. 11), While *cause related marketing* is about building monetary results (most of the times to a business) (Adkins, 2004; Moosmayer & Fuljahn, 2013), *cause related communication* refers to programs



dedicated to the greater good of the community. In this view, this study aims to illustrate how qualitative research plays an essential role in proving the effectiveness of cause-related communication programs, and moreover, in perfecting future similar programs and making them sustainable.

### **Importance of measurement and evaluation in cause-related communication**

The public relations literature presents a wealth of information regarding the research and approaches in the field of evaluation, all in look for a standard (Michaelson & Stacks, 2011), in order to solve the public relations field's core concern: accountability. Measurement and evaluation have long been identified as a major issue of public relations, by both academia and practitioners (Cutlip, 1994; Watson, 1994; Macnamara, 2006; Gregory & Watson, 2008; Michaelson & Stacks, 2011; Geddes, 2012). There is currently a considerable body of literature on public relations measurement and evaluation regarding its object of research, methods, and best practices. Most of this is focused on the business side of public relations and refers to proving the effectiveness of public relations programs against financial Return on Investment (ROI). This pattern comes from the predominant focus that the research and practice have on corporate public relations. Cause-related component of public relations programs have not been treated individually, but mostly as a slice of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative within an organization. Accordingly, in the field of measuring public relations effectiveness there hasn't been a lot of focus put on qualitative versus quantitative methods, but on why the evaluation is important and mostly what indicators show the success of a program or campaign towards the ROI.

Measurement and evaluation are studied in order to make them more formal (Macnamara, 2005; 2006). Furthermore, objectives and rigorous methods are required to deliver credible proof of results and Return on Investment to management, shareholders and other key stakeholders (Hon, 1998; Macnamara, 2005, 2006; Paine, 2007). Additionally, the environment in which public relations and corporate communication operate today is increasingly frequented by management practices such as Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Key Results Areas (KRAs), Benchmarking, Balanced Score Card, Advertising Value Equivalency (AVE) and other quantitative systems of tracking or key ‘metrics’ to evaluate activities (Macnamara, 2005, 2006; Likely *et al.*, 2006; Behn, 2003; Jeffries-Fox, 2003). On the other hand, the researchers in the field try to build a generally-accepted standard when it comes to public relations evaluation and to align theory and practice with each other (Gregory, 2001; Watson & Noble, 2005; Gregory & Watson, 2008; Ruler *et al.*, 2008). One of the solutions in this direction was to develop theoretical models. These are theoretical frameworks which aim to better illustrate the public relations evaluation process and which prescribe the essential success indicators for measuring the impact (Cutlip, 1994; Macnamara, 2006; Lindenmann, 1993; Watson, 1997; Watson & Noble, 2005).

Linda Hon (1998) investigated the areas of research in public relations evaluation. The researcher identified four different directions, relevant for the major topics that have been explored in the field: the “analyses of communication” (p. 106), which link the cause (public relations activities) to some effect (generally assumed to be cognitive, attitudinal, or behavioral); the “prescriptive research” (p. 107), which outlines the evaluation process and points out the importance of evaluation for public relations; the “case studies of public relations evaluation” (p. 108), which features examples of public

relations research in a variety of institutional settings and different ways of assessing the communication effectiveness; the final category of research about public relations evaluation, according to Hon (1998, pp. 112-116), refers to the interest in investigating “the status and types of public relations evaluation”.

Moreover, there is an important part of literature based on the communication effects theories which are being used discussing the potential of public relations programs to change attitudes and behaviors (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1980; McGuire, 1984; Schick, 1997; Norman 2004).

### **Outputs and outcomes**

Currently, one of the most replicated and cited studies in public relations measurement and evaluation remains the relationships research (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Grunig, 2002), through the application and development of relationships measurement (Hall, 2006; Paine, 2007; Wan & Schell, 2007; Ki & Hon, 2007; Yang, 2007; Kioussis et al., 2007). As a result of the *Excellence Study* (Grunig et al., 1992, 2002), Linda Childers Hon and James E. Grunig (1999) came to the conclusion that the value of public relations stands in building and maintain relationships: “...as important as it can be for an organization to measure PR outputs and outcomes, it is even more important for an organization to measure relationships” (p. 2). The two scholars have found that the outcomes of an organization’s long term relationships with key constituencies can best be measured by focusing on six precise elements or components of the relationships that exist. These indicators included in the *Relationship Index* were:

- *Control mutuality*: the degree to which parties agree on who has the rightful power to influence one another;

- *Trust*: one party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party;
- *Satisfaction*: the extent to which each party feels favorably toward the other because positive expectations about the relationship are reinforced. A satisfying relationship is one in which the benefits outweigh the costs;
- *Commitment*: the extent to which each party believes and feels that the relationship is worth spending energy to maintain and promote;
- *Exchange relationship*: in an exchange relationship, one party gives benefits to the other only because the other has provided benefits in the past or is expected to do so in the future;
- *Communal relationship*: in a communal relationship, both parties provide benefits to the other because they are concerned for the welfare of the other, even when they get nothing in return.

In addition, the *Institute for Public Relations* (<http://www.instituteforpr.org/>) is doing consistent efforts in setting up standards for the research in the field of public relations evaluation, as well as for the practice. The most comprehensive standards for practice were reinforced at the 2010 edition of the annual European Summit on Measurement in Barcelona, organized by the International Association for Measurement and Evaluation of Communication (AMEC) and the Institute for Public Relations, through *The Barcelona Declaration of Measurement Principles* (July 19, 2010).

The *Declaration* states seven principles which are meant to define the standards in making public relations evaluation successful, and to solve the tensions in the field (<http://www.instituteforpr.org/>). The seven principles act as “standards which will

be *business-focused* as opposed to academic, highly theoretical, and grounded in real PR practice”: 1) importance of goal setting and measurement; 2) measuring the effect on outcomes is preferred to measuring outputs; 3) the effect on business results can and should be measured where possible; 4) media measurement requires quantity and quality; 5) AVEs are not the value of public relations; 6) Social media can and should be measured; 7) Transparency and repeatability are paramount to sound measurement. A 2001 Public Relations Society of America Internet survey of 4,200 members found press clippings were the leading method of measurement, relied on by 82% of PR practitioners (Macnamara, 2005, 2006). Commonly referred to as “measurement by kilogram” (Macnamara, 2005, 2006), collecting press clippings continues the focus on quantitative measurement, with less attention paid to the quality of media coverage. Moreover, press clippings present quantitative measurement of outputs only, not of outtakes or outcomes. Press clippings, tapes or transcripts indicate only that reporting occurred in the media. They do not indicate whether target audiences read, saw or heard the information and, if they did, whether it influenced their attitudes or behavior.

Likely et al. (2006) highlight the differences between the various elements the PR program evaluation should measure, setting up a communication performance measurement framework around *outputs*, *outtakes*, *outcomes* and *outgrowths*. The scholar differentiates at each of these levels between *efficiency* (whether a given effect is produced with least cost and/or other resources) and *effectiveness* (refers to organizations’ ability to exploit resources in the environment).

The *outputs* refer to whatever materials are produced, distributed and covered/picked up. They are the PR “technician” responsibility. The *outtakes* are considered to be at the same technical level,

under the attractiveness of and attention to the materials that have been released, as well as the recall/retention/response rate. The next level, bottom-up in Likely's framework, is the managerial one (project management), where *outcomes* are important. These are considered to be the communication effects: awareness, knowledge, understanding, perceptions, attitudes/opinions, and behaviors. The first and foremost level are the *outgrowths*, which are the executives' responsibility (strategic management), and refer to the positioning of the organization, through its reputation, brand equity, relationships and leadership. Don Bartholomew (2007) developed a similar model of *outputs*, *outtakes* and *outcomes*, eliminating though the outgrowths. His framework is designed to increase the ability to determine ROI. Under *outputs* he includes everything that has to do with the exposure: number of hits, number of impressions, tonality, prominence, message inclusion, share of voice, share of online discussions etc. The *outtakes* are considered to be the signs of successful influence: message recall, message retention, and article readership, change in awareness and attitudes, and association with the brand. The *outcomes* define the success at the action level: visits to the store, event attendance, telling a friend, purchasing product, contacting the organization, vote, etc.

Lindenmann is the one who established the terminology – which has become standard (in Watson & Noble, 2005, p. 82) – of outputs, outgrowth (outtakes) and outcomes. He adopts an approach to research and evaluation based on three levels of sophistication and depth rather than the chronological process of communication from planning through implementation to achievement of objectives. However, Lindenmann omits inputs as a stage in communication. He splits inputs into his intermediate and advanced levels. Therefore, this model has the advantage of separating cognitive and behavioral impact objectives, but it is not as clear that

research should begin before outputs are produced. Lindemann's *Effectiveness Yardstick* does not specify which research methodologies should be used. At the same time, in the accompanying text he broadly outlines a mix of qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques such as media content analysis at level one; focus groups, interviews with opinion leaders and polling of target groups at level two and, at level three (advanced), he suggests, before and after polling, observational methods, psychographic analysis and other social science techniques such as surveys (Macnamara, 2006, 20).

In addition, following Geddes' (2012) path, the standard framework of a public relations program effectiveness measurement stems from the adaptation of the basic model of communication process of Shannon (1948). Geddes (2012) translates the message transmission from sender to recipient, from theory to practice, into the public relations program evaluation steps: activities evaluation – outputs measurement – reception assessment – outcomes / outtakes evaluation – communication results measurement – business results. However, in cause-related public relations, business results are translated in action towards the cause. Understood in this context, measurement and evaluation are extremely important to be considered at all stages of the planning process:

- Activities are directly linked to the program's objectives and tactics: "what did you do?" (Geddes, 2012, p. 8)
- The outputs refer to "message availability to target audiences" (Geddes, 2012, p. 9)
- Reception refers to the actual prime interaction of the recipient with the message
- The outcomes (outtakes) show the actual decoding, translated into a cognitive change (Geddes, 2012, p. 11), illustrated as a roundtrip from *Awareness to Knowledge to Relevance to Action to Advocacy and then back to Awareness*.

- Communication results translate into “specific, desired behaviors” (Geddes, 2012, p. 12) while the business results, which are not the object of this paper, translate, in Geddes’ model, into ROI, consumer, tactical or strategic business results (p.13).

The value of Geddes’ model stands in the emphasis it puts on engagement, at the reception level, understood as a “precursor to cognitive change”. While all these approaches stand as a valuable theoretical framework and aim to fill the gap between theory (prescriptive) and practice (pragmatic) in public relations evaluation, they fail to address two core issues in this area: the actual resources needed in practice in order to implement the effectiveness models and theories; the value of qualitative evaluation for finding unanticipated, cost-saving opportunities and build impactful, while sustainable cause-related programs.

### **Smokers are Unstoppable – the case study of a European Commission’s smoking cessation campaign**

European Commission’s (EC) “Ex-Smokers are Unstoppable” smoking cessation campaign (2011 – 2013) aims to encourage Europeans in the 27 countries of the European Union (EU) to quit smoking. The initiative moves the focus from the risks caused by smoking to the positive effects of smoking cessation, highlighting the achievements of ex-smokers and offering practical support to quit smoking. The “Ex-Smokers are Unstoppable” (“Unstoppable”) campaign was launched in 2011 and mainly targets the 28 million EU smokers, men and women, aged from 25 to 34 years old. The “Unstoppable” campaign follows two other anti-smoking initiatives, developed by the Directorate General for Health & Consumers (DG



SANCO) of the EC between 2002 and 2010 focused on younger target groups and on prevention. Aside to the awareness and information campaign on smoking cessation, the “Unstoppable” initiative also offers a tool to help people quit smoking, iCoach.

iCoach is an online digital health coaching platform that helps individuals stop smoking. Digital coaching, or the process of behavioral change in an online environment, is based on pioneering research, practical clinical experience, and the expertise of psychologists and communication experts. The platform, which is free of charge, is available<sup>1</sup> via email and mobile app in each of the 23 official languages of the EU. The reported quit rate for people signing up to iCoach is 37% (as of April 2013) which is the proportion of people who classed themselves as a non-smoker after 3 months on the program iCoach is not just intended for those who want to quit smoking. It also aims to inform those who are not yet ready to stub out their last cigarette. This makes iCoach unique. The user is presented with a brief questionnaire that determines his or her stage in a five phase stop smoking process. The questionnaire assesses the user’s behavior, attitude, and motivation

The main challenge of the “Unstoppable” initiative was to create a coherent, innovative and powerful communication solution for smoking cessation by effectively reaching people in the 27 EU Member States, and ultimately, to support a move towards a life without tobacco in the EU. The strategic direction to reach the objective of the campaign – a life without tobacco in the EU – was to attract attention by focusing on the positive aspects of potential new behavior, instead of the negative consequences of current habits. This approach builds on past EU smoking campaigns, but adds this news, and appealing tactic: powerful, positive messaging. This

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.exsmokers.eu/uk-en/icoach>

distinctive focus on the positive aspects of potential new behavior celebrates benefits that are physical, psychological and financial (*i.e. Ex-Smokers look better; Ex-Smokers travel more*).

The “Unstoppable” program was based on an integrated cause-related communication campaign in order to disseminate the message and gain a maximum impact and engagement, continuously and simultaneously implemented across 27 EU Member States. The components of this integrated approach consisted of: social media, online and mobile apps, advertising (print, TV and radio), ambassadors’ engagement, success stories, on-the-ground events, partnerships and alliances, ongoing media relations. In each country, this strategy was fine-tuned at national and/or regional levels in order to appropriately reflect and respond to cultural and societal specifics and needs. Social media formed a core component of the “Ex-Smokers are Unstoppable” campaign due to the age and social demographic of the target audience. From September 2012, the campaign offered a free innovative iCoach App connected to social media to further drive the campaign’s messages to the target. Moreover, the 27 Unstoppable Facebook pages offered a resource for ongoing encouragement and support from peers, in addition to serving as a platform for ex-smokers to highlight their own successes and achievements, in turn inspiring others. Also, the ‘What have you been smoking?’ Facebook application, available on each of the 27 national Unstoppable Facebook pages took an individual’s smoking habits, calculated the amount of money spent on cigarettes and equated it to what could have been bought instead with the money. Moreover, key campaign updates and stakeholder engagement were undertaken via Twitter.

Furthermore, iCoach free online stop-smoking tool was available from the beginning of the campaign, with a forum, a diary, to interactive tools and later on, with a dedicated version for the partnership

the campaign established with FC Barcelona. *Quit Smoking with Barca* iCoach version was supported by advices from FC Barcelona's staff and star players to the people who registered on iCoach in order to stop smoking. For instance, in Year 1 of the campaign, print advertising ran in selected publications and news sources across Europe. Metro newspaper was the selected source of European advertising due to its high level of representation. Appropriate daily papers were selected in countries where Metro wasn't available, such as Romania, where print ads ran in *Adevarul* (daily) in Year 1 of the campaign (2011) and *România Liberă* (daily) in Year 2 of the campaign (2012). A special print advertising campaign was conducted for 'World No Tobacco Day' (31st May 2012). TV advertisements for the campaign have appeared on Euronews and Eurosport on a periodic basis since the campaign launch. Thousands of Youtube views of the campaign's ads have also increased the outreach of the campaign across Europe: the Ex-Smokers YouTube channels have been visited more than 2 million times.

To bring the campaign to life and provide a 'real face' to the success of becoming an ex-smoker, several ambassadors were identified to represent their respective countries and provide the campaign with an impactful profile: Rankin 27 ambassadors (27 ambassadors who took part in the photos session dedicated to the photo album that marked the launch of the initiative in 2011), iCoach ambassadors (success stories after using iCoach), or high profile ambassadors. Ambassadors were the personification of being "Unstoppable" and they took part in TV, radio and print interviews, media events, sporting initiatives and achievements, sharing experiences with others through Facebook and events.

The public relations component of the "Unstoppable" campaign handled media relations, establishing partnerships (*i.e.* NGOs and KOL engagement, key companies' engagement), ambassadors'

engagement and events. In Romania, the public relations component focused on the following tactics each year, in accordance to the annual objectives set up by the EC. Thus, in 2011 the following tactics were approached: 1) media monitoring & analysis; 2) media relations included, but were not limited to; 3) press trip to Brussels for the launch of the campaign; 4) engaging media at the events; 5) continuously updating the media on the evolution of the campaign; 6) media release distribution; 7) meetings with key NGOs, active in smoking cessation, in order to ask for input and partnerships; 8) engaging KOLs; 9) attending major national and international sporting events with booth, informational materials and iCoach registrations support; 10) Key companies engagement.

One year later, in 2012, the campaign had a different strategy: 1) media monitoring and analysis; 2) media relations included, but were not limited to; 3) pitching success stories; 4) engaging media at the events; 5) continuously updating the media on the evolution of the campaign; 6) media release distribution; 7) key NGOs engagement & partnerships (“Marius Nasta” Institute, Romanian Pneumology Society, Health Ministry national “Stop smoking” program, European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention, Aer Pur Association, AIESEC, Bucharest Med Students Society); 8) engaging KOLs, including healthcare practitioners; 9) attending major local, national and international events with booth, informational materials and iCoach registrations support; 10) ambassadors engagement; 11) online and social media content (Facebook, Twitter & Ex-Smokers Romanian email administration); 12) key companies engagement: educational and informational programs designed for ENEL Romania, Procter & Gamble and SEWS; 13) in-flight smoking cessation card – activation at the International Airport “Henri Coanda” on World No Tobacco Day – May 31<sup>st</sup>

In 2013, the third years, the campaign changed again the number of tactics: 1) media monitoring and analysis; 2) media relations included, but were not limited to; 3) media roundtable on smoking cessation, in the context of World No Tobacco Day (May 31<sup>st</sup>) & pan-EU survey results; 4) success stories pitching; 5) engaging media at the events; 6) continuously updating the media on the evolution of the campaign; 7) media release distribution; 8) key NGOs engagement & partnerships (Romanian Pneumology Society, Health Ministry national “Stop smoking” program, European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention, *Aer Pur Association*); 9) engaging KOLs, including healthcare practitioners; 10) attending the European Youth Olympic Winter Festival (EYOWF 2013) or organized in Brasov (February 2013), with the special presence of a DG SANCO representative, dedicated booth, informational materials and iCoach app registrations support; 11) local and national authorities engagement (The Romanian Ministry of Youth and Sports, The Romanian Olympic Committee, The Romanian Ski Biathlon Federation, Brasov City Hall, Rasnov City Hall, EYOWF 2013 Organizing Committee); 12) in-flight smoking cessation card – activation at the International Airport “Henri Coanda”; 13) ambassadors engagement; 14) Online and social media accounts management (Facebook, Twitter & Ex-Smokers Romanian email administration); 15) key companies engagement: educational and informational program designed for GDF Suez, at the company’s initiative.

### **Success measurement and evaluation index**

The main indicators of success in each country (and across the EU), as set-up by the scope of work with European Commission were quantitative indicators and qualitative indicators. Among the

qualitative indicators: 1) media coverage including the number of media clippings – print, TV, radio and online, circulation/traffic, and number of evaluations; 2) number of iCoach registrations; 3) number of iCoach users who declared themselves ex-smokers after 3 months of being active on the platform; 4) number of iCoach app downloads; 5) Facebook reach (number of likes and shares); 6) number of NGOs meetings; 7) number of events; 8) number of people who attended the events / audience of the event.

Among the qualitative indications we took into consideration: 1) media coverage analysis, which means prominence of media outlet, key messages and the overall tone (positive / negative / neutral); 2) prominence of KOLs; 3) prominence and relevance of the NGOs to the target public; 4) relevance and significance of the events' audience; 5) relevance of the activities in terms of opportunity (speaking platform, awareness platform, informational platform, stakeholder engagement opportunity, media opportunity).

After three years of locally implementing the program, Romania is one of the countries where the campaign had the highest success, judging by the media response in coverage (*i.e.* more than 20% of the clippings for World No Tobacco Day 2013 were obtain in the Romanian press) and by its number of iCoach registrations: Romania ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> after UK and Spain based on the total number of iCoach registrations at national level in the EU. From the launch of the program in June 2011, a total of approximately 380,000 Europeans have registered to iCoach, of which more than 22,000 were Romanians. Romania ranks 3<sup>rd</sup> after UK and Spain based on the total number of iCoach registrations at national level in the EU.

### **Analysis and conclusions for a sustainable communication planning through qualitative research**

As the documentary analysis and the participant observation revealed, in the case of the “Unstoppable” campaign, quantitative indicators prevailed. In agreement with the EC, the KPIs for the campaign have mainly been quantitative (i.e. number of national events, media coverage, pan-EU activities, iCoach registrations etc.). However, qualitative research played an important, if not even an essential role. For instance, the value of the qualitative indicators (QPIs) is reflected in how the contract of work has changed over the three years: NGO engagement has been a lot more predominant in year 2 of the campaign, and events became more significant in terms of NC performance in year 3. Accordingly, there is nearly a 25% increase in events that have taken place in partnership with key NGOs from year 2 to year 3.

Along with the essential quantitative indicators that played a mandatory role, particularly the following QPIs have also had a significant impact on the continuation of the campaign on year-to-year basis and a positive impact on the campaign EC auditors (who received an assessment of the program twice a year) so that the program could receive payment for the following stages:

- Pan-EU and in-country key partnerships (smoking cessation NGOs, universities, corporations, local EC representations, other high level institutions such as Health Ministries and association with the national smoking cessation programs etc.);
- Key target audience (are we targeting the right people for the activities we conduct? For instance, in year 3 it was indicated that activities should be more women orientated as in previous years; yet, with FC Barcelona we managed

to engage with more men rather than women. Hence, in the third year, the campaign partnered with the European Institute of Women's Health);

- Participation at health and medical congresses, as a result of the data drew from the iCoach platform by the campaign's Steering Group Committee (mainly for year 2 and 3, when we had an array of iCoach data and more scientific analysis could be made by renown professors that are part of the Steering Committee);
- Post-campaign qualitative online / PP questionnaire designed for the key partners and stakeholders (on the Day of the Ex-Smoker, designed as a pan-European celebration of smoking cessation in September 2013).

The lesson we learnt is that a unified qualitative and quantitative evaluation matrix is needed for the program to be considered not only successful in terms of quantitative indicators, but as effective as it actually was in informing the public on the benefits of smoking cessation, in engaging groups to share the cause of the campaign, or in generating change in the peoples' lives. On the one hand, the quantitative indicators in this case have a major flaw: they do not compare the cause-related program, in this case, the "Unstoppable" program, to the full potential of the campaign in informing, engaging and changing attitudes and behaviors. On the other hand, the qualitative indicators used are not encompassing the full potential of the campaign's effectiveness and do not aim to support the improvement of the program on the long term.

Looking at the success measurement and evaluation index of the "Unstoppable" program, several observations can be underlined:

- The matrix is based on the outputs – outcomes measurement principle. Yet, the terms are only considered from the quantitative standpoint, and they are not consistently



defined: in a template evaluation report *inputs* and *outputs* are requested, while in another report the concepts used are *outputs* and *outcomes*. As shown by the matrix, outputs and outcomes are used interchangeably.

- Most qualitative indicators in the matrix are requested and set-up as a side-note, under *other observations* in the reporting matrix. This rule excludes the coverage qualitative indicators, which, however, do not go too much in depth and do not request a thorough media content analysis.
- Some qualitative indicators were used as a way to qualify certain tactics to be used in the program, which, although intuitive, constituted the evaluation of the program during the process. For example, partnership events chosen to be included in the national action plan were not allowed to be in any way related or sponsored by tobacco-related initiatives or organizations; the events needed to be sporting events that gathered potential influencers, with attendance of more than 1000 people, and with the potential to offer media opportunity for the “Unstoppable” cause to be voiced.
- The standard key messages to be investigated in the media clippings were related to the benefits of smoking cessation, European Commission campaign, Ex-Smokers are Unstoppable, website, iCoach. These messages needed to be identified in the coverage, but no other specific analysis was requested.
- The tone of voice was given by only an overall assessment of the article’s tone, ranging from positive to neutral or negative.
- Although the prominence of KOLs was an important success indicator, the term *prominent* was not defined. It was up to the national coordination teams to decide who is prominent

and who is not, based on their local experience or on-site knowledge: 1) a speaking platform for ex-smokers to directly share to the smokers the benefits of smoking cessation; 2) an awareness platform, due to its high attendance rate, but also due to the direct interaction of the ex-smokers running team with the visitors of the event; 3) an informational platform, with the “Unstoppable” booth visited by hundreds of smokers wanting to quit, but also by relatives or friends of smokers who wanted to be ambassadors of the campaign’s cause; 4) a stakeholder engagement opportunity, as it gathered Med Students volunteers who vouched for the “Unstoppable” cause and explained people the benefits of smoking cessation; 5) media relations opportunity, with a wealth of media inquiries and interviews, and live broadcasts from the booth, with ex-smokers sharing their success stories or with other stakeholders voicing the cause.

In building an integrated qualitative evaluation framework for the “Unstoppable” cause-related campaign, a few shortcomings of the current framework should also be analyzed and overcome in the future. First, the objectives are not explicitly detailed and no specific evaluation indicators are attached to these objectives. In order to build a sustainable cause-related campaign, the team has to set a starting point, especially when it comes to measurable results, so the actual results can show what has been accomplished in relation to what has been intended. Second, the objectives have to take into account a broader scope for the qualitative indicators: not only to change the behavior from smoking to not smoking is valuable, but also establishing other qualitative “KPIs”, in this case, the proactive engagement of influencers over smokers, or the identification of new influencers during the program etc. The qualitative KPIs can help the following cause-related program become more

sustainable. That means, through ongoing evaluation during the program, the pre-program evaluation is already in effect with results that help establish more realistic objectives.

The adapted model of Geddes (2012) adds to the value and efficiency of program planning, by setting up milestones towards the ultimate scope of the communication campaign: audience to act towards the cause. These milestones fall under the ultimate scope of the program, and are umbrellas for specific measurable objectives in the strategic plan. For instance, the scope of then “Unstoppable” program is to have a smoke-free European community. Some of the objectives that derive from the awareness step may be: until 2013 inform X% of the European citizens who smoke on the benefits of smoking cessation; inform Europeans about the iCoach free online tool that offers personalized support in smoking cessation. Under advocacy these two objectives may translate in: key group Y will endorse the campaign and disseminate the benefits of smoking cessation to a number of X communities in their field; key group Y will share and present iCoach to a number of X communities in their field by the end of 2013.

### **Ground for further research**

This case study shows that there is still a considerable gap between theory and practice in the field of public relations, particularly in measurement and evaluation. Along with the standardization of evaluation in public relations, this is a classical problem in the field which can be solved by a landmark qualitative evaluation matrix that can prove the value of qualitative research for the cause-related public relations field.

Furthermore, this topic, applied to the pan-European smoking cessation campaign “Ex-smokers are Unstoppable” is more

complex when studied from a multi-cultural perspective. Several aspects have to be considered in future research, taking into account the limitations of this first step towards identifying the value of qualitative research in evaluation the cause-related program. First limitation refers to the position of the investigator, that of national coordinator, which determines a certain level of subjectivity. Secondly, the program was coordinated in 27 countries both from Bruxelles – where the EC's input came from – and London – where the communication hub was located. This context required more research resources in order to gain a bigger picture on the strategic planning of the campaign, including on the evaluation component.

However, a few important questions can be formulated for a broader study on the topic: 1) *Were there the qualitative indicators of this cause-related pan-European program cultural-specific?* 2) *Was the set-up of these indicators cultural-specific?* 3) *Have the national teams conducted qualitative studies of their own, or put together an intuitive qualitative success scale evaluation instrument post- or during the program?* 4) *How proactive were the national teams in reporting unexpected qualitative KPIs? What level of importance each national team gave to these indicators?*

These questions are setting the ground for further research that will investigate this program within a multicultural context, analyzing the value of qualitative evaluation for the sustainability of the program and, ultimately, of the cause itself.

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