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Societatea civila – Diagnoze din Romania
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THE EUROPEAN WAY OF THINKING AND THE CRISIS OF DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES WITHIN PROCEDURAL SOCIETIES

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How does the 'European way of thinking' influence democratic practices?

There is a European (Greek-Latin) model of the conceptualization of history that subjects any understanding of the world to an ethical regulatory framework: we have no meanings with wide social impact outside the predetermined cultural framework on the basis of which we assign value to facts and produce hierarchies.

The deliberative turn (Goodin, Robert) of liberal democracies is the expression of the tendency of modern thought to formalize procedures for recognizing the truth (the values). The way people view history and judge history is backed in every age by a sense of good that dominates the social mind. The common individual lives every day of his life under the pressure of this social sense – which, once internalized (has become 'faith') – turns into automatic thinking.

Even if, for the moment, it is difficult for us to accept – modern rationalism itself feeds a particular scheme of reporting to knowledge and produces a specific interpretation of the results of the action.

Modern rationalism – armed with the presumptive innocence of Aristotelian logic (and, consequently, the whole of European science) seems to have kept a safe distance from the emotional charge of mythologies that legitimized the exercise of power in the ancient or medieval world.

But this is not as clear as it is claimed. The fact that we understand science in relation to an associated[1] moral dimension, leads to interested interpretations of the results of the knowledge process.

This non-theoretical interest traces the applied directions of research. Science and, at the limit, the whole culture and human creation remain linked (in the subsidiary) to the concern to find and maintain control over resources – all of which are presented as a condition of a good life. The interests of knowledge are politically oriented in this sense as well – the political action lives (and dies) between judgments filtered by particular experiences. But what are the guidelines of this mechanism of historical refocusing of the interpretation of the results of knowledge processes?

In Europe – and later on through diffusion all throughout the West – the interpretation of social becoming and the historical course takes place in a rationalist scenario. In all modern societies, the prestige of the regulatory framework stems from a formidable claim to scientific objectivity.[2]

The procedure for establishing hierarchies of value in modern societies appeals – without exception – to scientific reasons. *The entire political modernity is marked by the interested alliance with scientific prestige.*[3] This alliance produces immediate effects – both in terms of trends in scientific research and in terms of political action. But what are the strengths, the lines of force, of rationalism in Europe today?

The political modernity appears as a product of the transfer of technologies for the validation of interpretations through scientific substantiation and democratic processes have borrowed the binary logic of socio-metric methodologies for searching for truth. The habit of statistically analyzing physical phenomena is translated socially as certification by majorities.

The social effects of this transfer often appear to be disappointing and the tendency to identify the majority opinion with the public good has proved to be full of dangers.

The procedural security of the process of "recognition" of the truth and all associated social values cannot hide the non-objective dimension of the way of using scientific discovery (as it appeared in previous eras) and failed to keep under control the social conflict triggered by the authoritarian scheme for the exploitation of scientific prestige. This failure has not been openly acknowledged and does not currently know substantiated critical examinations.[4]

The failure of modernity (which we talked about in more detail on another occasion)[5] is intimately related to the inability of the dominant reason to offer at the social level and especially at the general human level what it had promised.[6] Modern rationalism did not stop cruelty and did not prevent the holocaust of the twentieth century – it was powerless in the face of the repeated crises facing Europe.

Theorizations about the various categories of crises[7] – assuming *ab initio* the relevance of socio-metric assessments – tend to underestimate the fact that human evolution and the development of human societies did not proceed according to the scenarios of reason. What are the immediate consequences of the tendency to place social interpretations in the context of the European way of thinking?[8]

It is easy to see that any significant socio-historical change is prepared by appeals that are reflected in a model of reconstruction of procedures for identification and recognition of values (moral, but not only).

The one aims at a political change, he/she begins with a strategic project to abolish conceptualizations aimed at publicly accrediting the protocol that legitimizes the exercise of authority.

This conceptual denunciation precedes open attempts to change hierarchies and power relations. Even when these hierarchies do not derive from authoritarian political commands, they are still based on the field of forces and claims that compete for domination in the space of a spiritual civilization.

The legitimacy of the political act in modern societies is grounded on a public consensus on an interpretation of everyday life. Any governance bases its authority on a *grand recit* (a great story) that entails an agreement. There is always an elite that creates the conditions for putting into circulation a story that it uses to explain public actions.

We always have a discursive ground by virtue of which the sentence of the "chosen one" becomes enforceable.[9] Any modern authoritarian leader speaks "the language of his people" – and "brings up to date" the procedures for the normalization of values. Any *aggiornamento* takes place within the horizon of particular purposes even when it proposes justifications drawn from the real needs of society.

The credibility and social relevance of European values is based on the classic set of cultural narratives on the horizon of which we have today a determined understanding of common concepts such as freedom or democracy. Any re-questioning of them is declared unacceptable.

It is necessary to note here that the *European way of thinking* does not work as a simple alternative to knowledge.[10]

It is not a measure of relevance in relation to a given cultural space, but passes equally, as a reference for what we consider to be good or bad throughout the world and in history.

It did not give birth to a simple *community of knowledge,* but has led to the formation in a direct 'slipstream' of a form of narrative reconstruction of reality.[11] The expression 'European way of thinking' is used as a cover with the meaning of way of thinking humanly and in this sense (as a tool for building the good) it circulates with the claim of a legitimate foundation of political action.

The European rationalism appears as a procedural pattern of the act of thinking in any modern society. Its authority is supported by the reference to 'science' (objective and producing certainties)[12] – any bringing into discussion of evidence that questions its own discursive version is rejected in principle, treated with contempt, possibly mocked at as being non-compliant.

The power of the arguments of mainstream science is based on rating. But it doesn't matter much if this rating is based on emotions (fear, adoration) or "stellar ignorance"[13] (simplism). The science that produces "procedural certification" is publicly declared an instrument available to all. This claim, however, deserves an applied analysis. Let's at least look at the way of social validation of the procedures and see if this is exactly the case.

How do the "abbreviated narratives" of science (popularization variants of the great scientific theories) reach the public space and how is the scope and nature of the influence they exert among the masses decided?

The "great narratives" compete in the space of common sense (dominated by emotions and their provisional character). Modern rationalism has become aware of the volatile nature of their public success in these conditions.

In social terms, this competition generates the series of philosophically theorized crises starting with the end of the 19th century: *the crisis of European humanity* (Edmund Husserl) or *the crisis of unity of meaning* (Jan Patocka) ultimately manifests itself as apparent effects of the crisis of science (which also appeared against *the background of the crisis of the foundations of mathematics)*.

The fact that we can no longer speak of an "ultimate source of knowledge" (Karl Popper) has facilitated the organization of a space for "negotiating the public relevance" of science.

The European rationalism paved the way for the procedural societies by authorizing the scientific production of "founding stories" and implicitly of meaning. This became possible when the predictability provided by the development of technologies made it possible to identify the truth in relation to functionality. But why would this be relevant in the political space?

The operational transfer of method has produced a subtle form of co-dependence between the political justifications of social actions and a consensually grounded interpretation of the truth of science. The crisis of the European way of thinking is linked to the deep crisis of the foundations of mathematics.[14] The perception of democratic majorities as the golden rule of the optimized nature of social and political decision is constantly undermined by the visible inability of European democratic regimes to keep under control the phenomenon of terrorism and new threats posed by the health crisis and the increasingly drastic limitation of human freedoms.

The tendency to refine governance models with a strong regulatory focus is justified as an attempt to limit the influence of personal and group interests in public impact decisions. However, procedural societies are not marked by equidistance – the central set of rules that dominates the market for human interactions is visibly marked by a certain ideological choice.

The most democratic political regime is the result of elections that involve a competition for power and whoever has the power wants guarantees of efficiency.

The repeatability of science results is tempting for the political competitors – they hunt down certainties (in the sense of capacity of predictability) and seek to undermine any data or evidence that calls into question the ideological foundations on which their actions are based.

Politics is – through its consequences – a choice of a way of thinking that allows the reconstruction of the social according to partisan interpretations and particular experiences.

This confrontation is pragmatic and, given the stakes, it tests competitors' respect for the values of the society where they do politics.

An established collective sense of the concept of fairness or good is born even in advanced societies following agreed procedures.

Of course, no one will agree to extract the scientific truth from consensus, but there is an almost universal practice of judging the results of scientific research in direct connection with the investigative procedures used.

Mainstream science is denoted by the usual term science. Procedures are used in the process of scientific research and their correctness is enshrined in a tacit form of agreement obtained within a *community of knowledge.*

This perspective appears transferable with immediate profits in the political space with the marked difference that the agreement of the majorities is the consequence of some emotional evaluations derived on the basis of personal and subjective feelings (thereafter treated procedurally as value judgments, given that in most cases they are not even judgments of taste).

There are several ways to 'fabricate' the consensual position – democracy being the systematic mechanism with the most defenders. The *procedure* of election, of political decision-making in democratic societies has always enjoyed the attention of the social sciences.

From a technical point of view, we have formidable examinations of political decision models and their relationship to access to power. But why have procedures become so important? Or more precisely – *what is done* (socially) *with the procedures?*

At a primary examination, the procedural systems produce a reconversion of social violence[15] – proposing solutions to keep aggression[16] under control within the 'anonymous crowd'.

Is democracy its own solution in communities where, as Darwin pointed out, competition between closely related individuals has stimulated evolution? And, above all, does the democratic procedure really work in the interest of individuals who choose to accept a restriction of their freedom for the promise of a better (safer) life?

In this sense, any procedural system carries in itself a subsidiary mechanism for the management of fear. Procedures consensually regulate the competitive field that no form of modern society can give up. The subtle forms (derivatives) of social aggression typical of the globalized world, the atypical manifestations of civic pressure that 'administer' fear in the Community space, the whole arsenal

of constraints available to the new bureaucracy[17] is formidable evidence of the competitive dimension modern civilization camouflages but in no way eliminates.

The modern societies often practice certain forms of *procedural mobbing* from which a group of individuals in society gain obvious competitive advantages.

The most democratic regimes exploit consensual regulations as an opportunity – forcing the selection of the social response to administrative and political decisions. More directly, the choice of procedures for the moral labeling of social action gives rise (in democratic systems) to a subsidiary form of selection of traits and characteristics that increase the individual chances of affirmation for members willing to reach consensus.

These individuals do not assert themselves socially starting from free personal choices: they configure their social reactions in the wake of civil fear and act considering that discipline ensures and provide them a high degree of personal security.

How sustainable this way of thinking is and what kind of experiences actually justify its perpetuation – we will see next.

What does political freedom look like in procedural societies and how the *European way of thinking* – can be a support for democratic decisions – seems a minor issue precisely because European-Western democracies pass as exemplary socio-political models.

Modern thinking and the ethics of 'institutional reason'

The functioning of political institutions enshrines the dominance of procedures, but the way in which institutions remain key instruments of the exercise of a will[18] remains transparent. In modern political systems, the will of the leaders (and of the dominant elite) resorts to instrumentalization: a whole procedural scenario justifies the executive action for which a corresponding set of 'rational' arguments was identified *post-factum*. However, the criteria on the basis of which we establish the rational character of a support remain strongly rooted culturally.

We decide and argue the rational character of actions on the horizon of judgments determined by historical experiences. All these arguments then receive collective validation and become a way of thinking.

Institutional reasons are without exception consensual – they are never too far away from the culture and mentalities that dominate a certain form of civilization. Europe has produced the first models of democratic institutions, and this is not at all a coincidence: in Greece, ancient philosophy facilitated the emergence within the community of a new way of thinking about freedom and a new perspective on the human condition.[19]

'The European way of thinking has' facilitated (out of efficiency reasons) the transfer of procedural practices and has led – out of reasons of interest – to the overbid of the impersonal nature of the executive action.

Institutionally one works with the tacit presupposition that behind the *regulations* (ordinances, laws) lies an infallible logic and an *enlightened reason* that follows and objectively reproduces an original and natural process of becoming. It doesn't take too much field research to see that the most respectable institutions remain the 'aquariums' that filter reality – and they don't do so disinterestedly.

There is a general tendency to silence the ideological contamination of institutional reason, and we have little reason to believe that modern institutions would be willing to re-examine their claims of objectivism and doctrinal detachment. This claim to enroll in the natural course of becoming proper to physical reality – functions as the ultimate and undisputed ground for the political decision.

Procedural modernity has something of the senior sufficiency of the monarchies of divine right:[20] only that the new deity is now the ethical reason whose procedural foundation seems to be the scientific methodology.[21] The reason why this claim was not suitable for any critical analysis on the merits is axiomatic: modern reason (as the 'core' of the European way of thinking)[22] does not account for someone who is not able to recognize the objective-scientific structure – the truth – and therefore legitimate authority as the undisputed guarantor of socio-political action. Let us, however, lean on this axiom, looking (as science proposes) at facts.

The procedural mechanism by which modern societies legitimize social action is a product of the ability to squeeze consensus by isolating challenges in their symbolic stages. Public cowardice / indifference are maintained by the lack of physiognomy of the will to create constraints.

Despite this deliberate depersonalization of the executive branch – the mechanism of imposing a political will is far from the innocence it claims.

The evidence of objectivity and the allegedly scientific aspect of the arguments at stake save but appearances. Procedures are 'imbued' with power relations through which subtle forms of exclusion and implicit subordination are perpetuated.

The modern procedural society is marked by an increase in the level of symbolic violence (the development of the online environment and the expansion of public space in the virtual unequivocally proves this phenomenon) and, in parallel, by a generalization of the formal model of social interaction.

The European way of thinking thinking partly explains this effect and substantiates the practical ways in which interpersonal relationships convert into moderately institutional relationships. This trend is easy to be seen from a simple analysis of Community regulations as they appear in EU documents.

When we speak at Community level about 'European values' (clearly indicated in Article 2 TEU Treaty – Lisbon 2007) we do not mean a simple political commitment – but we are talking about a legal obligation as non-compliance can lead to the appeal to the Court of Justice. Confering legal force to these principles and values shows the importance given to the conceptual foundations of *the procedural society.[23] The Europe of procedures is a derivative of the European way of thinking.* Western civilization remains uncompromising in relation to the respect for the

values that articulate and reproduce in *soft* versions an ancient *leitmotif* of classical Greek civilization: *the one who does not think like we do is 'barbaric'.*[24] This theme, regardless of the way in which it is resumed,[25] arouses hostility. And it is presumed that part of the violent actions facing the big European cities have their origin in the refusal to accept this idea. The myth of peace-keeping reason[26] does not hold up, and it is unlikely that our attempts to charge reason with something it cannot do have proved unrealistic.

The procedural society responds to the anarchic tendencies of exercising individual rights through the technique of division and multiplication of administrative obligations and through the artificial creation of needs.[27] The procedural society – as a product of institutional reason, faces a series of new challenges for which we do not yet have formidable, redoubtable theorizing. However, there are certain ascertaining premises the analysis of which can contribute to shaping some solutions:

1 The measures to combat the various manifestations of crisis in modern societies may give the impression that institutions of force (specific to the procedural society intensely bureaucratized and formally restructured by *social technologies*) unjustifiably restrict individual freedoms for control power, more precisely as part of the strategies for maintaining / reproducing power schemes.

Apart from this shortcoming which is the subject of common criticism, we must note that complex societies have an increased anarchic potential (to be seen the difficulties of implementing the *deliberative democracy*) and in the absence of law enforcement institutions the 'rule of law' may come to a standstill. For this reason, the *active individual freedom* specific to modern man imposes innovative governing solutions.[28] In the immediate practice, the 'institutional reason' does not produce structures, methods, and operational forms of administrative power through which it can coherently manage societies in which all the individual freedoms promised by the political system would be allowed and exercised. The ordinary political discourse talks about the guarantees that the system can offer to those who adhere to common social values.

The logic of the functioning of institutions derives from an axiomatic of the will to power – so that the recovery of an ideological[29] identity appears as an alternative means of collective operationalization of the way of entrusting political power – with simultaneous observance of democratic principles.

2 The usual exercise of procedural power does not redistribute its benefits to the people from whom it has been 'entrusted', but feeds and serves the interests of technology administrators who do not declare any ideological attachment – and consequently do not risk losing public support. The bureaucratic-technological infrastructure now manages the relations of ordinary individuals used to the political power, which means that democratic regimes (at the limit, nor the social contract) no longer function as a (directly) politically controlled relationship, but

only mediated and deeply reconfigured bureaucratically.[30] Contemporary social technologies allow bureaucratic systems to structure complex systems of *post-modern vassals. Post-democracy* arises once with the capitalization of power in a formal space created within procedural systems. The public response required by the procedural shift of the exercise of power is to provide formal support for the development of deliberative networks of political participation.

3 The procedural society admits the epistemic (scientific) critique but rejects any debate of its ethical dimension with the argument that the methods in sciences cannot be subjected to the moral dimension. Under this premise, post-democratic regimes (n.b. illiberal democracies) are used to justify political technocracies based on an error of classical logic.[31] It may be true that the ideological justification of political action allows for emotional attachments and subjective reporting to the historical realities. However, this type of argument has no demonstrative value: the fact that certain democratic exercises have brought to power corrupt or incapable decision-makers does not turn the democratic system into something essentially bad. It is necessary to denounce *the limits of modern democracies*, but this criticism must not provide the 'physiognomic' elites with reasons to establish prison discipline.

Civil society versus procedural society

Against the background of the democratic practices crisis in modern procedural societies, it is to be expected that the civil society will seek solutions for responses, by means of which the public opinion will reflect consensual positions and value judgments. In practical terms, during the major military – political crises, the means of expression available to the public opinion are dramatically limited and this is obvious, the best example thereof being the recent events in Ukraine. Regardless of the determination often shown by the civil society representatives – once with the very moment when the place of political dialogue is taken by military action and war – it is less likely that the voice of the civilian community will really matter.

I think it is but fair to say that the "European way of thinking" and the European values on which the legitimacy of diplomatic and socio-political relations between European nations are based could not stop the invasion of the Russian army in Ukraine and did not change the tragic character of the destinies of a wave of refugees, unprecedented in the XXIst century. The *Europe of reason* and implicitly the procedural model underlying contemporary democratic practices is confronted with a war situation for which states do not offer political solutions that can be formulated in terms of reason. There is, of course, a logic of strategic positioning at Community level, but the effectiveness of these approaches, which are to be maintained on the horizon of procedural reasoning, is increasingly problematic: compliance with the treaties, diplomatic conventions and, last but not least, observance of the principles of modern warfare[32] they do not provide additional security

guarantees and increase the exposure of those civilians willing -in peacetime- to defend essential democratic rights and freedoms.

The crisis of democratic practices is closely linked to the limited capacity of the civil society to produce authoritative opinion and to offer legitimate alternatives to political decisions which in this context remain the prerogative of the epistocracy. Deep political crises and the state of war are always opportunities to legitimize the concentration of power in transparent decision-making areas: these areas are the environment in which autocratic dictatorships and regimes are born. The war that Europe is currently facing calls for a more realistic reassessment of the possibilities of civil society to politically influence a world where the power asymmetry can no longer be masked by resorting to normative approaches: it is not enough for democratic rules to exist – it is imperative that there are practical benchmarks for the ethical sizing of political action in the field in which democracy takes effect. The connection of political action to an applied ethic remains a procedural phenomenon. The civil society does not certify ethical values – it translates, at a behavioral level, opinions that it extracts from collective experiences: the moment that new experiences brutally contradict beliefs or ideas that have been insistently conveyed for long periods of time – the civil society (marked by confusion) tends to react anarchically.

The war in Ukraine is not over yet, and there is little certainty with regard to the way in which this war will change the nature of power relations in Europe. Nevertheless, I think it is highly realistic to accept that, beyond the actual military confrontation – the conflicting parties have political, security and diplomatic approaches that broadly reflect the different degrees of connection of individuals and civil society to a specific architecture of values. The crisis of democratic values in the procedural societies has acquired, once with the invasion of Ukraine, a historical certification. It is essential that the response which the European civilization can provide to these challenges is to accept not formulas that are decoupled from the central set of ethical values that underlie the European construction.

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Notes

[1] The interest in applied sciences is only a minor symptom. When we 'do something' with the results of scientific research, we associate value judgments to them.
 This ideological contamination of the results of scientific research is noticed by Max Born (in his memoirs) who wrote in 1930: "Now I am convinced that theoretical physics is in fact philosophy."

[2] Even if this is sometimes difficult to accept – the most inhumane political measures demanded in their time a rational-scientific support and always found "specialists" with credible status to support them.

[3] The discussion of the "non-Platonic" nature of mathematical concepts is not new (Lakoff), but there are few occasions when this changes the tone of sociological analysis.

[4] Of course there are various observations, such as those made by Konrad Lorenz ("Irrational and unreasonable human nature" – so democracy would be "unnatural" but they are seen rather as figures of speech and have not gotten systematic attention.

[5] Sorin Borza (Ed.) (2016): *Modernitatea ratată. [Failed Modernity.]* București: Eikon.

[6] As the cradle of modernity, Europe is today crushed by successive crises (economic crises, the crisis of civilization, the "crisis of genuine leaders" and lately the health crisis Covid–19) maintained at the deepest level by the crisis of a way of thinking.

[7] Europe has "as its nucleus a certain structure of the spirit, for example, a determined form of ethos, a determined way of approaching the world as a whole and of forming the world,

through activity". (Cf. Max Scheler (1982): Der Genius des Kriegesundderdeutsche Krieg. In: Max Scheler: *Gesammelte Werke*. Band 4. Bern: A. Francke Verlag. P. 182.

[8] The crisis of European humanity...; The crisis of European sciences... (E. Husserl); The crisis of European man and the crisis of European culture (Fr. Nietzsche); The crisis of meaning (Jan Patočka distinguishes three fundamental movements of human life: the movement of acceptance, the movement of defense and the movement of truth) ecological crisis (J. Larchet); The health crisis; etc.

[9] There is a seductive dimension and a quasi – "erotic" relationship that the leader maintains with the public when he mobilizes it.

[10] Of course, the critique of Western exceptionalism does not resolve the basic issue and goes far too easily over the fact that Western civilization continues to attract immigrants from all over the world like a magnet. How then is it that the 'European way of thinking' remains associated with strong positive connotations even within worlds for which Christianity is a certain religion?

[11] Despite the fact that the end of those *grandsrécits* (invoked by J. F Lyotard) has already been prophesized – the increased appetite of contemporaries for the escort narrative cannot go unnoticed. The European way of thinking insistently offers some great grandsrécits stories – freedom, democracy, human rights, etc., and reconstructs reality (*teukhein*) using the coded language of power: the set of consensual "scientific interpretations"is established at the level of the social imaginary – justifying various political actions and then size them morally.

[12] All this starting from the fundamental premise that the purpose of science would primarily be prediction and not understanding.

[13] Gustave Thibon (Ed.) (2003): *Ignoranța înstelată. [Starry Ignorance.]* Romanian translation: I. Nastasia and M. Nastasia. București: Humanitas. ("A solution, in order to be truly assimilated, first requires a certain ability to pose and feel personally the problem that the solution solves.

The weakness of religious education is that it offers solutions long before problems have matured in minds and hearts.

It makes one think of political marriages between child princes who had to wait years for their union to take place, but between God and the soul of the „believers", how many marriages officially proclaimed and never committed!")

The problem of ideological attachment can be viewed analogously: ideologies sometimes offer solutions to problems that the public does not have and did not know...

[14] To be seen Russel's paradox, etc.

[15] The neutrality of the procedural management of social relations is meant to dissipate and divert the potential for collective violence to impersonal courts, "taking the targets in front of the shooters". Institutions and bureaucracies disperse tasks, responsibilities, so that we are in a situation where social violence no longer confronts direct opponents, but *diagrams of forces* (Foucault).

[16] Konrad Lorenz (Ed.) (1998): *Așa zisul rău. Despre istoria naturală a agresiunii. [The So-called Evil. On the Natural History of Aggression.]* Romanian translation: Ioana Constantin. București: Humanitas.

[17] Illustrative for the process of conjugating procedural power with political authority Krislov Samuel – *Representative bureaucracy*. To be seen also Ludwig von Mises – *Birocrația [Bureaucracy],* and respectively Milovan Djilas – *Noua birocrație [The New Bureaucracy]*, but also the studies of J. S. Mill, who noted the contradiction between bureaucracy and democracy. He emphasized the idea that in all systems marked by bureaucratic procedures there was a constant tendency to establish a technocracy that tends to reproduce and impose its own hierarchies of value through the exercise of power.

[18] Of course, it is not always an individual will of a leader, it can be the aggregate expression of a will that stems from group interests – but this detail does not change the essence of things.

[19] Platon is not a simple creator of concepts, he eventually created a new human type and, in this sense, a socio-political space and a new world.

[20] "...the bureaus usurp the power to decide many important matters, making decisions according to their own judgments on the basis of the merits of each case, that is, in a rather arbitrary manner." (According to Ludwig von Mises: *Birocrația și imposibilitatea planificării raționale în regim socialist.* [*Bureaucracy and the impossibility of rational planning in a socialist regime.*] P. 43.

[21] This mechanism is not a recent innovation – let us remember that Marxism self-proclaimed on any occasion as 'scientific materialism' – which did not in any way prevent the horrors of Stalinism or the suffering of peoples who went through Soviet experiments.

[22] In an already classic text (*The Tragedy of Central Europe*) Milan Kundera intuited that Europeans have more in common than a common geographical space. "Trying to draw exactly the borders of Central Europe would be pointless. Central Europe is not a state: it is a culture or a destiny. Its borders are imaginary and must be drawn and redrawn taking into account each new historical situation."

[23] Any voice that disagrees with the tone set by Brussels appears 'anti-European' – without a too careful analysis of the messages or the rationale. Brexit and, more recently, the sanctions imposed on Hungary are symptoms that eloquently show how necessary these analyses are.

[24] The Platonic idea that "everything that is not Greek is barbaric"is classical. However, it is no coincidence that Hannah Arendt considered totalitarianism to be a political form of Modernity. Of course, we will not find such a formula in European discourse – but it is clear that the level of civilization is measured in relation to the adequacy of these values and this 'European way of thinking'.

[25] Lucien Cerise, Samuel Krislov, Wiliam Dobson.

[26] Of course, the peace of the modern world is not crushed today by caterpillars – but fear has not been removed from the streets or even from the smart homes where the luckiest of contemporaries rest.

[27] Financial loans bring with them long-term commitments, obligations and debts, often over several decades, so that individual freedom of choice is significantly restricted from then on. Man is caught between the need to have income, so a secure job or secure business, and the obligation to pay installments, taxes, fees, etc. Under these conditions the market is a fundamental tool of social control. It is enough to overwhelm the market with products that people are stimulated to want (i.e. to produce 'needs'), to always bring out new generations and series of tools, appliances, high-performance machines for the purchase of which they want to work, to earn money or to borrow, so that from that moment on individual life is nothing more than a variable function of the market.

[28] The idea is not new – but realistic solutions capable of eliminating the system of postmodern vassals are not outlined. *Deliberative democracy* does not eliminate the dominance of 'authorized opinion' and the possibility of asserting social engineering as the core of government science.

To be seen also Godin, E. Robert (Ed.) (2003): *Reflective Democracy.* Oxford: OUP.

[29] The debate over the 'death of ideologies' reflects conceptualization tendencies meant to justify the expansion of procedural societies.

[30] Usually – the message betrays the author, so that the social effects of public messages are not directly related to the direct interest of some decision makers (people-institution), but to the mass effects of the persuasive focus of messages (what should they do and not in relation

to their truth or value in itself).

31 David Estlund seems to be in favor of this system of democratic validation of procedures for allocating *decision-making power/ competences* in politics.

Photo/Gábor Csanádi

Moral-democratic Competence as a Pillar of Civic Society
In memoriam prof. Georg Lind

Bogdan Popoveniuc

Introduction

The task of circumscribing what civil society is seems simple, but it is not. This special issue proposes two options. The first one is rather a general and ideal one: "civil society encompasses all human and institutional resources that facilitate social equity and the well-being of a community". The second is more concrete and operational: "[c]ivil society is ultimately represented by the social and civic institutions and organizations that are necessary for a functioning democracy." The former is too broad to allow a clear delineation from state power. The latter remains included in the long time debates among political philosophers on positioning the civil society within the continuum between the state (power) and private social institutions: nearly superposition (Hobbes, Locke), partial antagonism (Montesquieu and Tocqueville) or completely opposition (Marxists such as Gramsci). Regardless of their surface characteristics, the core characteristics of civil institutions are something distinctive of democratic regimes, although they are embedded in them. The sociological perspective seems inadequate to provide a satisfactory answer, which can be found at a deeper level.

Culture denotes deep-rooted values and norms underlying social structures as a whole. It give as our profound identity. Our essential identity is moral in its nature, because it legitimizes and give sense to our entire intentional, purposeful, authentic and appropriate way of behavior. However, we cannot choose between cultures or systems of values, and hence between total social structures.

The democratic institutions can be engrafted on most of the social patterns, perhaps with the exception of religious fundamentalist ones, but their viability is ensured by the compatibility and reciprocal influences with in-built social ones. This thing is possible because, "some pre-existing structures contain within themselves a 'democratic' way of settling minor issue". (Gellner 1994: 185–186) The civic institutions could act as an immunosuppressive mechanism for democratic grafts acceptance or as an immune rejections response. In fact, it is a conundrum. The viability and stability of democracy depends on the subtle interplay between the intrinsic micro values of a society/culture and the macro values of democratic institutions. Particularly, with their reception, how they are recoded in terms and meaning of genuine values.

The epistemic specialization divide narrows the researcher's perspective, which becomes limited to the particularity of its discipline. This is why political theory has this terrible conundrum to grasp what a democratic society is. The political science mantra, "a democratic society is a society with democratic institutions", becomes pleonastic and false.

For example, for Robert Dahl (1989) election systems and democratic assemblies, and to some extent, civil service and the judiciary system are considered among defining features of a democracy. Another good example of political scientists is John Rawls (1999), who also completely neglects individual dispositions, values, competences etc. and focuses on social institutions. A just society is a society with just institutions. Just institutions are those that embody the two principles of Justice: the principle of equality and the principle of difference. If the political and public institutions are structured and function to ensure both, then democracy will naturally run smoothly. Although, he made a peculiar inversion of reasoning and put the practice of productive moral and political theorizing before metaphysics and epistemology of values, his endeavor proved to be circular, in the end. His assumption on reasonable citizens is flawed because of, at last, two reasons. First, few people take responsibility for the "burdens of judgment" in the deepest questions on religion, philosophy, and morality and "accept their consequences for the use of public reason in directing the legitimate exercise of political power in a constitutional regime" (Rawls 1996: 54). People are opportunistic thinkers in matters of public reasoning. Eventually, if they do this, they do it mostly because their commitment to other moral values rather than to the rationality itself. Secondly, human beings' capacity for genuine toleration and mutual respect is chiefly the results of evolutionary affective traits and not of our capacity for reasoning alone. The reasonable citizen must accept reasonable religious, moral and philosophical doctrines or their interpretation. This will entail not a simple pluralism, but a reasonable pluralism. However, as psychological studies have revealed repeatedly, people are anything but reasonable in the question of religion and ideology (Haidt 2016).

Hence, this kind of imaginary experiments and philosophical reasoning have low chances to be useful for at least one practical reason. Human moral psychology is anything but reasonable.

The rational agreement on principles guarantees nothing about actual agreement and real behavior, as the phenomenon of moral dumbfounding proves. This is why the pragmatic Popperian strategy is much sounder. "How we can organize our political institutions so that bad or incompetent rulers (whom we should try to avoid, of course, but whom we might get all the same) can do the minimum amount of damage?" (Popper 2012: 46)

A paradigm shift is compulsory for better grasping the conditions of possibility for democracy. Political science has the alternative to learn from the example of molecular biology, as Patrick Dunleavy argues. As in the case of genetic linkages between the many minor genetic changes and the variation of a single major trait, the relation between the small set of major democratic traits and the dozens, or even hundreds, of different micro-institutions provide viability and stability for a genuinely democratic polity. The critically important political, i.e. democratic, 'main effect' of social institutions and how they operate turns out to be fundamentally shaped or conditioned by many other 'small effects' social institutions. "Micro-institutions often play complex roles, some switching on or off the effects of macro-institutions, and others changing radically how macro-institutions operate. Micro-institutions are small-scale rules and regulations, or minor cultural practices. They often sit well outside the scope of any formal 'constitution', instead lurking in the detailed supplementary practices or mores that grow up around how macro-institutions operate. They are also often found in administrative codes that apparently have little direct connection with the macro-institution they shape" (Dunleavy, Park–Taylor 2018).

The moral paradoxes of democratic power

The final appeal to moral principles and values for legitimizing democratic regimes, principles, procedures, decision-making mechanisms and implementations make indirectly salient the moral bases of democratic body. "Paradoxes of democracy especially problematic because democracy is so widely regarded as the morally best, perhaps the only morally acceptable, form of human governance. The prospect of paradox haunts this moral consensus" (Lee 2001). They are many, and especially because of moral burden of democratic legitimacy.

It is not so much the economic factors that erode democracies, but the wrongdoings of corrupt, incompetent, illiberal governance and legislatures, which weaken the laws and democratic principles. In the present large democracies with elective systems, the representatives stand for a small minority that exert and influence the power and can pass doubtful and partisan laws. In order to be viable, democracy should not only be able to mobilize society for achieving the shared democratic goals, but also to be able to restrain and punish the abuse of power (Diamond 2015). *Democratic power must be accountable, but it is kept accountable, in practice, only by those who are already in power.* This is a practical democratic vicious circle.

It can be broken, on the verge, only through popular upheaval, though the democratic uprising against democratic reign (who lost its legitimacy when it betrayed its elective mandate).

We also have the Wollheim's *moral paradox of the democratic citizen.* In democratic societies, committed citizens find themselves often in a moral dilemma. It can be common to believe that X is morally right and I vote for this. Nevertheless, the majority decided that Y is morally legitimate. Although I believe that X is morally right, I have to believe, that Y, incompatible with X, is morally right, because I am committed democrat and I believe that the decision of majority is morally legitimate (Wollheim 1962). Unfortunately, like in Rawls' case, in political science, the vast majority of theoretical debates that are trying to solve it gravitates around the moral significance of the paradox and its basic elements and not on the empirical evidence (See, for example, Weiss 1973). However, as this example illustrates, once again, the legitimacy of democracy, similarly to just political systems, requires moral entitlement. "Moral precepts are concern primarily with the relations between individuals, though sometimes applied to relations between the individual and community. In democracies, most law has been formulated in the interests of the society as a whole (or of the most influential individuals within it)" (Hinde 2007: 65). In the modern State rule of law, the Justice is done between the power State and individual, and not between individuals. This is an advantage, securing the modern societies from the talion-like retaliations endless justice, but also can proves to be a shortcoming, when the individual victims' sense of rightfulness is not satisfied by the public retribution of Justice. Juridical systems punishes the wrongdoers for breaching their obligations to the State and after they pay the 'debts', they are absolved by any consequences, while the victim can feel that as being morally unfair. In many cases, the State's macro morality is at odd with micro morals of individuals and communities.

Personal and group values filters how the public values, collective values are felt and understood. The political scientists' imaginative exercises, in the long tradition of theoretical political philosophy, are impractical as long as they are rational constructs unrelated to empirical evidence. The reason is not the driving force of human conduct and the transformation of society, but needs and values. Of course, they can and should be rationally instilled, but they are not always, even quite hardly so.

Speaking about values, they are considered, as we will see, as belonging to many different social spheres. Nevertheless, at the same time, any human values comport a moral connotation or, at least, justification in the background, no matter what social domain they are particular to. They rest upon an entire complex of significations that justifies the action(s) from a moral standpoint no matter what kind of conduct it is: religious, economic, political, private or publics. The values' powerful driving force stems from their fundamental characteristics. They are beliefs linked inextricably to affect; they refer to desirable goals that motivate action; transcend specific actions and situations; serve as standards or criteria and guide the selection or evaluation of actions, policies, people, and events; being ordered

by importance relative to one another (Schwartz 2012). People do not act because of the rational goal as such, but because attaining that goal responds to a motivation. Moreover, the link between motivation and reason is interceded by values. The actions are guided by relative importance of multiple values at the same time.

In 'actualized democracy', even in the most consolidated ones, we are witnessing, from time to time, such axiological clashes between democratic advance and resistance of traditional values. These clashes are not so much and always between opposing values, as they are between opposing meanings, conceptualizations, and representations, assigned to these values. For this reason, we see difference on the moral public sensibility between countries, populations, social classes, ages, gender and so forth. The differences are not only about self-interests, as it is about self-understanding.. Traditional family referendum, green certificate or vaccination resistance are illustrative for the middle-way actualized Romanian democracy.

Moral significance of democratic values

People develop their moral profile (values and competence) in a dynamic process between what people should do and how they do in reality. "The moralities that are part of each culture are affected by two-way interactions over time between what people do and what they are supposed to do" (Hinde 2007: 12). When there is a big difference between public discourse and real conduct, as it was in the communist regimes, the moral development is impelled along with the democratic competence.

The psychological radiographies made, a quarter of century after the fall of communist regimes, with standard instruments (mostly developed in countries with democratic traditions) reveal few differences. For Romania was found only two pronounced differences: a low level of trust in people and the tendency to exaggerate both the positive and the negative things (David 2015). The first feature is definitely very harmful to democratic success because it reduces coordination and cooperation for the benefit of joint actions. However, these mostly quantitative and standardized social instruments are unlikely to be suitable to grasp the subtle dialectic between the micro-level morality and macro-level salient morality.

The particularity of political science theories is their contracted sight limited at collective level, which makes most of them more or less versions of communitarianism as a form of social constructivism. It favors the relations between individuals and the community in the detriment of the connections between the individuals. Its fundamental latent assumption is that the personality and social identity of individuals is mostly molded by community relationships, as a top-down process, although the collective structure results from the down-top ensemble of individual relations. This aspect is obvious, for example, in the case of values. A political theory approach considers the community and its institutions to be the primary subjects of values and not the individual members of those.

The result is that what political theory understands by sharing values at the community level outlines a deceptive image of a general commitment of the individuals to those values. However, people can consent to values forming the political order out of various reasons (fear of consequences, conformity, disinterest, personal advantages, narrow self-interest, a missing sense of alternatives), or even by strategic judgment about how to promote other desired values using the recognized ones. More than this, people can carry, i.e. appreciate the events and assess the social reality, from a social sphere through the prism of the values proper to other social spheres, more meaningful and important in their lives (political power as a means of gaining money, religion or leisure time as social recognition). There are dozens of such social spheres: membership, security and welfare, money and commodities, working life (job/office and hard work), leisure time, education, kinship and love, divine grace (religion), social recognition (public respect, honor), political (power) (Walzer 1983).

Max Weber speaks about spheres of life (value-spheres or life-orders): the economic, political, esthetic, erotic, and intellectual sphere (Swedberg 2005). Once again, the concept of social or life sphere is hard to be understood purely sociologically. Their sociological essence is ambiguous as long as they are not equated with institutions, but are conceived, as Weber does, rather as consistent systems of prescriptions for conduct with "inner logic (*Eigengesetzlichkeit*) and limited autonomous working". The values from different spheres are typically in conflict with others and especially with those from the religious sphere. The idiosyncratic and contrasting relations of the religious sphere with the values from all other spheres (economic, political, esthetic, erotic, and intellectual) in the pandemic times speaks from itself.

They are of special interests in this analysis because some empirical research-based theories of the psychological underpinnings of democracy make a strong case by the possibility of attitude transfer from a social sphere to others. Max Weber's (1930) case from *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* is more than illustrative. Further studies confirmed this axiological inter-domains transference. Individuals who make decisions on other spheres (the professional one, for example) are more willing to make, rather than follow, decisions in the public sphere. For example, the service-sector occupations require a more developed cognitive mobilization, i.e. increase in the skills and the motivation needed to engage in decision-making in comparison with industrial work. As consequence, economic development makes people to become "accustomed to thinking for themselves in their everyday jobs". This cognitive mobilization is conveyed to political sphere where it "makes mass publics more likely to want democracy and more skillful at getting it" (Inglehart 2020: 168, 330).

This complex entanglement between various social spheres with their particular values and prescriptions is very insightful for understanding the difficult position of democratic sustainability mostly based on the main principle of political fairness.

There is an unspoken presupposition that lays beneath the analyses that a democratic society is a just society, or vice versa, a just society must be a democratic society. Both are false or at least, not necessarily true. A just society must be a limited democracy as long as order and retribution have to be reinforced systematically and continuously, while the survey, control mechanisms and social power systems should be independent from the will of provisional majorities. There will be a permanent tension between citizen freedom and State control. In addition, justice, as social value, cannot monopoles the axiological diversity of human society without conflicts. We find the same approach in the Kohlbergian theory of moral development, where the justice is seen as the master moral value. In the political science discourse, too, macro morality is based upon the fundamental concept of Justice, the principle upon which scholars "democratically" agreed. However, Justice is only one of the multifaceted forms of Righteousness. (This is why Nicholas Rescher can argue for a "pluralistic and heterogeneous" account of Justice, not because the Justice varied, but because Justice Value depends on the key values of different social spheres (Rescher 1966)). *Justice, in order to be "just", should do justice to other socially cherished values too.* The meaning of what is Just must accommodate and be instilled by the meaning of and how is felt righteousness in the other social spheres. Nevertheless, this homogenous perspective cannot fit with real values pluralism and especially with multiple ways of significations assigned by various people and groups.

Democracy versus civil society

From sociological ontology, in any society, there are not only state institutions, but also secondary associations (Durkheim 1902) or "voluntary associations" (Tocqueville). Similarly, "neo-Tocquevillian" theory of civil society conflates all civil associations as "voluntary groups" (see Putnam 2000). But there are many other non-political fields as education, healthcare, religion (churches), unions, all sort and diverse types of NGO' promoting various types and versions of values shared by different groups. These structures are complementing politics. They can support or conflict with State's institutions through their different obligations and values. "The stability of democratic rule is anchored among other things in its integration in the large set of social institutions indirectly related to political institutions in a narrow sense. […] They are linked to, give input to and shape democratic processes, and are in turn shaped by them." The average size of groups and the number of groups are among the meaningful quantitative indicators, at the social level, for the measurement of civil society (Fukuyama 1997: 13).

The values system of these plenty, small or big, social structures can be conflicting to democratic values, as often is the case of religious communities, conservative associations, nationalist and traditionalist movements and so on. They can present an external compatible democratic form, as voluntary association that ac-

commodates them in the tissue of democratic structure, but the driven value-systems are not favorable to the stability and promotion of democratic values. They also exert a powerful influence on character formation. While they are completely democratically endorsed, they can erode democracy if they cannot be suitably grafted on the democratic body.

As we have shown, political theorists end up by working with an abstract conception (set of rules, principles, and precepts) on democracy as 'a general ideal'. As ideal, it is unachievable in any society and hence irrelevant for the vast majority of people. The practically unimpressive, but various and abundant small factors, which sustain the smooth functioning of the democratic regime and give it strength, pass unnoticed. Because analysis focuses on the political domain, which became almost identical with the widespread State's structures, the non-political social institutions vanishes in the background. The civil society is still considered one of the most important factor, but only under its political aspect as political movements and activism. Its psychosocial characteristics with nonpolitical salient manifestation are neglected.

A democratic political system alone is unable to provide personal and political freedom unless the institutions of civil society are also active (Scruton 2013). *If there is no civil society, there is no democracy* as Gellner put it. Nevertheless, civil society is a problem of moral decision, because it is not imposed, except for the small groups for which professional conduct (journalists or civic education teachers) or when organizational memberships requires. In all other cases, civic participation is based solely on unconstrained moral decision. People are not born *democratic because democracy is not inherent in human nature*, "neither the choice nor the equality implied by the notion of 'democracy' is inherent in the human soul or social condition" (Gellner 1994: 187). People grow up in societies endowed with different cultural values in different spheres, some of them challenging the democratic master values of equality and choice. But some general historical force of human society evolution, as technological and scientific development, economical division of labor are conducive of democratic values and impels toward their dissemination in all other social spheres. Consequently, the other genuine values from these spheres are changing and adapting accordingly, in order to keep individuals unaffected by strong cognitive dissonance.

Beyond the surface of the institutionalized political system of free elections and public accountability rests a very deep and complex group dynamics and individual characteristics of the democratic citizen. The fixed formal structure of macro-democratic system lays upon mobile complex microstructures of individual and group mentalities, habits and ways of relating to others. Like any other form of power relations, within democracies there is a microphysics of individuals' conduct by means of moral values, principles and percepts, social conventions and so forth. *The (social) body is driven by mental(ity).*

"What the apparatuses and institutions operate is, in a sense, a micro-physics of power, whose field of validity is situated in a sense between these great

functionings and the bodies themselves with their materiality and their forces" (Foucault 1979: 26).

People differ in how they conceive moral values and principles, and as a consequence, the democratic ones (fairness being one of the core values from democratic regime) (Galinsky–Rucker–Magee 2016). The apparent consensus of democratic values as equality, equity, and universal fundamental rights floats on very heterogeneous and whirling conflicts among differently conceived and perceived moral values and socio-cultural institutions.

The dialectic of macro–micro democracy

Democracy is a psychosocial complex meta-institution with two interconnected layers: unit-level – the individuals' dispositions, competencies, intercourses, and the collective-level – the social institutions (political, juridical, educational and so on). Macro institutions, e.g. free elections, control by legislatures, independence of Justice are the primary object of study for political research. Nevertheless, the micro-institutions, the small-scale rules, particular legal procedures and regulations or minor cultural practices are usually neglected. There are other and deeper institutions that make democracy possible.

These are the legally settled micro institutions, such as the small particular aspects of election procedures, and socially constructed ones molded by the specific cultural values of that population. Moreover, if these micro-institutions fail, the entire *raison d'être* of the system is compromised. This became obvious in the completely unexpected success of Trump election. The US Electoral College was designed as an elite intellectual filter that will grant access to the Presidency only for the 'moderate candidates'. The subsequent development of strong parties and the Supreme Court judiciary political decision reduced the College to a mere constitutional ritual and made as the risk of a populist candidate to elude easily almost all checks and balances from the US constitution. Not to mention the conjecture that permits to the president to nominate the majority in Supreme Court, controlling the direction of federal politics for decades. The notion of separation of powers and independence of the constitutional courts or equivalent bodies is a general problem for all democratic states. For all democratic systems, the political role of the considered non-political institutions of the Constitutional Courts, with politically appointed members, can dictate the orientation for the main laws with major democratic implications on human rights (as abortion, limit of freedom of the press or speech, elected officials privileges and so forth) regardless of public opinion. In the Romanian case, for example, The Court admitted as constitutional the law that grants mayors' the prerogative to mediate the allowing social security payments, although on a deeper analysis this represents a potentially extremely effective tool (electoral bribe) for manipulating a significant part of the electorate. The majority of Court members was favorable (appointed) by the party with the

most mayors. In the absence of such functional micro-institutions, the political oligarchy (at central and local levels) of big parties is exerting the power almost uncontrollably. This is true for the US as it is true for Romania, though, at the general level, the big picture differs. As social theorist David Beetham put it, there is always "an inertial tendency inherent in social and political systems towards oligarchy and inequality, unless it is being actively resisted" (Beetham 1999: 568–569).

However, not only the juridical regulated political micro institutions are vital for democratic sustainability and effectiveness. When we speak about the two layers of a democratic society, we usually think about a democratic society if it has democratic-like institutions like free elections, equality of citizens before the law, respect for fundamental rights etc. In a real or actualized democratic system this macro democratic institutions are mirrored at the micro level and democratic values are present in and instill the vast majority of people mentality (convictions, belief, attitudes, motivations) and social relationships patterns (daily interactions, relations with authorities, with minorities, handling conflicts and disputes, how leaders are promoted etc.). If the macro institutional change can take place rapidly, as in the case of popular revolutions, following a legislative act, the latter implies only a very slow and oscillating process of revaluation and adaptations of social and moral values at the level of individuals. In other words, the social democracy is easier to achieve than psychosocial democracy. "The achievement of actualized democracy requires greater political plasticity, involving psychological changes in cognitive and behavioral styles. The psychological citizen can become capable of constructively participating in, and supporting, a democracy through acquiring a variety of cognitive and behavioral skills and practices" (Moghaddam 2018: 20).

These are equal with change of the core values that drive the citizens' super-ego. In the case of former totalitarian countries, which became democracies, the democratic class that tries to achieve the democratic model of personality, the progression is similar with the civilizing process (Elias 2000). Although still reluctant at many of the driving democratic values, with which they are not accustomed to, they borrow uncritical the ideas, ideals and ways of conduct from the democratic models. Democratization, as the civilizing process, proceeds at both the individual and the social levels. The non-democratic values or their non-democratic consequences of their employment are gradually banished from consciousness and conduct by the constant social pressure (institutional and collective). But unlike the civilizing process, where the objective economic factors make social success dependent on acquiring the civilized codes and conduct, in the democratization process they are missing or, at least, are less constrictive. The process does not presuppose the repressing of primary urges by civilized automatic conduct, but by replacing or molding values that are mostly incompatible with democratic axiology. Therefore, the process of internalization of democratic values into automatic mental and behavioral self- constraints is not so straightforward. On the contrary, the older repressed values can continuously oppose assimilations of the democratic ones. Hence, the ambivalence of both tendencies between assimilation and repulsion, assimilation

and distinction is more pronounced (Elias 2000: 430). Therefore, in the democratization process, these two phases and correspondingly tendency can pass almost indistinguishable. This was visible in the first years after the Romanian revolution in the older generations' preferred rebuke 'misunderstood democracy' to refer to the young people's unrestrained behavior. This is ironic considering that they could not have a single clue about what a democratic behavior really was except for their imaginary collage between totalitarian realities they lived by stripped of some of their oppressive components.

The civilized conduct is the rational conduct of an individual in a society with 'highly differentiation of functions'. Democratic mentality is the rational mentality of an individual within a society that, in addition, has a 'highly values pluralism and equality of rights'. However, each of the social spheres are heavily value-laden and, sometimes, these values are hardly compatible.

The intrinsic dialectic of micro–macro level of sustainable actualized democracy brings us to the necessity of finding another concept for understanding the core processual element that makes it viable. Democracy is a matter of individuals' equality, in fact equity, in a treatment free from the formal or informal group membership. This is equivalent with a 'fair' treatment regardless of individual or group social capital. At the same time, the social capital is essential for social success and access to resources in a society. Hereafter, social capital can prove a very suitable conceptual candidate for illuminating the robustness of a democratic society.

The structure of social capital as measure for civil society

Although a very promising and semantically rich concept, social capital is only in appearance easily to grasp. According to Adler and Kwon (2002), scientific literature defines social capital either external, as relations maintaining between actors, or internal, as a structure of relations among actors within a collectivity, or both. At personal level, social capital is the social reachable networking of a particular individual. Pierre Bourdieu considers it as an individual's attribute linked to its membership (social position) in a group. "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its member with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles then to credit, in the various senses of the word" (Bourdieu 2008: 286).

At sociological level, "social capital is rooted in social networks and social relations and is conceived as resources embedded in a social structure that are accessed and/or mobilized in purposive actions" (Lin 2001: 41). Robert Putnam promotes the idea of its collective nature, conceiving it as the amount of participatory potential, civic orientation and trust in others available to cities, states, or nations. However, social capital can be either a 'private good', a 'public good' or

both. Its substance is sociological and represents "the connections among individuals – social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them".

Consequently, in this view, the relevance of individual's virtue is lost. Social capital is a 'civic', completely unrelated with the individual 'attributes. "A society of many virtuous but isolated individuals is not necessarily rich in social capital" (Putnam 2000: 19). However, the social capital has a more complex nature and conflates several slightly different aspects.

Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) identified four different types of social capital, each of them corresponding to a classical tradition. The first type is the social capital based on *value introjection* as a result of "socialization into consensually established beliefs" (Parsons and Durkheim). It promotes behaviors based on pro-social morals and values rather than on self-interest. The second type is based on *"the norms of reciprocity* in face-to-face interactions" (Simmel). This type of social capital emerges from grounded culture that creates the agents' moral boundaries of meaning(s) of norms, values, and beliefs. The third type of social capital reflects *bounded solidarity* that leads to principled group action based on "situational reactive sentiments" (Marx and Engels). The last one expresses the enforceable trust legal/rational mechanisms, used by formal institutions, and substantive/social means, used by particular groups, to achieve compliance with group norms and expectations (Weber). It results from the 'particularistic rewards and sanctions linked to group membership'. Portes and Sensenbrenner (1993) confines their analysis of social capital mostly to the economic sphere, but it is not the case with the original meaning of evoked sociological traditions. Their slightly changed definition becomes comprehensive enough to encompass all types of social spheres: *social capital are those expectations for action within a collectivity that affect the specific goals and goal-seeking behavior of its members, even if these expectations are not oriented toward that specific sphere.* Norman Uphoff and Wijayaratna (2000) make more salient the individual-collective dialectic active within social capital in their distinction between structural and cognitive social capital. The sociological structural capital is in dialectical relationship with cognitive capital. In fact, both are ultimately cognitive because they emerge from mental state rather than from the material realm.

Why social capital can be the missing link between individual and social democratic structure? Because both, social capital and democracy, presuppose interpersonal trust. Actualized robust democracies require 'citizens to tolerate others efforts to participate in politics, even if they promote unpopular views' and 'who will participate in politics'. Both conditions relates to a generalized interpersonal trust, which send to complex interrelations between social capital networks from different spheres, ability to support moral norms of reciprocity in enhancing political participation and democracy, and will to voluntary participation in common activities and associations. "Roles, rules, procedures, and precedents as well as social networks that establish on-going patterns of social interaction" are the result

of "norms, values, attitudes and beliefs that predispose people to cooperate" (Up-hoff–Wijayaratna 2000).

Civil society assumes social capital because the latter carries the norms and values that makes possible cooperative behavior on the part of groups. "Social capital is […] the *sine qua non* of stable liberal democracy" (Fukuyama 1997: 7).

The participation and interactions in various groups and association facilitates motivation to be civically active (Putnam 2000). The social capital is essential because it also provides the educational resources environment that nurture the democratic/undemocratic oriented cognitive and social development of children (Loury 1977).

So, underneath the salient democratic macro configuration, there is a huge and complex network of both political and non-political micro institutions, with their rules, norms, rituals based on shared plural sets of moral values that form its inner load-bearing structures. Democracy depends on the degree of equity in the distribution of heterogeneous social capital. It not presumes a homogeneity of sharing social capital in all and every social spheres, as utopian progressists foolishly promotes, but a balanced total weighted distribution. A democratic society can exist if the vast majority of people perceives the social arrangement as fair. However, they have this feeling only if the social opportunities are roughly equal (although heterogeneously, i.e. the gains in social capitals in some spheres compensate the lack in others due to their exchangeability and felt importance). The paradox is that despite the wishful perspectives (e.g. Green 1988), even the social capital is the one that makes "absolute equality of opportunity, where an individual's change to succeed depends only on his or her innate capabilities an ideal that cannot be achieved" (Loury 1977: 176). At the same time, the democratic macro principles of equality and justice can be perceived as attained in a society if individuals feel that the social capital is distributed evenly, although heterogeneously, within the society. That doesn't mean that all have similar proportions in any special sphere. It is a matter of equity in social capital distribution, and not of equality. And here lays the political correctness and radical progressists' fundamental error. The amount of social capital varies for each individual in various social spheres, but overall they must be at peace with its distribution as being fair. The overall evenly distribution of social capital at the macro level is perceived due to its the symbolic, and/or material, convertibility between social spheres and how much it contributes and provides personal gains and social recognition that can be converted in achieving the goals. People values dissimilar the diverse social spheres, but the unevenly distribution is not felt as unfair if personal social capital in the social sphere(s) that individual perceives it as greatly meaningful is high.

Therefore, the ideal republic of democracy, based on stark principles of equality, freedom and justice, is even theoretically impossible. Rising adversarial forces hunt the very process of democratic advancement. The objective nature of social capital makes full equality/equity untouchable. Is there nothing that can be done? Is democracy doomed to fail sooner or later? Was Plato right despising "these and

qualities akin to these democracy would exhibit, and it would, it seems, be a delightful form of government, anarchic and motley, assigning a kind of equality indiscriminately to equals and unequals alike?" (Plato 8: 558c) Yes and no. My thesis is consonant with the famous quote "as the worst form of government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time". Democracy is a process with certain characteristic that makes it adaptable to human various and changing needs and values.

As a process, it is resilient for adaptation to the diverse and changing values and beliefs and goals of different groups, more than any other type of political regime.

Fostering moral-democratic competence

Many studies on the relation between power and corruption and moral hypocrisy prove the truth of the old story of Gyges' Ring (Plato 2:358d–2:360e). People in power tend to cheat more and oversight their own moral transgressions (Lammers, Stapel–Galinsky 2010; Rustichini–Villeval 2014), become insensitive to the needs and rights of others (Galinsky, Rucker–Magee 2016) and perceive the world in a more self-serving manner (Rus 2009, 2010, Overbeck–Droutman 2013).

In this matter, political science is once more useless as long as it does not incorporate the insightful empirical knowledge on human psychology. The principles identified to be at the basis of democratic governance are necessary, but not sufficient, as illiberal democracy proves. For example, *the rule of law* and *legal equality* are empty words if the laws are crooked, it is not 'fairly applied' in practice or the independence of Justice is not a fact (O'Donnell 2004). *Political freedom* is useless in the absence of concrete opportunities of manifestation. If the political unregimented citizens are deprived by practical means of promoting democratic alternatives or to exert concentrated influence (in elections or social movements) on big parties. The *respect of human rights* should be a morally accepted principle in that society and not just *flatus vocis* (Russia is a good example). *Free election* must be supported with a real political pluralism and equality (Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, Taliban parties fraction in Afghanistan are example of what can happen if democratically elected parties, that represent ideology with undemocratic values, can ruin any democratic system once in power).

Theories of moral judgments use sets of generally human values, of evolutionary origin, to substantiate the criteria for making moral decisions (Haidt 2016). "Values are general beliefs about desirable goals, varying in importance, that serve as guiding principles in the life of a person or group." They are „characteristic adaptations shaped by the interplay of basic personality traits and the opportunities and constraints of the social and natural world" (Schwartz 2017: 124). A democratic society without individual democratic values cannot endure.

As the democratic structure, morality manifests on two layers: macro- and micro-, but even one of the important research approaches of moral psychology,

the Neo-kohlbergianism, tends to keep them apart. "Macromorality concerns the formal structure of society as defined by institutions, rules, and roles" and how individual behavior is affected by structure of society and public policy, and affects them on his turn. They are mostly sociological salient in election, polls and referendums, public-service, public positions, protests and so on. "Micromorality concerns the particular face-to-face relations that people have in everyday life" (Rest–Narvaez–Bebeau–Thoma 1999).

In political science, only the macro-morality is considered worthy for scientific research. However, doing so, the most important link between micro and macro morality, between micro and macro democracy is lost.

The key question is how public democratic principles of impartiality and rational (utilitarian or deontologist) moral conduct at collective public level can be built on a micro-level morality based on a diverse and different values as non-impartial principles of loyalty, respect for authority, taboo-like spirituality favoring of close ones and personal virtue?

The interconnections between collective values and personal values, collective and individual morality and democracy are the key to understand the sustainability and solidity of democracies. The development of human societies was determined by their success in answering three fundamental problems: the relationship between the needs of the individual and those of the group; the control of relationships between people, so that the social structure is preserved; and the relationship with other groups/societies and nature. The way in which these situations are resolved defines that society. At the same time, the values at individual level are the specific responses "to the universal human requirements reflected in needs (organism), social motives (interaction), and social institutional demands" (Schwartz–Bilsky 1987: 551). The complex dialectic between personal and collective needs and values forms the intricate tissue of social establishment. From evolutionary times, the moral stability of societies depends on how they managed to get the equilibrium between the needs of society and the needs of individuals. This is reflected in the balance between *selfish assertiveness* – "the propensity to do the best for oneself", and *prosociality* – "the propensity to please others, to be cooperative, kind loving, and so on" (Hinde 2007: 9). The macro social values of democracy seems to be one of the most resilient and adequate pattern of keeping this equilibrium. Moreover, it is far from stable, especially when the patterns of personal values and micro level are too different.

Democracy is impossible without democratic citizens and democratic culture. In addition, democratic citizens are continuously in the making from generation to generation and from one stage to another of their lives. The democratic thinking should and can be fostered. Nevertheless, personal and group values cannot be changed at will. On the contrary, people display a very uncritical motivated reasoning for promoting their unscrutinized values that drive their conduct and which were instilled in socialization process by habits, education, conformity and ignorance.

At this point, the strength of democracy proves to be its weakness, too. Its principled permissiveness and value pluralism tolerance makes her vulnerable in front of discourses promoting intolerant values from other less flexible social spheres. During the pandemic times, in Romania, one of the main strategies of anti-vaccination and against preventive measures discourse, heavily promoted by the Church, was the religious freedom.. Until recently, the public discourse of the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) was neutral-to-discouraging towards vaccination, while local priests mostly presented vaccination as a loss in religious faith.

The effects of green certificate preventive anti-epidemiological measure) were practically canceled in a predominantly rural Romania, where resistance to vaccination was already high, especially among religious people, because of exemption for going to churches (the regulation's text did not restrain it, at least, attending religious services!)

The 'products or services' of Churches are vital, such as those of 'grocery stores, pharmacies, hospitals' (nothing about educational services, of course) constituted the official position of ROC and Romanian political rulers. ROC only in the end and half-hearted spoked against "trivialization of the severity of the disease and the consequences of the pandemic". Hence, even in the last minute it concedes to vaccination, but not to green certificate. The situation is an illustration of wayward non-ethical (and in this case unethical, theological in this case) discourse can shifts the emphasis from the intrinsic "moral" religious values to democratic political rights. It is an unethical critical reasoning, because a genuine Christian ethical reasoning about the decision to vaccinate and respect the preventive measure should be built upon the Christian values of conduct and not on political ones. Christian ethics is not about myself, it is about the other. "If there's a small chance that my vaccination (regardless of its effects on me) will protect you – my parent or brother (in the broadest sense) – then it's good and recommended. For I do not think of myself when I do it; as a believer, I must be ready each and every day to appear before the Lord when he calls me. I think of you; I miss talking face to face to you, and I cannot live with the thought that – playing with my idea of freedom – I am putting you in danger. (…). I am not vaccinating to be 'safe' myself (because – as a believer – I know there is nothing safe in this world), but for fear that I can harm you without my will. In fact, this is the beginning of ethics: *to refuse to do harm when you can do it.*"

This touching example of genuine Christian ethical reasoning illustrate what is required for democratic citizens and a viable and enduring democracy. Democracy requires ability for ethical reasoning. Ethical reasoning which is, in fact, the moral-democratic competence. The revaluation and democratic integration of values from various spheres in such a way that they do not contradict the democratic values and principles, can be made only gradually and rationally by self-reflection.

In order to properly function the democratic mechanism at macro-level (political accountability of the rulers, rule of law, freedom of speech and peaceful protest, independence of Justice, universal suffrage, meritocracy and so forth) have

to be sustained by the micro-level democratic-like base structure of the milliard everyday interrelationships between people, i.e. democratic citizens.

The sociological structure is based and, in its turn, influences the psychological structure. The universality of values does not guarantee that they are perceived and interpreted in comparable way, except that the bearers employs critical moral competence. The psychological characteristic of democratic citizens circumscribes the necessary conditions for ethical reasoning: the state of constructive *self-doubt* that I could be wrong in my convictions and ability to *revise my opinions in light of evidence, ability to critical question all of my beliefs, including the sacred in my society, seeking information and opinions from different sources, to understand those who are different from us and learning from them, openness to new experiences, actively seeking experiences of higher value and creating new experiences for others, and having a principled right and wrong perspective* according to principles underlying democratic governance as basic freedoms, right, equity, and just treatment (Moghaddam 2018; see also Moghaddam 2016).

Conclusions

The most important dimension for democratic sustainability is not the formal institutions that, as history proves, are only necessary but not sufficient. They can be shaped without substance, as in the case of illiberal democracies. Political marketing is successful in a society with uncritical citizens who are easily manipulated and self-serving critical citizens who accept being manipulated when it is to their personal advantage. The underling democratic mentality is the antidote for the slippages of democratic power. The development of media and information literacy, critical thinking and moral-democratic competence (ethical reasoning) are the prerequisite tools for accommodating the democratic required abilities with any particular pattern of values, as long as, the incompatibility is not between values as such, but as how people understand these values. All of these constitute the rigorous psychological concept of moral-democratic competence (Lind 2016).

This intrinsic relation between a democratic society and the ethical conduct of its citizens reveals not only the permanent danger of democratic degradation, but also the threats arising from its advancement. The more democratic a society becomes, the newer (i.e. nonexistent or barely existing in undemocratic regimes) intrinsic pressures come into the fore. *The more democratic a society becomes, the higher, in some respects, is the likelihood of undemocratic behavior.* We can call it the *tragedy of democracy*, paraphrasing the phenomenon identified by Muel Kaptein (2021) in the case of ethical organizations. The more democratic a society is becoming, the flexibility, pluralism, tolerance and inclusive nature of democratic system, as well as the higher level of general trustworthiness, becomes both the cause and effect of democratic advance and regress. We can use the Kaptein's insightful framework for advancement of ethical organizations processes, for

understanding what is happing with the deepening of democratization of a so-ciety. Democratic ethics is at the base of democratic sustainability and the more democratic a society becomes the more four counter-democratic forces come into act and threaten it stronger. One is the upward democratization force. The advance of democracy entails the raising of democratic awareness. Further undemocratic imperfections are scrutinized, making (apparently?) undemocratic behavior more likely and democratic standards are set until they cannot be met. This seems to be the cases of 'cancel culture' and 'woke' movement. The second is the down-ward democratization force. State control and supervision decrease along with the raising level of democracy, until the democratic rights become visibly abused and undemocratic behaviors become more attractive.

The third is the backward democratization force. The consolidated democracies decrease the investment in democratic education until it is no enough. At the same time, the more attention is on newly still unaddressed undemocratic issues, mak-ing undemocratic behavior regarding the previous issues more likely. The fourth is the forward democratization force. The more democratic a society becomes, more it is prone to manage democratic processes in similar way until it ends up outdated for the new democratic challenges. In addition, more eager it becomes to keep its democratic prestige, but more cases will be identified as being unrightfully resolved, many other will be disapproved, and also many hidden too, until they cannot be hidden anymore.

Democracy is a process and not a state. Democracy must be constantly rein-forced by the inner moral subtle mechanisms of daily morality. Another sensible issue of democracy is its openness and inclusive feature. Democratic states are open to pluralism of values and tolerance with opposing view. Its fundamental principle is the negative prescription, based on the primal 'Thou shalt not harm other rights'. Similarly, in human ethics (moral), there are no moral rights (except, maybe, in the business usage of the term), but only moral duties. However, the na-ture of moral conduct is more comprehensive, including positive prescriptions as being 'caring', 'loving', and 'helping' among other. It is based on what you should do, not what you are entitled to have. Democratic ethics is stuck around the rights. The unbalance between the democratic rights and democratic duties threatens the very moral base of democracy. Democratic rights overweigh completely dem-ocratic duties. The Law protects only the democratic rights, to the extent that they are transposed in juridical terms, and barely and indirectly have prescriptions for democratic and lawful duties. (And it is doubtful if this would be desired). Demo-cratic duties are only encouraged and fall in the moral/civic domain and parental and community socializations.

In order to promote a sustainable and viable democracy an *inversion of political ethical reasoning* between duties and rights, at least in the educational discourse, is compulsory. The accent should move from promoting the lawful, social, and ethical rights, that are granted by a governing body, to the personal, communal, and moral duties, that should also undertaken be the governing body. Responsi-

bilities and obligations should promoted prior to democratic rights and privileges. Democracy is not as much *negative* – as the respect of other fundamental right than it is *positive* – of fulfilling one's democratic duties. The negative norm of respecting the rights and liberties of the others is self-dissolving in the absence of a mutual base for consensus (e.g. the fictitious Rawls reasonable citizen). The focus should be on fostering democratic values. However, the pluralism of human values is a very difficult task to deal with. They are the driving force for action, but they are also inconsistent. The same values are differently understood and people re-signify them according to "self-defining life narratives, complexly and differentially situated in culture and social context" (McAdams–Pals 2006).

As we have shown, democracy is a moral ideal and has a processual nature. It is deeply rooted in the fabric of human culture, but not in its nature.

Although it is universally kept as a desirable ideal, few people know how it can be achieved. The moral-democratic competence must be learned. Not any type of education helps preserve democracy. The mere transferring of knowledge and skills, essentially for social progress, is not enough for promoting a democratic way of life. Without democratic competent citizens, the technological advanced and economically powerful residents are increasingly potentially self-destructive.

At individual level, the democratic living implies dilemma and conflicts of personal and interpersonal interests, preferences and opinions. At social, public, or even international level, democracy faces intercultural differences, interests and disagreements. Peaceful resolutions require ability to deliberate in a principled moral way. This requires valid knowledge and ability for critical thinking, scientific literacy, especially ethics, psychology, and anthropology. People have to know about their reasoning vulnerability, which is full of cognitive biases. Another ability is media literacy. People must become aware of the power media exerts on their life and be able to critically evaluate and use it. Directly related to them is information literacy. People must have the ability to find, sort, organize, effectively use, critically and ethically apply the information and communicate truthful and veridical information within the overwhelming contradictious informational environment. Only in this way, the democratic resident can live properly and supportive in a democratic regime. Because ones is able to question its own believes, open for new experience and capable to tolerate difference which are the constant challenges of living in a democratic environment.

Moral values are the most powerful determinants of human conduct. They are almost immune to persuasion, argumentation and reasoning, unless the individual has developed cognitive abilities for critical thinking and ethical reasoning. If the affective aspect of moral value is more automatic and, partially, unconscious, the cognitive aspect can be addressed in reasonable manner. It can influence and ad-Just the affective aspect of moral orientation. (Sauer, 2017)

The neurocognition of morality empirically supports the conception that both emotional and cognitive components play an important role in the moral-democratic competence as the "ability to apply a certain moral orientation in a consistent

manner, as trained, developed, trustworthy moral and differentiated manner in varying social situations" (Prehn et al. 2007: 44). Ethical reasoning, as an aspect, but not component, of moral competence can be trained to discursively articulate, express, improve (to make them just), and to justify the moral values. How an individual acts driven by ones moral values is heavily based on his/her level of moral competence. Moral competence can articulate and adjust moral orientations, reappraise varied values and make them compatible with democratic understanding and living in the world. Democratic lifestyle requires "the ability to solve problems and conflicts on the basis of (felt) moral principles by means of thinking and discussion with others and without recourse to violence, deceit or subjection to others" (Lind 2016).

The most important dimension for democratic sustainability are not (only) the institutions, but the underlying democratic mentality. Democracy presupposed the pluralism of values, which habitually are in conflict. The development of media and information literacy, critical thinking and moral-democratic competence are the prerequisite tools for accommodating the required democratic abilities with any particular pattern of values, as long as, the incompatibility is not between values as such, but how people understand these values. This flexibility and progress in understanding the values can be educated by means of moral-democratic competence (Szopka–Bardziński 2011; Lind 2006, 2016).

Moral-democratic education must be a relentless and progressive process as long as the psycho-affective human traits are in partial disagreement with democratic social institutions. Even though democracy as social institution is a human-made reality, it would be impossible for the human species to survive and prosper if its subjective social constructions will be constantly in incongruity with its biological traits. The process of civilization and democratizations implies a constant mutual adaptations of human psychological mechanisms to the socially (rationally) set up institutions. These collectively established social institutions (social cognition) shape gradually human deep psychology (neurocognition), which is a lengthy and laborious process. However, until human biopsychology will be favorable to democratic society, democracy should be continuously created and preserved at the level of social structure. This can be made by the means of the only faculty that can be fully mastered by human individuals, the ability of reasoning. Moral-democratic education, as the pillar of civil society, is essential to the resilience and endurance of democracy.

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THE CRISIS OF LIBERAL DEMOCRACY BETWEEN POPULISM AND TECHNOCRACY

Andrei Țăranu–Cristian Romulus Pîrvulescu

◼ For two centuries, since it has first manifested itself in modern politics, with the presidency of Andrew Jackson, populism has taken specific forms of manifestation, adapting to local cultural conditions, but has always had general characteristics that make it recognizable. In fact, populism is a form of manifestation specific to forms of democracy, especially representative, although it can influence other political systems. On the other hand, populism has much older roots: perhaps since politics was politics populism has been a form of manifestation. "Ideological radicalism of the Right, with its mass roots in the menu peuple, as we have seen, is no new phenomenon. Over the centuries, it has taken such forms as the traditional alliance between king, church, and city mob" (Worsley 1969: 241). But it has always depended on a technological base, taken advantage of technological progress, it has been a reaction to established forms of political organization. In fact, current populism is not a new phenomenon, but only the new generations of researchers are once again acquainted with it, and trying to analyse it from the perspective of today's society. As Jean Paul Gagnon, Emily Beausoleil, Kyong-Min Son, Cleve Arguelles, Pierrick Chalaye, Callum N. Johnston were explaining in their editorial from *Democratic Theory* from the winter of 2018: "This definitional difficulty is exacerbated by the Babelian confusion of voices on populism, where the term's meaning differs within and between *global regions* (e.g. Latin America vs. Western Europe); *time periods* (e.g. 1930s vs. the present), and *classifications* (e.g. left/right,

authoritarian/libertarian, pluralist/antipluralist, as well as strains that muddy these distinctions such as homonationalism, xenophobic feminism and multicultural neonationalism)" (Gagnon, Beausoleil, Emily–Son, Kyong-Min–Arguelles, Cleve–Chalaye, Pierrick–Johnston, Callum N. 2018).

In their book from 1969, Ghiță Ionescu and Ernst Gellner already noticed that "Aspectre is haunting the world-populism. A decade ago, when the new nations were emerging into independence, the question that was asked was – how many will go Communist? Today, this question, so plausible then, sounds a little out of date. In as far as the rulers of new states embrace an ideology, it tends more often to have a populist character. And populism is not an outlook restricted to the new nations. In the Communist world, strong currents seem to move in a populist direction. And in the anxious or agonizing re-examination which has gripped several developed liberal societies of late, populist themes are prominent" (Ionescu–Gellner 1969). And already since then the question has been "whether populism was primarily an ideology (or ideologies) or a movement (or movements) or both".

For more than a decade populism has returned as the main political enemy of contemporary political societies: from Central Europe to Australia and from the United States to India the ghost of populism seems to haunt the world. But unlike in the 1960s, when the same ghost was only bothering political scientists, today populism seems more aggressive than half a century ago. Presidents and journalists, crowned heads and university professors, diplomats and generals deplore the assault of populism and the popular support it seems to enjoy in more and more states considered until recently democratic. In the European Union the problem of populism seems the most acute, as the increase in the voting intention (and in the effective vote) of more and more European societies can lead to the undermining and even dissolution of this political project which has maintained for over 70 years the peace on the continent.

The march of populism has started in the '80s of the last century but has increased after the events from 9/11 2001 as a social reaction in the West against political correctness and multiculturalism. Since then, parties such as *Pym Fortuyn List* (Netherlands) or *Vlaams Block* (Belgium), as well as the *Front National* (now the *Rassemblement National*, France) have 'denounced' the hypocrisy of political elites who used the new Muslim 'minority' as an electoral pool increasingly difficult to please, maybe only through financial bribes, and that also blackmails through rights and democracy.

But those parties, many of them gone today or completely changed, received a strong political and electoral boost once and then again, after the 2007 economic crisis. The economic crisis has quickly turned into a political and system crisis, as it has generated new models of social reflection on how the new political-economic order is built and how the economic system is built through the political structure. The economic crisis has collapsed the confidence in the old political parties of many European states as well as in the political elites of the United States generating a carousel of political and even ideological emotions and contradictions.

The left embraced globalist and right-wing programs, extremist currents went to the center (Jobbik) and others from the center targeted the extreme (Fidesz) and all of Europe decried the death of multiculturalism that was removed from public discourse. On this background, the liberal populist parties developed precisely because of the weakness and ideological fatigue of the mainstream parties.

Today the resilience degree of political institutions when faced with illiberalism in countries that seemed definitely anchored in liberal democracy is heavily being put to the test. Nor does it seem to be merely an accident of United Kingdom or American political life. In fact, these election events were the signal to start the great offensive against the 'liberal democracy' already announced by Viktor Orbán at the Tusnad summer camp in July 2016. Now, on behalf of the nation reborn from its own ashes, claimed as the only genuine political reality, the 'illiberal' of all obediences believe that democracy should be reduced to a simple electoral ritual of validating those in power. Hillary Clinton's failure in the US presidential election legitimized the simultaneous start of the offensive against human rights and citizens' freedoms. The concerted and multi-fronted attack against democracy, for the latter is ultimately targeted under the formula of 'liberal' democracy, had already begun few years ago, but seemed to be a kind of marginal phenomenon. In an editorial published in several American dailies in late 2016, Fareed Zakaria revised the deadline he had launched two decades earlier to explain the situation in marginal states such as Pakistan or Egypt[1] to see "the rise of illiberal democracy in the United States".[2] Immediately after his mandate inauguration, Donald Trump's presidency launched a controversy meant to delegitimize the 'liberal' press through the launching of the famous theory of 'alternative facts', the formula used by Kellyanne Conway, Donald Trump's adviser, to explain the source of the statement of the first White House spokesman, who was replaced later, in July 2017, according to whom the January 20 2017 inauguration festivities had the largest audience in history: "And they're giving – Sean Spicer, our press secretary – gave alternative facts."[3]

In this ideological context dominated by illiberalism, the new media, as it has happened every time new information-transmitting tools have been introduced, had a significant impact on the quality and impartiality of the dissemination of information. In an article from 2015 Robert Epstein and Ronald Robertson[4] noted, based on an experiment, the existence of *a manipulation effect of the research engine* (SEME – Search Engine Manipulation Effect). The research confirmed the hypothesis that the rankings made by search engines are biased and that they can change the voting preferences of undecided voters (research indicates a significant number of around 20% of undecided who have changed their voting preferences as a result of the information 'delivered' by the searching engines). On the other hand, Epstein and Robertson found that this proportion may be much higher for certain isolated demographic groups, but also that the effect of these classifications is not obvious, so that those affected by this information treatment do not realize the manipulation.

Internet searching engines, such as Google or Facebook, can have a significant impact on consumer's choices.[5] The citizens who become (who are reduced to the role of) consumers feel that they receive neutral information when they automatically take for granted the results of searches ranked through sophisticated algorithms, but that's not the case. The hierarchies resulting from the searches are adapted to the profile of each individual: Epstein and Robertson do not thinkthese hierarchies are neutral, but tailored to every consumer's preferences, in our case, the elector. And if the experiment conducted on three groups of subjects showed that search algorithms can easily change the voting preferences of undecided voters by up to 20% for open groups and by up to 80% in isolated demographic groups, political impact becomes essential. Moreover, in an interview he gave to *Politico* in August 2015, the same Epstein already noted that Donald Trump was in a very good position in the search engine hierarchy. Or these hierarchies were not generated by economic preferences, as many analysts of the political phenomenon are tempted to believe, but by the political predispositions of internet information consumers.

Even when the results of Epstein and Robertson's research are considered exaggerated, the manipulation effect of search engines is not however denied, being estimated at between 2–4% of voters,[6] which in a highly politically inclusive society such as the North American one – but in general, the situation can be found in most states that use majority electoral systems – can be decisive.

But if we accept the old definition given by Cas Mudde for populism, the original populist movements even declared that they are 'besides the people (considered innocent) against the corrupt elites' who 'highjack the political life of society', 'taking prisoner the democracy through party bureaucracy' (Mud–Kaltwasser 2015: 42) and if populism has managed to take control through leaders like Donald Trump, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, Matteo Salvini or Viktor Orbán, this means that the former political elite has failed to be attractive to the citizens that it is supposed to represent.

The social distance between elites and citizens is growing more and more and the citizens feel less and less represented by political parties, and yet the mainstream politicians still claim not to understand why the pressure of populist parties is increasing.

In Romania, a mobile phone company has introduced a robot as a telephone interface service with the customers, instead of the classic operators considered too expensive and sometimes rude or unfriendly. The Robot (friendly called *Andreea*, a girl name) says she is there to help customers solve their problems related to bills, subscriptions or any other problems they might have or, when is not possible for her to solve those problems, to put them in contact with a human operator. It's just that the algorithm that guides Andreea are so opaque that most customers can't solve their problem, nor do they get to the operator they want. The answers are preset and whatever you try to say to Andreea sends you directly to the main menu – over and over again and again. The reason why more and more customers

are turning to other mobile phone companies (even if some of them offer poorer services or have poor coverage) just because they can't get past Andreea and solve the problems they had with the respective company. Also because of Andrea's software, customers cannot get in touch with human operators, who seem to have little contact with customers and therefore from the point of view of management seem/become inefficient and therefore useless. The company is losing customers because they are looking for human operators that the company is firing because they don't get to talk to customers. And all of that because of the robot Andrea.

This example seems relevant for the way in which mainstream parties are becoming increasingly strongly contested and abandoned in favor of populist or illiberal parties. Mainstream political parties have been in an extremely precarious situation for a long time – because, in order to preserve their electorates, they have made large concessions to the populist message on the one hand and on the other they have disappointed the same electorate by making concessions to the great global and globalizing capital.

Let us take Chancellor Angela Merkel as an example: in 2010 she declared that multiculturalism was dead (Multi Kulti ist Tot) while accepting the rescue of European banks through the European Central Bank (since the 2008 financial crisis broke out, more than €1.5 trillion in taxpayer money has been used to rescue ailing banks in Europe, according to the European Commission). After 2011, the same Mrs. Merkel banned German banks from accepting bank speculation if they still wanted support from the state, while starting a small crusade against the Cypriot bailout in 2013. This pendulum between perspectives has obviously upset German citizens and then European ones, generating increasing frustration. Moreover, after 2015, the German Chancellor asked for and obtained from the Bundestag the consent for Germany to open its borders to Syrian refugees stranded in the Balkans, Hungary or Austria. This divided the German society extremely and ultimately led to a long political blockage. And the migration-related cleavage in Germany spread rapidly across Europe, freeing and channeling various anti-German economic frustrations towards anti-Muslim and Euroskeptic movements.

It is worth noting that *Alterantive fur Deutschland* emerged as an anti-system party that initially opposed the euro area and Germany's economic model, while Germany was a member of the European Union. At this stage AfD was an eccentric party with a limited success to the public. Once the migration theme launched, and in particular through the phagocytizing of the PEGIDA movement – an anti-Muslim and highly nationalist movement, from the former DDR – AfD has become a successful party nowadays, with a score that places it as the second largest political party in Germany, while Angela Merkel is preparing to become history, being less and less present on the German and European political scene.

In the Netherlands, the populist Geert Wilders and his Freedom Party seem dethroned by the new and young Thierry Baudet, leader of the Forum for Democracy, who recently joined politics. The latter's party, declared euro-skeptic and

neo-conservative, won 38 seats in the Dutch Senate (which has a total of 75 seats) at the last final elections. Baudet, like Wilders, was a follower of Nexit (the Netherlands' exit from the EU) and its return to the Gulden. It's just that, unlike Wilders, his speech is becoming increasingly radical anti-Muslim and Euroskeptic, and is received and voted by more and more Dutch people. But unlike Wilders, the Forum for Democracy knows how to remain in the sphere of equal opportunities and freedom of conscience, that is, in a project of a political center rather than a far-right one. A situation which, as we will see in the case of the central and eastern European states, becomes rather the norm – illiberal populism tends to target the political center.

What is special about the new European populism when compared to the old one? First of all, Europe, as built by Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman onward. As explained at the beginning, populism is not innovative, but adaptive. Against the general background, that of virulent criticism of elites of all kinds (political, economic, scientific, etc.) different messages and movements are adapted accordingly to the characteristics of the environment. The chameleonic characteristic of populism uses social and economic frustration accentuated by various successive or simultaneous crises to promote itself. As the Covid–19 crisis has shown, even scientific elites are not immune from this populist offensive. And yet, with differences from one country to another, the majority of the population accepts authority and does not refuse the exercise of power. But minorities who flirt with populism can today use technology. So did the Bolsheviks and fascists at the beginning of the last century, when they used radio, cinema and microphone to successfully manipulate the crowds newly entered in politics and affected by the successive crises caused by the First World War and then by the Great Depression. Likewise, the impact of populism today is amplified by new media. And, as Marshall McLuhan anticipated, "the medium is the message" (McLuhan 2015: 102). The fact that information comes through social networks and not on official channels makes it credible. But didn't the same thing happen with rumors during the French revolution? *La Grande Peur* – didn't she leave any trace in the French collective imagination?

Becoming the most influential democracy in the 20th century due to its essential contribution to the victory of the Entente during the First World War, the US also played an important role in the emergence and dissemination of modern populism. On the one hand because Jacksonian democracy was a kind of illiberal democracy *avant la lettre*, on the other hand because the democratic model that will impress Tocqueville so much, America, will also export populism. But what does American populism look like? In the article dedicated to the North America in the book coordinated by Ionescu and Gellner, Richard Hofstadter noted that "the character of American populism derives in great part from the American tradition of entrepreneurial radicalism. Elsewhere, populism rested upon the role of the peasantry, but unless one identifies a peasantry simply with rural poverty, the United States has not had a peasant class; neither, despite the limited stratum of large landowners and slave owners in the South, has it had a class of rural grandees,

an aristocracy with clerical and military connections and conservative traditions" (Richard Hofstadter 1969: 9).

These religious traditions will always be looked upon with suspicion. In 1935 Sinclair Lewis, the first American to win a Nobel prize for literature, was publishing a dystopian novel, *It Can't Happen Here*, describing the fall of America under the nets of fascism after F. D. Roosevelt was defeated by a populist politician. And 69 years later Philip Roth imagined, in turn, in *The Plot Against America*, 2004, an alternative history where the fascist Charles Lindbergh defeated the same Roosevelt in the 1940 election and turned America into a totalitarian dictatorship allied with Nazism. Why should the two great writers – Lewis, the first American winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature, and Roth, one of the most important writers of the end of the century and the beginning of the millennium – be obsessed with fascism? Or is the country of democracy perhaps at the same time the one where fascism has emerged and developed?

Since its beginning in the early 16th century, the opposition between puritanism and liberalism has forged a contradictory America that will be found in the founding cleavages of the United States. And puritanism defines not only a religious doctrine but also an institutional and socio-cultural system, in which authoritarianism, and sometimes social and political totalitarianism, require total control over civil society. Between this puritanism and freedom, especially in historical Puritan societies, in America and, to a lesser extent, in the UK the relationship was conflictual. And this conflict has lasted to this day.

In *The Anatomy of Fascism*, published in 2004, Robert Paxton, one of the most important researchers of the phenomenon, saw fascism as a reaction to the development of liberal democracy. And when his analysis stopped on the origin of fascist movements, Paxton considered the hypothesis that America might be the country of origin of the proto-fascism: "Considering these precursors, a debate has arisen about which country spawned the earliest fascist movement. France is a frequent candidate. Russia has been proposed. Hardly anyone puts Germany first. It may be that the earliest phenomenon that can be functionally related to fascism is American: the Ku Klux Klan. Just after the Civil War, some former Confederate officers, fearing the vote given to African Americans in 1867 by the Radical Reconstructionists, set up a militia to restore an overturned social order. The Klan constituted an alternate civic authority, parallel to the legal state, which, in the eyes of the Klan's founders, no longer defended their community's legitimate interests. By adopting a uniform (white robe and hood), as well as by their techniques of intimidation and their conviction that violence was justified in the cause of their group's destiny, the first version of the Klan in the defeated American South was arguably a remarkable preview of the way fascist movements were to function in interwar Europe. It should not be surprising, after all, that the most precocious democracies – the United States and France – should have generated precocious backlashes against democracy" (Paxton 2004: 49).

First emerging in the America of the third decade of the 19th century as an alternative to the liberal democracy of the Founders, under Andrew Jackson, the populism of Jackson-ian democracy was the ideological foundation of the South's reaction against the 'march of equality' that Alexis de Tocqueville had already revealed in *Democracy in America* (1835). For Tocqueville, this march to equality opened the great road to 'democracy'. But far from being just a matter of institutional architecture, 'democracy' was for Tocqueville a state of mind that involved building a 'democratic society' to be founded on. A democratic and liberal society that runs counter to the totalitarian puritanism of the South. Frustrated by the North's victory, the Southerners have lasted eight generations by building an alternative world, alternative truths, founded on a specific political culture. And this world in which the Klan played a central role found in Donald Trump the belated opportunity for a historic revenge. This is how the flame of the Civil War was rekindled, pushing America to the brink, as the January 2021 assault on the Capitol showed. And all this would not have been possible without the metamorphosis of American populism. "Jacksonian thought was divided between those who continued in the old hard-money, anti-bank ways, and those who were more interested in getting access to government funds and putting them to use in exploiting the great American bonanza. This cleavage in thought was paralleled by a cleavage in expressed values and in economic policy. As to values, Jacksonian democracy is marked by *two conspicuous themes* that seem quite at odds with each other: the first is the persistent clamor of new enterprisers for greater opportunities, the cry against monopoly and aristocracy; the demand to give the commoners better and more even access to the big prizes in business, politics, and the professions… The second theme is what Marvin Meyers has called restorationism (Meyers 1953: 4). It hearkens back to the simplicity, the civic dedication, the nobility, the limited material aspirations and high moral tone that were deemed to be characteristic of the old republic. In it the Cincinnatus-ideal, so integral in the public reputation of George Washington, is invoked once again" (Hofstadter 1969: 11). And this is the tradition that – six decades after – the American Populist Party will take over.

In Europe, especially in Central and Eastern Europe, where illiberal democracy is promoted by leaders with autocratic tendencies who want to become permanent in government, the tradition of agrarian populism is still alive. Those social categories that are the following after those who adhered to agrarian populism a century ago are also addressed by Viktor Orbán in Hungary and by the new Romanian extremist party AUR (Alliance for the Unity of the Romanians).

On the other hand, current European examples presented above show us how important the decisions and the rhetoric of mainstream parties are in forming and building populist groups and parties anywhere in the world. Moreover, what the AfD reproaches to the mainstream parties is the same thing that most European populist parties reproach to the European establishment, democratic or bureaucratic alike. They consider that Europeanists are, first and foremost, representatives of international financial capitalism which, by valuing their influence at the level of

governments and the European Commission, save banks at risk of bankruptcy at the expense of taxpayers throughout the Union. What else do sovereign debt, the Treaty of Fiscal Stability or the austerity mean if not passing on to public budgets, i.e., to all European citizens, the losses of the banks that had made risky investments in Greece or who had engaged in fraudulent Bernard Madoff-type schemes? This is called capitalizing on benefits and socializing losses, and perhaps the most ironic aspect is that the operation is carried out by appealing to public authority. The state must therefore be minimal only as long as it is about preserving the interests of the business environment, but when banks or large enterprises need its support, all talk about the 'invisible hand' and the benefits of the unregulated market is quickly given up, and it is called to help that very state – until then, a minimal one!

Populists also believe that the European vocation belongs to them and to the multinationals, that benefit from the abolition of customs tariffs, that can relocate production capacities without any obstacle from the States of origin and that, in this way, access to cheap labor force and markets in Eastern Europe. In addition, as a result of relocations, trade union organizations are also dismantled, increasing the room for employers to maneuver in wage disputes in both the West and the East.

Thus, an extremely interesting fact is European populists – declared right-wing and pro-free market – are becoming critics of globalization and of the great capital, as well as of the privileged relationship between the European Union (as well as the states that belong to it) and the supranational companies that fuel financial and technological globalization. It seems therefore that Ernesto Laclau was right to regard populism as a form of political emancipation of political and social marginals against the dominant political trends (Laclau 2005: 48). Only that Laclau's emancipated marginals today tend to become the new dominant political line themselves. What is reproached to populist and illiberal movements is precisely the inability to produce public policies unifying society, as they rather produce scissions and cleavages within the societies in which they come to power. And this criticism turns out to be based on reality because we see how in Hungary, Poland, Italy or Austria the principles of social solidarity assumed by the European Union are being blatantly violated in the name of national defense (Bozóki, A. 2015; Modrzejeski, A.–Potulski, K. 2014).

Thus, in Austria the right-wing government has blocked the access of Eastern European citizens to social assistance in its country, even if that meant it offered more money to citizens from other more socially developed European countries. Conservative Chancellor Sebastian Kurz explained that his aim is to "combat immigration into our social protection system", but also to provide incentives for Austrians to seek work, and even if this action faces an impeachment from the EU, the conservative government, supported by populist parties in Austria, does not want to withdraw the law. And last year, Matteo Salvini, the charismatic leader of the Northern League, declares to a rally, "The European elections next year will be a

referendum between the Europe of the elites, of banks, of finance, of immigration and precarious work; and the Europe of people and labor".[7]

In an extremely important article, William Davies (Davies 2017: 26) points out that the image and credibility of elites (both political and epistemic) seems to have collapsed during the last decade, both because of technology and of political involvement in the economy. If, in a technological perspective, things seem to be simpler, because the answer to everything is just a click away and therefore the need for a leading knowledge has diminished in the perception of knowledge receiver, in the field of social sciences and especially in political sciences things are more complicated. Because the latter, almost since its founding, has distinguished between the masses and the elites – usually focusing on the latter.

For example, in the view of the followers of behaviorist theory from before 1960, many citizens were regarded as apathetic and politically ignorant, being followers of authoritarianism rather than democracy and hostile to civil liberties and racial and religious minorities. That's why many behavioral theorists concluded that the health of democracy depends more on the elites than on the general (Berelson 1952; Lipset 1960). Starting from here almost all political science until the 1980s was no longer interested in the public and in the public opinion. For here is what one of the most prominent figures of 20th century political science, Robert Dahl, wrote: ...one of the central facts of political life is that politics – local, state, national, international –lies for most people at the outer periphery of attention, interest, concern and activity. At the focus of most men's lives are primary activities involving food, sex, love, family, work, shelter, comfort, friendship, social esteem, and the like. Activities like these – not politics – are the primary concerns of most men and women. It would clear the air of a good deal of can't if instead of assuming that politics is a normal and natural concern for human beings, one were to make the contrary assumption that whatever lip service citizens pay to conventional attitudes, politics is a remote, alien, and unrewarding activity (Dahl 1961: 1279).

Murray Edelman, decades later, in *The Symbolic Uses of Politics* (Edelman 1999: 78) accepted the same thing – that the mass public was ignorant and passive. Worse, ordinary citizens incorrectly believed that their votes controlled elites and influenced public policy. Edelman argued that ordinary citizens' political dispositions and behaviors stem from the symbolic atmosphere created by elites and his focus was on the deleterious effects of elite's *manipulation* of mass ignorance.

The idea that elites manipulate the masses has become a faith shared by theories belonging to both political sciences, political communication and social psychology, giving the impression that social sciences have already agreed that the masses do not exist, but are only social groups (Moscovici 1997: 54) that are somewhat mechanically subjected to elites – formal or informal ones. These theories have been embraced by both left and right ideologies that seem to share together the contempt for 'masses' and election campaigns have become manipulation shows, in which purpose and values no longer have any relevance but only the success of the manipulation experiment. The most direct example is the

campaign for Brexit, a campaign in which, as we saw almost immediately after the vote, no one knew exactly what they were voting for, everything being reduced to emotion – because entire social categories that voted *Leave*, they soon realized that they had voted against their own economic and social interest. Today, when Great Britain seems to have failed both on Brexit and in terms of remaining in the European Union, some are asking that political elites, as well as epistemic ones, explain themselves. Sometimes these elites, especially the latter, try to find new explanatory or 'manipulating' theories to explain their failure. But was it a failure? Wasn't the result predictable? The instrumental role of the electoral system has long been known, and from this perspective the referendum is hardly a democratic method of consultation with the public. The so-called consultation mechanism itself was flawed on the one hand by the method, which nullifies any debate, and on the other hand by the result, whatever the result might have been, as long as it did not recognize the equality between participants in an electoral consultation. The referendum, through the caricatural simplicity of the matter on which the participants were invited to decide, distorts the perception of voters and attacks the foundation of democracy, the equality between citizens. For example, those who voted against Brexit – almost half of the voters – no longer matter: they are annihilated in their quality of citizens. Far from being democratic, the so-called transfer of the decision to the people is nothing more than a typical illiberal maneuver to delegitimize existing elites and legitimize anti-system currents. It should never be forgotten that the method of legitimization through electoral consultations – a true *reductio ad electionem* – is not only the privilege of today's illiberals but was also successfully used by Mussolini and Hitler. Following the referendum from August 19 1934, Hitler was confirmed by a vote of 89,83% with a presence of almost 85% as the Führer of the Third Reich.

The role of the electoral systems in strengthening authoritarian regimes in power is already known. In 1924, Mussolini won a crushing majority (65%) which would then justify the dissolution of democracy in 1925. The Acerbo Law of 1923, which introduced the first majority, already distorted political representation and provided a fabricated majority to the National Fascist Party that facilitated the road to dictatorship. However, such electoral formulas facilitated both the repeated victory of Viktor Orbán's Fidesz and Vladimir Putin's United Russia in Russia. In general, the first past the post and plurality systems, as it is the case with the US, the UK and France, create such manufactured majorities that facilitate governance, but move the political conflict from parliament to the streets. The absence of forms of facilitating negotiation and real consensus, as it is the case with consensual democracies, leads – under the conditions of today's society – to the increase of conflicts. And this is one of the causes of violent political actions such as the assault on the Capitol, Brexit or the movement of yellow vests. On the other hand, proportional electoral systems can also be perverted, especially if there is a lack of a democratic political culture to provide a real basis for liberal civil society that can bring a real counterweight to illiberal trends in contemporary societies. And

to counter this liberal civil society, we are witnessing the formation of an uncivil civil society, which takes over and develops the values of illiberal groups in order to create an illiberal ideological foundation for a post-democratic political system.

In fact, as Bobby Duffy explains (former Managing Director of Public Affairs for Ipsos MORI, and now professor to King College from London) in his book, *Perils of Perception: Why We're Wrong About Nearly*, people are wrong in almost every respect. And many phenomena that we talk about are the result of errors of perception and of stereotypes that affect the use of critical thinking. "It is hard to prove that misperceptions have been widespread for a long time, because measuring them requires representative surveys, and social scientists started conducting rigorous public opinion polls only relatively recently. In the middle of the twentieth century, surveys of people's perception of social realities were rare, limited primarily to simple political facts – for example, which party was in power, what their policies were and who the leaders were. But some of these early questions, first posed as far back as the forties, have been asked again in recent studies and, as we'll see, the responses suggest that nothing much has changed" (Duffy, 2018: 18). In fact, Duffy focuses his attention on the research of Daniel Kahneman (winner of the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2002) and Amos Tversky on the two systems of thought – fast and intuitive thinking and slow, rational thinking – that together form human thinking. However, perceptions are related to the first form of thinking that we use with greater dexterity and which often misleads us. And this error is amplified by technological means. "That's not to say that our current, ideologically-driven discourse and the explosion of social technology have no effect on our perceptions of reality, or that we're not living in particularly dangerous times. In fact, those technological shifts are particularly terrifying in their effect on our accurate view of the world or key issues – because the quantum leap in our ability to choose and others to push 'individual realities' at us plays to some of our deepest biases, in preferring our existing world view and in avoiding conflicting information" (Duffy 2018: 19).

The yellow vest protest in France is an unprecedented phenomenon for the last half century, after the student movements from 1968. All possible accusations have been made against those who participated in this protest – and to a good extent all are entitled: fascists or anarchists, uneducated peasants or sophisticated haters, the instrument of local and foreign populists (in this case, Italians), etc. Those who have put their yellow vest (as the proletarian cap used to be in the past) come from all strata of the middle class and access almost all radical ideologies at the same time – they want the increase of wages and lower taxes, are for ethnic and racial plurality but against *les travailleurs détachés*, etc. This trans-ideological mix of left anti-Semites and of extreme right anticapitalism has only one target of their social hatred – the political elite. And France, due to the effects of the electoral system on the political system, was already the predilection of the strikers' movements. According to the Hans Bockler Foundation study in a selection of OSDE member states, France was the world's number one for the strike days between

2008 and 2018 with 114 strike days per year. However, the lack of institutionalized compromise mechanisms has already made possible that, in addition to the majority manufactured by the electoral system mentioned above, we also have the effect of constitutional reform of the reduction of the presidential mandate from seven years to five years which made cohabitation impossible – which reduced the potential for social conflict between 1980 and 2007. As parliamentary elections take place a month after the presidential elections, the president-elect ends up with a significant majority. In front of this majority the use of violence becomes the only form of negotiation. In fact, the violence of the yellow vest movement is the effect of the non-consensual French political system. That is why the President Emmanuel Macron, understanding in the end the cause, has tried to compensate the situation through a national consultation to relaunch the consensual mechanisms.

But these attempts to restore consensual mechanisms are not yet enough to relaunch social dialogue between different social categories whose isolation has been accentuated by the computer revolution. And on this basis populism can build on the old model of the elites divorcing 'people'. In the last decade, the European lower classes seem to increasingly realize that 'elites' are less needed in the political process. And, if one looks at the overwhelming passive support to the yellow vests from the other classes in France, it seems that the will to change the political organization of European societies spreads. This development is to be welcomed in many aspects, most particularly as a claim for the renewal of current representative regimes that become increasingly irrelevant and do not qualify as legitimate democracies in the conscience of their citizens. This is not to say that citizens in general, and the yellow vests in particular, do not acknowledge the necessity of governance. Quite to the contrary, they sense that a new form of democracy is both possible and necessary in order to make governance efficient for those who are side-lined by the 'system' *and wish at the same time to count as individuals* (Steenvoorden–Wright 2018: 6).

The authors' explanation is that individuals have as an essential need a two-way social identity – are 'we' identities, identifications of an individual with a group or a category, as opposed to 'me' identities, which are identifications of the individual with social types, roles or characteristics (Brewer 2001). Or, the European identification seems to have failed dramatically in recent times, although its aim – largely successful – seems to have been to evacuate the national identification in favor of European identity. Thus, European citizens are less and less French, German, Romanian or Slovak, but they also feel not very much European. Thus, a massive identification arises, which is solved by increasing individual identification. Or new technologies help a lot in this through a process of social alienation and denationalization without generating European identification, thus depriving any social group of social solidarity that any social group entails. That is why the authors believe the yellow vests are a symptom of this European anomia – they are not representatives of an ideologically or socially homogenized group, but merely a mechanical assembly of unhappy individuals. And each individual dissatisfaction

is taken over by each other participant who joins the dissatisfaction of others (Lubbers–Scheepers 2007: 650).

Under these conditions, some researchers have turned to analyzing the relationship between populism and technocracy. Their thesis is that the reaction of European political elites to increased post-election delegitimization is the orientation towards expertise or professionalism. Politicians of the mainstream political elite are getting closer and closer to technocracy in an attempt to increase their legitimacy space. We do not want to develop here the thesis of the end of ideologies or the right-left cleavage but only to mention that there is a whole political literature that develops the perspective of the need to introduce clearer criteria in terms of the contemporary definition of political ideologies and their taxonomy, especially when most mainstream political parties consider themselves to be center parties (and develop catch-all policies). That is perhaps why the relationship between mainstream European families and the Commission's bureaucracy seems so good, which provokes the wrath of populist and Eurosceptic parties in Europe.

This closeness seems paradoxical and quite new, for as Aberath, Putnam and Rokman show us *(Bureaucrats and Politicians in Western Democracies)* the relationship between politicians and bureaucrats was not, until recently, a good one. On the contrary, bureaucracy – by being stable, and seemingly unideological – was viewed with mistrust by political parties that had the political legitimacy obtained by elections, but did not always have the institutional legitimacy to carry out the political projects they wanted. Hence the permanent political tension between the two forces of the rule of law. This tension was lower in the United States, primarily due to federalism and then to the small number of those who held public office. On the contrary, in European states the conflict has often been an open one and the tension, therefore, much stronger. Here the bureaucracy has always been much larger, more stable and more centralized. And during the long period when there was this tension between bureaucracy and political parties, political parties used their ideological dimension (and inherent cleavage) as a weapon against bureaucracy defined as a state.

On the contrary, at European level – especially at the level of the embryos that later constituted the European Union, such as the CCO and then the EEC, it was the European bureaucracy that constituted the political files and not the politicians. The politicians of the Europe of the 12 took the decisions at national level, and the European dimension was also discussed there, the European Parliament (established in 1978) whose decision-making powers have been gradually strengthened, the most important being decided by the Treaty of Lisbon and implemented in 2014, and it was the European Commission that dominated European policy on public policy-making after Maastricht (1992). But, after all, it is what is happening at the national level. But since the European Commission is not a genuine government – being not only duplicated, but also institutionally dominated by the Council with absolute political powers – it is only the one that initiates, not the one that decides on European policies. But this has not prevented some from

claiming that, unlike the national level in Europe and even the American model, bureaucracy has turned into a political superstructure that seems to be too little, or not at all, controllable. In this it was alleged that the Commission had become a technocratic superstructure. This is exactly what the populist, illiberal, Eurosceptic or sovereigntist parties of the European Union are reproaching, and this was one of the hard-working arguments of Brexit – the plethoric bureaucracy and political impunity of the European institutions.

During the last three decades we have witnessed two parallel phenomena, which are intimately related to each other: the increase in power of the institution of expertise, but lacking political legitimacy, especially in the context of European integration and the strengthening of the European institutions, and on the other hand, the development and growth in importance of extremist, Eurosceptic populist parties. As Peter Mair points out (Mair 2013: 126), there is an inextricable link between the development of the technocratic character of the EU institutions and the development of political theories justifying technocratic leadership as a deliberative one, which is a form of legitimization through parallel theories to democratic theories. The theory of deliberative democracy "is meant to provide an answer to the question how to best make collectively binding decisions that from an anticipated future standpoint we have no reason to regret. You may call this the concern for the epistemic dimension (or the epistemic properties and characteristics) of the process, rules and procedures of political decision-making and its modalities, a concern which feeds into another symptom of the malaise of democratic government and governance, i.e. technocratic rule [...] democracies should be regarded as self-scrutinizing and self-correcting political systems that can respond to internal deviations from its normative ideals. This is why they face notorious and ongoing controversial demands for their own revision, development, and improvement – the challenge here consists in "a tricky recursive logic" (Offe 2017: 14).

Buchstein and Jörke also criticize the theory of deliberative democracy as an inherently elitist one, and in a more recent contribution Jorke and Selk explain, as in the comments above, that the development of populism is a democratic reaction to the neoliberal and post-democratic order, an order in which the connection between the public and public policies is permanently lost. And it is more than obvious that, in essence, technocracy is elitism, and populism is characterized by deep anti-elitist sentiments (Mudde–Kaltwasser 2015). However, we have to introduce a nuance here, because populism opposes the elite considered corrupt only in order to (as we see in Poland, Hungary, Italy, etc.) takes its place, establishing illiberal political regimes that limit rights and discriminate against minorities.

In her work, Nadia Urbinati (2014: 192) identifies the two currents of technocracy and populism as forms of disfigurement of democracy that destroy the diarchy between will and opinion the procedural democracy depends on. Technocracy reduces democracy to the search for truth (assessment of opinions), while populism reduces the pluralism of opinions to the single and indisputable popular will. In both cases, the appeal to democracy is only an instrumental one – for some

the search for truth, for others only for the introduction of a single condition of the 'will of the people'. At the end of both processes, democracy is disfigured, no longer classical liberal democracy: "Populist and technocratic forms of discourse can be considered as two sides of the same coin, the coin being the critique of party democracy […] the idea of contemporary political life being restructured around a new cleavage between populism and technocracy actually masks a *deeper* dimension of political opposition – between party democracy and its critics – in terms of which both populism and technocracy find themselves *on the same side*" (Bickerton–Accetti, 2017: 201).

Bickerton and Acetti point out that the common element between technocracy and populism is the denial of pluralism and mediation between political parties. Participatory democracy involves policies competing on the same issue, and parliamentary democracy assumes that these competing policies are mediated by political groups so as to reach policies whereby most benefit, and those who inherently lose from these policies hope at least for further compensation. On the contrary, populism and technocratism deny any form of negotiation in order to impose single visions based on either majority or competence.

Both [populism and technocracy] are examples of *'unmediated politics'* dispensing with intermediate structures such as parties and representative institutions between a *supposedly unitary and common interest of society* on the one hand and elites on the other [...] populism stressing the centrality of a putative will of the people in guiding political action and technocracy stressing the centrality of rational speculation in identifying both the goals of a society and the means to implement them" (Caramani 2017: 54).

In such a situation, the tendency of mainstream parties to glean political models either on one side or on the other – from populists and technocrats alike – on the principle of catch-all parties turns out to be a big mistake. Unable to propose anything other than their own idiosyncrasies, classical European parties try to reinvent themselves by copying the models that seem successful in their competing formulas – populism and technocracy. However, it is precisely this attempt that proves fatal to democracy, because it makes these clearly illiberal models to be acceptable to society and their radical forms – as we have seen in the Netherlands – to be no longer seen as exotic but as capable of political transformation. The return to classical representative democracy will have to be a new political model, even if by doing so the old political elite will have to leave the stage.

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Notes

[1] In the same article Zakaria explained: "From Peru to […] the Philippines, we see the rise of a disturbing phenomenon in international life – illiberal democracy. It has been difficult to recognize this problem because for almost a century in the West, democracy has meant *liberal* democracy – a political system marked not only by free and fair elections, but also by the rule of law, a separation of powers, and the protection of basic liberties of speech, assembly, religion, and property […] what might be termed constitutional liberalism – the rule of law and the fundamental human rights..[…] Today the two strands of liberal democracy, interwoven in the Western politic fabric, are coming apart in the rest of the world. Democracy without constitutional liberalism is not simply inadequate, but dangerous, bringing with it the erosion of liberty, the abuse of power, ethnic divisions, and even war."

[2] Published by *Washington Post* on December 29 2016, Zakaria's article pointed out: "Two decades ago, I wrote an essay […] that described an unusual and worrying trend: the rise of illiberal democracy. […] But in many of the places where ballots were being counted, the rule of law, respect for minorities, freedom of the press and other such traditions were being ignored or abused. Today, I worry that we might be watching the rise of illiberal democracy in the United States […]."

[3] See Aaron Blake's article from *Washington Post* from January 22 2017, "Kellyanne Conway says Donald Trump's team has 'alternative facts.".

[4] 'The search engine manipulation effect (SEME) and its possible impact on the outcomes of elections" published on the *American Institute for Behavioral Research and Technology*'s website.

[5] On October 9 2017, New York Times published a Reuters news that released the results of Google's research into the possible involvement of Russian influence groups in the 2016 US election campaign: „Google has discovered Russian operatives spent tens of thousands of dollars on ads on its YouTube, Gmail and Google Search products in an effort to meddle in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, a person briefed on the company's probe told Reuters on Monday."

[6] See the working document *Watching the watchers: Epstein and Robertson's "Search Engine Manipulation Effect"* published by Katharina Anna Zweig on the Algorithm Watch website: https://algorithmwatch.org/en/watching-the-watchers-epstein-and-robertson.

[7] https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/05/world/europe/italy-election-northern-league-populists-migrants.html

THE CHURCH AS A CIVIL SOCIETY

Laurenţiu Petrila–Marius Ţepelea

Introduction and short history

Since its foundation, the Church has led the good news of eternal life into the Kingdom of heaven everywhere. Beyond the heavenly aspect, the apostles and their disciples were aware that in this earthly life Christians must integrate into society, be model citizens of the Roman Empire, the state representative of the ancient world and be or at least be in the process of becoming true moral landmarks. The rise of various regions within the Romanian state has led to terms taken over from Greek philosophy, Roman logic and ancient Roman citizenship within the Church. Since the second century, Christian writers have raised numerous problems, related to the emancipation of women, the release of slaves, the aid of widows and orphans, these attitudes being the first elements of civic citizenship, if we can call them in antiquity, in the Church. In order not to be considered a foreign body in the religious Preanton of the Roman State, Christians were aware that their interaction with the civic institutions of the Roman Empire must not lead to confrontation, but to fruitful dialog and integration.

The Savior himself respected the Roman laws, paid the giving, and uttered the words in which he urged the honor of the State authorities: "then give the czar what are of the czar and God those of God!" (Luca 20, 26). The non-involvement of Christians in Roman public life contrasted with the expressed wishes of some Christian writers to see the Christian Emperor. Since Christians refrained from participating in the heathen public holidays, were reluctant to do politics or hold

positions in the Romanian administrative system, it was quite difficult to change things inside the heathen Romanian society. Through the writings of the first three centuries, the Church's parents and Christian writers tried to influence the ethics of the Romanian state, the Roman laws and the actions of some Emperors. Even though these attempts have only succeeded to a small extent, it is commendable that Christians attempt to turn the Roman pagan world into a Christian world, which can be considered a form of early, early, early, civic life.

Christians who loved the Roman Empire, being honest citizens, sometimes high-ranking military or administration officials, suffered because of their inability to change something in the Roman administrative and legal system. The most conciliatory writings to Roman kings come from the second century, from the time of the Antonie dynasty. Saint Justin the martyrs and Athenagora write with great respect to the Roman kings (Iustin Martirul, *Apologia* I, I, , in vol. 2 From the P.S.B. collection, Greek-language apologists, trad. de D. Fecioru, 1980, București, ed. IBM al BOR, pag. 33–34). Among the Christian authors who favor a reconciliation with the Romanian state and who have respectfully written to the Romanian authorities are Clement Romanan, Meliton in Sardes, Abercius, Athenagora Athenian, Apollonius, Teofil of Antiohiy and Dionysis of Corinth. These parents have spoken out for respect for Roman imperial power, wishing that the Empire should recognize Christianity and have a tolerant attitude toward the Church, which would have facilitated the work of Christian missionaries and helped to implement new church practices, such as dial service, social assistance, within the roman society.

Christians did not necessarily constitute a special society in the Roman world, but through the way of life and the unique doctrine they clearly distanced themselves from heathen. Initially, seen from outside the communities and the Church, Christians seemed no different from +the other citizens of the Roman Empire. The greatest difference between Christians and heathen was in lifestyle, derived from superior Christian morality. Christian moral ideas were entirely new to the ancient pagan society, as was the concern for all people, regardless of their religion. The political and social ideas that were drawn from Christian teaching were too advanced for the historical period in question, unusual with such changes that Christianity was proposing. To a Roman slave owner, his own were not dignified beings, endowed with a rational soul, but creatures who ate, drink, needed clothes, and who the master could kill when he wanted, without being liable to the law for his murder. This would change and the ancient Church campaigned for the first emancipation of people in slavery. The author of the letter to the pagan cult Diognet emphasizes the superiority of Christian morality and living, describing the truth and beauty of Christianity, which can change an unjust world (*Epistola către Diognet*, V, 6–16, col. PSB 1, p trad. de D. Fecioru, 1979, București, p. 340).

By introducing the idolatre elements into the honor of the Emperor, Romanian officials and magistrates have driven the Christians away from the patriotic feeling toward the Roman Empire. The most loyal Christians have experienced great attempts during the persecution, showing civic spirit and when they were regarded

with suspicion of their own. The natural feeling toward a state that ensures peace and prosperity for its citizens has turned into an idolatant adoration of the person of a single man, the Emperor, an adoration from which most of the benefits of the Caesar's court were drawn. A caste of privileged people lived well by the honor of the sovereign of Rome, while the real Romanian patriots, senators, courts, members of the equestrian order, peasants and soldiers, they had to obey the rules of the imperial court. The claims of some provincial governors who thought they could force patriotism and respect the laws can be met with almost all provincial governors, who thought they were bringing a service to the emperor and the roman state if they persecuted Christians and the men on the periphery of the roman state for not complying with the roman heathen customs (*Martiriul Sfântului Policarp*, VIII, 2; IX, 2, în col. PSB, vol. 11, Actele martirice, trad. de Ioan Rămureanu, 1982, ed. IBM al BOR, București, pag. 34–35).

In Christian antiquity, Christians, but especially Christian women, especially deacons, have distinguished themselves through works of social assistance and charity, seeking to be of benefit to the Community. The women visited the sick, took care of the poor, they were waking on their pilgrims, visiting those imprisoned for faith, and taking care of orphans. The old pagan woman had turned, through Christian baptism, into a new woman, decorated with the coat of love and mercy. Women who had no respect from heathen society became, after their conversion to Christianity, worthy of all praise and admiration, distinguished by faith, cleansing, love for their neighbors, maternity, humility and snorts. If once they could be found in the heathen and banquets in honor of the gods of the ancestors, in Christianity the woman is distinguished by the devotion to the family and the charity demonstrated by visits to hospitals, prisons and orphan-tropics. The followers of the miraculous women consolate the sick, help the poor and raise the orphans, under the assistance of the deacons, the most worthy of them. In order to strengthen the zeal of Christian women, an author such as Clement the novel writes to Christians in Corinth about the commendable facts of women in the old Testament, as a model about the charity and civic sense of Christians in antiquity (Clement Romanul, *Către Corinteni*, LV, 6, col. PSB 1, p trad. de D. Fecioru, 1979, București, p. 74).

The church and the public space or the relationship between the state and the church

Throughout history, we can say that the relationship between the Church and the State was a complicated one. Until the Milan edict in 312, the Imperial power or the state was regarded as demonic origin, but immediately after Constantine's conversion, the Imperial power began to be seen differently: As being on the side of God and the implicit church. The relationship between the state and the Church, however, continued to be increasingly complex and complicated by developing over time even a papal hegemony. If during the first centuries Christianity was

characterized by martyr and oppression from the authorities, things have begun to change. So much has changed that Saint Ambrothery (339–387) had the courage at some point to refuse to share Emperor Theodogus until he publicly repent (Negruț 2000: 11)

Opinions have always been divided. In Augustin, for instance, in the City of God, De civitate Dei, (Augustin 1998) considers that the kings of this world are part of Satan's Kingdom, and in Bizanteur the relations between the State and the Church were so open that they went to the Caaro-papacy (Negru 2000: 11). After many centuries, Protestant reform has returned to the Australian convictions. Calvin's position, pro-involvement (different kings, different laws), (Calvin 1989: 41–141) was completely different from Luther and the other reformers. There were two approaches to the relationship between the Church and the State. From total separation between the Church and the State to sustained and political involvement. Even those who were attached to the prospect of separation, however, considered that the political area is also part of the divine order, and we must implicitly be involved in it. Coming much closer, we can say that even today the relationship between the Church and the State is characterized by complexity and sometimes even subject to context.

Returning now, after having been able to follow very briefly from the previous section that was the Church tradition in terms of civic and involvement in society during the ancient period, the Orthodox Church can be characterized as involved, to a large extent, in the city's life, in contemporary society. Of course, we cannot expect the Church to solve certain problems such as a non-governmental organization, a niche foundation, or other public associations, or even to substitute government organizations for overcoming crises in contemporary times. However, through its pastoral component of excellence, through the active involvement of priests in social life, the Church cannot remain indifferent to the needs of people, the ecclesial body being the real civil society, if we can use such a language. History has shown us over time that the church has infinite antennae. From shaping and influencing a small community to building mentalities on the weberian model (Weber 1993). Since the appearance of social mentalities and values through the church, we can already speak of the movement of the church or of the faith itself without borders.

One of the questions that have transited through the last century was: Is religion a threat to international stability, or can it be a tool for promoting peace? (Dark 2000: 24) the influence of religion in international politics takes different forms, from the perspective of religious conflict to the contribution of religion to strengthening international collaboration and peace. When religious institutions are in the state service, such as the Greek Orthodox Church in Cyprus or the Russian Orthodox Church in post-Soviet Russia, state policy can become more intransigent. When religion is mixed with nationalism, such as in the case of the Serbian Orthodox Church, state policy can legitimize human rights violations and ethnic cleansing. But the additional power of religion also means that religion can give

individuals and communities greater resistance to act independently, or defy state policy, such as the confessing church in Nazi Germany or in the German Democratic Republic, the Catholic Church of Communist Poland, Or in the anti-apartheid fight of Christian churches in South Africa. (Dark 2000).

The different approaches to the relationship between religion on the one hand and international relations and politics on the other give rise to certain questions: how does the global renaissance of religion affect the principles, rules and standards of international society? (Rosenau–Czempiel 1992) involves transnational religion a new transnational ideology, which causes obedience to the state, and brings into international relations new beliefs and values incompatible with the rules, rules and principles of international society (Dark 2000)? So we are talking about a resource of religion. A resource that goes beyond recent agendas to minimize the religious impact on important social issues.

The urgency of religion has also been considered in the light of its relationship with a number of non-religion-related issues. This analysis was summarized by the Austrian-born US sociologist and theological Peter Ludwig Berger. The first of these perspectives is the area of international policy. In order to assess the role of religion in international politics, a distinction must be made between political movements that are genuinely inspired by religion and those that use religion as a convenient legitimacy for political agendas based on non-religious interests (Berger 1999: 14–15).

The second issue with which the resource or the re-emergence of religion is related as an important element in public speech arises in the debates on war and peace (Berger 1999: 15). Although it would be desirable to be able to say that religion is everywhere a force for peace, we find that this is not the case. Rather, religion is likely to favor war in the modern world, among nations and within nations, even if it is true that religion has mediated conflicts in some nations. As such, both aspects must be taken into account in the analysis of the impact of the resource of religion in international politics.

Another area, the third to which the resource of religion is interrelated in a way of interdependence is economic development (Berger 1999: 16). The basic work written on this subject is appreciated as *Protestant Ethics and the spirit of capitalism*, written by Max Weber, which showed that certain values have favored the development of the modern economy (Weber 1993).

Finally, in our Berger discussion, the area with which the resource of religion still interacts is human rights and social justice (Berger 1999: 17). Religious institutions have made many human rights statements, many of which have important political consequences. But it has to be taken into account, generally speaking, that different religions have different perspectives on what human rights mean.

One of the main claims related to the resource of religion is that it is, or can also be, a source of conflict. This is because it promotes new beliefs and values that are incompatible with international society rules, practices and rules, such as territorial integrity, state sovereignty and non-intervention at places. International

society is based on European cultural values and norms and was created through the expansion of European States – through colonialism and imperialism – across the globe. What has once been a European international society is now an international society at global level (Dark 2000: 18).

Secularization and liberalization have tended to limit religion to the private sphere, which has made theological concerns not considered relevant in the talks about state-to-state relations. However, the role of religion in international relations is now a growing subject of study. Case studies suggest foreign policy is affected by state religion and communication made possible by transnational networks of believers (Harris 2000: 29)

From another perspective, religion is a profoundly political influence in public life and should not be seen as a set of theological problems. (Barry 1994: 20–34). Religion is thus considered to be political, even in the absence of a political, theological, generated and determined conflict.

Religion's involvement in politics is also seen in social and social protection policies, in actions that complement and compensate state services at this level, and even through proposals for alternative social strategies for certain social problems.

The relationship between religion and politics can probably be observed in a tangible and practical way in the US, where Christianity has made contributions to political decision-making. We can talk about a presence of Christians in foreign policy actions, especially since the mid-years '90.

In general, the role of the Christian right in US foreign policy is believed to have increased in recent years due to several developments. Firstly, it is about the election of a president, George W. Bush, who is strongly linked to this movement. Secondly, their influence also relates to the significant electoral potential of the evangelists (43%) and the fact that the Christian right has become a force whose claims must be taken into account by politicians. Thirdly, the influence of the evangelic in foreign policy is also due to the alliance they developed with the neo-Conservatives (Vlas 2008: 199–200).

Beyond the multiple events and actions of social, political and even diplomatic involvement of the two historical churches: Catholic and Orthodox, we are beginning to talk in recent years of the dynamics of the protesting and evangelical bill interventions. For example, US evangelists have been involved in international politics since the cold War period. Thus, the evangelists have tried to open up the Soviet Union to ensure religious freedom, an initiative extended to other States in the form of diplomatic initiatives such as the International Religious freedom, and later the law-making of measures against human trafficking and trafficking in human beings (2000). In 2004, under the evangelical influence, the North Korea Human Rights Act was legislated, then the Bush Administration's interest in the problem of AIDS in Africa; campaigns to influence the US's actions toward China toward granting religious freedom and US–Chinese relations at the level of official diplomatic policy, and examples could continue (Vlas 2008: 199–200).

The global reaffirmation of religion describes how religion and politics intersect across the world. This phenomenon concerns what was called reconstruction of religion in the global era. A focus on reshaping or restructuring religion can provide a better way to understand how the forces of social and cultural change are put together thanks to globalization to bring a long-term cultural change to domestic and international policy (Dark 2000: 27).

Religion is often perceived as a competition in the fight for obedience and obedience. As with transnational faith systems, religions are often seen as a bigger law than state laws and international treaties (Goldestein 1996: 204). Transnational religion is also considered to be a way of undermining diplomacy, one of the main institutions of international society, because religious conflicts cannot be subject to diplomatic negotiations (Johnson–Samson 1996: 3).

He will also need to think more holistic about both religion and security. What is more important is that we must not limit ourselves in our examination of the link between religion and security to assessments of threats: Religion is not just part of the problem, it is part of the solution (Seiple–Hoover 2004: 2).

There is also another way of expressing the challenge that transnational religion is facing at the level of the principles, rules and rules of international society. It disputes the secular construction of international society, rather than the principles of society itself. Perhaps the best way to understand religions is to consider them as interpretative communities in dialog with their members and their religious traditions in order to determine their contemporary relevance to faith and social life. Different cultural values about, about religious and secular authority, about gender relations, or about reproduction have come into conflict in developing countries (Dark 2000).

The relationship between religion and politics, between the global resource of religion and international politics, is subject to polarization: From the positive role of religion to the role of conflict. But both those who have great hopes of the role of religion in the world's affairs and those who fear this role must be disappointed with the concrete evidence. There is no nuanced alternative to assess this role, a case-by-case approach. But a statement can be made with great confidence: Those who neglect religion in their contemporary business analysis do so by being subject to great danger (Berger 1999: 18).

Church as civil society: the Bodnariu case

The presence of evangelical denominations in Romania could be seen more openly in public space, especially after 1989 when the fall of the communist regime took place. Before this year, the evangelical movement was rather an underground movement because it was not tolerated by the communist regime. However, their influence in promoting religious freedom could not be neglected at the

time. The presence of some leaders has been reported in relations with Radio free Europe, through which reports have been broadcast on the state of religious freedom in the country.

The Romanian evangelical movement is currently reunited within the Romani-an Gospel Alliance The following denominations are to be included: The Baptist Christian Church, the Church of the apostolic-Pentecostal God, and the Christian Church after the Gospel. Quite close to these declamations both in liturgical and dogmatic terms is also the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The influence of these denomations in the Romanian society can be mainly signaled in the social field, by helping people who are helpless or who are going through periods of crisis in various problems. There are a variety of Christian foundations which aim to meet specific social needs, thus complementing state involvement and sometimes even pioneering activities.

At political level, interventions in the level of government participation may be reported by some representatives in central administrative bodies, but also in positions taken in relation to certain legislative acts and as proposals for such acts. In the most representative work for the evangelical Community in Romania until this moment: The Gospel man. An exploration of the Romanian Protestant com-munities (Dobrincu–Mănăstireanu: 2018), we are dealing with a laborious analysis of the evangelical Community made by Professor Daniel Barbu.

Among the most important actions of the evangelis nature, we mention the action on the issue of religious freedom at the time of the 2006 Law on religious freedom and the general regime of religious denominations. The Seventh-day Ad-ventist Christian Church organized a conference on 16 September 2006 to raise awareness among the political class and public opinion of religious freedom in Romania. The communique issued by the president of the Christian Baptist reli-gious denominations in Romania at the time, pastor Paul Negrut, in the Romanian free newspaper of 14 December 2007 shows disappointment and concern over the vote of the Chamber of Deputies on the law (Ardelean 2011: 354–355). The communique reflects the intervention on the change in the content of the law. The Christian Baptist cult in Romania expresses its concern at the adoption of the law on religious freedom and the general regime of religious denominations by the Chamber of Deputies on 13 December 2006. By adopting this law, 17 years after the revolution, Romania is setting up the monitoring of religious organizations, as well as religious discrimination. We believe that with this decision, Romania is moving away from the family of civilized and democratic States and is creating the premises for restrictions on fundamental human freedoms.

It is also important to note that the US has made an important contribution in supporting religious freedom in Romania. The country report issued by the US State Department in 2006 said: the United States government is discussing free-dom of religion with the Romanian government, including at the highest political level, as part of the overall policy of promoting human rights. Throughout the year, the US Embassy continuously voiced concern over the discriminatory components

of the draft law on freedom of religion, including the prime minister, lawmakers and the culture and religious ministry. The stance taken on the law also manifested itself in public actions expressing dissatisfaction with its provisions. The leaders of the gospel confessions in Timisoara decided to hold a protest March against the religious law on 21 January 2007. The organizers and the representatives of the present confessions had speeches in which they expressed their position on the law of religious denominations, which is considered to be a discriminatory, unfair law and which limits freedom of religion. All of these attitudes, both internally and internationally, have led to changes in the structure of the law. It is worth noting that some of the problematic provisions of the draft law have been removed during the legislative process. Instead, the law receives other discriminatory provisions. The significant change in the draft law made it no longer fit for the original draft (Ardelean 2011).

The Penticostals were more vocal at the time through the voice of the former President of the Penticostal Christian cult, pastor Pavel Rivis Tipei, and contested the final form of the revision of the Constitution. Calling for the inclusion of all Christian cults recognized in Romania in the constitutional text, and I also call for the family to be clearly defined as a free Union of consent between a man and a woman. The position of the Pentecostal cult toward the art. 1 paragraph 1 is as follows: Romania recognizes the historical role in the constitution and modernization of the Romanian State, but not with the mention of the Orthodox Church, but of all religious cults recognized by the law because Law 489/2006 recognizes all religions and not a special cult. That's the first of our remarks. Our second remark refers to the art. 48 paragraph 1 where it says that the family is based on freely agreed marriage between the spouses. Because we are a Christian country and we are based on the Bible, I think it is right to say this: The family is based on freely agreed marriage between a man and a woman. It would exclude any other animosity that may happen and is contrary to Christian life.

A position on the revision of the Constitution has also taken the cult of Baptist in Romania. It was also expressed by former President Otniel Ioan Bunaciu, President of the Union of Christian Baptist churches in Romania. The Romanian Christian Baptist cult requests that, in accordance with the principles expressed in the address submitted to the Commission on 18 March 2013 regarding Article 48, the family be defined as based on freely agreed marriage between men and women. The definition of the family as based on the freely agreed marriage between the spouses announces the giving up in Romanian society of moral responsibility toward the family, a responsibility which society has together with that of guaranteeing the rights and freedom of the individual. The proposal that says: Romania recognizes the historical role of the Orthodox Church and other denominations is discriminatory toward other Christian denominations, Judaic faith and the rest of the religions recognized by the law. The exclusive mention of one of the cults does not contribute to the clarity of expression and suggests a classification/hierarchy of cults by including the majority in a lower category than the one favored by

exclusive classification. Around the date of the 2018 referendum the most vocal were the leaders of the baptist churches through the president: Pastor Viorel Iuga and pastor Paul Negrut, rector of the Emanuel University of Oradea.

Perhaps it is too early to look at what happened at the referendum in 2018, when less than a quarter of Romania's voting population participated (the stakes were participation), but perhaps the tolerance of Romanians was too underestimated. Threat speeches have disembarked people. The church's reconciled function was replaced by an apocalyptic speech doubled by a close link with political compromise – supported by the party with its most powerful antipathy.

Another legislative initiative, and possibly new from us in the country, is that made by former MEP Marius Dugulescu on pre-abortion advice. At the time, Marius Dugulescu worked in two years on a project that deals with advising women before the abortion. "20 million abortions have been so far – we would have done financially if we had not killed our own children. In all respects, when we obey God, God gives the blessing", said the PDL deputy of Timis. Dugulescu initiated this project for compulsory counselling of women before the abortion. Dugulescu says that awareness is needed of the woman who wants to interrupt pregnancy: he must know what this means and what consequences he is subjected to, both physically and mentally. There are many women who regret this step, I am taking this decision under pressure. We commend ourselves that we are a Christian country. However, this Christianity is not visible, the rifles are full, we are the first in abortions.

The short incursion in this part of our study highlights things that are not as potential as the prospects that can be seen and reach when we act, support and take action. Perhaps the societal crises say nothing other than the need for the involvement of society on the part of the church. The Church must be more than ever the logistics headquarters to keep society wounds of all kinds. Perhaps we should not fight so much with secular waves, but we should strengthen our boats. The deep message of Scripture has nowhere to be inserted the function of exclusion, but of careful embrace and correction.

 Perhaps one of the most challenging events of the contemporary period, which united all the churches, at least in Romania, because of the complexity of the case, was the drama of the Bodnariu family in Norway. In this case, where the Romanian state authorities, especially the diplomats of the Foreign Ministry, failed to help this Christian family, civic involvement came from religious communities, especially Protestant ones. This moment and episode is important in view of the fact that the action was inter-confessional, and even if we are talking about a family of Pentostar evangelists, the leaders of churches of any grit or confession have given their hands have trampled on their feet the dogmatic and ritual egos and cavities that separated them because this one let the family be reunited.

The Jerusalem of the Romanian Orthodox Church that was most involved in helping the Bodnariu spouses is Macarie Dragoi, the Episcopate of Northern Europe, who made several pastoral visits to Norway for this purpose. In an interview

with Mediafax news agency, Bishop Macarie expressed his natural concern about how the relevant Norwegian authorities did so, stressing that there was an atmosphere of solidarity on the part of Orthodox families established in the Nordic countries that faced similar problems. The separation of children from parents cannot be considered as a measure taken in the interests of children.

The one who was noticed by an official communiqué, for the unconditional support of the Bodnariu spouses, for the recovery of children's custody, was the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, P.S. Daniel, who also issued an official communiqué from the Romanian Patriarchy at the end of 2016, still on the Trinitas site. In order not to distort the message of solidarity, civic involvement and unconditional support to the hard-pressed evangelical family, we continue to replay the entire official communiqué:

"The Romanian Patriarchy has noted with concern the critical situation of the Bodnariu family in Norway due to the forced separation of the five children from their parents, following the decision of the Norwegian local authorities.

We believe that, irrespective of the legal grounds invoked by the authorities, the role of parents and the family must remain a priority in bringing up and educating children, which does not exclude cooperation with the state. From this perspective, the Church continuously supports the family as the natural framework for the birth, breeding and education of children in the spirit of fundamental values for the European culture and civilization of Christian origin.

We hope that an objective analysis of the Bodnariu case by Norwegian responsible factors will lead to the natural reintegration of the five children into the family where they were born and raised."

Bishop Macarie, on a personal visit to the Bodnariu spouses in 2016, spoke about the dramas and trauma caused both to children and parents by the separations dictated by Barnunnet, and the Orthodox family Nan was in the same situation. Even where there are problems and difficulties, the most suitable environment for the upbringing and education of children is the family one, where there is love, devotion and faith. Beyond dry procedures, interventions in force, figures and laws applied in the letter, the competent authorities should also consider harmonious cooperation with families and the Church:

"Each of us from the position and service to which we are called: State, Church, family, friends, responsible citizens, we have a moral obligation to uphold traditional family values and to find solutions for them to be cultivated in the interests of children, while respecting the cultural and spiritual aspects to which the parents adhere. We have a moral obligation to ensure that the clash of purely institutional approaches does not reduce relations in society to administrative procedures and statistical data. We must not forget that in these situations we are talking about people, fragile souls, and understanding the situation they are going through also depends on the fate of future generations of European citizens."

On the other hand, there were other voices, especially from journalists, who criticized the way the Orthodox Church and Protestant churches were involved

from a civic point of view in helping the Bodnariu and Nan families, believing that everything was an exaggeration. Of course, everyone is free to think how he wishes and not to agree to one or other position of the various churches, But the free vices against their cults and civic involvement seem rather to be drawn from a neomarxist trend that would like religious leaders not to be active in civic life and in the heart of the poles as human cities, but confined somewhere in a strictly religious and cultural bubble. just prayer.

This kind of thinking and interpretation of facts also included political analyst Cristian Parvulescu, who is permanently invited to numerous TV stations, who is considered to be a man who can influence a certain kind of thinking and to be the voice of a genuine Europeanism and Atlanticism. Regardless of the qualities of a political junturalist and analyst and name, perhaps even an honorable one, the civic actions of the Orthodox Church and Protestant churches cannot be considered anti-European, anti-western, inciting and directed against human rights.

During 2016, numerous civic protests took place in Romania, in the big cities, in support of the Bodnariu family, organized mainly by Protestant communities, in which many Orthodox Christians participated, at the official request of the Orthodox Church, which affirmed its public support for the settlement of this drama. Several months later, under pressure from public opinion, numerous NGOs, churches, children were returned back to their family, and Marius and Ruth Bodnariu chose to establish themselves in Romania.

Meanwhile, many journalists have sought to show the other side of the coin, namely the competence of those working in the Barnevernet case in Norway, or the lack of competence, the more or less flawed way in which employed psychologists make the psychological portrait of parents and assess children and how only the letter of the law applies. One of the most courageous reports, which also made extremely courageous revelations about the very morality of some of the Barnunnet employees, was carried out by renowned British journalist Tim Whewell, for the BBC. In his analysis, the British journalist revealed, in detail, the dramas of countless families, the excessive zeal of Norwegian magistrates and social workers, and many aspects of the honesty of the decisions taken to the detriment of families who have been deprived of their parental rights.

Apart from the political, cultural, legislative and emotional aspects of this case, which was very much publicized during the years 2016–2018, the solidarity shown by the members of the Romanian churches, and especially their leaders, remains in memory. To the pleasant surprise of Protestant communities, the Romanian Orthodox Church has taken all-in-one, showing civic spirit. Orthodox bishops such as Macarie or Patriarch Daniel have campaigned to help the Bodnariu family, testifying about solidarity, support, understanding the needs of their neighbor regardless of nationality or confession. It remains to be seen how the churches will react from a civic point of view to other challenges, such as health, economic crises, canel culture phenomena or aggressive neo-Marxist policies that would enjoy seeing religious leaders silenced or discredited.

Conclusions

We have been able to see during this analytical and descriptive incursion the role that the church can play in the history of a Community and even on a global scale. The study did not essentially deal with a new theme because as we have shown during the work – the church was more and more often in the middle of the city. The novelty of this study lies in the new societal paradigm as regards the place of the church in the world and the necessary or imposed censorship. The Bodnariu case can be repeated at any time given that, as the great British sociologist of Bauman Polish origin said: The planet has begun to turn into a diaspora archipelago, and the identities reached on the archipelagos can generate unproposed crises. The clash of civilizations has become niches of identities and values. There is little thing to do in the middle of the winter season protests around the world or wherever there was a trace of Romanian who wanted to act and plead for both a spiritual, family cause and a cause belonging to the national. The Church has started this long-standing approach of working together at the level of high diplomacy, lobby structures, peaceful protests, letters, dialogs and everything that the influence of Romanians at the international level could mean, as well as interpretations of human rights and international law.

Crises, regardless of their order, can be achieved through an overlap between civil society and the church through an effort of an ecumenical nature – the phenomenon of Bodnariu-Barnunnet opens up other research niches. After all, civil society also has the role to play in removing the barriers that are necessary to the proposed development. The role of civil society in strengthening democracy is enormous, but here it is that in matters involving elements of morality and belief, success can only be ensured in a major socio-political overlap between civil society and the church.

In another register, I do not believe that Members and senators of different colors and beliefs or senior clergy would have put themselves at the same table of international and diplomatic negotiations without having felt the mission and responsibility resulting from the overlap between the church and civil society.

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THE ROLE OF THE NON-PROFIT SECTOR AND THE CHURCHES IN THE INSTITUTION-BUILDING STRATEGY OF THE HUNGARIAN MINORITY OF TRANSYLVANIA IN THE POST-COMMUNIST PERIOD

Dénes Kiss

■ Researches considering the non-profit sector has mostly been conducted at the level of nation-states and national societies. Researches on the global non-profit sector are also relatively common, but research regarding the non-profit organizations of sub-national social units, including ethnic minorities, and their non-profit sector is rather uncommon. However, various social groups, including ethnic minorities, which have less access to, or presume to have less access to the resources provided by the public sector, often make use of the opportunities provided by the non-profit sector to meet their social needs. Of course, the establishment of non-governmental organizations is only one of the solutions enabling the ethnic minority groups to meet their special needs, as this is also possible by transforming public institutions into ethnic organizations. Depending on the relationship with the majority, state-funded minority ethnic institutions (cultural institutions, political parties, etc.) may be established. On the other hand, public institutions that have not been established for such a purpose (local organizations of the administrative system, churches, etc.) may also function as minority institutions in practice. Similarly, economic organizations can function as ethnic organizations if the minority community can provide them with a suitable market demand – as the literature on the ethnic economy provides ample documentation.

The social needs and requirements of an ethnic community living in a minority may therefore differ from the needs of the majority, and members of the commu-

nity may seek a solution to these needs by exploiting the opportunities provided by the state, market and non-profit sectors, building their own ethnic institutional system. In my study I show how this institution building process looked like for Hungarians in Romania. By presenting the system of minority institutions, I argue that the importance of the non-profit sector in this case is greater than in the case of the majority society. The case study also highlights that the structure of the resulting minority non-profit sector differs from the majority non-profit sectors in several respects. On the one hand, due to the fact that the financing of this non-profit sector is not linked to one, but to two public financing systems, inter-mediary organizations are gaining more importance. On the other hand it differs from the majority non-profit sectors in that churches are gaining a more important role than usual, as a result of which the segment of church-affiliated organizations in the minority non-profit sector is outstandingly large. In the first part of my study, based on the literature on minority nonprofit sectors, I seek to answer the question of whether we can talk about a minority non-profit sector at all, how to define an ethnic minority non-profit sector, and whether the characteristics of minority non-profit sectors differ from those of the majority.

Is there an ethnic or national minority non-profit sector?

Weisbrod was among the first to draw attention to the prominent role of nonprofits for ethnic minorities. If one of the basic structural functions of the non-profit sector is to meet social needs that the public sector for some reason does not meet satisfactorily, it is reasonable to assume that the less social group is able to access public goods, and the members of the most dissatisfied with them seek to produce these public goods on their own – an idea that forms the basis of Weisbrod's (1988) thesis of heterogeneity. According to this, the more heterogeneous a population, the more differentiated public services it desires, so more segments there are dissatisfied with the public goods produced by the state, which are less differentiated compared to their needs. As a result, the more het-erogeneous a population is, the larger the size of the non-profit sector is created and operated. Ethnic and national differences, among other social, linguistic and cultural factors etc., are the source of this heterogeneity.

Thus, for example, members of an ethnic minority often have a need for educa-tion in their own language, which is rarely provided by a state based on the needs of the majority, which is why non-profit organizations with an educational profile are more common among minorities (Bielefeld 2000: 2). However, the thesis of heterogeneity has not been clearly supported by empirical analyzes, some have shown, for example, that ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity can also lead to a decline in overall trust, which tends to lead to underdevelopment of the non-profit sector (Anderson–Paskeviciute 2006).

Other authors have pointed to the paramount importance of minority organizations from other perspectives as well. Thus, Hula and co-authors discuss the fact that members of ethnic minorities are often able to achieve political success and, as a result take local or regional positions, in which case they encounter governance difficulties that majority politicians do not usually have to deal with. To increase their governance efficiency, however, they can successfully establish and operate non-profits that assist in governance, take over or complement certain functions of the public sector (Hula et al. 2001). In addition to NGOs established for this purpose, other authors report on the successful operation of minority organizations in other areas. Crastocea (2013) examines minority organizations involved in the implementation of political representation. U. S. analyzes show the importance of ethnic organizations across a wide range of services – health, education, mental health, job search, and services for children and families (Jenkins 1981; Vu 2008). Jenkins is also developing a set of criteria by which an NGO can be considered an ethnic organization. According to him, an ethnic organization (a) primarily serves members of the ethnic group, (b) the team active in the organization belongs to the same ethnic group it serves, (c) the members of that ethnic group form a majority in the leadership of the organization, (d) the organization is supported by an ethnic group or ethnic power structure, (e) its programs and services have an ethnic component, (f) it promotes the well-being of families of the ethnic group, and (g) its ideology includes some elements for maintaining a minority identity, and the participation of the minority in decision-making (Jenkins 1981, quoting Vu 2008).

Vu, relying in part on Jenkins, is also developing a possible definition of ethnic organizations. According to him, we can talk about ethnic organizations in cases when:

(1) the organization's staff and management are largely members of a particular ethnic group. Due to this, through the visible, experiential cultural similarity (appearance, language), the organization provides a sense of homeliness to the members of the ethnic group who come into contact with the organization;

(2) the organization usually complements its core service with a cultural component, e.g. by holding special holidays for the group, which also strengthens ethnic awareness and identity;

(3) the organization also has a community-building function, meaning community-building activities, practices, and policies that reinforce interactions between individuals, groups, and organizations within the group and their relationship to the surrounding geographic location;

(4) and finally, since ethnic organizations are usually formed in places where a given ethnic population is concentrated, their extent is generally smaller (local or regional) compared to mainstream organizations (Vu 2008: 6–8).

Diversity of ethnic minority institutional systems and nonprofit sectors

Thus, based on the literature, there is no doubt that we can talk about minority non-profit sectors. Beyond the definitions, however, we know little about how these are like. Are they different from the majority non-profit sectors in terms of their main characteristics? This question is difficult, if not impossible, to answer for two reasons. On the one hand, the national non-profit sectors are very diverse, and on the other hand, the minority non-profit sectors can also be very diverse. A typology of national non-profit sectors (i.e. non-profit sectors of majority ethnic groups) was developed by Solomon et al. (2003). For this purpose, a distinction was made between types of organizations with a service function and those with an expressive function. Service organizations were defined as those that provide services not primarily to their members but to others (educational, health and social organizations), while expressive NGOs serve the direct interests of those involved in their activities, expressing their interests and value commitments. Based on this distinction, as well as the finance of the organizations and the size of the sector, the authors distinguish three types of national non-profit sectors (Salamon et al. 2003: 33–50).

The non-profit sectors typical of Western and Southern European countries are called the model of the European-style welfare partnership. In these countries, the non-profit sector is large, dominated by service organizations, and operates primarily from public funds. Historically, this type has developed as a result of the strengthening of cooperation between the state and the non-profit sector, during which states have delegated a significant part of social services to the non-profit sector, providing them with adequate resources.

The other type is the non-profit sectors of the Scandinavian countries, which are also typically large, dominated by organizations with an expressive function, and whose financial maintenance is mainly based on their own revenues. The emergence of this type is explained by the fact that the Scandinavian states implement a wide-ranging welfare policy, making it unnecessary for non-governmental organizations with a service function to gain ground. As a result, organizations with expressive functions are dominant in these nonprofit sectors. However, due to their strong tradition of self-organization, these organizations rely little on the state and state subsidies.

The non-profit sectors of the post-communist region are a third type. Expressive organizations also predominate in this region, but compared to the previous two types, the non-profit sector is significantly smaller in these countries, and own revenues are the most important among the financial resources that ensure its operation. The authors see the development of these characteristics in the communist past: the socialist welfare states strictly expropriated the service functions, so only the civic self-organizations of an expressive-representative nature could survive. However, the authorities also limited their operation, as a result of which the formal non-profit sector virtually disappeared during the socialist decades.

Although the number of NGOs began to grow after the change of regime, especially those of expressive-representative organizations, the size of the post-communist non-profit sectors is still far behind that of the non-profit sectors of Western Europe or the Scandinavian countries.

The nature of national non-profit sectors is thus determined by a number of factors, such as the tradition of self-organization and the state's attitude towards social services and self-organization. For this, there is reason to believe that, like national non-profit sectors, minority non-profit sectors can be very diverse. In an earlier study, based on the analysis of national minority organizations in Romania, I showed that the institutional system of these minorities, including the non-profit sector, is affected by factors such as minority size, territorial concentration, rural or urban nature, strength of ethnic culture (above all, the level of knowledge of the language) and the existence of a kin state. Taking into account these factors, with the same attitude of the state (since the studied minorities all built their own institutional system under the Romanian Association Act), I distinguished four types of minority institutional systems, in which the minority non-profit sectors have different characteristics. (1) One type was the institutional system of small, rural minorities.

If members of an ethnic minority live predominantly in villages with lower-than-average educational attainment (and this is the case in Romania), there are not enough skilled people in the community to operate the various institutions. Furthermore, since most public institutions are not local, they are not usually part of the ethnic institutional system. Thus, the ethnic institutional system is mostly made up of non-profit cultural organizations, which very often operate in an informal form, as the establishment of formal non-profit organizations is also negatively affected by the relative lack of higher educated people. (2) In the case of minorities forming urban communities with a larger population, the administrative structures of the public institutions may not function as ethnic organizations, but the public educational and cultural institutions may, for which the ethnic group may already have the necessary human resources. The ethnic non-profit sector linked to the institutional system is already more formal. (3) The ethnic organizations of the minorities, which are also more urban but are scattered in a diaspora, have the least separate institutional system from the majority ethnic group. Compared to the previous type, their institutions are much more limited to the cultural sphere and usually address the members of the majority through their programs – based on this, I called this type of institutional system a 'multicultural service provider' model. (4) In the case of large minorities, on the other hand, the system of minority institutions, just like in the case of the ethnic majority, tries to cover all areas of social life, therefore I have named this type the model of 'parallel society'. This is achieved in part through the operation of local and regional branches of public institutions as ethnic organizations, in part through the provision of certain services through economic organizations, and finally in part through an extensive non-profit sector. It maintains its non-profit sector partly with domestic and

partly with kinstate public funding. Kinstate funding can also be decisive in the case of the previous types; in the case of the existence of an actively supporting motherland, the system of minority institutions, especially its non-profit part, is significantly more developed (Kiss 2010: 9–3). We formulated this model of parallel society for the Hungarian minority in Romania. In the next part of the paper, I will attempt to present this case in more detail.

Institutional system and non-profit sector of the Hungarian minority in Romania

Most of the Hungarians in Romania, one of the largest ethnic minorities in Europe, live in the western region of the country, Transylvania. The ethnic community of more than 1,2 million in 2011 became a minority as a result of the annexation of Transylvania to Romania after the First World War, before which it was the dominant ethnic group. In order to compensate for the social disadvantages associated with minority status, the creation of a minority society with its own institutional system and parallel to the majority society has been formulated as a political program from the very beginning (Sulyok 1931). From this point, the creation and maintenance of an institutional system that takes care of the members of the minority in as many areas of the everyday life as possible will become a permanent explicit or implicit goal of the Hungarian elites in Transylvania in different periods. This 'social program' has repeatedly resulted in strong institutionalization processes depending on the change in the political context. The literature reports such periods of institutionalization in the periods after 1945, after 1968, as well as after the change of regime in 1989 (Bíró 1998).

Several attempts have been made to analyze the post-communist Hungarian minority's institutional system in Transylvania (Bíró 1998; Kiss 2006; Székely 2012; Kiss–Kiss 2018). In distinguishing Hungarian ethnic organizations from majority organizations, these authors most often considered the use of language to be an indicator of the ethnic nature of the organizations, in addition to the ethnic affiliation of those working in the organization. An organization is therefore considered to belong to the Hungarian institutional system if its members and staff use Hungarian in their daily operations, and Hungarian is the 'unmarked' language used in its own institutional space. If these criteria are met, a given institution can be considered part of the Hungarian institutional system even if the reference to its ethnic nature does not appear explicitly in its objectives. For example, a leisure association operating in a region largely inhabited by Hungarians is part of the Hungarian institutional system even if its Hungarian character does not appear in its founding document, as in this case the founders take it for granted that the organization will operate for the ethnic community.

The Hungarian minority's institutional system in Romania thus defined consists of public institutions, economic institutions and non-governmental organizations. Some state institutions are officially minority institutions, as the Romanian state

maintains a number of Hungarian-language schools, university departments, theaters and media outlets for members of the minority. Another category of public institutions is not formally a minority institution, but since it is located in a settlement or region where the Hungarian population forms a local or regional majority, it also operates as a minority institution. Examples are local and regional branches of municipalities and the institutions they maintain (e.g. libraries, cultural centers), which are also considered by members of the minority as their own institutions. In contrast, in areas where Hungarians live locally in a minority or scattered, public administration institutions already operate as majority institutions, so in these situations the minority institutional system consists primarily of non-governmental organizations and churches.

As the legal basis for state-funded institutions for minorities is the preservation of the cultural identity of the minority, these institutions are largely limited to serving the cultural needs of the minority. On the other hand, as we have said, the aim of the Hungarian minority is to create the conditions for a more complete, parallel society, so that its needs extend to the full range of social services. These needs can thus be met with the help of economic or non-profit organizations. However, as even a relatively large minority is able to generate market demand for only a small number of services, the minority economic sector is relatively small. Thus, the most frequently used solution remains the establishment of non-profit organizations, as a result of which the non-profit sector is gaining prominence in the minority institutional system.

Funding from the public sector plays a prominent role in maintaining the Hungarian non-profit sector in Transylvania. The Romanian state, on the one hand, supports non-profit cultural organizations and, less frequently, companies (e.g. publishers) through the organization representing the political representation of minorities (Democratic Union of Hungarians from Romania, hereinafter referred to as DAHR), and on the other hand in areas whose funding is little influenced by ethnicity (such as the social assistance sphere) also have access to public resources. The peculiarity of the Hungarian minority in Transylvania is that it has a supporting kinstate, which also supports the minority institutional system. Thus, the maintenance of its institutional system is partly financed by the Romanian state and partly by the Hungarian state. The extent of the contribution of these two financing parties to the maintenance of the minority institutional system and their relative proportions varies over time. The importance of Romanian state resources increases during periods when the minority political party participates in the government, while it decreases when it gets into opposition. Similarly, the level of Hungarian public funding varies, increasing when parties that are more generous to Hungarian minorities torn to other countries come to power, and decreasing when parties that are less sympathetic to Hungarian minorities living outside Hungary come to power.

According to some calculations, during the three post-communist decades, there were also periods in which the amount of Hungarian state subsidies within

the funds intended for the maintenance of the Hungarian non-profit minority sector in Transylvania exceeded that paid by the Romanian state.[1]

One of the characteristics of the system of minority institutions outlined above is that it is 'systemic', with the aim that "all spheres of the perceived or real physical, social and mental space of the Hungarian minority society in Romania should be covered by institutions" (Bíró 1998: 22). Within this institutional system striving for full coverage, several sub-units and 'subsystems' of the entire institutional system can be distinguished on the basis of the orientation of the activities of the organizations.[2] In an earlier analysis, we identified eight spheres of minority society that operate within a highly autonomous organizational framework: politics, public administration, educational research, religious life, social welfare, cultural life, media, and sports and leisure.

These subsystems do not cover all areas of minority life, and some of its areas, such as the economy or health, are typically organized within non-minority institutions. The number of subsystems may vary over time, depending on the extent to which each type of activity takes place within independent institutions, so that, for example, the institutional framework for sport activities has not been a separate subsystem for a long time. In recent years, however, their ethnic autonomy has been significantly strengthened (Kiss–Kiss 2018). The following figure outlines the structure of a minority institutional system consisting of three sectors and eight subsystems.

Figure 1. The structure of the Hungarian minority institutional system in Romania

		Subsystems							
		Politics	Admi-nistration	Edu-cation and rese-arch	Reli-gion	Social care	Mass media	Culture	Sport and leissure
Sectors	Public								
	Nonprofit								
	Private								

Following: Kiss, T.–Kiss, D. 2018.

The impact of double state funding on the structure of the Hungarian non-profit sector in Romania

The non-profit sector of the minority institutional system in question has negligible own revenues, similar to the national non-profit sectors of Eastern Europe. Economic actors also hardly participate in its financing, so it is maintained primarily from state resources. Following the accession to the European Union, EU funding has also become available, but it is also largely available through state-level state institutions. We do not have recent data on the origin of the financial resources of the Hungarian non-profit sector in Transylvania, but according to a 2006 survey conducted among organizations, the most important sources of revenue for 57,6 percent of the organizations came from the public sector. A similar study three years later found that rate was even higher at 62,5% (Kiss 2010).

Table 1. The most important source of income for Hungarian non-profit organizations in Romania.

	2006	2009
Public sector	57,6	62,5
Public sector – Romanian	25,2	44,4
Public sector – not Romanian	32,4	18,1
Private sector	18,1	22,7
Own income	16,3	10,4
Other sources	8,1	4,4

Based on Kiss 2010.

Dividing public sector resources into domestic and non-domestic categories, in 2006 more than half of these came from non-domestic sources. As EU funds were barely available at that time, most of them cover subsidies from Hungary. As it can be seen from the table, the share of domestic and non-domestic public money will change significantly in the coming years. On the one hand, this is due to the fact that the party ensuring the political representation of the Hungarian minority is becoming one of the governing parties in the meantime, as a result of which domestic state resources will become more accessible. On the other hand, the change in the financing of non-profits is reinforced by the fact that in this period the parties pursuing a more supportive policy towards Hungarian minorities in Hungary are in opposition. In the following period, however, the political situation in the two countries in terms of supporting the Hungarian non-profit sector in Romania will turn around. In Romania, Hungarians are excluded from government for a long time, while in Hungary, political forces supporting minorities come to power for a long time and with a significant parliamentary majority.

For the period beginning here, data similar to the above are unfortunately not available, but the change in the composition of resources is well indicated by the increase in subsidies to Romania from the Hungarian public sector fund Bethlen Gábor Alap (BGA): subsidies from these funds increased continuously after 2010, then after 2016, they have multiplied (Morauszki 2020). Thus, it can be assumed that nowadays the resources from the public sector (domestic, Hungarian and EU) form the basis of the Hungarian minority non-profit sector and the whole minority institutional system in Romania to a greater extent than in any previous period.

This high proportion of public funding results in the increased importance of intermediary organizations in the minority non-profit sector. Compared to 'grass-roots', or participatory organizations, these are non-membership organizations whose main function is to connect the beneficiaries of their activities with the level of supporters (Caroll 1992: 11). Romanian state resources play a significant role especially in the case of public institutions operating as ethnic minority organizations. These reach the target institutions in the form of direct funding, in which respect the non-profit sector is not of paramount importance. Thus, the local governments operating as Hungarian institutions are directly connected to the national public administration system. They use their resources themselves and pass on only a small amount of resources to grassroot nonprofits. The largest minority political party, which also has parliamentary representation, receives direct state funding. Hungarian educational institutions (with the exception of a Hungarian state-founded private university) are all directly subsidized state institutions. In the case of the social subsystem, accredited, non-profit institutions already play a much larger role, but their Romanian state funding is also provided directly to them through deconcentrated state institutions. Indirect funding using non-profit organizations is found mainly in the cultural, mass media and educational subsystems, where the NGO in charge of mediating state resources is the Communitas Foundation, set up and controlled by the political party providing parliamentary representation for the minority group.

Similarly, Hungarian state resources can be found for all subsystems mentioned. Instead of direct funding, in some cases we can find funding through Hungarian close-to-government foundations (BGA), but the typical mechanism of funding is the involvement of a non-profit intermediary organization operating in Romania. Such organizations are found in all subsystems,[3] but also in areas that are not ethnically autonomous (economy and health).[4]

Intermediary organizations therefore play an important role and are a broad-spectrum, typical player in the minority non-profit sector. There are several attempts in the literature to identify its types. QUANGOs are abbreviated to quasi-governmental NGOs as intermediary organizations that are mandated to spend or distribute public funds within a country and that, although established by the state, still have some independence from elected politicians (Greve et al. 1999: 130). Regarding organizations that mediate cross-border funding, we can find GONGO- and DONGO-type organizations. The former covers organizations set up

(and controlled) by a government to receive external aid and is named after the acronym Government Organized NGO. The latter is a name referring to organizations

Donor Organized NGO (Gordenker–Weis 1995: 360–361). The Hungarian intermediary organizations in Romania reviewed above show similarities with the QUANGO and DONGO types, but they also differ significantly from both. The closest to QUANGO is the Communitas Foundation, which is responsible for distributing grants for cultural purposes. However, its founder is not the Romanian government, but the ethnic party representing the Hungarian minority, which appoints its board of trustees and the bodies that review applications, over whose decisions it has no direct control (at least there are no criticisms in the media). Compared to the QUANGO in the literature, it is thus a kind of special, minority QUANGO, which enjoys a high degree of autonomy on the part of the majority state.

The organizations involved in the mediation of funding from the kinstate are, without exception, non-profit organizations founded in Romania, mostly foundations and Hungarian churches. Most of the foundations (in some cases associations or federations) were not originally set up for this intermediary role, but some were set up for this purpose from the outset. As these are organizations registered and operating in Romania, their decision-making bodies include only Romanian citizens of Hungarian ethnicity.

Thus, we cannot talk about their formal dependence on supporters in any case, instead the strength and reliability of informal relations is the basis for the predictability of cooperation. These are therefore QUANGO organizations based on a kind of patron-client system, in which case if the relationship between the sponsor and the organization deteriorates, it is not the unreliable members of the decision-making bodies of the organization that are replaced, but the intermediary organization itself (this, in turn, can trigger the 'voluntary' replacement of those who have become politically undesirable). This informal nature of the relationship between the patron client QUANGOs and the funder is a source of instability for the institutional system as a whole.

A special type of intermediary organization is also the churches which, for historical reasons, are primarily or exclusively connected to the Hungarian population, i.e. their membership or the majority of them are of Hungarian ethnicity. Their role as mediators intensified after 2016, and the two districts of the Reformed Church and the various dioceses of the Roman Catholic Church became the organizations receiving the greatest support from the Hungarian state. Most of these grants were not used for religious activities but for social activities carried out by themselves, or forwarded to other organizations. In the following, we will discuss in more detail the specific role of churches in the Hungarian non-profit sector in Romania and in the entire minority institutional system.

The prominent role of the religious subsystem and the churches in the Hungarian minority's institutional system and non-profit sector in Romania

Churches and secular non-profits are historically closely intertwined and show many structural similarities from an organizational perspective (Hall 1990, in Cormode 1994). Researchers in the non-profit sector generally consider churches to be non-profits, so they form a separate main category in the international classification system of NGOs (Salamon–Anheier 1996). Nevertheless, the finding more than two decades ago that, while theoretically considered to be part of the sector, they are almost completely excluded from the analyzes still seems valid (Cormode 1994). Analysts in the nonprofit sector in Romania generally do not consider churches to be part of the nonprofit sector,[5] but at the same time they appear as key players in social economy analyzes that otherwise cover almost exclusively nonprofits (Conovici 2013). If we look at the Hungarian churches in Romania, their classification into the state, non-profit or market sectors is not clear at all. Based on their legal status, they are neither state nor non-profit organizations, as their establishment and operation are not regulated by the law of non-governmental organizations, but by the law of religions.[6] From the point of view of organizational sociology, they have both state and civic characteristics. While we are faced with bureaucratic organizations with redistributive functions at higher organizational levels, local organizations are much more civic in nature, playing a significant role in organizing and integrating local communities. Due to the ecclesiastical religiosity typical to Hungarians in Transylvania (Kiss 2020), people participate in the administrative affairs of congregations, so their participatory nature is also strong. Based on these, in the triple category system of the state – non-profit sector – market, the Hungarian churches in Romania can be located somewhere at the meeting point of the public sector and the non-profit sector.

The outstanding significance of the churches in the Hungarian minority's institutional system in Romania can be traced back to several reasons. On the one hand, they play a significant integrative role in organizational terms. The three churches already mentioned, the Reformed, Catholic and Unitarian churches, integrate more than 90% of the total Hungarian population. In addition to the fact that the vast majority of their members are of Hungarian ethnicity, their ethnic character is also emphasized by the fact that they use Hungarian not only in their spoken language but also in their official (written) administration. In addition to organizational integration, these churches also cover the minority population almost entirely in terms of territory, and small local communities of a few dozen people are also part of the church structure. Finally, their role as intermediaries between Hungarian state resources and minority communities also contributes to the importance of churches. Their becoming as an intermediary organization can be traced back to several factors. Due to their organizational and territorial integrating function, their social legitimacy is outstanding, due to their size they are more stable than non-profit organizations, and due to their special legal status, they have more autonomy to-

wards the state than ordinary non-profit organizations (Varga 2014).

Due to the mediating function of the churches, the significance of the religious subsystem in the minority's institutional system goes beyond itself, by having a complex relationship with many other subsystems. Several subsystems of the Hungarian institutional system in Transylvania owe their relative autonomy towards the majority society to their cooperation with the churches. In the following figure we have outlined the institutional areas that are related to the religious subsystem. As one can see, only in the case of the political subsystem there can be not found institutional mergers between political and religious organizations.

Figure 2. Overlaps of the religious subsystem with other subsystems of the minority institutional system

		Subsystems							
		Politics	**Administration**	**Education and research**	**Religion**	**Social care**	**Mass media**	**Culture**	**Sport and leissure**
Sectors	Public			State-funded denominational educational institutions Theological institutes	CHURCHES				
	Non-profit		Rural and community development associations	Foundations and associations of educational institutes	CHURCHES Organizations of monastic orders and spiritual movements Women's associations Youth organizations	Social organizations of churches	Church radio stations Church print and electronic press	Church orchestras and choirs	Associations of professional and amateur sports clubs Youth leisure groups
	Private			Private educational institutions	Directly or indirectly owned church companies				

The most complex ecclesiastical presence is found in the case of the education subsystem, in which the churches play an important role in the public, non-profit and for-profit sectors. Minority churches appear as bridges in relation to both states. While they are important partners for the Romanian state as owners of school buildings, they play a mediating role between the minority community and the Hungarian state. As is well known, during the socialist nationalization, church schools were abolished and school buildings were nationalized. After the change of regime in 1989, most of them returned to the ownership of the churches, and either a Hungarian-language state educational institution is still operating in them, or a church school was re-established. The re-established ecclesiastical schools are important pillars of the Hungarian minority's education system, in which education ranges from kindergarten to high school, and in terms of their profile they have a varied offer, and only one of them offers solely theological education. In fact, even

in this case, the institutions themselves are state institutions, at least in the sense that their financial maintainer is the Romanian state. Their ecclesiastical character is realized by the fact that, according to a special protocol concluded between each church and the Ministry of Education, the churches are represented in the school boards. Through this presence, they also have a say in important decisions concerning schools (such as the selection of principals, formally approving the faculty members, the introduction of religious and moral education, etc.). From the point of view of the Hungarian ethnic nature of the institutions, the most important consequence of the church presence in the educational subsystem is that Hungarian control over the operation of these public schools is realized, which prevents, for example, attempts to transform schools into majority institutions, their 'Romanization', which is the centuries-old horror of the Hungarian minority. The relationship between the churches and the state is broadly similar in cases where there is a non-ecclesiastical Hungarian-language public school in the church property, as the educational institution operates in property leased from the church in these situations, and the leases can be terminated if the state changes the institution in a way that is unacceptable to the owner churches.

In addition to their role in the relationship between the minority education system and the Romanian state, the churches also have a bridging role in the relationship between the minority education system and the Hungarian state. This is necessary because, although the primary maintainer of the above-mentioned Hungarian church and state educational institutions is the Romanian state, the infrastructure providing space for education, the burden of maintaining and developing church-owned buildings lies with their owners, i.e. the churches. Churches can achieve this by using Hungarian state resources. What's more, in addition to the existing buildings, the motherland also funded the construction of a number of new church properties for educational purposes. In these cases, the user of the funding is directly the funded church, which contracts with various companies (frequently church-affiliated), to carry out the necessary work, and non-profit organizations are rarely involved.

This intermediary role of the churches is equally important in minority higher education, in which case the role of the Hungarian state is also significant. Most of the Hungarian higher education in Romania takes place in the Hungarian-language institutes of a Romanian state university, but it is partly implemented through the operation of a private university, Sapientia University, established and maintained by the Hungarian state. This university is funded through non-profit intermediary organizations founded by the Hungarian historical churches and whose board members are appointed by the churches (Sapientia Foundation and Partium Christian University Foundation).

In the case of both secondary and tertiary Hungarian education, there are also a number of dormitories maintained by churches. These are the churches' own institutions, not only as real estate but also as institutions, which are largely maintained from their own resources. Finally, the role of churches in the education system of

small, rural settlements should be mentioned. In these small settlements, there are usually only elementary and primary schools, and in some cases the properties are church-owned. In these cases, too, the churches seek to raise funds for their maintenance. The special feature of these cases is that, among the funds mediated by the churches, the financial support of congregations of western countries and the fundraising are becoming more important than the Hungarian state funds. However, these cases appear to be relatively rare.

We can find completely different forms of church presence in the field of social welfare. The largest players in this sphere are church-based, non-profit social organizations whose services have received state accreditation. Being non-profit institutions established by Hungarian historical churches, they are considered to be entirely Hungarian organizations. Their personnel policy is completely autonomous, so they operate almost entirely with Hungarian staff and their target audience is almost entirely Hungarian. As service providers, they provide social services outsourced by the state to those in need, so one of their most important supporters is the Romanian state, which accesses resources through deconcentrated state institutions (county councils, local governments). In addition, some of the costs are applied for at church charities in Western Europe. Their access to the latter resources is due to their church affiliation, as are grants from domestic church fundraisers. In this subsystem as well – moving towards the local level – social organizations are becoming less and less institutionalized, so they are less visible, but they are becoming more and more directly organized and managed by the church, and due to their frequency, they are also of great importance.

In the case of the cultural subsystem, churches may play an important role in supporting the ecclesiastical arts. Their activity in the preservation of the built heritage is outstanding in this field, which is mainly focused on the restoration and maintenance of churches of architectural and artistic value. As the Byzantine ecclesiastical tradition of the Romanian majority followed completely different stylistic trends than that of the Protestant and Roman Catholic Hungarians, who followed Western European trends in this field, the elements of the built heritage are also important ethnic symbols. Romanian state and European Union funds are also available for their maintenance, but in the last decade the subsidies provided by the Hungarian state for this purpose have become more significant. Churches are the recipients and usually the direct users of grants for the maintenance of historic church buildings and other ecclesiastical buildings. In addition to these, churches are less often involved in the rescue and restoration of civilian buildings. Such cases occurred mainly in the case of listed monument-castles of aristocratic families. In these cases, it is more common for an ecclesiastical NGO to act as an intermediary for the funds spent on purchases.[7] Churches are also important players in the media subsystem, within which they are primarily present with their own radio stations and their printed and electronic press products.

While the church presence in the cultural and media subsystems also has religious implications and aims, it is less so in the field of settlement and community

development related to the administrative subsystem. Institutions engaged in activities aimed at improving the general socio-economic well-being of settlements are included here. We can find mainly infrastructural developments, systems supporting economic activities, and programs aimed at the development of human resources in this field. In such programs, churches are mainly involved in small settlements, but there are also institutions on a regional scale.[8] These programs are organized either directly by local congregations or by NGOs founded by them.[9]

And finally, it is worth mentioning the role of churches in organizing minority sports. In this subsystem of the minority institutional system, which was the last to begin to become autonomous, a number of non-profit organizations participate, most of which do not have a church background. Here, however, there are also intermediary non-profits established by the churches, such as the foundation involved in the organization and maintenance of the Szeklerland Hockey Academy.

Summary and conclusions

Ethnic and national minorities, depending on their relationship with majority societies, are able to establish and maintain their own institutional system to varying degrees. In good relations, the majority state may establish minority institutions for this purpose, or minorities may use state institutions as their own, ethnic institutions. In any case, an important framework for the establishment and maintenance of institutions is the non-profit sector, the size of which is positively influenced by the willingness of the majority state to provide resources for its operation, as well as if the minority has a supporting kin state. The kin state, through its subsidies, on the one hand encourages the establishment of non-profit organizations, and on the other hand, the means of the financing mechanism are also non-profit organizations.

In my paper I presented the institutional system of the Hungarian minority in Romania and the minority non-profit sector that is a part of it. Based on the presented case, on the one hand, I tried to argue that in the case of this minority, due to the supportive attitude of both the majority state and the motherland, the analyzed minority non-profit sector is characterized by the presence of a significant and diversified level of intermediary organizations. Intermediary organizations seem to have different characteristics from those known for national non-profit sectors. While domestic resources are mediated by a kind of minority QUANGO, in which control is delegated by the state to minority political forces, organizations mediating kin state resources are under stronger political control, realized through personal connections. On the other hand, I have tried to show that churches that operate as minority institutions play a particularly important role in the minority institutional system. Although these institutions cannot be clearly seen as part of the nonprofit sector, some of their specific features, such as their stability, relatively high autonomy vis-à-vis the domestic state, and social legitimacy, make them the

preferred intermediary organizations for the kin state. As a result, we find these churches, or the NGOs they create, in almost every subsystem of the minority institutional system. This involvement of churches in minority institution building reinforces the relationship between the minority community and the churches, which in turn may be one of the reasons for the high degree of religiosity of this minority society.

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Notes

[1] A journalistic analysis comparing Romanian state subsidies to non-profits with subsidies received by one of the Hungarian NGOs mediating state subsidies showed that in 2018 only the amount of these Hungarian subsidies exceeded that of Romanians. (https://atlatszo.ro/tamogatasok/milliardokkal-olajozott-erdekhazassag-igy-hoditotta-meg-az-rmdsz-t-a-fidesz/)

[2] DiMaggio and Anheier (1990) use the term sector as the English equivalent of the subsystem term used here. However, since the term sector is used in the literature on non-profit organizations to distinguish the legal status of organizations (public, non-profit and for-profit sectors), we preferred to use the term subsystem.

[3] The Eurotrans Foundation and the Democracy Centers play an intermediary role for the Hungarian parties in Transylvania. In the perhaps most resource-intensive education subsystem, we find several intermediary organizations, such as the RMPSZ (Association of Hungarian Teachers in Romania), the School Foundation, the Sapientia Foundation, the Pro Universitate Partium Foundation, and the structures of the Reformed, Roman Catholic, Unitarian and Hungarian Lutheran churches at various levels. In the field of sports, the Mens Sana Foundation plays an intermediary role, and in the case of the press, the Transylvanian Media Space Association. Public administration seems to be the only subsystem in which we cannot find intermediary organizations.

[4] The Pro Economica Foundation manages the funds spent by the Hungarian state to support Hungarian agricultural entrepreneurs in Transylvania, while the Studium Prospero Foundation manages grants for the construction of medical service housing.

[5] The Foundation for de Development of Civil Society (Fundatia pentru Dezvoltare Societatii Civile) regularly produces comprehensive analyzes of the non-profit sector in Romania, which make a significant contribution to shaping the public perception of this sector. Churches are completely absent from these analyzes. (See e.g. Lambru, M.–Vamesu, A. 2010).

[6] Law 489/2006 on religious freedom and the general regime of cults.

[7] With the help of Hungarian state subsidies, the St. Francis Foundation of Deva became the owner of several listed monument-castells, and the Women's Association of the Reformed Church recently bought the Bethlen Castle in Bonyha.

[8] The LAM Foundation was established by the Calvinist Parish of Illyefalva and has been successfully operating a regional microcredit program for farmers for several decades, in addition to organizing agricultural training and various other vocational training courses (https://www.lamilieni.ro/).

[9] The Georgikon Foundation, established by the local congregation in Györgyfalva, Cluj county, has played a successful role in the asphalting of the local road network, the construction of the water and gas network, the development of local businesses and the organization of agricultural training (http://gyorgyfalva.eu/wp/intezmenyek/).

Photo/Gábor Csanádi

Social Enterprises in Bihor County

Rita Pásztor–Katalin Gál

Introduction

◼ Addressing social issues with an entrepreneurial mindset in an innovative approach, which gives rise to the concept of the social economy. The social economy aims to creatively combine two, traditionally opposing ideas, namely the profit-making activities of the business sector and the alignment with a social mission. The social economy connects local economic prosperity with the social needs of local communities. Social enterprises, as the main components of the social economy, aim to find effective solutions to achieve social goals. In this context, the concept of enterprise does not refer solely to profit-making but also to the subsequent use of the profit. Social enterprises represent an approach in which people are more important than funds. Funds are the means not the goal and they serve the development of local communities and are used to solve social problems.

The concept of social economy started to gain ground in Central and Eastern European countries as they joined the European Union and the organizations created mostly benefited from project-based funding, which made sustainability unsteady (Fekete 2017). The target group for social economy interventions consists of the long-term unemployed, young people starting their careers, people with disabilities, people with social integration difficulties, women with caring responsibilities", as well as disadvantaged groups on labour markets (age, education, health) (Frey 23, 2007). The social economy is closely related to correcting the deficits of the social policy implemented by the State. However, it has a limited presence

in public discourse and it is adopted with great difficulty as an opportunity for achieving both economic and social goals.

This study focuses on the characteristics of social enterprises in Romania and Bihor County. The first part provides an overview of the concept followed by data illustrating the situation in Romania. The second part of the study is a case study based on the analysis of the secondary data pertaining to Bihor County and the information from interviews.

The social economy and social enterprises

The concept of the social economy became known after the publication, in 1994, of the European Commission White Paper entitled Growth, Competitiveness, Employment. It spread quickly as it was considered a solution for the growing rate of unemployment in the 90s. Its effect on job creation is visible mainly in third sector local initiatives in the field of services, recreation, culture and the environment. The social economy considers those in need not as passive beneficiaries but as citizens assuming responsibility for their own fate (European Commission, 1994).

Social enterprises emerged in the context of the social economy. In 2011 the European Commission defined social enterprises as an alternative economic opportunity for meeting the challenges posed by the economic recession of 2008, rising unemployment, poverty and social exclusion. The expectations of the social economy are self-preservation and the development of investment-based strategies (Csoba, 2020). According to the EMES1, social enterprises belong to the third sector and some of the important aspects to be considered when they are created are: a social character, limited profit distribution and operation based on democratic principles. This definition represents the European approach to social enterprises. Market income and the trends in social innovation tend to consider the American features (Fekete et al., 2017).

The social economy can be defined as the totality of organizations that do not pursue a profit but seek to generate social advantages for communities or disadvantaged people. Their main goal is to ensure goods and services for individuals and local communities. The main indicator of achieving the objectives of their social mission is the rate of profit reinvestment.

The concept of social enterprises originates from the US and it refers to non-profit organizations which have departed from the traditional forms of obtaining income (financial aid, donations) and moved in the direction of the profit-making characteristics of the business world. In Europe, the first common definition, based on European characteristics was elaborated by EMES researchers, at the end of the 90s. They define social enterprises as not-for-profit organizations which have a market orientation and are established in order to reduce state aid and private subsidies barriers (Defourny–Nyssens, 2008).

The innovative forms of business combine social and economic goals hoping to contribute to the growth of labour market integration and the development of the economic sector (Nicolăescu et al., 2011). Common requirements of social enterprises are profit-making, social goals, profit distribution and redistribution. Social enterprises use business resources in order to set social goals and achieve social results. Their legal form can vary from foundation, association, cooperative to so-called hybrid forms. Hybrid organizations can be social enterprises or any of the forms previously mentioned and their main characteristic is that they try to generate profit and social values at the same time. Hybrid organizations are more market-oriented than the other forms (Lambru, 2021). Social enterprise represents an approach in which people are more important than funds. Funds are the means not the goal and they serve the development of local communities and are used to solve social problems.

The legal framework and characteristics of the social economy in Romania

In Romania, the social economy is an umbrella term which encompasses social enterprises. Provisions relating to the social economy and its components are laid down by Law 219/2015. No legal framework existed before the adoption of the law in 2015 though the concept of the social economy was present in strategic papers[2] and sources of funding[3]. Conceptually social economy has entered the public consciousness through EU funds, namely the European Social Fund and the Operational Programme Human Capital, in the 2007–2013 programming period.

As defined by law, the social economy is based on private, voluntary and solidarity initiatives, it is characterized by autonomy, responsibility and limited profit distribution, and at the same time, it is an innovative solution in the context of social exclusion. The social economy encompasses activities that are independent of the public sector, are conducive to the common good and aim at increasing the employment of the vulnerable and/or providing goods and services or assist in implementation. It operates privately, voluntarily and based on the principle of solidarity. It is characterized by a high degree of autonomy and responsibility as well as limited distribution of profit (Law 219/2015 on the social economy). The law states that the operating principle of the social economy is work accomplished for the common good. It has a threefold objective and aims at having a positive effect on individuals, the environment and on the local economy.

The social enterprise status is attested by a certificate valid for a 5 years. The certificate is granted for enterprises meeting several criteria, two of which are: serving social and community purposes and reinvesting 90% of the profit in social objectives. Organizations holding such a certificate are subject to a number of reporting requirements. The law allows another category, integration social enterprises, which is in fact a label used by organizations in which at least 30% of the total working time is contributed by people belonging to vulnerable social groups.

This status is attested by a mark and these types of organizations are also subject to a number of reporting requirements. For all categories, implementation and inspection tasks are carried out by a dedicated subdivision of the county employment agency![4]

Romania meets the requirements of the EU directives, there is a legal framework in place, nonetheless, the approach to social enterprises is strongly influenced by their social character, which considers the labour market integration of disadvantaged people as its core responsibility (European Commission 11, 2020).

In Romania, unemployment is one of the most frequent causes of a disadvantaged background. Besides unemployment, other problems identified are poverty, disabilities and ethnic identity *(see fig. 1)* (POCU, 2020).

Figure 1. Social problems (%)

■ Unemployment ■ Poverty ■ Illness, disability ■ Aging ■ Roma integration ■ Elderly care ■ Other
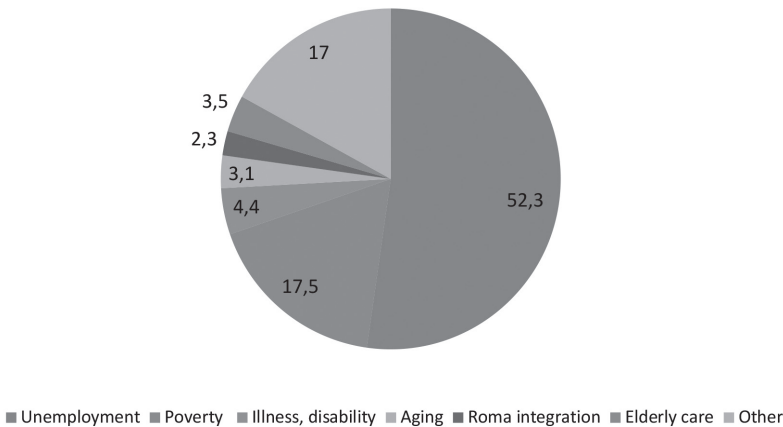
Source: POCU 21, 2020

Out of the numerous NGOs, there are only a few with a certified status event though their activity connects them to the social economy. At the beginning of 2020, 125 social enterprises in 36 counties were registered at national level. Most of them, i.e. 12 enterprises, are in Maramureş County. In the western part of the country, Bihor County is the only county without any registered social enterprises. Five other counties are in a similar situation: Caraş-Severin, Mehedinţi, Neamţ, Teleorman and Vaslui. 42% of the 125 enterprises are associations, 40% are other forms (LLC), while 8% are foundations, cooperatives or public aid organizations (POCU 43, 2020).

An analysis carried out in March 2021 reports 1,642 social enterprises. In the same period, 45 integration social enterprises are also registered at national level. 69% of the enterprises operate in towns, while 31% in the countryside *(see fig. 2)*.

Figure 2. The operating environment of the social enterprises (%)
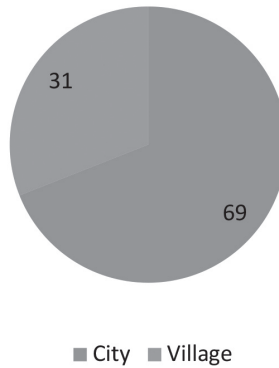
Source: Vameşu 34, 2021.

The 2021 National barometer provided data on social missions. It distinguishes the following categories: funding of enterprises, culturerecreationyouth-programmes, environmental protection, community activities, cooperatives and public aid, social services, and labour market activities *(see fig. 3).*

Figure 3. The social mission of social enterprises (%)
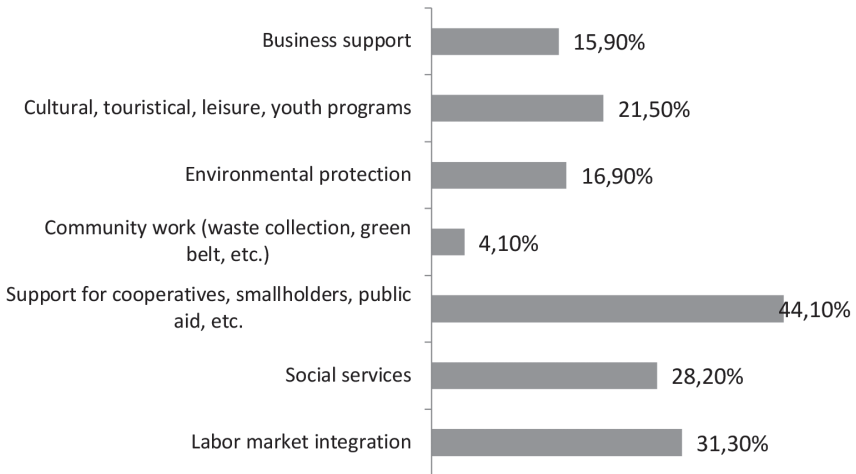
Source: Vameşu 40, 2021.

Social care encompasses eldercare, care for the disabled, childcare, assistance for the homeless and other community services. The priority target group of the labour market integration of disadvantaged people consists of the disabled and the long-term unemployed.

When investigating social enterprises at national level, we identified four main target groups: Roma communities, people with minimum wage, the disabled and young people over 18, who leave the child protection system (Iancu et al., 2020).

EU funding programmes have boosted the number of social enterprises. There was a significant increase at the end of 2020, beginning of 2021 (*see table 1*). The number of social enterprises is increasing steadily. At the end of 2020, there were 644 registered social enterprises, out of which 28 were certified.

Table 1: Annual Registration Number of Social Enterprises and Integration Social Enterprises

	Social enterprise	Integration social enterprise
2016	48	2
2017	50	7
2018	15	4
2019	13	3
2020	518	12
October 2021	1748	85
Total	**2392**	**113**

Source: RUIES 2021, own editing

By October 2021 the number increased to 2,392, with 113 integration social enterprises *(see fig. 4)* (RUEIS, 2021).

Figure 4. The distribution of social enterprises by counties
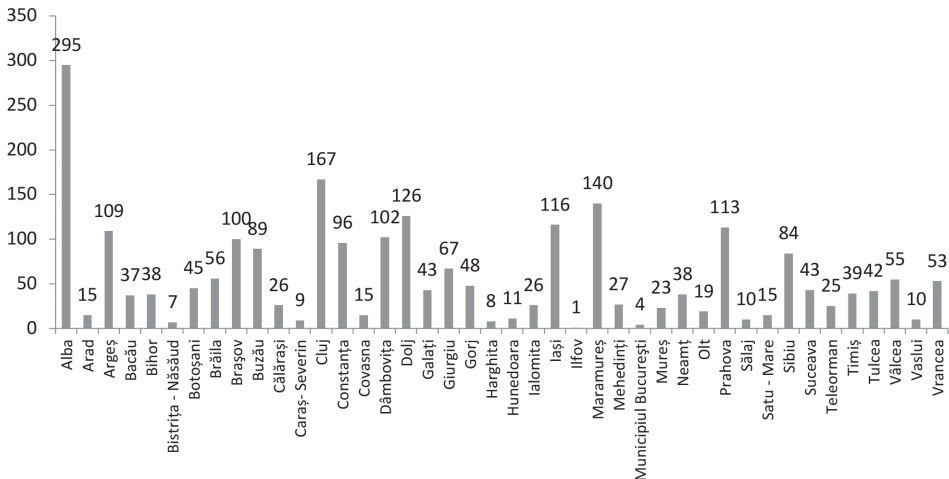
Source: RUEIS, 2021, own editing.

Alba County occupies the leading position with nearly twice as many social enterprises (295) as Cluj County, which is in second place (167). The underlying cause was revealed in the interviews conducted with professionals. It is most likely that the advisory and support process in this county was more prevalent than in other counties.

Even though there was an exponential rise in the number of social enterprises in the past year, the same does not apply to enterprises facilitating integration. We can speak of steady growth but on a low scale as in December 2020 there were 28 certified social enterprises at national level, while in the spring of 2021 there were 45, a number which nearly doubled by October *(see fig. 5)*. According to October data only 4.72% of the 2,932 enterprises are registered as integration social enterprises, i.e., are certified social enterprises.

Figure 5. The number of newly formed integration social enterprises
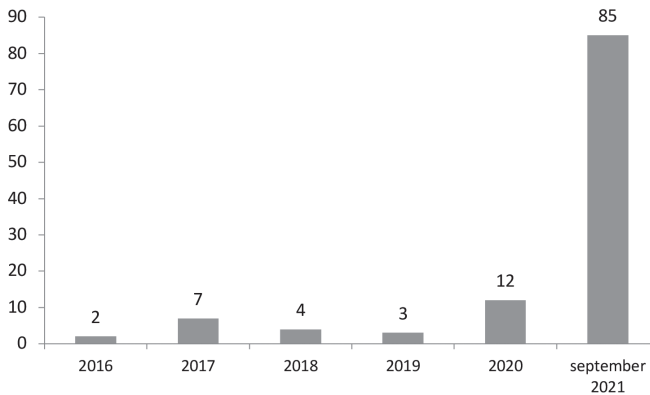
Source: RUEIS, 2021, own editing

The social economy sector falls under the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection. There are no available national statistical data on all social economy actors. There is an accurate record of social enterprises and social enterprises for integration. Social reality in Romania highlights the fact that shifting the focus from profit maximization to social, ecological and ethical aspects helps to improve the quality of life (Iancu et al., 2020).

Research goals and methodological framework

The main aim of the current research is to explore the social reality of social enterprises in Bihor County, to get an insight into their operation, typology as well as into their social impact. Research questions investigate the presence, the social mission and goals of social enterprises in the Bihor County region.

We looked into their job creation potential, what kind of people they employ as well as the successes and challenges they face. Another research question focuses on stakeholders auto-identification (how they define themselves, what problems they face, what opportunities they see) and hetero-identification (how they perceive other market actors, how social enterprises are seen by other market actors) frameworks. We also wanted to find out whether networking could be identified in the region, and who has a decisive role among social enterprises at the county level.

The starting point for our exploratory research is secondary data analysis and desk research. We collect available secondary data and analyse it in order to present social enterprises and entrepreneurship in their context. The goals are to contextualize social enterprises, to get acquainted with national and international practices as well as to identify those key actors/stakeholders who can serve as interview subjects in the second stage of the research.

The empirical research methodology adopts mainly a qualitative approach through interviews with social entrepreneurs as well as with the community of experts from the region. Thus the most significant empirical basis for the research is the analysis of interviews, in the light of which stakeholders' perceptions of social enterprises are presented. The semi-structured interviews were conducted partly within an institutional framework and partly online, using the Google Meet platform. Interviews lasted between 60–80 minutes. Three professionals were interviewed, two of which were online. The interviewed experts hold a university degree, they occupy senior and middle management positions in an organization that is directly involved in the social economy, thus they have an insight into all the aspects of social enterprises. In terms of gender distribution, the respondents are two males and one female. They range in age from 40 to 50 years.

Six social entrepreneurs were included in the research. These were identified via the contact information available in the county database and through snowball sampling. This resulted in one female and five male respondents. Considering their educational attainment, four of them hold a higher education diploma, while two of them have a high school diploma, their age also ranges from 40 to 50 years. As regards the place of business, three of the enterprises are in Oradea, the other three are in rural areas. Each interviewee has more than 15-year experience in the field of the labour market, while their experience in social enterprises differed. Interviews were conducted in the June-September 2021 period.

The third pillar of our research methodology is the case study. As a summary of the data available to us, a case study was made, presenting the situation of social enterprises partly in Romania, partly in Bihor County. The case study relies on the information from secondary data analysis and the primary qualitative data analysis. We investigated the legislation on social enterprises, looked into scientific and statistical analyses as well as the stakeholders and interested parties' perception of social enterprises. The case study, combining several methods, facilitates result interpretation, thus contributing more information on the research topic (Héra–Ligeti 2005), in the present case on social enterprises in Bihor County.

The sampling procedure was limited by the geographical area relevant to the research, i.e., Bihor County. We used national data sources for the identification of organizations. In particular, data provided by the National and County Employment Agencies as well as the Register of Social Enterprises.

Presentation of the research area: Bihor County

Bihor County is located in the western part of Romania, on the border with Hungary. Its neighbours are: Satu Mare County in the north, Sălaj County, Cluj County and Alba County in the east, Arad County in the south and Hungary in the west. The county has a total area of 7,754 km², which amounts to 3,2% of the country's territory. It is characterized by multiculturalism and ethnic diversity as illustrated by the demographic data in *table 2.*

Table 2. Ethnic Distribution of the Population (%)

Nationality Region	Total population 100%	Romanian		Hungarian		Romani		Other[5]	
Romania	20,121,641	16,792,868	83.46	1,227,623	6.10	621,573	3.09	1,479,577	7.35
Bihor County	575,398	366,245	63.65	138,213	24.02	34,640	6.02	36,300	6.31

Source: Pásztor 91, 2017.

Figures show a significant growth of the Romani population, values being above the national average. According to the survey defining disadvantaged regions, conducted in 2016, the ethnic composition is one of the contributing factors (Teşliuc et al., 2016). The SocioRoMap research project estimates a Romani population of 45 332 (7,9% of the total population) individuals in Bihor County, while according to census data, only 34,640 people declared themselves to be Romani (Horváth– Kiss 2020). Three aspects were considered when analysing settlements: human resources (the proportion of 15–64 years old people with elementary education, the proportion of the disabled, the proportion of individuals aged 0–17), employment and housing conditions (electricity and water supply, density standard). Results show that 5,5% of the rural areas in Bihor County are marginalized, disadvantaged small-size settlements (Teşliuc et al. 2016).

When it comes to educational attainment, Bihor County has a higher proportion of people with higher education diplomas than other regions, nevertheless, lower levels of education are more common in the county, with 56% of the population belonging to this category *(table 3).*

Table 3. Educational Attainment by Region (%)

Region/educa-tio-nal attain-ment	Up to eight grades	Vocational education	Secondary education	Higher educa-tion
Romania	11,7	22,6	53	12,7
North-west region	10	23,2	56,8	11
Bihor County	16,7	39,3	30	14

Source: Olah et al. 2016. Own editing

The human resource's low level of education affects income trends. Even though the unemployment rate is insignificant *(see table 4)*, it is below the national average, when it comes to the average monthly income, Bihor County is at a disadvantage at the national level. The unemployment rate is lower than the national average both in the case of males and females.

Table 4. National and County Unemployment Rate

	Romania, 2021		Bihor County, 2021	
	January	February	January	February
Average (%)	3,3	3,4	2,2	2,2
Male	3,2	3,3	1,7	1,8
Female	3,5	3,5	2,8	2,7

Source: INSSE, 2021, Own Editing

When comparing incomes at the national level, figures show that due to the continuous deterioration starting from 1998, Bihor County has fallen behind the national average and in 2014 it ranked last among the counties (Ştefănescu et al. 412, 2016). It is the economic structure of Bihor County that accounts for this process as it is engaged in economic activities in the sectors of agriculture, light industry and commerce. The high-productivity heavy industry and the service sector have a diminished role. As regards incomes at the national level, the county is lagging behind. *Table 5* below presents data on the difference between wages.

Table 5. National and County Gross Income

	Romania, 2021		Bihor County, 2021	
	January	February	January	February
Average (lei)	5,549	5,597	4,465	4,537
Agriculture, forestry, fishing	4,281	4,313	4,877	5,048
Industry and construction	4,555.5	4,538	4,053	4,306
Services	7,810.5	8,425	4,768	4,696

Source: INSSE, 2021, own editing

The differences between wages, especially in the service sector, can be connected to the low level of educational attainment of human resource and the lack of sectors with high-paying jobs.

The data presented above alongside the data on the educational attainment at the county level show that in order to maintain employment levels, alternative solutions need to be implemented, which create job opportunities despite the multiple disadvantages.

Case study on Bihor County

This part of the study is a systematic presentation of the available research data following the logic described in the methodology section of the paper i.e., the situation of social enterprises in Bihor County is first presented in the light of the secondary data, then through the individual interviews and interviews with experts. The analysis investigates territorial distribution within the county, legal forms of organisations and social goals.

According to data from the National Employment Agency as well as data provided by the Bihor County Employment Agency, 38 certified social enterprises operated in Bihor County in October 2021. This figure represents 1,59% of the social enterprises at the national level.

Figure 6. The years of foundation of social enterprises in Bihor County
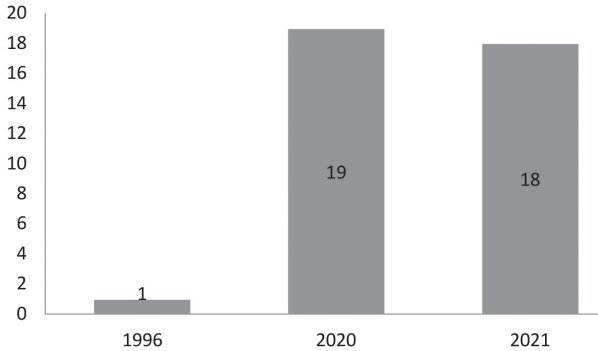
As illustrated in *fig. 6*, the number of social enterprises in Bihor County experienced an exponential increasing trend between 2020 and 2021, similar to the data at the national level (see table 1). Off all the registered organizations, there is only one foundation that has been operating since 1998 and applied for certification. The remaining 37 are newly-created entities. As interviews also reveal, this is explained by the availability of funding, i.e., the number of social enterprises has increased in direct proportion to the availability of EU funds.

Figure 7. Distribution of social enterprises by settlement
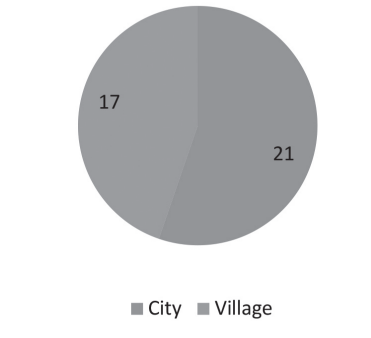
Similar to the national trend, social enterprises are typically created in urban areas within the county *(see fig. 7)*. Information flow and the chances for implementing innovative ideas are higher in urban areas than in rural ones. This data raises awareness as it points to the fact that the integration effect of the social

economy does not surface as a solution in places with greater disadvantages. *Figures 8 and 9* attest to the dominant role of the capital city and its catchment area as regards the place of business of the social enterprises.

Figure 8. Distribution of social enterprises within the county
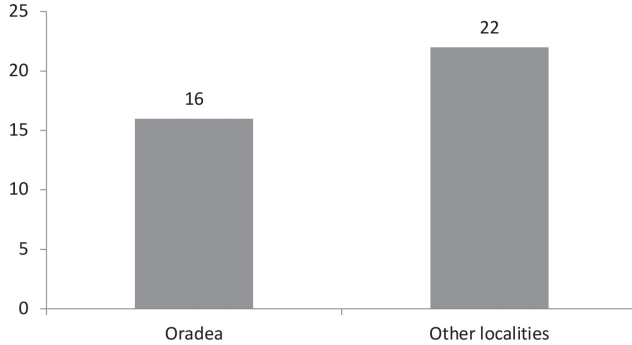
Source: RUEIS, 2021, own editing.

Figure 9. Social enterprises in the metropolitan area6 and in the county
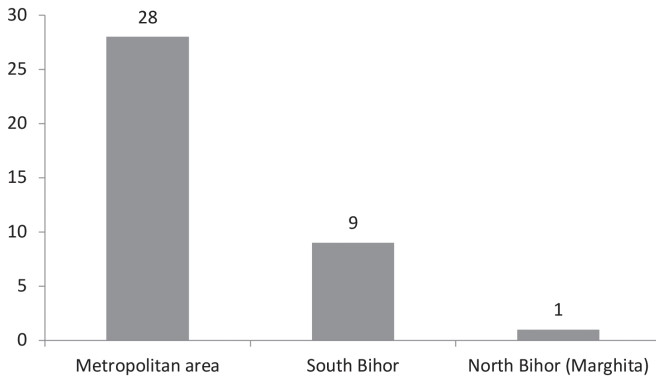
Source: RUEIS, 2021, own editing.

There are differences in the legal form of the entities under scrutiny. According to the law, any type of organization can become a social enterprise provided it has social goals. All forms accepted in the social economy can appear in the structure of social enterprises. Non-profit LLCs are the most common form, followed by associations *(see table 10)*. This trend reflects national data, according to which the non-profit LLC is the most popular form.

Figure 10. The legal form of social enterprises in Bihor County
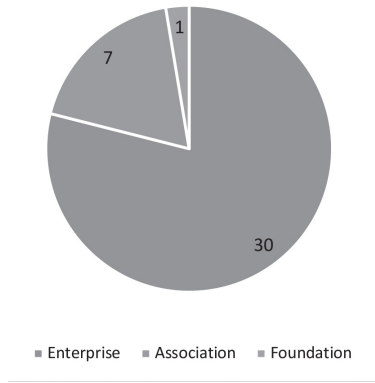
The most prominent activities are education and services *(see fig. 11).* Other areas of activity include production and recreation.

Figure 11. The areas of activity of the social enterprises in Bihor County
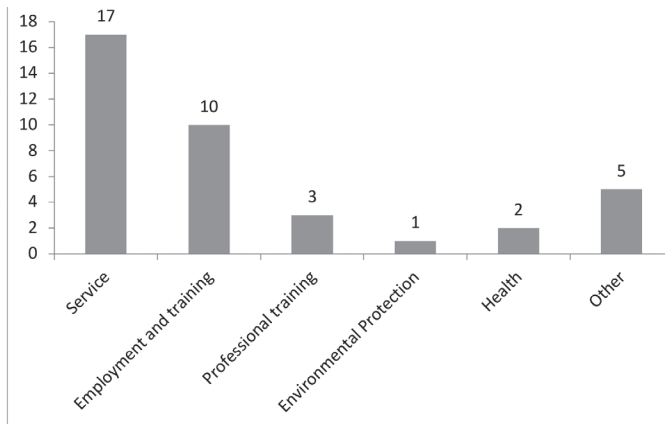
When investigating activities we found that social enterprises which operate as foundations set out as their main goal alleviating societal issues, while associations and LLCs focus on accomplishing social, community goals. There is no available data on the financial situation of the social enterprises as they have not reached the end of the reporting period yet when the data have to be submitted

to the county employment agency. We have information regarding revenue from the interviews. The main source of revenue is funding, for all types of organisations, complemented by a lower business income. Out of the 38 social enterprises, seven managed to register as integration social enterprises and obtain the social enterprise mark for three years. These seven enterprises employ 14 people from vulnerable groups. 10 people work in services, 2 in production, while 2 in other areas. Services feature hotel and restaurant trade, as well as car repairs; production implies essential oil extraction; while other areas stand for public aid.

Overall, the field is male-dominated, however in certain areas, such as social services or education, there are more female entrepreneurs *(see fig. 12)*. Comparing and contrasting national data on the gender of the entrepreneurs, it can be observed that the county data on social enterprises reflect the national trend as there are fewer female entrepreneurs at the national level as well (there are almost twice as many male entrepreneurs in Romania than female ones) (NTRO7, 2021).

Figure 12. Gender distribution of entrepreneurs/ legal representatives

■ Female   ■ Male
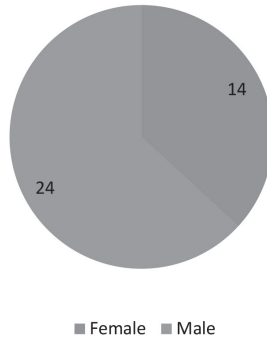
Source: RUEIS, 2021, own editing.

In what follows, the paper presents a brief analysis of the interviews which facilitate statistical data interpretation and provide a deeper insight into the subject matter. First, we discuss the interviews with experts, representing mostly the legislative and executive side, followed by the social entrepreneurial dimension, within which we shed light on how these entities see their own situation in the social reality of Romania.

Analysing interviews with experts

For the interviews with experts, we contacted officials operating in the field of social enterprises, involved in decision-making and /or in the executive area, who have an insight into how the whole system of social entrepreneurship works, into its legal framework and at the same time they also have practical experience.

We have interviewed the head of the Ministry of Labour, and two representatives of the Bihor County Employment Agency. We considered three main aspects when analysing the semi-structured interviews: the role of legislation and public organizations, motivating factors for starting a social enterprise, and vision and sustainability.

The role of legislation and public organizations
Interviewees had a positive attitude towards Law 219/ 2015 on social enterprises. The law provides the framework to be acted upon by the national and county employment authority. Representatives found the law clear in many respects and it's content applicable.

"Defining the social mission is an important criteria in the certification process. Goals are difficult to measure, as a result, the Bihor County agency insists on clearly defining these goals in the Memorandum and Articles of Association" (2nd interviewee).

"30% of the total working time has to be contributed by employees belonging to vulnerable social groups. You don't look at the number of employees but at the total working time they get paid for within the enterprise. This is what they ask for the social mark" (3rd interviewee).

The county authority faces difficulties already when enterprises apply for a certificate as one of the basic conditions, the social mission, cannot be unequivocally verified. Consequently, they insist on having these goals defined in the Memorandum and Articles of Association. At least this is the case in Bihor County.

"We don't check it. What we have to do when they apply for the certificate is to check whether they meet the criteria. The law makes it clear what to look for. The certificate is given on honour so the least that can be done is to have it put down on paper, to make it clear. They do not even have to attach a business plan corresponding to the NACE[8] code. This is why we ask for this..." (3rd interviewee).

"They undertake their social mission in the charter or in their legal form, this makes it measurable...I have also asked the ministry to make it specific that they require this and we act in conformity with this" (2nd interviewee).

The law clearly defines the role of the county employment agency in this context. They are responsible mostly for administrative tasks related to the certification of social enterprises, to a lesser degree they also have an advisory role, while promotion and related tasks are hardly taken on.

Motivating factors for starting a social enterprise
Organizations belonging to the structure of the social economy, such as foundations, associations, cooperatives, etc., have been engaged in the Romanian economy for a long time. Data shows that only a very small number of these organizations change their status to social enterprises. Several arguments may be put forward in support of creating new entities, one of them being that existing

NGOs have new organizations registered rather than start a lengthy bureaucratic process to modify their memorandum in order to incorporate social missions. Another reason is the inspiring nature of funds.

There is also an emotional reason as the founders sometimes see their dreams come true in creating an enterprise: "they speak very openly, they are very enthusiastic, it all looks nice in theory" (2nd interviewee).

Vision – Sustainability

More individuals expressed the idea that social enterprises cannot function unless economic sustainability is ensured. One cannot have a positive vision without sustainability.

"Most of the entities today are viable under market conditions, they are not competitive. A 10% profit is not even worth working for. You'd rather take it to another sector. From an economically supported sector to another, where it can become competitive. Generally, 70% of the companies disappear within two years because they are not profitable right away" (3rd interviewee).

Interviewees unanimously agreed that it can be a source of sustainability if the economically well-functioning financer, relying on his social sensitivity and responsibility, joins the financing of some kind of group. It has also been mentioned that there is a need for continuous funding aimed at increasing employment.

The state also plays an important role in securing the future of enterprises. This, first of all, entails drafting appropriate legislation and secondly rendering social enterprises as beneficiaries. The expert, familiar with the national system, also finds legislation an important factor in the promotion and development of the social economy and social enterprises. The amendment of the law is under discussion. It is expected to become effective (undertaken by the Ministry of Labour) in 2020. The amendment aims to promote a modern and sustainable social economy and to promote public policy integration. It contains concrete proposals on how to simplify the registration of social enterprises and proposals related to employment policy and social inclusion. It also treats the subject of a better alignment with the public procurement procedure.

"We consider work to be the most appropriate form of social protection. Through work, the dignity and self-confidence of the vulnerable and the marginalized increase. This is why we consider it important to have initiatives for creating job opportunities for people whose living conditions make it difficult for them to find work" (4th interviewee).

It has also been pointed out that supportive, preparatory training, as well as consultancy, would help entrepreneurs as given their novelty, social enterprises are not yet known. Professional expertise would make economic embedding more accessible.

A stable, sustainable entrepreneurial segment belonging to the social economy cannot be created without public intervention. There is a need for developing and

adapting laws, creating public policy concessions, establishing national and local representative bodies as well as developing a socio-economic strategy. Goals can be achieved by observing practices and building on real-life experience.

Interviews with social entrepreneurs

The interviews conducted with individuals operating social enterprises focused on presenting the social enterprises, on how they define their own identity, on the social and economic mission, on network mapping and on problems related to providing a vision of their future. The present study, due to constraints on length, discusses mostly the issues on identity and summarizes the responses to challenges and opportunities.

Before discussing the results, we address a feature specific to Bihor County. During the series of interviews, the Ruhama Foundation was frequently mentioned, references were made to its professional experience and activity. Accounts have revealed that the foundation plays a significant role in the development of the social economy in the county (and above). As a result, we deemed it appropriate to contact the founder of the organization. Discussions provided an insight into the foundation's activity, their views on social enterprises, their concrete endeavours as well as into their expectations for the future.

The Ruhama Foundation, with a decades-long history, is one of the most well-known organizations. It is mostly associated with the integration of the Romani people though it is involved in a much wider range of activities. It is also the oldest and first social enterprise to receive a certification in the county. One of the important issues in the life of the organization is the way they have come to consider themselves a social enterprise. In this context, the question of sustainability arises immediately: the organization started out as a foundation, not knowing at the time what a social enterprise is[9], they simply carried out their social activity. Changes followed in the context of EU funds being made available as generating the required own contribution meant a serious economic challenge for a non-profit organization. Each project required own contribution and on the other hand, the implementation of projects after the funding had expired also raised a number of questions on sustainability.

The areas of activity defining the foundation are: education, housing, developing social services, professional training and employment and supporting the disadvantaged. Activities generating economic benefits, *economic resources* are: accredited professional training and consulting. The strategic area in which they operate targets disadvantaged regions and disadvantaged people.

The foundation is a co-partner in a project which is aimed at creating, mentoring and supporting social enterprises, based on a certain concept. In this respect the main activities of the Ruhama Foundation are: technical support, training, conducting competitions for business plans based on social entrepreneurial ideas and

consultancy for the winner of the competition as well as mentoring in starting the business. So far, they have helped the creation of 5 social enterprises in Bihor County.

When presenting their situation, interviewees expressed mixed feelings. Motivation and commitment in leadership is characteristic of the initial stage of the enterprise. This optimistic approach facilitates facing challenges, which are not scarce in the case of these entities. Challenges are posed by the financial situation, sustainability and by creating market competitiveness. The word cloud below, created from interview answers, reflects this idea. Respondents were asked to provide three keywords on the concept of social enterprises.

Figure 13. Perception of social enterprises

Volunteering
Community development
Responsibility
Performance Novelty
Sustainability
Disadvantaged people
Strategy
Fair business Opportunity
Education
Support Integration
Help
Little money
Confusion

Source: own research

As the word cloud illustrates respondents provided a wide range of concepts related to social enterprises, or at times to social entrepreneurship. Compulsory elements, such as responsibility, community development, disadvantage, make their presence, however, it is obvious that in addition to social values, sustainability is a matter of particular concern to stakeholders.

When asking interviewees how they had found out about the social economy and social entrepreneurial opportunities it became apparent that even though there are various motivational factors behind creating the enterprise (had always been interested in it, read much on it, is committed to creating social value) if it had not been for EU funds, which helped create the enterprise, they would have never been entered into the county register as social entrepreneurs because the enterprise would not have been founded to begin with. This clearly illustrates the dependence on external sources and the question of long-term economic sustainability. The topic of the social economy and social enterprises being absent from civil discourse is also considered a challenge by the respondents. They hold

that the topic should be debated more often, authorities should promote these opportunities more and other social actors, supporters, and financers (e.g. banks) should be involved in the development of this sector in order to achieve economic sustainability.

"Organizations would be interested in certification or obtaining the social mark if there were funds but today in Romania you can operate as a social enterprise in the non-profit sector without any kind of registration..."(1st interviewee).

Based on the literature and strategic documents, the creation of economic value in the activity of social enterprises is a key issue, both in the context of social impact but also on its own. This question does not surface as an inherent feature of social enterprises but it is introduced as a condition for external financing. The reason for this might be partly structural as the legal framework and the financing conditions do not make reference of economic value creation in the context of social enterprises, in this sense it can be said that the legislator and financer do not view social enterprises as real enterprises which can generate economic prosperity; the economic aspect plays/can play a role only in maintaining the organizations.

In sum, even though social enterprises and the social economy sector in Romania and in Bihor County is not a success story, a number of positive effects and results can be identified:
– it is suitable for social sensitization,
– it increases social responsibility,
– it raises awareness of the need to address social problems at the community level,
– it increases employment,
– it ensures gaining professional experience,
– and it helps the acquisition of specialised expertise.

It serves community benefits and individual results at the same time. If a person on social assistance benefit becomes a taxpayer, it is a gain for the community. By entering the labour market, the individual is given an opportunity not only to earn an income but also to acquire experience, which in turn makes his position in the labour market more stable. A social enterprise might move from the social economy sector into the traditional competitive sector, which is again a gain as it indicates that it was able to expand, to develop.

Creating a network of social contacts can be effective as it makes information flow more efficient, more accurate and it might facilitate the development of more needs-oriented services.

From a market perspective, they consider their situation difficult and full of challenges because of stability and predictability. Public actors do not consider them to be key players in the economy. For the public sector, a new business, whether traditional or social, is an asset. It does consider the added social value, however, it has been revealed that due to the business construction, it does not deem this type of economic activity to be a firm social actor. Social enterprises most often do not have a business plan, do not perform economic calculations,

they are simply brought into existence by the founders' enthusiasm.

During the mapping of problems and dangers, achieving sustainability was the most prominently displayed factor. We can speak of a multifactorial environment: on the one hand, the legal framework does measure social impact but by few means (obligation to return profit and disadvantaged employees) and it fails to consider the economic mission and economic sustainability. It is obvious that the legal framework causes social enterprises to be heavily dependent on external financing. In this respect we cannot speak of "real" social enterprises in Romania which can consider the value creation they undertake in their economic and social mission in such a way that they are economically sustainable and at the same time accomplish social goals.

Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the social entrepreneurial sector in Bihor County and present a picture of its current situation. Research methods helped us achieve our research objectives and answer research questions. The National Register of Social Enterprises served as a source for secondary data, while other available research data presenting the situation in Romania were also used. Primary data was collected via interviews. Interviews with experts and social entrepreneurs facilitated the access to the information behind the data and we managed to highlight the reality behind data as regards social enterprises.

The first research questions investigated the presence of social enterprises in the Bihor County region and their social goals. Considering the development of the sector across the country, Bihor County, with its 38 entities, is lagging far behind the leading counties. Social missions focus on the employment of the disabled and the support of Romani families and communities in marginalized situations. The availability of external financing plays an important role in the creation of social enterprises.

As regards the second research question, identification, research results yielded the following: social entrepreneurs define themselves as vulnerable entities who perform their duties with a high rate of social responsibility and a low rate of social esteem. Their auto-identification is based on the legal definition combined with goals or community engagement. Definitions are not void of emotions as they often see their own accomplishments as the fulfillment of a dream. The low level of esteem surfaced during hetero-identification. Social prejudice is not favourable for social organizations. This is also influenced by the fact that a social enterprise finds entering the market more difficult than a traditional enterprise. At the same time, the state itself does not consider these entities "real" entrepreneurs as neither the legislator nor the financer addresses the issue of long-term economic sustainability.

The research question on network formation has also been answered. Based on

the provisions of the law, a centralized network of social contacts is built as each social enterprise is closely associated with the county employment agency. For entities financed by the EU, project management is of crucial importance both from the aspect of accounting and the verification of activity indicators. It is a specific feature of the county that the Ruhama Foundation, due to its scope of activities, was added to the network. The authorities represent the anchor points of the network (in the roles of legislator, supervisor and financer), the consulting sector plays an important role (the significant differences in the emergence of social enterprises in different regions imply that in some counties the promoters were more successful), and there are the entrepreneurs (in their own realities, entering the sector with different motivations) – all this embraced by a legal scheme, which does not clearly define the framework for social and economic value creation. As a result, the network is centralized. Social entrepreneurs do not show any signs of reciprocity as a means of sharing information, forming economic relationships, or even joint lobbying. The fact that the law on the social economy is not harmonized with other laws (e.g. public procurement) does not make the situation easier since local governments as potential facilitators in the social economy are completely left out.

All things considered, it can be said that sector of social enterprises seems to be growing and developing. This is an area in which all participants are still learning. Though facing many challenges, more and more initiatives are emerging, which could develop into more successful long-term businesses, provided there was more stable public policy support and better business skills.

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Notes

[1] The EMES abbreviation originates from the French name: L`EMergence de l`Enterprise Sociale en Europe (Emergence of Social Enterprises in Europe).

[2] E.g., National Strategic Report concerning Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2008–2010 – this document defines social economy for the first time in Romania.

[3] E.g., Sectoral Operational Programme Human Resource Development 2007-2013

[4] Romanian name: Agenția Județeană de Ocuparea Forței de Muncă (AJOFM)

[5] The 'other' category comprises people whose nationality is other than Romanian or Hungarian, such as Ukrainian, Slovak, German, etc. as well as people who did not provide their nationalities

in the census.

⁶ The Oradea metropolitan area was founded in 2005 as a result of a union with adjacent communes. First it comprised nine settlements, then, in 2007, three other settlements joined in. It consists of the following communes: Biharia, Borş, Cetariu, Paleu, Nojorid, Oşorhei, Ineu de Criş, Girişu de Criş, Toboliu, Sântandrei, Sânmartin.

⁷ National Trade Register Office

⁸ Nomenclature of Economic Activities

⁹ One cannot speak of social enterprises in Romania in 2004. Funds aimed at organizations activating within the social economy became available only later, after the country joined the EU in 2007. Nonetheless, the first law which guaranteed and created the legal framework for the operation of social enterprises entered the scene of social reality only in 2015.

Photo/Gábor Csanádi

THE ROLE OF RIGHT-WING AUTHORITARIAN ATTITUDES IN EXPLAINING COVID–19 PANDEMIC RELATED CONSPIRACY BELIEFS AN

EXPLORATION WITH ROMANIAN DATA

Adrian Hatos–Beáta Fatime Gyarmati

Introduction

Public health policy measures to contain the Covid–19 pandemic have been hindered worldwide by widespread adherence to conspiracy theories, which can be broadly defined along the lines of previous definitions (Goreis–Voracek 2019; Swami et al. 2010) that say conspiracy theory is a belief that one or several plots by maleficent agents are behind salient and threatening socio-political or political developments.

As shown by current research concerning holders of Covid–19 related CTBs, people who support such views are less likely to comply with public health regulations and more likely to protest against lockdown, mask-wearing, and quarantine (Allington–Dhavan 2020; Bertin et al. 2020; Biddlestone–Cichocka et al. 2020; Marinthe et al. 2020; Pennycook et al. 2020; Plohl–Musil 2020; Ștefan et al. 2021; Swami–Barron 2020) and, in this way, subverting the effectiveness of anti-Covid–19 policies. This motivated a surge of research into the correlates of support for CTBs, including the present article, which investigates the issue in the particular case of the Romanian adult population.

Covid–19 pandemic in Romania

The first officially recorded case of a Covid–19 infection was announced on February 26, 2020, but on February 21, 2020, the government had already announced a general interdiction for people arriving in the country from the regions of Italy affected by the pandemic. On March 14, 2020, as the number of cases had reached 100, a state of emergency, which decreed a general lockdown and several interdictions which were in force already in other countries affected by the pandemic were imposed in Romania as well. The state of emergency lasted for only one month and was followed by a state of alert, with milder interdictions though, through successive governmental ordinances. By the end of May 2020, the number of daily new cases has shrunk to around 100 and the authorities lifted some of the interdictions against outdoor public meetings, the functioning of terraces, and, among others, the beaches and so on to ease the pressure on the service sector of the economy too. Since then, the number of daily new cases has constantly swollen reaching 1300–1400 by mid-August.[1] In the second half of 2020, Romania was subject to both severe restrictions and early relaxations, depending on the fluctuation of Covid–19 infections. In 2021, the trend was similar: there were variations in the number of daily cases due to novel, more contagious strains, which led to further waves of increasingly severe outbreaks. The highest number of cases was reported on 19 October 2021 (18,863).[2] To date, Romania has recorded more than 1,8 million cases of coronavirus since the beginning of the pandemic, according to the World Health Organization.[3]

This situation has generated a sort of general panic within the ranks of authorities and in the media, which all started searching for culprits as they were faced with a threatening situation of the rising number of cases, shortage of intensive care units in hospitals, the prospect of economic downturn, and the uncertainty over the opening of schools in September to start the new academic year. One such explanation for the surge in Covid–19 cases during the pandemic waves of 2020–2021 was the low level of compliance by the people with the officially endorsed counter-epidemic measures, especially the advice to avoid large gatherings and to wear face masks. As in the rest of the world, one of the reasons for this lack of compliance is to be found, according to the public accounts, in the belief in Covid–19-related conspiracy theories, which undermined the official statements concerning the pandemic and its management. Studies show that a considerable proportion of the world's population explicitly stated that they believe in Covid–19-related conspiracy theories (Freeman et al. 2020; J. Miller 2020a; Uscinski et al. 2020).

Romania ranks above the average as related to a conspiracy index by country (Theocharis et al. 2021). A report published in early 2020 reveals that a significant proportion of Romanians, on average 39%, believes in several conspiracy theories (Hajdu–Klingová 2020). According to a survey made in the first part of May 2020, almost two-thirds of Romanians believed that the government and the Romanian

media were exaggerating the dangers of the current pandemic.[4] Regarding the prevalence of CTBs in Romania, the statistical data is scarce. However, at the beginning of the state of emergency, 41% of the members of a Romanian online panel agreed that Covid–19 is a biological weapon engineered by the US to dominate the world[5] and there is little reason to believe that the Romanian population has not been affected by the subsequent waves of conspiracy theories and fake news surrounding the pandemic.

Given the reality and the relevance of the topic of CTBs with the Covid–19 pandemic, our paper contributes to solving two related issues: 1) measuring the intensity of Covid–19 pandemic related CTBs; 2) investigating the sociological predictors of Covid–19-related CTBs. To make these contributions, we begin by combing the literature on measurement and theorization of CTBs before and after the current pandemic began, focusing on a class of predictors often neglected in psychological studies, but well-known in political psychology, that is, right-wing authoritarianism. Next, we verify, through multiple regressions, several of the hypotheses deduced from the theory, by using an additive index of Covid–19-related CTBs applied and tested on an online panel of adult Romanians during the second half of May 2020. At the end of the study, we underline the impact of right-wing authoritarian beliefs in nurturing CTBs directly and indirectly through mediating or suppressing the impact of other well-known predictors.

Literature review and hypotheses

Covid–19-related conspiracy theory beliefs (CTBs)

There is a large body of empirical literature on the predictors of beliefs in conspiracy theories which abuts on such fields as psychology, political science and sociology, and includes predictors from all these areas.

Belief in Covid–19-related conspiracy theories is, according to current research, a regular phenomenon belonging to the domain of 'beliefs in conspiracy theories'. Research shows that people who believe in one conspiracy theory are susceptible to hold other conspiracy theories, as well (Wood et al. 2012). CTB holders see the events in the world as being under the control of and motivated by the greedy and sometimes evil interests of maleficent forces that hide behind the official narratives and governments. Many of the most resounding events in the Western Hemisphere during the last few decades were explained by many through conspiracy theories, e.g., the assassination of JFK, the Moon landing, the events on September 11, 2001, etc. As one would expect, the Covid–19 pandemic provided fertile soil for such popular explanations, considering that conspiracy theories are prone to appear following societal crises, because they provide a way of coping with uncertainty and threat (Swami et al. 2016; Van Prooijen–Van Vugt 2018). Belief in conspiracy theories feeds people's epistemic, existential and social needs,

providing them with knowledge and clarity to understand their environment and giving them safety, security and a sense of control and belonging (Douglas et al. 2017).

Conspiracy beliefs related to the Covid–19 pandemic are, according to the research on the topic published since the beginning of the pandemic, strongly correlated with a conspiratorial mindset, an attitudinal disposition recognizable in easy adherence to a vision of the world according to which the observable track of events hides a malign agenda of evil forces (Freeman et al. 2020; Georgiou et al. 2020; Jolley–Paterson 2020; J. Miller 2020b). This is consistent with previous research on adhesion to other conspiracy theories, which highlights that this tendency towards conspiratorial thinking is among their strongest predictors (Enders 2019; Enders–Smallpage 2018; Enders et al. 2018). Therefore, hypotheses aimed at explaining adhesion to conspiracy narratives surrounding the current pandemic could be derived from the knowledge we already possessed about conspiratorial thinking before the 2020 pandemic. According to this strand of literature, education, anxiety, individualism vs. communitarianism, and institutional trust and political partisanship, among others, emerge as the most important predictors of CTBs. To these, we add right-wing authoritarian values, a less often hypothesized predictor of CTBs, yet very plausible, because they correlate with political values, education, trust, and communitarianism.

Education

Previous research on conspiratorial thinking has robustly shown that it is predicted by a lower level of education (Goreis–Voracek 2019; Lindeman 2011; Mancosu et al. 2017; Ståhl–Van Prooijen 2018; Van Prooijen 2017; Van Prooijen et al. 2015). This link between lower levels of education and higher belief in conspiracy theories has been confirmed by the current wave of research on Covid–19-related CTs (De Coninck et al. 2021; Duplaga 2020; Freeman et al. 2020; Georgiou et al. 2020; Hornsey et al. 2021; Karic–Mededovic 2021; Kim–Kim 2020; Mao et al. 2020; Simione et al. 2021; Srol et al. 2021).

One possible explanation for this otherwise intuitive correlation is that it is mediated through epistemic style variables, as belief in CTs is correlated with weaker abilities in analytical reasoning (Goreis–Voracek 2019; Kim–Kim 2020; Stoica–Umbreș 2020), critical thinking (Kim–Kim 2020; Lantian et al. 2020) or with false claims to intuitive ability at recognizing the truth (Garrett–Weeks 2017) or levels of knowledge (Pennycook–Rand 2020). Next, this study hypothesizes that higher levels of education predict lower levels of adherence to CTBs.

Anxiety and stress

Conspiracy theory beliefs often develop in societal crisis situations, characterized by high levels of uncertainty and lack of control (Bruder et al. 2013; Grzesiak-Feldman 2013; Van Prooijen–Acker 2015; Van Prooijen–Jostmann 2013; Van Prooijen–Van Dijk 2014; Whitson et al. 2015), when people are facing an existential threat (Van Prooijen 2020; Van Prooijen–Douglas 2017). Uncertainty leads to increased levels of stress and anxiety (Barzilay et al. 2020; Salari et al. 2020). The negative feelings individuals experience in these situations persuade them to try to make sense of the ambiguity of the event and develop explanations (Douglas et al. 2017; Fritsche et al. 2016; Van Prooijen–Douglas 2017; Wood 2018), which can increase the likelihood to believe in CTs (Marchlewska et al. 2019; Van Prooijen 2020). In this case, conspiracy theories provide simple answers to complex events and can help people cope with uncertainty, anxiety and stress by offering them the illusion of control (Imhoff–Lamberty 2020; Swami et al. 2016; Van Prooijen–Van Vugt 2018). Although these sense-making mechanisms are intended to reduce negative feelings, they can result in higher susceptibility to CTBs (Srol et al. 2021; Van Prooijen 2017; Van Prooijen–Douglas 2017).

Earlier theoretical accounts have underlined that conspiratorial thinking is a defensive mechanism used by threatened weak groups (Uscinski–Parent 2014) to strengthen in-group solidarity and vigilance against potential enemies. High levels of anxiety in conditions of crisis or turmoil, be it political or economic, are shown to have a strong positive correlation with beliefs in conspiracy theories (Douglas et al. 2019; Earnshaw et al. 2020; Green–Douglas 2018; Hart–Graether 2018; Kim–Kim 2020; Leibovitz et al. 2021; Simione et al. 2021; Srol et al. 2021; Ștefan et al. 2021; Van Prooijen–Van Vugt 2018), which appear to be a rational strategy for coping with uncertainty entailed by important events both in the psychological (Van Prooijen–Douglas 2017; Van Prooijen 2017; Van Prooijen–Krouwel 2017) and political science research (DiGrazia 2017; Enders 2019).

Although recent research (Georgiou et al. 2020) was not always able to find a relation between holding Covid–19 conspiracy beliefs and levels of stress, there is a body of research showing a positive correlation between stress and endorsement in CTBs (Grzesiak-Feldman 2013; Newheiser et al. 2011; Swami et al. 2016). Therefore, it is reasonable to expect, based on previous research, that self-reported levels of stress are correlated with conspiratorial thinking in relation with the current pandemic.

Individualism and communitarianism

The literature consistently produced evidence that people with more individualistic worldviews are more prone to have CTBs (Biddlestone–Cichocka et al. 2020; Lantian et al. 2017; Rajkumar 2021). Indeed, more collectivist persons are to a larger

degree inclined to accept the idea of collective risks such as climate change or environmental risks and more likely to contribute to collective efforts to mitigate such dangers. The official narrative regarding the Covid–19 pandemic is of the same sort.

The pandemic is a collective issue and can be fought against only by participating in collective action through small individual sacrifices necessary to implement the epidemiological measures recommended by all authorities (wearing masks, keeping a minimum physical distance, using disinfectants whenever necessary, etc.) which by some people with a stronger individualist mindset could entail an unacceptable restriction placed by the state on individual's freedoms. Recent surveys showed that individualists are less amenable to the practice of physical distancing and adherence to CTs concerning the Covid–19 pandemic (Biddlestone–Green, et al. 2020; Castle et al. 2021; Chen et al. 2021). Hornsey et al. (2021) studied the relationship between CTBs and orientation towards self and others. Their results show that belief in conspiracy theories is correlated with concerns about one's own safety and self-centred protective behaviours. They conclude that people with high levels of CTBs are more concerned about themselves than others, having a self-centred perspective. The subsequent hypothesis is that belief in Covid–19-related CTs is positively correlated with individualism.

Levels of institutional trust

Linked probably with the impact of individualism, theorizations of CTBs have underlined the impact of trust, i.e., the lack of it, in its vertical-institutional and respectively horizontal, interpersonal forms. As early as 1994 (Goertzel 1994), it was shown that people with little institutional trust tend to believe that the world is run by hidden maleficent forces which, of course, the government is protecting and keeping in the shadows.

Many other studies demonstrate that distrust plays a central role in the belief in conspiracy theories (Kay 2020; Kowalski et al. 2020; Stojanov–Halberstadt 2019), and that institutional trust negatively impacts these beliefs (Achimescu et al. 2020; Bruder–Kunert 2021; Earnshaw et al. 2020; Georgiou et al. 2020; Imhoff–Lamberty 2018; Lutkenhaus et al. 2019; Miller et al. 2016; Swami et al. 2016; Van Mulukom 2021). As a similar negative correlation was also found in the US (Freeman et al. 2020) suggesting that CT is nurtured by a mean world mindset, one hypothesis of this research is that people lacking institutional trust, as well as interpersonal trust, are more prone to believe Covid–19-related CTs.

Political values – right-wing authoritarianism and political partisanship

In the cultural model of political decisions, values play a fundamental role (Michael et al. 1990; Rokeach 1973; Song–Moyer 2017). According to this perspective, political partisanship and identification, and the vote are determined by one's placement in a polarized system of political values (Schwartz et al. 2010).

Previous research sometimes showed a pattern of correlation between political and social values and conspiratorial thinking. Several empirical studies found a consistent relationship between authoritarianism and CTBs, the two being positively related (Goldberg–Richey 2020; Kim–Kim 2020). For example, the conspiracy mentality questionnaire of Bruder et al. (2013) has shown CTs to be positively related to social dominance orientation and right-wing authoritarianism, being in line with Swami (2012). Although there has been suggested bias towards conspiratorial thinking of those leaning right on the political spectrum, the empirical evidence on this conjecture was initially considered inconclusive (Goertzel 1994). A research on the belief in CTs in Italy found a stronger adhesion of those with a right-wing orientation to these theories, including the support for the Five Star Movement (Bruder et al. 2013).

Focusing on political extremism, Van Prooijen et al. (2015) showed that extreme right political ideologies are positively associated with a tendency to believe in conspiracy theories. The recent studies on Covid–19-related CTBs have shown also a consistent pattern of correlation of partisanship with certain right-wing and populist political movements such as a preference for the Republican Party or Trump in the US (Miller, J. M. 2020; Uscinski et al. 2020). The connection between populism and CTBs in general has been shown in previous works (Van Prooijen 2018). Researchers (Oliver–Rahn 2016) demonstrated that populism correlates with conspiratorial thinking, which predicts belief in Covid–19 conspiracies (Stecula–Pickup 2021; Uscinski et al. 2020).

Relying on this string of previous evidence and the centrality of right-wing authoritarianism in one's political dispositions (Conover–Feldman 1981; McCann 1997; Song–Moyer 2017), we infer that right-wing authoritarianism as a set of social and political values, and support for right-wing and populist parties, predicts belief in Covid–19 CTs. As our previous research on Romanian electorate shows, measures of dimensions of right-wing authoritarianism correlate strongly not only with political partisanship, but also with structural characteristics like education, income and age (Hatos et al. 2019) and it is reasonable to expect that some of the covariates of CTBs interact with authoritarianism, nationalism, and traditionalism. Data from the World Values Survey regarding Romanian population suggests that as the level of education increases, the level of trust in government decreases, the better-educated showing distrust in government (Stoica–Umbreș 2020).

Not only political ideology or political values can influence one's position on Covid–19-related CTs, but also political partisanship plays an important role (Gadarian et al. 2021; Pickup et al. 2020), as the reaction to the pandemic becomes

politicized. This correlation has been shown in the US, for example, where compliance with distancing measures seems to be related to political orientation (Lipsitz–Pop-Eleches 2020). This relationship is determined by the subject's political allegiance and motivated ways of processing information, which according to the cognitive dissonance theory makes people accept misinformation and conspiracy theories only to be in line with the group (Pasek et al. 2015; Smallpage et al. 2017). Recent studies investigating adherence to Covid–19-related CTs confirmed that political partisanship is one of their predictors, even after controlling for ideological motivations (Enders–Smallpage 2019; Kim–Kim 2020).

In Romania, the pandemic situation has been managed by a minority government run by the National Liberal Party (PNL) (right-wing conservative, member of the European People's Party), and helped in the Parliament by the Save Romania Union (USR) Party, a centrist progressive organization (a member of the Renew Europe political group in the European Parliament) while the opposition is led by the Social Democratic Party (PSD). Although a member of the Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament, the electorate of the Social Democratic Party is largely rural and holds strong socially conservative beliefs.[6] We expect thus that supporters of the parties in the government hold less CTBs than the supporters of the opposition party (the PSD).

Data collection

Data for this research was collected through an online survey on a commercial panel of 623 Romanian adults (age >18) from May 15 through May 22, 2020. The sample is representative of the adult online population of Romania.

Measures

Besides several single-measure variables (age, gender, and education) all the other variables used to test the hypotheses are additive measures of attitudes using Likert-scales. For all the indices used in this research, the intensity of the belief in Covid–19 conspiracy theories, the attitude denoted by the scale's name, is correlated with the score, i.e., cases of reverse scaling have been corrected. In other words, the larger the score for the dependent variable, the stronger the belief in conspiracy theories. Likewise, larger nationalism or the stress scores indicate, respectively, more intense nationalistic feelings displayed by the subject and stronger anxiety felt by the subject.

Dependent variable

Covid–19 conspiracy beliefs (CTB)

A reliable and unidimensional additive measure of conspiratorial thinking related to the current Covid–19 pandemic was set up using a 5-item Likert-scale that covers most of the conspiratorial content circulating in the society at the moment of the data collection. The CFA of the additive scale showed one-dimensionality, while the alpha is 0,786.

To what degree do you agree with the following statements regarding the actual Covid–19 pandemic?

1 Behind the current Covid–19 epidemic crisis there are people reaping advantages.
2 The virus has been created in a laboratory.
3 The virus is a biological weapon.
4 The pandemic is a part of a campaign to impose mandatory vaccination all around the world.
5 The pandemic is a part of a campaign to eliminate elder people.

Of the 623 cases in the database, 380 (61%) responded to all five items, while on an item-by-item basis the percent of missing values is in a range from 12,2% (item 1) to 25,2% (item 2). To avoid possible bias reflected in the non-randomness of the patterns of missing values, the CTB score was computed both with valid values (CTBL) and with missing values replaced by series mean (CTBR). Because the Likert items were reverse coded in the database – meaning that the larger CT scores meant less adherence to CT beliefs – the final scores that were used in the subsequent analyses were reversed using a linear transformation that preserved the range (minimum 5 and maximum 20) and the standard deviation.

Independent variables

Right-wing authoritarianism

Three indices corresponding to dimensions of right-wing authoritarianism – authoritarianism, nationalism, and traditionalism – considered by many experts in the field of political psychology to be at the core of the system of model political values (Conover–Feldman 1981; McCann 1997; Song–Moyer 2017) have been used as predictors in the current research. The three additive scales have been tested and described in Hatos et al. (2019) and the Likert-items that address them are published in the current article's Annexure. All of the above four constructs showed good one-dimensionality and reliability (all alphas > 0,7).

Individualism vs. communitarianism

Individualism was measured using a shortened version of individualism vs. communitarianism Likert additive scale that was first tested on English speaking population by Kahan et al. (2012) and then tested in relationship with Covid–19-related risks by Dryhurst et al. (2020). The three items included in the scale are as follows:
– The country's leadership should make laws and pass decrees to stop people from doing harm to themselves.
– The rulers of the country should act towards the general interest even when this means to restrict the freedoms and options for some.
– The government has to restrict rights when these can harm society.
The corresponding scale has an alpha > 0.7.

Stress

Covid–19-related stress or anxiety was measured using self-reported Likert type items related to one's health, the health of those in close relationships, income, quality of relationships, and jobs (5 items). The subsequent additive stress score has proven to be unidimensional and reliable (alpha = 0.794).

Trust

Institutional trust has been measured as an additive score on Likert scale items on trust in the capacity of government, the Parliament, scientists, press, and WHO to handle the Covid–19 crisis. The five items make up a one-dimensional scale with an alpha of 0,782.

Political partisanship

Political partisanship was indicated by dummy variables corresponding to the intention to vote for one of the three of the most popular political parties in the Romanian political spectrum PSD, PNL, and USR+. Together the three parties make up 79,3% of all explicit party options in the survey (57,6% of all answers).

Education

Education was measured via dummy codes for higher education (BA and above) and higher secondary education (high school and vocational school). Other controls used in the research have been gender (dummy – 1=F) and age (numeric).

Analytic strategy. The hierarchical regressions

The hypothesized relationships were tested using hierarchical regressions in blocks to test for possible mediation in the effects on the dependent variable. The blocks used in the regressions were as follows:
1 controls (gender, age and education);
2 trust in institutions, communitarianism, and stress;
3 core political values – right-wing authoritarian dimensions (nationalism, traditionalism, and authoritarianism);
4 political partisanship.

Comparability between models was ensured by using in the modelling only those cases in which all the variables have valid cases.

Results

Conspiracy theory beliefs

Among those who provided valid answers to the CT items, a majority supported three of the items. The last two items, relating the pandemic to plans to impose vaccination or to reduce the elderly population were endorsed by almost half of the sample.

Table 1. Covid–19 Pandemic Related Conspiracy Theory Items and Distributions (% of Valid Cases)

	Totally agree	Agree	Disagree	Totally disagree
Behind the current Covid–19 epidemic crisis there are people reaping advantages	39,5	40,2	13	7,3
The virus has been created in a laboratory	37,1	36,3	16,1	10,5
The virus is a biological weapon	33,3	34,5	18,4	13,8
The pandemic is a part of a campaign to impose mandatory vaccination all round the world	24,4	23,4	26,9	25,3
The pandemic is a part of a campaign to eliminate elder people	23	26,9	25,7	24,4

The score computed only with the valid cases has a slightly larger mean and a median larger with a unit.

Table 2. Descriptives for Covid–19 Pandemic Related Conspiracy Theory Indices

	CTBR (MV replaced)	**CTBL (listwise)**
Mean	13,95	14,14
Median	14	15
N	623	380
Std. Deviation	3,71	4,40

Regression models

All models in the hierarchical regressions proved to be an improvement upon the previous models that supported most of the hypotheses at each step. However, the largest improvements occurred when measures of anxiety, institutional trust, and communitarianism (model 2) were introduced, and by the introduction of measures of right-wing authoritarian values (model 3). Of the total variance explained (between 34–38%), anxiety, institutional trust, and communitarianism explained around 43% and right-wing authoritarianism explained 37–38%. It is also noteworthy that the modelling valid measures of CT beliefs on the one hand and of CT beliefs in which missing values had been replaced with item means (CTBR) on the other hand resulted in very similar models. However, the explanatory power of models for CTBR was at each step lower than the models for CTBL. All the collinearity checks were made at all steps and no problem was found.

Test of the hypotheses

Highly educated subjects are less likely to believe in CTs about the Covid–19 pandemic. However, as it appears from the block-models, this relationship is mediated by right-wing authoritarian values. At step 3, after the introduction of the three measures of nationalism, authoritarianism, and traditionalism, the effect of holding a higher education diploma wanes.

Anxiety and institutional trust are among the most consistent predictors of the dependent variable. As expected, subjects displaying high levels of anxiety tend to hold stronger CT beliefs, and subjects with low institutional trust tend to adhere more to CT beliefs.

Communitarianism (vs. individualism) is also a significant predictor of CTBs, with higher levels of communitarianism linked to fewer CTBs, while individualists are more prone to believe in CTs. This relationship is tricky though, as it becomes visible only after the introduction of right-wing authoritarian values. This is another mediation that deserves discussion.

All right-wing authoritarian values consistently predict belief in conspiracy theories. Considering the betas (standardized regression coefficients), nationalism is the strongest predictor.

Political partisanship is also a strong predictor of the dependent variables and, as expected, net of all the other independent variables. Although support for the main opposition party is a non-significant parameter when all the other predictors are controlled, though representatives of this party have expressed positions in line with the CT narratives, the support for the main ruling party its ally in the Parliament (USR) has a significant negative impact on holding CT beliefs.

Mediation effects

Two interactions of independent variables with the dependents appear mediated or influenced by the other independent variables: the effect of education, more specifically of holding a higher education degree, and that of communitarian values.

In the case of higher education degrees (BA, MA, and PhD are considered together in our test), the statistical situation is clear. Right-wing authoritarian values (nationalism, authoritarianism, and traditionalism) are the mediators. When the impact of these variables is controlled, the influence of higher education degrees is non-significant. It appears that highly educated individuals are less likely to hold an authoritarian worldview, which explains why better-educated people appear to be more thoughtful and less vulnerable to conspiracy theories. Although quite evident, this is an important result of previous research which tried to explain the relationship of education and CT beliefs through other causal mechanisms that involve critical thinking, types of reasoning, etc. While our results do not entirely negate such explanations (as abstract reasoning or critical thinking, etc.), they could be correlated with authoritarian thinking as previous research has already suggested (Hodson–Busseri 2012; Keiller 2010). We consider that ours is an important result that highlights the role of education in creating tolerant citizens.

The second interaction is less salient, as it comprises the revelation of a significant effect, of communitarianism, when right-wing authoritarian values are introduced in the regression model (Model 3). It appears that right-wing authoritarianism is a suppressor of the impact of communitarian values on CTBs – when controlled in regression, it increases the significance of the impact of a communitarian worldview. This might happen because right-wing authoritarianism, which stimulates CTBs, has a strong communitarian component. Therefore, persons who are given to communitarian thinking but are not authoritarian tend to reject CTBs. In contrast, authoritarians with communitarian thinking tend to favour CTBs.

Other possible suppression and mediation effects might involve two structural controls, age and gender. There appears a weak positive effect of age in the CTBL model after the introduction of the 2nd block, but it disappears with the 3rd block,

which hints that the impact of age on conspiracy theory beliefs is enhanced by right-wing authoritarian values. Blocks 2 and 3 act as suppressors for the positive impact of gender, the positive parameter being women becoming stronger in the CTBR models after the introduction of each of the two mentioned groups of variables. When anxiety, institutional trust, communitarianism and right-wing authoritarianism are controlled, women appear to be slightly more inclined to hold CTBs. This effect is, however, weak and appears only in the case of data with CTBs computed with substituted missing values. Therefore, this needs further investigations.

Discussion and conclusions

Parallel hierarchical multiple regression models – run on the cases that had valid cases for all the CTB items and on cases in which the missing values for items of the Covid–19 related CTBs scale were replaced with the mean – explained more than one-third of the variance of the CTB measures. All the hypotheses were proven right with some nuances that were caused by the introduction of measures of three dimensions of right-wing authoritarianism – nationalism, traditionalism, and authoritarianism – three core political values seen by many experts as the origin of many ideological positionings and political partisanship. Important exceptions are the negative results for the impact of gender and age.

Before discussing the impact of right-wing authoritarianism, it is important to mention that anxiety and trust in institutions are among the most powerful predictors of the dependent variable. Holding Covid–19-related CTBs is more likely among those with high pandemic related anxiety and those with low levels of institutional trust. In the case of anxiety, the results support the thesis that CTBs may have an uncertainty reducing effect (Earnshaw et al. 2020; Poon et al. 2020; Swami et al. 2016; Van Prooijen–Van Vugt 2018) while the correlation with institutional trust is obvious.

Right-wing authoritarian values explain the two above mentioned variables. More traditionalist, nationalist and authoritarian subjects are more likely to hold CTBs, with nationalism at the top among the betas. Given the results, one may say that CTBs are almost proxies for right-wing authoritarianism. This might explain the fact that one is more likely to find holders of CTBs among partisans of right-wing or populist movements, like the Republican Party in the USA, the Five Stars Movement in Italy, or the PEGIDA in Germany.

Also, political partisanship seems to be consequential for the level of CTBs in the public. In the specific Romanian case, voters of the parties that acted for consistent measures to contain the Covid–19 epidemic – actually the parties in the government, are the least likely to adopt CTBs, while the voters of the opposition party that, probably opportunistically, adopted some of the conspiracy narratives related to the current pandemic are much more likely to harbour CTBs. These correlations of the dependent variable with political partisanship – explained in

some degree by cognitive dissonance pressures and political values – may predict a bad record of fighting the Covid–19 pandemic by governments with a populist constituency and discourse – like the Trump regime in the US or the Bolsonaro presidency in Brazil.

Beyond these conclusions, the most important result is the impact of right-wing authoritarianism on CTBs, which mediated the impact of holding a higher education degree and suppressed the impact of communitarianism (vs. individualism). Concerning the first effect (mediating in the impact of higher education degree), the negative correlation between right-wing authoritarianism and education has been firmly established in the literature. However, a convincing explanation of this relationship has not been provided yet (Eftedal et al. 2020; Stubager 2008). I strongly believe in the convergence that our results with the aforementioned capacity of education and of all the processes of selection and training that accompany it, to educate people to be tolerant and inclusive and uphold modern values.

The second effect warns us against confounding the communitarian accents in the authoritarian narrative with communitarianism in itself. From this point of view, we propose that a distinction be made between authoritarian and non-authoritarian communitarianism. Our results prove that non-authoritarian communitarian inhibits CTBs as the literature predicted.

The results reached in this study are not entirely conclusive because of the methodological limits. First, given the nature of the sample (online panel) and the listwise exclusion of cases with missing values, the regressions could have been affected by selection biases. Second, endogeneity cannot be ruled out for all the parameters, as we are dealing with attitudinal predictors and response variables. Although the presented specification is plausible and in line with previous research, both the above limitations should be addressed in subsequent research.

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Annexure

Scale items

Traditionalism vs. modernity items

– Abortion should be permitted only in certain circumstances (incest, rape)
– Religion should be a compulsory subject in all Romanian schools
– Non-Christian places of prayer should be banned in Romania
– The main responsibility of women is of mother and wife
– Good parents have to slap their kids once in a while
– We should observe our ancient traditions

Nationalism vs. globalization items

– One should always prefer Romanian companies against the foreign ones
– I prefer buying Romanian products over foreign-made ones

– One should forbid the buying of Romanian land by foreigners
– The great powers' influence in Romania is too strong

Authoritarianism vs. liberty items

– Romania needs a tough handed leadership
– The peace and security of citizens is more important than human rights
– The single most important thing a kid has to learn is discipline
– The state should have control over what is published in the media

Table 3. Hierarchical Regressions Model Fit

Model	Adjusted R Square CTBL	Adjusted R Square CTBR
1	0.039	0.034
2	0.202	0.183
3	0.343	0.314
4	0.378	0.343
N	299	411

Table 4. Hierarchical Regression Models

Model	Variables	Dependent	CTBL	Dependent	CTBR
		Beta	Sig.	Beta	Sig.
1	Intercept		0.000		0.000
	Age	0.067	0.251	0.025	0.608
	Gender	0.070	0.223	0.076	0.119
	Higher education	-0.195	0.021	-0.198	0.007
	Upper secondary school	0.011	0.891	-0.003	0.965
2	Intercept		0.000		0.000
	Age	0.104	0.051	0.057	0.216
	Gender	0.053	0.314	0.079	0.082
Model	**Variables**	**Dependent**	**CTBL**	**Dependent**	**CTBR**

	Higher education	-0.193	0.012	-0.185	0.007
	Upper secondary school	-0.004	0.960	-0.009	0.890
	Anxiety	0.269	0.000	0.252	0.000
	Institutional trust	-0.348	0.000	-0.345	0.000
	Communitarianism	0.005	0.928	0.015	0.750
3	Intercept		0.001		0.000
	Age	0.061	0.222	0.025	0.558
	Gender	0.063	0.195	0.089	0.036
	Higher education	-0.063	0.384	-0.056	0.380
	Upper secondary school	0.047	0.501	0.032	0.606
	Anxiety	0.20	0.000	0.194	0.000
	Institutional trust	-0.274	0.000	-0.279	0.000
	Communitarianism	-0.166	0.005	-0.133	0.007
	Traditionalism	0.16	0.017	0.174	0.002
	Nationalism	0.225	0.000	0.215	0.000
	Authoritarianism	0.158	0.013	0.124	0.020
4	Intercept		0.000		0.000
	Age	0.044	0.364	0.01	0.820
	Gender	0.046	0.336	0.071	0.089
	Higher education	-0.025	0.726	-0.03	0.634
	Upper secondary school	0.071	0.300	0.053	0.389
	Anxiety	0.210	0.000	0.198	0.000
	Institutional trust	-0.224	0.000	-0.238	0.000
	Communitarianism	-0.139	0.016	-0.112	0.021
	Traditionalism	0.146	0.026	0.150	0.007
	Nationalism	0.191	0.002	0.202	0.000
	Authoritarianism	0.142	0.023	0.114	0.028
	PSD	-0.041	0411	-0.056	0.195
	PNL	-0.133	0.010	-0.129	0.004
	USR	-0.221	0.000	-0.194	0.000

Notes

[1] https://ourworldindata.org/coronavirus

[2] https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/country/romania/

[3] https://covid19.who.int/region/euro/country/ro

[4] https://ires.ro/articol/397/bilan-ul-starii-de-urgen%C8%9B%C4%83-in-romania

[5] https://issuu.com/eurocomunicare/docs/eurocomunicare

[6] Data on the social values of voters of specific parties are rare in Romania. However, a survey published before the referendum that was held in October 2018 on the issue of banning same-sex marriages revealed the fact that voters of the Social-Democratic Party gathered to present the strongest opposition to same-sex marriages – 96,1%, while the Save Romania Union had the smallest share of people opposed to same-sex marriages –.68,9%. https://adevarul.ro/news/politica/sondaj-curs-85-votantii-pnl-70-votantii-usr-opun-casatoriei-persoanele-acel-asi-sex-spun-sustinatorii-psd-alde-1_5b585e16df52022f759ead1b/index.html

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"FAMILY, FAITH AND FREEDOM" FOR WHOM?

THE REACTIONS OF THE ROMA CIVIL SOCIETY TO THE 2020 RE-EMERGENCE OF THE ROMANIAN FAR-RIGHT

Ana Gabriela Pantea–Sergiu Mișcoiu

Introduction

This article uses a theoretical toolkit and a qualitative inquiry to provide a country-specific analysis of the perception of Roma activists of the emergence of the newly established Romanian right wing populist party – The Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR). Since 2020, after the party won 9,08% of the votes in the legislative elections, AUR has become the fourth-largest political force in the Romanian Parliament, with a conservative, ultraorthodox and nationalist agenda. By focusing on a single party, we explore the relationship between right-wing populism and Roma perception of it, and the intersections between the party discourse and the peculiar context of Roma political representation within the civil society.

Post-communist Eastern Europe has seen radical movements and populist parties gain considerable ground by drawing on nativist and ethnic claims to call for a return to an imagined past, a free present and a utopian future. In Romania, the Alliance for the Union of Romanians have been able to capitalize votes through unionist nationalistic discourse, while also playing on historically negative feelings towards ethnic minorities.

The aims of the article are to examine the reactions of the NGO leaders of the Roma community to AUR, and to analyse the ways in which the representatives of the Roma community are polarized by this party's discourse. The findings of the article show that pre-existing prejudices, fluid political representation of the Roma community in the last decades, and newly build conspiracies can be a powerful

force that not only target marginalized communities, but also challenge the mainstream representatives of the party. The reaction of the Roma community is trifold, partly being absorbed by the populist movement, partly reacting against the divisive message expressed by AUR, partly approving the violent discourse of AUR.

The second part of the article consists of the analysis of the main results of a qualitative inquiry conducted in 2021 and consisting of a series of interviews with leaders of Roma non-governmental organizations. We will show that there are three main argumentative points highlighted by the Roma civil activists about the possible consequences of AUR's rise for the Roma communities, two of them being negative, while the third being potentially positive: (1) AUR is a potential threat for the Roma, as it is an heir of the interwar and WWII fascist movements; (2) AUR is harmful for the ethnic minorities and especially for the Roma, as it is anti-European; (3) AUR is potentially beneficial for the Roma communities, as it has a socially redistributive and economically less neoliberal programme.

The political stakes of populism in Romania

Given that populist parties have been gaining support in the last decades all over the globe, including Eastern Europe, it is not surprising that there is a growing amount of political, academic and media interest in this subject. In fact, the main reason for concern lies in the ambivalent relationship of populist parties with democracy and their versatile ideological constructions. Even more, there is no consensus on the very concept of populism itself (Mișcoiu 2012: 9–29). Scholars work with different definitions of populism and there is not a clear conceptual framework that can be employed for undertaking comprehensive research which can be applied across regions, including Eastern Europe, and more specifically Romania.

Despite populism being a contested concept, Collins Dictionary provides the following neutral definition: "various, often anti-establishment or anti-intellectual political movements or philosophies that offer unorthodox solutions or policies and appeal to the common person rather than according with traditional party or partisan ideologies" (Collins 2018: 305).

Regardless of such generic definition, increasing number of authors see populism as an ideology, a set of ideas characterized by the Manichean distinction between 'the people' and 'the elite', having the core principle that politics should be about acting in concordance with popular sovereignty. "Seen in this light, populism has a democratic thrust as it is inclined to be at odds with any type of independent and unelected institution that puts limits on the will of the people" (Kaltwasser–Taggart 2015: 2). As such, populist movements advocate unorthodox democratic politics that are anti-elitist and call for protest and personal involvement which are less characteristic of established parties. "At its best, populism reminds democratic politicians that they are beholden to their electorates, and it demonstrates that collectively engaged, grassroots activism can be a time-honoured method of reform.

At its worst, populism is xenophobic, politically naïve, and stubborn, and at the extremes, conspiratorially suspicious of the established machinery of democratic governance" (Feldman–Jackson 2013: 3). Such extended spectrum of characteristics however, points out that populist actors or parties should not be seen automatically as authoritarian forces; and many of the issues raised by populists are legitimate, although the solutions they propose are frequently quite controversial.

In line with this growing academic consensus through which populism is seen as an ideology based on the Manichean distinction between 'the people' and 'the elite', in this article the concept will be used in the sense of:

"Thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' and 'the corrupt elite", and which argues that politics should be an expression of the volonté générale (general will) of the people" (Mudde 2016: 23).

Opposed both to elitism and pluralism, populism understood in this manner is a useful tool for understanding the Romanian AUR party and the reaction of the representative of the Roma community towards it, regardless whether it is adhesion, concern, or radical rejection. The advantage of such approach is that it allows us to look beyond the ideological statements formulated by the AUR party, beyond its potentially charismatic leadership and their appealing discourse for the Roma NGOs. Populism ultimately corresponds to a referent object (the voters), the sectors of societies that do not feel represented by the establishment, and as such have rational and emotional reasons to react to the Manichean worldview embedded by the populist parties, including AUR.

The Alliance for the Union of Romanians (AUR) – the ideological fusion

In case of AUR, the nationalistic component floods the construction of the discourse – in a similar way as we have witnessed the discourses of Polish populist parties (Law and Justice, Self-Defence) or the Austria one (Austrian Freedom party). Populism and nationalism closely resemble one another. "Populism is both about the construction of an antagonism between the people and the power-holders and about the elimination of this antagonism through the embodiment of the people in the place of power. Similarly, nationalism is both about the construction of an antagonism between the nation and the state and about the elimination of this antagonism through the construction of a congruent nation-state" (Heiskanen 2020: 9). Or formulated differently, although their bases are opposite, the purposefulness of nationalist and populist discourse is identical. Both claim the elimination of the gap of representation that exists between the people and the exercise of power, through establishing an internally homogeneous nation-state (Laclau, De Cleen). This logic of identity, which Laclau calls a 'logic of equivalence', entails the construction of the identity of the 'self" in contradistinction to an excluded 'other" (Laclau 2005: 32–49).

As Heiskanen notes

"Even if these ideal-typical forms of populism and nationalism are conceptually distinguishable, they are not separable. In practice, populism and nationalism require one another because the desired sovereign unity of the people and the place of power enacted by the modern state can only be accomplished both through the identification of the people (nationalism) and their embodiment in the place of power (populism). Nationalism is not an external contamination of populism, but an internal supplement that accompanies it from the very beginning" (Heiskanen 2020: 20).

Opposed to pluralist views in which not every citizen is able to identify with a restrictive sense of the nation-state, the populist ones emphasize the principle of belonging to an imaginary 'us' and homogeneity which inevitably brings exclusion (us vs. them) – and, in some instances, the one which can be based on ethnic, religious, or racial criteria. As the NGO activists (L. M. or E. Z.) emphasized throughout the interviews, the greatest concern of Roma representatives regarding AUR is the explicit intersection of nationalist and exclusionist discourse which might lead to a more unequivocal anti-Roma discourse or policies. As they note, the Roma community might be targeted as 'enemies from beyond' (beside Jews, sexual minorities, immigrants) who might conspire with enemies from above (the EU or other foreign powers) to undermine or denationalize the Romanian state and implicitly the nation.

As The Alliance for the Unity of Romanians can be labelled as an openly nationalistic party with an ultra-conservative agenda which "brings together some people whose history is linked to the late period of communism. Its candidates are experts in propaganda, intellectuals with more or less open sympathy for legionnaires and legionary or pro-legionary intellectuals, businessmen and itinerant politicians who wander from one radical party to another" (Schmitt 2020).

The president and founder of the party, George Simion, began his political life as an activist in Moldova, where he founded several unionist youth organizations. Unlike previous nationalist parties in Romania (The Greater Romania Party) or similar European nationalist parties today (National Rally, Freedom Party, Alternative for Germany), the AUR is open to share national sovereignty with transnational forces such as the EU or NATO. AUR does not question, for the moment, the European path of Romania, but according to its manifesto, the party's main mission is to unite Romanians from all over the world. As a result, its central focus is the unification of Romania with the Republic of Moldova. The unionist agenda was the core and main trigger in the success of AUR in the last legislative election, being able to capture votes from double – Romanian-Moldavian – citizenship.

AUR draw from the historic-cultural unionist background of Great Romania (the Kingdom of Romania in the interwar period) with the aim to (re)build the national faith, cultural imagination, and community imaginary.

For instance, the religious ultra-orthodox agenda (shared with the Orthodox Brotherhood) present in their discourse and precepts of a conservative Orthodox Christian nation may contribute to the formation of a concept of a new society and state. Indeed, this longstanding background that makes populist ideas seem reasonable, and gives populism its appeal – what makes it 'feel right' or to be 'a way-of-life' to its audience (Pally 2020). Within the Romanian political life, the ultraorthodox nationalist sense of belonging and this 'way-of-life' was well capitalized by AUR. There is no other political party which captures these feelings, no other party is open to religious gatherings co-organized with representatives of the radical factions of the Orthodox Church, with the exception of AUR no other party organizes marches against sanitary restrictions through which patriotic songs are sung in a deep sense of communion. The void created after the dissolution of the Great Romania party (and the death of Vadim Tudor, it's founder) has been strategically occupied by the AUR (Mișcoiu 2021).

Although very new, the party is already labelled as a far-right populist one by several analysts (Mișcoiu–Bogdan 2021: 23–24). The definition used of radical right party is based on the classification Mudde (2019: 7) provided in his comprehensive study of the far right party family which includes the two categories of the extreme right and the radical right. The two differ in their stances on democracy. While the extreme right contests the main features of democracy (including majority rule and popular sovereignty), the radical right accepts democracy but rejects some key elements such as minority rights and the rule of law.

The disappointment with the old political elite played an important role in the emergence of AUR as well. Since 1989, Romania has been governed largely by the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the National Liberal Party (PNL), the Democratic Alliance of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR), and several small formations with short-term or limited impact on political life (Rados: 2009). The PSD was repeatedly accused of corruption, abuse of power, and labelled as the successor of the Romanian Communist Party, and suffered significant damage to their reputation in the last three years after the incarceration of its former leader, Liviu Dragnea. The National Liberal Party provedto have integrity issues. In addition, the PNL's decisions to form controversial coalitions (including the one from 2021) with the PSD have negatively impacted the party's image.

Therefore

"Essentially, Romanians had to choose between three scenarios in December 2020. They could vote for the existing political class, vote for an anti-system party or ignore the polls entirely. Exactly 535,828 (9,08 per cent) Romanians chose to back anti-system groups, giving the AUR enough votes to get into the parliament. Although the group's success is not necessarily linked to the poor performance of the other parties in the electoral campaign, it can be attributed to the fact that many voters just wanted to show their contempt for the old political class" (Demianenco 2021).

Advancing in the context described above, AUR used the political atmosphere of disappointment and appetite for nationalism efficiently, together with the rise of religious conservatism. Additional factors which had led to the success of Aur in the last legislative election were, for instance the pandemic crisis or the role played by the social media in the promotion of the party. But first and foremost, AUR can be considered a nationalist container of hatred providing a cultural and psychological preparation for xenophobic actions, including those against minority groups, and implicitly against the Roma. As the interviews prove in the second part of the article, the concern expressed by the NGO activists lies in the fascist ideology of the party, to think of 'the other' as problematic, or harmful. Such approach increases the moral permissibility of violence, similar to the 'license' of neofascist ideology.

AUR and lack of Roma representation

If we address the question of whom speaks for the Roma to protect their interests vis-a-vis the growing populist wave in Romania, we might follow a "pragmatic approach in determining the shared interests of the Roma by focusing on formal organizations which lobby or speak on their behalf" (McGarry 2010: 142). The interests of Roma across Romania vary, as such it should not be assumed that what Roma organizations advocate for is directly correlated with the interests of the Roma community itself. Taking such a pragmatic approach, the only criteria based on the assumption that "identity and interests are insoluble" for the Roma and "locally based NGOs obtain de facto legitimacy due to proximity" (McGarry 2010: 125). These explains the large spectrum of the positions of Roma NGOs towards AUR, as such organizations have local and particular political, economic or social interests.

The processes of ethnic mobilization and interest articulation (McGarry 2010: 2) might be examined through 'organizing structures of representation' like civil society organizations. The present article deals exclusively with the perception of Roma civil society and discusses views from the Roma nongovernmental organizations regarding the AUR, without considering other vectors of the society, for example the Roma elite (a relativistic concept in the Romanian Roma context) or political parties themselves (in 2021 a Romani party with self-proclaimed representation claim does not exist, and the former ones lost their legitimacy).

As Mișcoiu (2006) analysed it, the main characteristics of the Roma communities in Central and Eastern Europe might be summarized as socio-economic-political precariousness due to: 1. low level of self-consciousness; 2. non-territorial distribution; 3. traditional social organization; 4. marginal economic status; 5. vertical and horizontal social and cultural immobility and rigidity; and 6. heterogeneous cultural and political elites (Mișcoiu 2006: 80).

"The non-governmental organisations of the Roma […] are far from having acqui-red any form of legitimacy from the Roma communities. […] If, however, someone desires to find some elements of legitimacy, he or she may observe the prestige that some of the NGO leaders have within a certain layer of the Roma communities (this is the case of the leader of Aven Amentza, Vasile Ionescu). However, this pres-tige does not transform itself into confidence that might be utilized in an electoral or in a militant manner" (Mișcoiu 2006: 82).

While they are not necessarily representative of the entire range of Roma com-munities, the Roma NGOs have deep knowledge and expertise not only about the context and the situation of the Roma ethnic groups, but also about the challenges the Roma are confronted with. Moreover, the Roma civil society gathers to some extent the most advanced strata of the Roma communities in terms of social and intellectual capital, who represent a valid interlocutor for the Romanian authorities in their relation with the Roma groups (Salat–Mișcoiu 2021). Their understanding of the social and political dynamics of the Roma communities and the assessment they make about the minority's future development as affected by the political evolutions in Romania seem to be particularly relevant. For all these reasons, it is pertinent to study the way the Roma civil activists understand and perceive the spectacular emergence of AUR and more importantly its possible consequences for the Roma communities.

Research design

The second part of the article consists of the organization and the interpreta-tion of the main results of a qualitative inquiry we made in October–November 2021. During the inquiry, we interviewed mainly online 20 leaders of 'Roma NGOs' (non-governmental organizations specialized in the defence of the human, social, economic, political and/or cultural rights of the Romanian Roma ethnics). The selection of the respondents was based on the principle of reasonable balance in terms of gender, age, location and education as reported to the Roma civically and politically active citizens. So, the sample is not statistically relevant, but satisfies the primary need of this investigation, namely to assure a wide variety of profiles and opinions. Detailed data about these profiles and the duration of the interviews may be found in Annex no. 1. To each participant, we applied a semi-structured interview including 11 questions the order of which could be alternated based on the answers (see Annex no. 2). For the analysis of the responses, we used the in-ductive thematic analysis described by Warren and Karner (2014).

Arguments

As a result of this inquiry, we synthesized three main arguments of the Roma NGO militants with regard to the consequences of the emergence of AUR for the future of the Roma communities:

1. The representatives of the Roma civil society believe that AUR is a potential threat to the Roma communities, given the party's ideological lineage with the interwar Iron Guard and with the 1940s' fascist regime.
2. They also believe that, as it is deeply Eurosceptic, AUR will affect Romania's European path, with negative repercussions on all the majority-minority relations.
3. On the other hand, the Roma NGO militants think that AUR has a socio-economic platform that is oriented towards more redistribution, fairness and equity, which could be favourable to the disadvantaged and marginalized Roma communities.

I. A fascist legacy...

Most respondents indicated that they were genuinely concerned about AUR's ambiguous attitude with regards to the interwar and WWII Romanian fascist movements. As one of them put it, "Whatever the AUR leaders say, they are the heirs of the Legion, this is a secret for virtually nobody" (M. P.). For another respondent, AUR is the first party which embraced a mixture of legionary and pro-Antonescu ideologies, which explains the wider electoral addressability of the party among the radical and the nostalgic nationalist public:

"I am not a specialist of the far-right. But I saw in AUR a combination of the revolutionary and insurrectionary activism of the Iron Guard, on the one hand, and of the military dictatorship of Ion Antonescu, on the other hand. Both trends are present in AUR – look at their leader, George Simion, and at that other guy, Georgescu whose video messages we all watched!" (W. B.)

Our interviewees presented several reasons for fearing AUR's fascist lineage and its potential negative impact on the fate of the ethnic minorities in Romania and especially on that of the Roma. The first is the authoritative nature of these interwar precursors of AUR that is reproduced in the party's actions and discourses. As one of the respondents put it, "the success of the fascists is due to their rejection of democracy – of course a democracy that is always imperfect and that they claim they will correct" (I. G.). For other participants of our research, there are "clear signs that AUR would impose a far-right dictatorship […], a system where minorities could be easily persecuted" (L. M.). AUR seems to be "a party which will not hesitate to forcefully impose its decisions, this is already obvious when we see their behaviour in the Parliament" (D. D.). The same respondent shows his concerns

about the fact that "minorities will not find their place in a decision-making system led by such an authoritative party" (D. D.). Moreover, among the minorities that could be affected by an eventually authoritarian deviation of an AUR-led government, the Roma seem to be particularly affected, because:

"We all know that we, the Roma, we are free, in spirit and in action. Most Roma have a problem with discipline and authority, so they will rebel against any attempt to control their freedom of movement or to impose rules that are not consistent with their way of life" (A. P.).

The second reason for thinking that the fascist roots of AUR push the party towards anti-minority and more particularly anti-Roma attitudes and initiatives is the perception according to which AUR has not only a historical affinity for the fascist regime of Ion Antonescu, but also a non-critical view on its involvement in the Jewish Holocaust and in the Roma genocide (*Porajmos* in Romani language). These concerns are based on the fact that, according to one of our respondents, "several AUR leaders expressed their admiration for Ion Antonescu's regime, either in public speeches or, more often, online, in the social media" (W. B.). Other interviewees also share this fear and underline the 'short memory of the Romanian society' or even 'its ignorance' about the Second World War Roma genocide. One of them stresses the "irresponsibility of those who play with the traumatic memory of the Holocausts, both the Jewish and the Roma ones" (M. P.), while another deplores the "attempts of all these nationalist politicians to rehabilitate Antonescu who deported tens of thousands of Roma in Transnistria" (I. G.).

What qualifies AUR as a movement in line with the fascist regime's ideology and policies? For several respondents, AUR seems to embody "all these sinister paths" towards "excusing the WWII fascist regime for its crimes, wrongfully presented as being committed in the name of the country and of the nation" (D. D.).

There are a couple of "clues pointing out that AUR is behaving like an ideological continuator of the Antonescian regime" (R. H.). The first is that "it is quite militarist, full of old generals, generals of the old guard, like the strange General Chelaru, the one with those extravagant theories" (K. L.). And, as another respondent put it, "it is obvious that the old military who joined nationalist parties, even if they are civilian now, have a high respect for Antonescu and would never criticize his regime" (W. B.). Thus, for the Roma communities, "who were actually, along with the Jewish ones, the only two to be persecuted to the point of being eradicated by the Antonescu's fascists" (M. P.), the traumatic memory of the 1940s is still strong and pushes their representatives to be vigilant about any political attempt to restore or to rehabilitate the Marshall's reign.

The second indicator of AUR's fascist-authoritarian dimension and of its affiliation with the Antonescu's regime lies in its attitude towards the Republic of Moldova. AUR is an openly unionist party, backing the reunification of Moldova with Romania, described as the mother-country of the Moldovans (Mișcoiu 2021).

While this attitude is widely spread among the other Romanian political parties, AUR particularizes itself by its "aggressive anti-Russian platform, which fuelled its number of votes among the radical Moldovan-Romanian by-national citizens" (D. D.). Some of the interviewees give their best to explain why they are "truly concerned about AUR":

"Let me tell how it is: Antonescu invaded the Soviet Union to re-annex Moldova and deported us to the Bug shores, at the margin of the lands Romania had just annexed. Now, AUR wants to get Moldova back to Romania and glorifies Antonescu. Logically, what could one expect to happen with the Roma?" (E. Z.)

AUR's unionism seems to our respondents as being not firstly patriotic but mainly nostalgic about an authoritarian-militarist regime that besides annexing the Eastern territories perpetrated the mass deportation of the Romanian Roma. As one of them put it:

"Only God knows how much our parents or grand-parents suffered in those times. How could one still defend this regime? Aren't they aware that behind unionism lies the memory of tens of thousands of Roma victims?" (L. R.)

These multiple connections between AUR and the fascist WWII Antonescu regime are not the only elements that seem to make a wide consensus among our respondents. They also tend to agree about the fact that "the efforts of the AUR's leaders to deny these allegations are very weak and unconvincing" (J. P.). According to some other respondents, "there is no real and direct distancing of AUR from the Antonescu's regime" (S. J.), while, on the other hand there were "nevertheless some statements denying that AUR is a legionary party, as I can remember" (F. H.). This seems to be even more troubling for some Roma civic activists, as "historically, those who persecuted the Roma were Antonescu's fascists and it happened after the failed rebellion of the Iron Guard" (D. D.). So, rejecting the legionary affiliation but assuming or accepting the fact that they have a penchant for Antonescu's regime seems even "more terrifying for the Roma and shows to what extent AUR is dangerous for our communities" (A. P.).

2. (...) and euroscepticism (...)

More than half of our respondents indicated in a spontaneous way that they feared AUR's anti-European or at least Eurosceptical attitudes could affect Romania's European path to which the ethno-cultural minorities are attached. What qualifies AUR as a party opposing the European Union? For about half of our respondents, "there is no doubt that AUR is anti-European" (M. P., L. R.). This attitude of AUR became "evident since the very beginning, I think this is what makes

AUR unique among the Romanian political parties" (P. U.). An even more attentive activist observed that "the main leaders of AUR launch from time to time anti-European messages in the media" (L. M.). For other respondents, being anti-EU is "very beneficial for the party" as "it found in this way a sure avenue in Romanian politics" (R. H.).

This being said, not all the respondents agree about AUR's exact stance on the European Union. Some of them believe that AUR is rather only Eurosceptic, while most (10 out of the total 15) tend to believe that it is anti-European. Those of the first category appreciate that "no Romanian party can afford to openly oppose the EU, as Romanians are economically too dependent of the Union" (S. J.). Another respondent pointed out the fact that:

"AUR campaigned and scored big time in the diaspora and the Romanians of the diaspora are there because of the freedom of movement. So, AUR criticizes the EU, especially on the moral and religious dimension, but could never propose some sort of Ro-exit. It is an Eurosceptic but not really an anti-European party" (D. D.).

On a contrary, most interviewees believe that AUR is a "totally anti-European party" (E. Z.). The identification of AUR with the interwar and WWII far-right worked in this sense as a solid argument. As one of them put it, "how could a fascist party be pro-European?!" (W. B.). For other respondents, "it is not even worth asking these questions, those guys, if in power, would send us out of the Union on the spot!" (R. H.). There is a "radical incompatibility between this party and the EU, they [AUR] simply don't fit in-there" (A. P.).

Disregarding the kind of judgement, they make about the nature of AUR's position on the EU, being anti-European or just Eurosceptic, almost all the respondents believe that AUR's attitude towards the EU is prejudicial to the development of the ethnic minorities' identities and in particular to that of the Roma. This is because "Romania made efforts to arrive at the point where it tried at least to build a system of protection of the national minorities" that was "definitely encouraged or even imposed by the EU" (D. D.). Some respondents also believe that a victory of AUR "would be catastrophic for our European identity" (K. L.) and that minorities would suffer as minority rights are defended by the EU. One of the respondents explains in detail:

"In Romania, human rights are globally respected to a great extent, but there have been several occasions where the rights of the Roma individuals have suffered and the European Courts repaired the damages. If AUR was in power, there would be a serious problem with respecting the supremacy of the European law, just like in Poland" (R. H.).

Moreover, the perspective of a Ro-Exit encouraged by AUR represents a particular concern for our respondents. This is because "the Roma are among the

most mobile communities in Europe" and so "the remittances sent by the several hundreds of thousands of Romanian Roma working in other EU countries would disappear" (L. R.). Leaving the EU would leave the Roma "both defenseless and much poorer, even if they still do not realize this at the moment" (E. Z.).

Even if Ro-Exit did not happen, the eventual presence of AUR in the Romanian Government would jeopardize the country's European path, with direct or indirect effects on the ethnic minorities. First, this "would look very bad in the eyes of our European partners" and would also be interpreted in the following way: "the party of Hungarian minority is replaced by the extremists as a governmental coalition member" (M. P.). This would also alienate the other smaller minorities, who will feel "unsafe, given the trend that an anti-European party" (E. Z.). Then, it would create a context where the EU "would put pressure on Romania" and, "as the reaction to pressure would be retaliation, the scapegoats would obviously be the less accepted minority – the Roma" (W. B.). Thus, an eventual presence of AUR in the government would generate a high amount of criticism from the EU and this would push AUR to taking "even more anti-minority measures" (L. M.).

3. (...) but more social and economic fairness.

In spite of all these fears and elements of deep concern, the programme of the Alliance for the Romanians' Unity, along with this party's discourse and with some of its initiatives, comprise a dimension that could have indirect positive consequences for the Roma. AUR is perceived by our respondents rather as a "socialist or at least a left wing party, from an economic perspective" (D. D.). Given the socio-economic situation of the numerous Roma communities – marginalization, exclusion, isolation, poverty (Mișcoiu 2006; Hrițcu–Mișcoiu 2014), a party with a more inclusive and redistributive platform could "be seen as a solution by many Roma citizens" (P. U.). As AUR's programme is oriented towards the "rather poor and discontent Romanians" and as "other parties, including the Social-Democrats, are not really interested in helping the disadvantaged" (S. J.), the Alliance has "a chance to convince quite a few Roma voters, who are more interested in finding a solution to survive and pay little attention to cultural or linguistic discrimination" (K. L.). As some other respondents put it, "there is no preoccupation in Romanian society with the poor and the marginal, and AUR tries to fill this gap too" (R. H.).

Moreover, the social-conservative ideological stance of AUR seems to be popular especially among some particular categories of Roma, such as the neo-protestant communities. As an NGO leader who serves also as a pastor put it,

"AUR vocally promotes the values of Christianity and family, who speak a lot to some newly born local Roma chieftains. They might be ready to ignore all the other aspects of AUR, including what some of its candidates say about us being 'dirty Gypsies', guilty of the all the problems of Romania" (A. P.).

This religious-conservative position is consistent with the pro-family platform promoted by the party, which includes a strong social and economic dimension. As the Roma are "among the demographically most fertile ethnic groups", the initiatives to provide "financial support for the families with three or more children are naturally beneficial for the Roma" (E. Z.). For other respondents, "it makes sense to be ready to support a party that subsidizes families, if you know you have or will have many children" (F. H.). This explains why the mixture between a discourse of social and economic equity and moral rigor is in line with some Roma communities' aspirations, as it was also the case in the past (Mișcoiu 2014). For another interviewee, it is the "simplicity of AUR's discourse on faith and on family that could seduce the Roma voters", as they are "even less inclined than the other Romanians to listen to the endless speeches of the old parties" (P. U.).

Finally, several respondents said that AUR's direct presence in the local communities during the electoral campaign was appreciated by the Roma ethnics. Unlike the mainstream parties, "AUR did not hesitate to go to the most miserable villages of Romania" (S. S.), promoting in this way "some sort of normality that other politicians lack", "shaking hands and chatting with us, from the less fortunate dude who barely has something to eat to the mayor and the local businessmen" (P. U.). Five of the NGO activists we interviewed praised AUR's strategy of conquering the 'deep countryside and the poorest neighbourhoods'. This was a proof that the party "genuinely relies on the less fortunate people", which could lead to redistributive social policies "the Roma ethnics could benefit from" (L. M.). Thus, by tackling the extreme polarization of the Romanian society, with the Roma being "at the very bottom of the pyramid", AUR could contribute "to repair the huge economic imbalances the Roma have been confronted with for centuries" (I. G.).

Nevertheless, almost all the respondents agreed about the fact that these initiatives and programmes could only accidentally benefit the Roma communities. In fact, there is no doubt the AUR leaders never took into consideration the socio-economic situation of the Roma people and, as a respondent ironically put it, "it's better they didn't, because otherwise who knows what AUR could have proposed!" (S. J.). So, the Roma are among the citizens who could *"benefit from an eventual social turn of the public policies in Romania, in case AUR got in power"*, but this is rather circumstantial and does not reflect any intention of this party to *"particularly address the problems raised by the Roma ethnics"* (J. P.).

Conclusions

Our article raises new questions on the rebirth of far-right populism in Romania and the reactions of the Roma community – among political scientists, sociologists, psychologists, and others. In these times of worldwide far-right populism, identity-related concerns, economic crisis and turbulent political live, the success of the Alliance for the Unity of the Romanians in the 2020 parliamentary elections

has been associated with the negation of pluralism and the dismantling of incipient forms of equality and inclusion policies. As we have seen in this article, AUR is a populist far-right party with an ultra-conservative agenda, and its perception by the ethnic minority activists is likely to be that of a threat to the collective identity of the non-majority groups.

As expected, the Roma civil society militants perceive AUR as an extremist party that continues and refreshes the legacy of the interwar fascist movements and of the WWII fascist regime of Marshall Ion Antonescu, the latter having been a direct oppressor of the Romanian Roma. Moreover, they saw in AUR's anti-European or Eurosceptic position a danger for the stability of the majority-minority relations, mainly because an eventual distancing of Romania from the EU would leave the Roma minority without its supranational protector., and less expectedly, AUR conservative social agenda and more particularly its pro-family programme was seen by the Roma civic activists as a potential positive trend for the poor and marginalized Roma communities.

Our investigation opens several avenues for further research. Despite the unique situation and characteristics of the Roma minority, several other minority groups could make the object of a similar demarche, meant to understand the way their relevant representatives or the average minority group members stand in relation with the Romanian far right's rebirth. Then, a second path would be to study in-depth the discourse of AUR regarding ethnic minorities during the 2020–2024 legislative term to investigate its evolution and to assess the party's changes of strategy on this sensitive issue. Then, a promising option would be the compare AUR's perception by the Roma and/or by other minorities to the ones of the its precursors, such as the Party for the National Unity of the Romanians (PUNR), the Greater Romania Party (PRM), the New Generation Party (PNG) or the People's Party Dan Diaconescu (PPDD). Finally, by keeping in mind the three main arguments we developed, another possible path would be to compare the perception of AUR by the Roma minority's representatives to the one of some other similar parties by minority groups in a relevant pool of Central and Eastern European countries. This could consolidate the comparative studies of the contemporary far-right's attitudes about and perceptions by the minority groups in this region.

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Annex no. 1. Profiles of the NGO Activists

No.	Initials	County	Sex	Age	Profession of the NGO leadership member	Length of the inter-view
1	J. P.	GJ	M	56	Teacher	60'
2	W. B.	MH	F	40	Civic Activist	55'
3	A. P.	AR	M	45	Pastor	65'
4	K. L.	MS	M	51	Businessman	60'
5	D. D.	B	F	28	PhD Student	65'
6	R. H.	IS	M	49	Legal Councillor	50'
7	I. G.	VS	M	38	Public officer	60'
8	F. H.	AG	F	44	Nurse	55'
9	S. J.	BV	M	51	Businessman	60'
10	M. P.	AB	F	48	Teacher	55'
11	L. R.	B	M	67	Retired	65'
12	E. Z.	CT	M	32	Social Assistant	55'
13	P.U.	CJ	F	48	Technician	60'
14	L. M.	HG	M	35	Businessman	55'
15	S. S.	B	M	72	Goldsmith	60'
16	D. U.	CJ	M	74	Electrician	55'
17	A. C.	CJ	M	44	Engineer	55'
18	A. P.	CJ	M	51	Support staff	45'
19	A. V.	BH	F	65	Teacher	60'
20	B. D.	BH	M	34	Public officer	50'

Annex no. 2. Interview Guide

1 Please explain to us the type of organization you are involved in, your experience in the organization, and the nature of your activity.

2 To what extent do you believe that the political developments in Romania affect the status and the evolution of the Roma communities?

3 What about that of the Roma NGOs? Is their development subject to change as regards to the political evolution?

4 How much have you been interested in observing the Romanian radical, populist and extremist parties that have been active at different moments in time in post-communist Romania?

5 When and how did you first hear about the Alliance for the Union of the Romanians (AUR)?

6 How would you characterize AUR? Could AUR be placed among the parties you mentioned/ we discussed at Question # 4?

7 According to your knowledge, what is this party's position with respect to the ethno-cultural minorities in Romania?

8 More specifically, as far as you are informed, what are the intentions of AUR with regards to the Roma communities in Romania?

9 What about AUR's more general political platform, such as its socio-economic doctrine, as reflected in the political programme and in the declarations and initiatives of its representatives? If it was put into practice, how would this programme affect the Roma communities?

10 How would you assess AUR's attitude to the European Union and to Romania's pursuit of the European integration? How would AUR's European policy affect the ethnic minorities in Romania, and especially the Roma?

11 What would the consequences of a potential election of AUR as majority party be? First, for the Roma communities, and then for the Roma civil society?

Photo/Gábor Csanádi

WHEN THE DEMOS TAKES TO THE STREET
PROTEST PARTICIPATION IN ROMANIA, BETWEEN MYTH AND REALITY (1990–2021)

Sorin-Gelu Borza–Victor Papp

Motto: "What is the use of living, if it be not to strive for noble causes and to make this muddled world a better place for those who will live in it after we are gone?"   (Sir Winston Churchill 1908)

Introduction

■ Seen as forms of political participation and contestation, democratic protests in post-communist Romania had a direct impact on the functioning of democracy, often leading to important social and political changes. Beyond their historical reality, these social movements can be and have been interpreted in different ways, depending on the collective imaginary and the political myths employed.

This paper represents an attempt to interpret the main moments of the political challenge consumed between 1990 and 2021 in terms of the keys offered by the political imaginary and myths. 'Golania' and 'Mineriadele' from 1990-1991, 'University Square 2012', 'Post-Colectiv Political Revolution' from 2015, #Rezist Phenomenon (2017–2019) and the 'Protest of Free Romanians' during the COVID–19 pandemic, are all considered. All these episodes of the political contestation have benefited from detailed descriptions in the media (Revista 22, Critic Atac, Mediafax, Agerpres News Agency, etc.) and from a solid analytical literature (Abraham 1990; Bulai 2012; Cesereanu 2020; Dumbrăveanu 1991; Gallagher 2004; Gheorghe–Huminic 1999; Mărgărit 2016; Momoc–Butoi–Ștefănel–Podaru 2019; Nicolau 1997; Radu–Buti 2019; Stanici 2018; Stoica–Mihăilescu 2012; Ștefănescu 2011), both constituting rich resources that allow a longitudinal comparative analysis.

Without claiming to be exhaustive, this paper's scope is to analyze the interpretations and narratives of the protagonists of the main moments of political contestation (protesters vs. target of contestation: the Romanian rulers of the last 30 years), including the intentional use of political mythologies and Manichaean approaches

with the aim to construct meaning and determining both mobilization and action.

By understanding how the 'street' and the 'public square' have worked in their relationship with political myths, we can better understand democracy in Romania. But beyond the political imaginary, after 30 years of street democracy, it is worth reflecting on the real and profound changes that these political contestations have managed to produce and still produce in the Romanian democratic system.

Theoretical framework

The protest movements of the contemporary demos can be studied from several perspectives. A first general approach aims at protests as collective actions in their sociological sense, as social movements. Understood as processes of profound change in society, social movements broadly overlap with those of democratization. However, the correspondence between democratization and social movements does not automatically mean that those movements are expressions of democracy, just as political democracy does not necessarily mean the presence of social movements. Rather, it would be a covariation of the two, meaning similar processes, supporting both (Sava 2014).

On the other hand, from the point of view of political science, protests, under their various manifestations, can be considered forms of unconventional, heterodox political participation and an indicator of citizens' involvement in political life, falling within *"that set of acts and attitudes that tend to influence (in a more or less direct, and more or less legal manner) the decisions of those in power in the political system or in the political organizations taken separately, as well as their choices, in the perspective of preserving or modifying the structure (and therefore the values) of the system of dominant interests"* (Pasquino 2002).

Seen from yet another perspective, the street protests of the demos fall within the concept of *"political contention"* (Tarrow–Tilly 2007), by which we understand the general plan that brings together contestation, collective action, and politics. Political contestation involves the interaction of actors who make claims that will affect the interests of other actors (contention), leading to combined efforts on behalf of shared interests and programs (collective action), in which governments are involved as targets, even as initiators of claims, or as third parties (politics). In *'Dynamics of Contention'*, the three authors, representative for this field of study (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly) distinguish between limited / 'contained contention' and 'transgressive contention'. The collective political struggle is thus defined as *"an episodic, public, collective interaction among makers of claims and their objects when (a) at least one government is a claimant, an object of claims, or a party to the claims and (b) the claims would, if realized, affect the interests of at least one of the claimants, (c) at least some parties to the conflict are newly self-identified political actors, and/or (d) at least some parties employ innovative collective action"* (McAdam–Tarrow–Tilly 2004).

By virtue of this definition, not all politics is contentious. Most of the political life consists of continuous events, such as the electoral process, the legislature of the Parliament, political consultations, the implementation of public policies, etc. All these involve actions of contention either to a very small extent, or not at all, in most cases. In other words, the contention we are referring to, represents that part of politics that is rather incidental than normative, which occurs in public, involves interactions between claimants and other actors, is recognized by the latter as affecting their interests and brings to the stage the government, in our case, as the target of the contestation.

Most of the events that are subject to political contention fall into the transgressive category, the dichotomy having in principle the role of emphasizing the specificity of the field, namely the emphasis on emerging and unconventional forms of contestation. The most important distinction from political contention in the general sense is that of the novelty of its transgressive form in the political context in which it manifests itself, in the sense that its actions can be categorized as innovative because it incorporates claims, selects objects of claims, it includes collective self-representations and/or adopts means that either do not have a correspondent in the given reality or are prohibited within the regime in which they operate (McAdam–Tarrow–Tilly 2004).

The issue of protests in a dynamic and constantly changing environment, such as contemporary Romanian society, involves a careful analysis, and the conceptual framework offered by the political contention, even without going into details, gives us a starting point in this regard. (Drăghia 2015).

During 30 years of post-communist Romania, there have been several *demos* protests against different governments, movements that are part of the conceptualization of transgressive political contention, described above. These protests started with *'Golania'* and *'Mineriadele'* from 1990–1991, then continued with the 'Bucharest Spring' (2012), the 'Political Revolution' from 2015, the #Rezist phenomenon (2017–2019) and ended with *'The protest of the free Romanians'* of today, during the COVID–19 pandemic (2020–2021).

All these forms of the demos manifesting in the streets were not only some of the most visible forms of participation and political activism, but also a form of protest with a direct impact on democratic governments, often leading to social and political change. The protests ultimately contributed to shaping the form of today's Romanian representative democracy, but the essential question is: beyond the collective imaginary, how significant was this influence and how major were the changes produced? We will return to these issues in a broader discussion in the concluding part of the paper.

Especially in the last 10 years, Romania has experienced an unprecedented effervescence of protest movements. This aspect became very clear after the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2008, but especially after 2011, when internationally known events as the 'Arab Spring' brought to the fore the violent challenge resulting in some cases in the overthrow of political regimes.

Regardless of the theoretical angle we approach the protests – as unconventional forms of political participation, contentious *politics* or, in their wider acceptance, as social movements – one aspect stands out: the role of discontent, indignation and other emotional reactions in generating and supporting all these street movements. The protests were born out of emotion and in turn generated strong emotions, which were then converted into political changes.

From a neo-functionalist perspective of the theory of social movements, *"social dissatisfaction, anxiety and tension must be constructed, even generated, so as to result in a desired collective action. What matters is the perceived reality, the constructed society, and less the real one, which no one can evaluate objectively"* (Sava 2014). From this constructivist view, social movements and contentious politics can be inspired, sometimes even fabricated. Emotions, the construction of meaning through the production of frames (framing), collective identities, and culture, all intervene in this process.

The mobilizations associated with spontaneous or organized riots represent emotional reactions generated by a triggering factor, an apparently minor event (such as the aggression against a protester, or the resignation of a 'hero'). There are events that induce collective reactions and involve '*moral emotions*' (Jasper 2011). These emotions are triggered by a reaction to a moral issue (perceived as unjust, unfair, dishonest) and can be used by civic or political activists, or by the entrepreneurs of social movements (Sava 2014), facilitators, individuals who change the direction and dynamics of protests, to transform spectators and passive sympathizers into active participants.

The transformation process is best described by the theory of *framing* (Goffman 1974), as the succession of stages (motivational, compatibility and identity) through which an individual defines his attitude towards an object or a movement. Intervening on these stages can stimulate the desired reaction, positive or negative feelings, and can produce favorable or unfavorable attitudes. After all, framing theory is about the constant struggle to generate ideas and meanings.

'Meaning' includes *"the moral meaning of the notion of right and wrong, the cognitive meaning of the notions of true and false, the perceived meaning of pleasant and unpleasant, the social meaning of identity and difference, the aesthetic understanding of beauty and ugliness, and other meanings that we employ in giving meaning to objects, things, people, events and actions"* (Sava 2014: 239).

The meanings are constructed through what is called framing. These frameworks help us organize the reality around us and guide our actions. In the case of social movements, collective action is in turn guided by collective frameworks and collective meanings, sets of beliefs and action-oriented meanings that inspire and legitimize activities. Frames are "the result of shared and negotiated meanings" (Benford–Snow 2000), with a function of guiding action and generating collective action.

"Basically, the adherents of a movement negotiate a common understanding of an existing situation based on which they define the need for change, desig-

nate what should be blamed, develop a set of alternatives and urge others to act together to generate change" (Sava 2014).

The place of political myths in this process of meaning making (framing) is a major one. They are the fuel that contributes to the triggering of emotional reactions and fuel the production of frames and collective meanings. They legitimize the political contention and inspire the construction of desirable or unfavorable collective identities. They have an explanatory and mobilizing role. In other words, they have the ability to move the people from their balcony, as merely spectators, to the 'street'.

From a complex mythological constellation, Raoul Girardet synthesized four fundamental political myths characteristic of contemporary societies: The Conspiracy, The Savior, The Golden Age, and Unity (Girardet 1997). "Romania currently appears as an ideal laboratory where they all meet, intertwine and dissociate in countless variants" (Boia 2010). Generally speaking, the post-Communist Romanian society has been, and still is, animated by strong mythological pulsations. This is also the case of the protest movements in our country.

Mythological constellations are involved, especially in the case of political contention, in the construction of meaning and in the construction of a group's identity. By the latter we mean a *"process in which actors produce common cognitive frameworks that allow them to assess the situation and calculate the costs and benefits of action"* (Melucci 1996).

Myth is an element of the collective imaginary that is more than a still mirror of the collective body. Myth has a function of a generative matrix through which an identity is concretized. However, this matrix is a dynamic one. Myth must also be seen as a result of the media (public discourse, media, cinema, social media, etc.), permanently created and re-created by them. Being produced and put to work in a given social and political context, the mythological constellations do not constitute a neutral pattern of analysis but produce a series of alterations of the objects and identities they describe and explain.

Exercising important explanatory functions, myths have been able to put some order in the disturbing chaos of facts and events. *"The events were subjected to naming and 'categorization' processes, according to various available landmarks, meant to give them one meaning or another and thus bringing 'order' in what appeared to be a spontaneous movement, more or less surprising"* (Mihăilescu 2012).

However, the available landmarks are always culturally oriented, and they must be understood as a collection of symbols and myths, including political ones, images, traditions, narratives, social norms, common memories, etc. From this toolkit, the leaders and the *entrepreneurs* of social movements extract those pieces that are necessary for the construction of a desirable collective identity and mental frameworks favorable to one's own narrative and unfavorable to opponents (Sava 2014: 240).

The relationship between political contestation and these cultural frameworks is ambivalent. In a sense, social movements are actively involved in the manipula-

tion and calibration of cultural frameworks. In the other direction, cultural frame-works in turn ensure the manipulation and calibration of movements, so that strategic objectives are best served.

The modern political myth does not only have a merely explanatory role, but also a mobilizing, 'performative' one: *"[it] does not explain reality, adequately or not, but tries to produce it; therefore, the political myth has many factual elements that connect it to reality, but not to explain it, but to unify it in an image as accessible as possible to the collective imaginary. Even when it seems to explain, in fact, the myth does not explain, but unifies disparate, fragmented information, making it accessible to understanding and thereby allowing the triggering of an action"* (Kun 2012: 15).

The mobilizing potential of political myths is manifested, par excellence, in an ideological context (Șandru 2012: 72), the ideology being the central figure of the socio-political imaginary. The ideology uses certain mythical constructions in a legitimizing sense, the goal being the integration and the identity of a community or a social group (Șandru 2009). In this ideological context, the way in which the Other is perceived, in the context of political contestation, is decisively influenced by the symbolic employment of the word and of political myths respectively.

"The ability to turn everything that is not on our side into manifestations of evil has a double meaning. The technique is to say that 'we' are good and pure, while our enemies (of ideas, of politics) are stupid, infected, dirty. The mythology of the trans-formation of the Other into a Demon (n.n. demonization), respectively the const-ruction of a discourse through which the political opponent is labeled by strings of radically opposed positions, following the logic of the conflict between Them and Us has been widely used […]. Demonization works in two ways, because while opponents are demonized, our own images are idealized" (Pop 2012: 132–133).

From the perspective of a philosophical-political analysis, Romanian politics work within a Manichaean framework (Iliescu 2003), built on the permanent con-flict between two opposing entities: Good and Evil. This struggle is manifested by the conviction that there is an absolute Good, which belongs to the one who enunciates it!

In conclusion, the political imaginary and its myths create, on the one hand, meaning and identity, bringing order to the chaos of events, while on the other hand – manifesting themselves in an ideological context, their attribute is to urge mobilization and to determine action, a prominent function especially in the *"epochs of historical fracture"* (Adameșteanu 1997), such as the post-communist era in Romania.

The birth of a symbol: "Piața Universității" / University Square (1990)

To understand the nature and dynamics of the Romanian political contention of 1990–1991, it is important to emphasize the violent nature of the regime change of December 1989, because between the radical character of the Revolution and the formula of manifestation of post-communist political life there was in fact *"a congruence relationship"* (Radu–Buti 2019). Democracy in Romania was born through violence and continued, at least in the early years, in the same register of violent conflicts at the level of political discourse, but also at the level of the street.

Against the background of the struggle for post-revolutionary political legitimacy, both the representatives of the new provisional power, grouped in the National Salvation Front (FSN), and their protesters from civic organizations and newly established historical parties cultivated political contention and confrontation. Before the first free elections, the line of demarcation of the political contention was drawn along the ideological cleavage 'communism/anti-communism'. On the one hand, there were groups of 'neo-communists', labeled as such by their political opponents, who sought to maintain the levers of power and a controlled transition to an 'original democracy', on the other hand, self-proclaimed anti-communist groups, who did not accept that the former leaders from the second echelon of the Communist Party and the representatives of the former nomenclature be found in the new democratic leadership structures.

What is known today as the 'Revolution Square Phenomenon' began on April 22, 1990 by occupying the University Square and transforming it for 53 days into the 'first zone free of neo-communism' from Romania. This marathon protest was the culmination of political and street confrontations (from January–April 1990) between the two camps. If, before May 20 (the day of the first presidential and parliamentary elections), the University Square was *"the scene of large-scale pre-election mobilizations"*, after the elections, it became *"the main location of the post-election reaction"* (Sava 2014: 190).

Political myths and manichaeism played a decisive role in creating both the identity of the University Square and the political mobilization of that period. While opponents were demonized, the group on its own was idealized. Political myths (Conspiracy, Savior, Golden Age, and Unity) intertwined in multiple ways, generating a complex mythological constellation. Heroes and villains clashed both in the street and in the collective imaginary.

Ever since the choice of its name, the National Salvation Front has presented itself as the 'savior' who delivered the country from the communist regime. FSN claimed an organic connection with the population, being 'fiber of the people's fiber', while the leaders and representatives of other, historical, political parties (PNȚCD and PNL are the christian-agrarian and the liberal parties founded before WWII and banned during the Communist Regime) were labeled as 'sons of *kulaks* (*chiaburi*, in Romanian) and legionaries' who conspire against the working people.

Hence the workers' slogans, used and applied even by miners, such as 'Death to intellectuals' and 'We work, we do not think'.

Ion Iliescu, Petre Roman, other representatives of FSN, as well as the miners from the Jiu Valley (who came to Bucharest), were the heroes of the day: the 'saviors' of the people and the defenders of democracy. Ion Iliescu described the protests of 1990 as "acts that demonstrate the tendency of obscure forces that ignore the option expressed by our people and want by force to establish a fascist regime".

The conspiracy myth provided to FSN leaders the framework to identify the anti-heroes: anti-FSN protesters in University Square were categorized as 'scoundrels', 'legionnaires' and 'vandals'. In contrast to the official heroes, the villains, embodying Evil, were 'coordinated from the shadows' by forces outside the country to endanger the stability of democracy and the unity of the country. Not coincidentally, the miners found "at PENEȚEU (n.n. PNȚCD – National Peasants' Party – Christian Democratic) drugs, weapons, ammunition, automatic typewriter", and "money printing machine at PENELEU (n.n. PNL – National Liberal Party)".

The same myths and the same technique of demonizing the opponent – in order to create meaning and to generate mobilization – could be found on the other side of the barricade. It is noteworthy from the beginning that the protesters did not just occupy any public square in Bucharest, but a symbolic place, directly related to the Revolution of December 1989 and the anti-communist struggle. The meaning framing started right from the choice of the place of the protest. Anti-communism ensured both the desired group identity, as well as social and political legitimacy.

Revolutionary anti-communism tended to legitimize itself by calling for the re-establishment of a historical link between the unsettled present and a past whose natural course has been fractured (Șandru 2012). The interwar period was presented as the 'Golden Age' of the Romanian nation, and the representatives of the historical parties, claiming moral supremacy, could only be the true democrats and the true 'saviors' of Romania. This time, they were the saviors, and the villains could only be Iliescu, Roman and the other successors of the dictatorial regime. After the violence of June 1990, the group of villains also included miners from the Jiu Valley, seen as the para-military repressive force of the Iliescu regime.

In the narrative of the street, the opponent's conspiracy belonged to the *Securitate* and had neo-communist nature, the Revolution being hijacked by former security forces and PCR (Romanian Communist Party) activists grouped in the FSN. In the same interpretation, Iliescu was presented as Nicolae Ceaușescu's successor, and FSN as the successor of the Communist Party. 'Unity' and freedom could not be manifested elsewhere than in the public square, by participating in protests. The square was proclaimed as 'the first zone free of communism', over time becoming, symbolically, the 'kilometer zero of democracy'.

'University Square Phenomenon' has experienced a pattern of evolution similar to other social movements.

After its *emergence*, followed the stage *of organization* (involvement of new participants, attracting media attention, supporting demands such as the Proclamation of Timisoara, blocking traffic in the area) and then an attempt to *institutionalize* (creating official organizations and bureaucratic structures to realize the program of the movement), which, however, was realized only to a small extent. The associations and structures that emerged did not manage to be recognized[1] in the structure of Romanian society nor to achieve the desired objectives. Decline inevitably followed (Abraham 1990). The decline of the *University Square Phenomenon* began immediately after the parliamentary and presidential elections of May 20, elections won by FSN (67%) and Ion Iliescu (85%) and ended following *the violent collective behavior* of June 13 and 14–15, respectively.

Starting from the violent repression of the protest, the University Square was the birthplace of a symbol of condensation (Edelman 1999) which, in the years of post-communist democracy, grew and cemented itself strongly in the Romanian political imaginary. In 1990, the Collective Savior was born in the University Square, a hero who, even if he lost the unequal fight with the authorities and the miners, will still manage to survive in the collective imaginary and will revive every time, when the new generations of protesters will occupy the street, and the University Square, but also other symbolic squares in the big cities of Romania, in their fight against the representatives of a political system considered no longer representing them, but who also are perceived as acting against them.

The Mineriad of September 1991

Despite the overwhelming electoral score obtained in the 'founding' elections of May 20, 1990, elections that led to a multiparty system with a quasi-absolute domination of the FSN (Preda 2011), the Government could not complete its term. The Prime Minister, Petre Roman, and his cabinet, were replaced only 18 months after the inauguration. However, the change of government did not take place democratically, following an election or a motion of no confidence in Parliament, but as a direct result of a violent movement: the *Mineriad* of September 1991. It was the fourth arrival of miners in Bucharest, but not the last.[2]

Unlike in June 1990, this time the miners did not respond to any call for 'defense' of the authorities, but on the contrary. They wanted to overthrow them! Their labor dispute was just a pretext for hiding obvious political goals. This time, the miners no longer went against the 'public square', but wanted to be the 'street' themselves, manifesting violently, again, against the FSN Government.

The miners' narrative from September 1991 aimed at identifying them with the people ('Miners – your brothers' was just one of the slogans chanted for this purpose on the streets of Bucharest) against the politicians who were governing Romania against the interest of the people.

'Unity' and the national consensus were the key words through which the miners tried to legitimize this new violent movement. From the incarnation of Evil and the anti-heroes of 1990, the miners tried to turn into 'saviors' who fought, this time, against the 'Bolshevik' rulers, not only for their own well-being, but for all Romanians. Slogans such as "Down with Iliescu", "Bucharest is with us" or "The students are with us"[3] came to strengthen this narrative.

Some witnesses of the events considered the violent movement of the miners as a 'neo-communist coup' set up by groups of the former *Securitate* (former communist secret service) to resolve the conflict between Ion Iliescu and Petre Roman. Others interpreted the 1991 Mineriada as *"a specific form of protest participation whose main features – class conflict character, violent character and ideological character (n.n. anti-capitalist) – brought it closer to the Marxist idea of revolution"* (Radu–Buti 2019: 68). In any case, the September 1991 *Mineriad* produced the first overthrow of a legitimate government by a violent movement of a minority constituency. This was seen as an important development for the young Romanian democracy.

2012 – University Square reloaded

Popular protests in January–February 2012 erupted amid the global economic crisis and the accumulation of social frustrations caused by the austerity measures of the PD-L Government (conservative), overlapping with the rejection of the aggressive political style of the 'president-player', Traian Basescu and the contagion with the Occupy-type global movements. The 'spark' that ignited the explosiveness of the protests was the resignation of the Undersecretary of State, Raed Arafat after the televised verbal conflict with President Băsescu on the Government's intention to privatize the Emergency Medical Service (SMURD).

Although less violent and much reduced in terms of popular participation than the University Square Phenomenon of 1990, the 2012 political contention claimed its roots from the same symbolic place: University Square, a strong space still anchored in the collective memory even after almost 20 years.

The resignation of prime minister Emil Boc and his cabinet at the beginning of February 2012 represented the second moment (after the *Mineriad* of 1991) in the post-communist history of Romania when a popular movement directly determined the fall of a legitimate government.

'University Square 2012' went a step further and indirectly contributed to the re-balancing of political relations, especially those in the Romanian Parliament. Sacrificed under the pressure of popular protests, prime Minister Boc was replaced at the head of the government by Mihai Răzvan Ungureanu, but he did not last long in office either. After only 78 days, Ungureanu's term ended following the success of the no confidence motion initiated by USL (Social-Liberal Union), the opposition coalition of social-democrats and liberals.

The success of this political action was due to the desertions from the PDL-Băsescu camp, the 'camp-switching' parliamentarians changing the structure of the parliamentary majority. Defeated both by the street and by the Parliamentary Opposition, president Băsescu had to appoint a USL government led by Victor Ponta.

Beyond both the direct and indirect political consequences of the University Square movements from 1990–1991 and 2012, other similarities can be identified, especially in terms of the ideological discourse of the protagonists and the use of political myths.

The main villain of 2012 was certainly president Traian Basescu. From the anti-corruption and anti-PSD hero, adored and voted by the people (at least by the majority of voters in the 2004 and 2009 elections, as well as in the 2007 suspension referendum), Băsescu experienced a spectacular decline. In 2012, in the narrative of his supporters, he, and the Boc Government, saved the country from economic collapse. In the narrative of the University Square, and of the population, they became the personification of Evil.[4] His personal political style, as well as the measures adopted by the Government, managed to irritate, and divide the population.[5] which immediately identified in him, mainly, the enemy against whom it was willing to protest and to vote[6] in 2012.

The protesters who took to the streets in 2012 claimed to be the successors of freedom fighters of the first years after the Romanian Revolution (December 1989), so they perpetuated the myth of the collective savior. The University Square, but also the other squares in the Romanian cities where protests were organized, became the 'heroes' who freed the country and the population from a regime perceived as arrogant and with authoritarian accents.

On the other hand, the representatives of the Power also continued the labeling policy used by the previous regimes. The demonstrators were called 'inept slum', 'worms' and 'trumpets', in an attempt to reduce the credibility but also the symbolic significance of the University Square. However, the side effect of these labels was to further inflame the spirits and contribute to an even greater mobilization of people.

Within the narrative of the participants of the University Square 2012 movement, the moment was considered one of 're-founding the civic and political protest', after a break of almost 20 years. The collective savior was reborn in 2012 and with it *"the second generation of activists in the Romanian space"* (Stanici 2018). This generation institutionalized the protest in Romania, as we will see in the following chapters, because, unlike their predecessors, the 2012 protesters managed to form a very active form of civil society over the next seven years. 'University Square 2012' was just the beginning of a cycle that would continue and climax with Colectiv and #Rezist.

Colectiv 2015 – a political revolution!?

In the case of the popular uprising of November 2015, the 'moral emotions' of the 2012 Generation of protesters were triggered by a dramatic incident: the fire at the Colectiv club, resulting in 64 dead and 184 injured. In essence, *"the protesters viewed the fire at the Colectiv club as embodying a series of structural problems of the Romanian socio-political and social reality"* (Mărgărit 2016: 255). The club did not have an operating license, and the authorities failed to check and fine the club's owners for violating the law. In addition, the state authorities proved unprepared and the hospitals insufficient to cope with the large number of victims with severe burns. The narrative of the street identified the Ponta Government as the main culprit for the tragedy at *Colectiv.*

The aforementioned second-generation civic activists and the 'entrepreneurs of social movements', i.e. leaders of online groups and communities,[7] mostly with visions and political options opposed to the main ruling party, used this collective emotional shock to turn outraged but passive – until then, viewers, in active participants of the political contention aimed at determining a change at the political and governmental level. The left-wing government was identified as the Evil that had to be defeated and removed by the force of the street, that is, the force of Good.

Therefore, four days after the tragedy, following a massive mobilization in the online space, over 35 000 Romanians from Bucharest and the big cities took to the streets accusing the Government of corruption. After the first day of protest, prime minister Victor Ponta announced his resignation, producing the symbolic act of sacrifice meant to calm the protest wave. From the hero of the Opposition and of the 'Street' in 2012, Victor Ponta, together with his party and their political allies, played in 2015 the role of the (moral) scapegoat.

The *Colectiv* case determined the meeting and the conjugation of the forces of no less than two saving heroes. On the one hand, thousands of Romanians (the collective Savior) gathered again in the University Square of Bucharest, the kilometer zero of democracy and civic activism, from where they marched to Victoria Square (the seat of the Government) to demand the resignation of the rulers. On the other hand, it was the moment of affirmation of the 'savior' Iohannis, the 'different' president of Romania: *"We cannot believe that a simple change of government solves Romania's problems, not even the problems of the Romanian political class. Much more is needed. I am willing to take these steps, which, in the end, will lead to a different kind of politics in Romania, a policy for citizens, a predictable and transparent policy. And, speaking of the other demands that have arisen in recent days and that were made during last night's demonstrations, it is true. And the demonstrators here did one simple thing: they told us what they think should happen in the foreseeable future. I think that these requests are correct, they are common sense requests"* (Iohannis 2015).

While the collective savior defined itself as a civic-conscious reformer, the villains were identified in the retrograde and deeply corrupt political class that enjoyed extremely low trust from the population.

Following the resignation of the Prime Minister, the President asked the 'Street' to appoint representatives to consult with in order to form a new government to carry out the requested reforms. The involvement of civil society in an institutional process reserved until then only to political actors, was not only an 'original' movement of the president who thus proved his status as a mediator, but also a re-legitimization of civil society, or at least certain non-governmental organizations, as significant political actors. At the same time, it was the manifestation of the 'unity' between the people and the president, by proxy of civil society. It was a clear message that the president is on the side of the people, on the side of the reformist protesters.

This unprecedented act in political life after 1989 led to another premiere, which showed the democratic 'vision' of the savior Iohannis: the appointment of a government of 'technocrats'. The Dacian Cioloș government was the first post-communist cabinet composed exclusively of ministers not carrying a party card as of 2015. This evolution of events led some authors to consider the 'street' of 2015 as 'political revolution' (Radu–Buti 2019).

Vive la #Rezist (2017–2019)[8]

After only one year, during which the 'technocratic' government disappointed the popular expectations, in December 2016, the 'political restoration' followed. The social-democrats (PSD) won the parliamentary elections by a landslide (with about 45% of the votes it managed to obtain almost 50% of the parliamentary seats) and returned victorious to the country's leadership. The desire expressed in the street a year ago was no longer reflected in the vote of Romanians. Resetting the political system was a failure.

"This situation provided the fuel for new episodes of protest participation. The result of the parliamentary elections and the return of PSD to power (especially as the dominant party) were political realities difficult to accept by the citizens who had discovered the strength of the Street and assertive citizenship. Naturally, we would say, new anti-government protests followed" (Radu–Buti 2019: 215–216). The political contention lasted for almost three years, three years in which the contention of 'street' almost became a rule and not just the exception of political life.

In 2017, the triggering moment of the 'moral emotions' or *"the valve that released the frustration that the anti-PSD public had accumulated following the result of the parliamentary elections"* (Radu–Buti 2019: 222). was the issuance by the government of an emergency ordinance (OUG 13/2017) suspected by the political opposition that it favored the PSD leader, Liviu Dragnea in his 'hidden' approach to settle his personal problems with the Justice.

It was the moment when the two saving heroes who stood out in the fall of 2015 reinvented themselves and re-entered the political scene. In a context dominated by rumors announcing the 'disaster' in the field of Justice, president Iohannis made his appearance in force, unexpectedly chairing the meeting of the PSD government (January 18) with which he was in political opposition. It was his first symbolic victory in the fight against the Evil embodied by PSD and Liviu Dragnea. After that moment, thousands of Romanians from Bucharest and other cities took to the streets to protest against the draft ordinances that 'threatened' the independence of the Judiciary and the rule of law in Romania.

The Street's criticisms brought to the amendments of the justice laws went beyond the facts and were summarized only at the rhetorical and political level. *"No one has objected precisely to any article to improve the laws of justice, but they (n.n. the Government and the majority in the Parliament) are stubbornly accused of leaving the rule of law and assaulting justice – formulas that show both ignorance and bad faith! Which rule of law? What justice?!"* (Marga 2020: 215)

Going over the author's 'strong' formulations, one thing was obvious: the emotion of the street and the interpretation framework used by the protesters made the background of the problem – i.e. the democratic functioning of the Romanian judiciary – to take a back seat. What mattered was the fight between the forces of Good (the Street, Iohannis, the political opposition) against Evil (PSD).

The declared intention of the Street was to produce political changes, starting with the dismissal of the PSD government. The intention was manifested from the moment when the protesters abandoned the University Square and transferred the movement to Victoria Square, in front of the government headquarters. Not even the repeal of the infamous government ordinance has succeeded in reducing the scale of the protests or the nature of the demands.

To demonstrate the 'unity' with the street and the people, the president briefly joined the protesters who blocked the University Square (January 22): *"A gang of politicians with legal problems wants to change the legislation in Romania, it wants to weaken the rule of law. Or such a thing cannot be admitted! It is inadmissible to change the law and tens, hundreds of politicians in trouble with the law to find their files cleaned and continue their illegalities. Romanians, rightly, are outraged"*, he later commented on his Facebook page. It was the second symbolic victory of the savior Iohannis in the 'fight' with a government that, according to the narrative of the Street, was in the service of the corrupt and the 'criminals' ('penali').

The third symbolic victory of the hero Iohannis was the announcement of the intention to launch a national referendum on "continuing the fight against corruption and ensuring the integrity of the civil service/public function".[9]

Stimulated by the emotional political discourse and mobilized on social networks, the collective hero, *"assertive, intransigent and emotionally oriented towards action in the public space"* (Radu–Buti 2019: 221) continued to gather in Victoria Square. Following a scenario and a deployment of imaginary means (lighting telephone lanterns or recreating the European Union flag), the public square mani-

fested its identity and belonging (pro-European and pro-Western liberal values), in contrast to the retrograde villains, who do not share the same 'superior' values.

In the same time with the protests in Victoria Square, counter-demonstrations were organized against president Iohannis in front of the Cotroceni Palace, the official presidential residence (Momoc–Butoi–Ştefănel–Podaru 2019), but their magnitude and impact did not rise to the level of the protest in Victoria Square. The only effect was an imagological one: the Romanian society looked, again, divided.

During those tumultuous days of protests, an idea employed in the past by the president-player Băsescu, that of a deeply divided Romania, was (re) imposed in the collective imaginary: the first half of the division was that of the 'beautiful and free' young people, educated, civic duty oriented, bringing reformist ideas, protesting against corrupt and discretionary governance; the second half was that of those with precarious education, social benefits receivers, the 'plagued' (the social democrats, PSD, were called the *red plague*) and the elderly, who supported an isolationist and nationalist government. The protests were no longer those of the people; they became a transposition in the street of the battle between the Good and the Bad, between those who claimed a direct link with the democratic past of Romania, and those who opposed the development of democracy.

This image of a country divided between the personifications of Good and Evil was also strengthened by the introduction of the Diaspora in the meaning framing. The image of Romanians who left the country (because of PSD allegedly) to work abroad has been used successfully in the past (the second round of the 2014 presidential election won by Klaus Werner Iohannis in front of Victor Ponta), so that social movement *entrepreneurs* again resorted to this method of legitimation and mobilization. On August 10, 2018, the 'big' rally of the Diaspora in Victoria Square, on the same anti-corruption issues, turned into a violent fight of 'ultras' (football hooligans) who arrived in the Square, with the Gendarmerie. The violence was used by the protesters to self-victimize.

And once again, President Iohannis chose to display a show of solidarity and unity with the 'victims', condemning the 'violence' of the gendarmes. It has happened quite rarely for the head of a state to be against the action of the representatives of the 'authority' of that state, but in this case the narrative must be deciphered in an eminently political key. Iohannis opposed, in fact, the PSD Government, thus seeking to emphasize strong unity with the people.

The concept of 'diaspora' is based, among other things, on an idealized collective memory and/or a myth of the motherland (Cohen 2008), which led to the situation where the appeal to the diaspora by the protesters, introduced another myth in the meaning framing, that of the 'Golden Age', a period of 'old times', in which there was no PSD, when Romanians did not have to leave Romania because of the poverty and corruption of the rulers. Of course, such a projection was far from the reality of the facts, but this detail was too little taken into account in a production of meaning that operated with desired, and favorable, frameworks, and not necessarily with the true ones. Furthermore, the myth of 'Golden Age' was

present in the construction of the meaning of the #Rezist movement by appealing to the birth era of civic activism in Romania. The 'beautiful and free young people' of 2017 were none other than the 'children of the former *golans (scoundrels)* from the University Square' of 1990.

Concerning all the protests that took place in the University or Victoria Square from 1990 until now, a conspiracy-type rumor has been created, maintained by both sides of the political contest. The theory and myth of the Conspiracy returned obsessively in the national political imaginary, explaining the struggle between Good and Evil. It could not have happened differently in the case of the #Rezist protests from 2017–2019. The conflict between Good and Evil, between the Street and PSD, was consecrated by the use of slogans that, since that moment of protest, have made history in Romanian democracy: "By night, like the thieves", "Let DNA come and take you" (DNA, National Anti-corruption Directorate) or "PSD, the red plague".

On one side, the rulers and pro-Government media have always accused internal or external conspiracies of the various forces of 'darkness': president Iohannis, opposition parties, the 'Soros network', international banks and corporations, etc.. Referring to the violence during the Diaspora rally, Liviu Dragnea (PSD President) spoke about a 'failed coup attempt' and about a 'very well-developed paramilitary organization'. On the other side of the 'Conspiracy', the protesters and the political opposition circulated scenarios regarding the hijacking of the protests (Dragnea, PSD). In both cases, the stakes of such a discourse were to delegitimize and demobilize the opposing party.

The 'fight' of the *Street* with PSD and Liviu Dragnea ended with the European Parliamentary elections of May 26, 2019, elections won by the presidential party, PNL. The next day, the PSD leader was imprisoned in the Rahova Penitentiary, being sentenced to 3 years and 6 months in prison in a controversial case regarding the instigation of abuse of office.

The #Rezist movement was the longest series of protests in the post-communist history of Romania. Following the political contention, it was possible to block or overturn certain decisions of the Government, but it did not have a direct effect on the government configuration, it did not produce any political upheaval. The political changes within the government were due to party calculations and interests, being caused by the PSD leadership's agenda. In October 2019, PSD lost the government but the success of the Opposition's censorship motion against Prime Minister Viorica Dăncilă (PSD) cannot be linked neither to the #Rezist movement, but only to the change of the parliamentary majority and the preparation of the December 2019 presidential election campaign.

The protest of free Romanians 2020–2021

During the COVID–19 pandemic, starting with the first half of 2020, the political contention has diminished as a result of the government's restrictive measures. However, the number of these movements and their intensity began to increase again during 2021, a trend that could also be observed globally (Bethke–Wolf 2020; Pleyers 2021; Herbert–Marquette 2021).

In the name of the fight against the new coronavirus, the liberal Government in Bucharest introduced and maintained[10] measures that have limited citizens' rights and freedoms, including those on organizing rallies and demonstrations against the rulers. Through these limitations, the successive PNL Governments between November 2019 and November 2021 managed to create an image of failed democracy: the suspension of the normal functioning of democratic life, aroused the dissatisfaction and indignation of the population. There have been countless criticisms of the illegality of the decisions adopted by the Government, as well as other normative acts issued by ministries, and many actions have been brought in court to overturn these normative acts. Challenging these controversial decisions occurred not only in the courtrooms, but also in the Street.

Those who decided to take to the streets to protest, despite all the health and/or legal risks (fines), were extremely dissatisfied with the *status quo* and the Government's response to the health crisis. The themes of the protests were the 'abuses', 'violations of the Constitution and of fundamental rights and freedoms', 'discrimination and segregation of Romanians' and 'introduction of the green certificate'. Frustration was exacerbated during 2021 and by the way in which the governments understood to carry out the anti-COVID vaccination campaign, especially by the constraints and conditions imposed for obtaining the so-called European Green Certificate.

In 2020, with the change of the themes of the political contestation, the actors of the protests also changed. The very active 'civil society' between 2017 and 2019, against the social democratic governments, vanished from the political contention scene during the pandemic. The network of non-governmental organizations in the USR–PNL area of influence has been replaced by other organizations and other civic *entrepreneurs.*

Obviously, just like the previous political contention, the ones from 2020 were exploited electorally and politically by the Opposition parties,[11] but they also led, for the first time, to the emergence of new political actors in the mainstream, such as AUR (The Alliance for the Unification of the Romanians).

Only at the end of November 2021, dozens of NGOs, former 'heroes' of the Street from 2017–2019, together with very vocal public 'personalities' in the past, were reactivated in the public space as a result of the governmental alliance concluded between PNL, PSD and UDMR. Under the title 'Let's not abandon Romania', they launched a manifesto[12] in which they accused 'those who hold the power in the State' of orchestrating a *'political mineriad'* in recent months. However, as

the leaders of the civil society – freshly re-joining the arena, explained, *"PNL and Iohannis' alliance with PSD, even if it gave birth to 'disgust' was not a reason for protest and it will be settled strictly by vote, not in the street"*.[13]

The leaders of the 'street' between 2020 and 2021 were mainly either leaders or supporters of the AUR (Alliance for the Unification of Romanians) party, or the satellite non-governmental organizations of this party. The conservative-nationalist ideology of these groups has also left its mark on the forms of manifestation of the political contestation of this period. The result was an interweaving of symbols and myths from the repertoire of the historical-nationalist imaginary with images and self-representations of liberal origin: The 'fighters' for freedom and against the establishment of authoritarianism and the 'sanitary dictatorship' were the patriotic Romanians and Christians, who 'wearing their traditional attire' defended their 'Rights and Freedom, won with the blood of our forefathers'.

Inside the 'story' of the Street of 2020–2021 all four fundamental political myths were found in symbiosis. The collective 'saviors' of democracy in Romania were this time the 'free Romanians', who, under the slogan 'United, we save all Romania' reaffirmed both their national identity and unity with the people.

By appealing to nationalist discourse and historical symbols or organization protests exactly on the Romanian National Day – December 1st the 'Golden Age' and 'unity' could not be identified in other times than the Great National Assembly from Alba Iulia back in 1918. The chosen moment had a double meaning: on the one hand, according to official historiography, it represented the apogee of the national struggle of all Romanians, leading to the unification of the country following WWI, on the other hand, that period of history was good enough to be presented as the 'good old days',[14] when Romanians lived without sanitary restrictions and there were no instruments of Evil, such as protective masks, vaccine, 'green' certificate, etc.

The 'Conspiracy' presented by these 'free Romanians' gathered under the national flag could only have been against the rulers who abused the power they acquired in the Romanian State. Seen as foreigners of servants of foreign interests, not coincidentally, the main representatives of Evil bore foreign names to the 'Romanian people': Klaus Werner Iohannis (the President) and Raed Arafat (Head of the Department for Emergency Situations, the same person whom the protesters supported in 2012, against former president Basescu!). The gallery of 'conspirators' and 'enemies' of the Romanian people was completed by the leaders of the ruling party, PNL, by the European Union, the World Health Organization, Big Pharma, etc.

The meaning built by the Government(s) during the pandemic started from the same myth of the Savior: The PNL governments and president Iohannis were the heroes who fought for the health and for the life of all Romanians, showing responsibility even when they had to take unpopular measures. They struggled not only with an *invisible virus*, but also with the 'conspiracy' of those with retrograde mentalities who did not accept the 'measures' (by which they had to be saved) and remained ungrateful for the 'good' that was done to them. The failure of the vacci-

nation campaign (Romania being last in the EU in terms of vaccination rate)[15] was attributed to the resistance of the 'enemy': uneducated extremists and functional illiterates who made Romania *'the shame of Europe'*. The technique of *division* was applied again to create legitimacy and give meaning to the official narrative. In 2021, as in 2017, 2012 or 1990, Romanians were divided again into Good and Evil. Both have been reluctant to adopt *democratic attitudes and behaviors* such as dialogue, consultation, tolerance or consensus.

The Golden Age identified by the targets of political contestation (*the authorities*) was the 'time of normalcy' before the pandemic. Returning to 'normal' was the favorite theme of the rulers, but also of the Street. However, the two sides proposed completely opposite ways to achieve this desired state: the Government insisted on respecting the new rules and vaccinating the population as widely as possible, while opponents 'fought' against compulsory vaccination and for the removal of restrictions.

Despite the accumulation of frustrations in society related to the COVID–19 pandemic, the street protests in Romania have been, at least until this date (30 November 2021), free of violence. This represents a significant difference both from the protests of the past in Romania, but also from similar political protests in other countries of the region, or the world. At the same time, the political contention in the pandemic has remained without results for the time being.

Today, December 2021, Romania is facing the overlap of at least three major crises:[16] the 'health crisis', with the pandemic far from being under control; the 'energy crisis' with all its implications, from difficulties in supplying energy to industry, to cost-effective tariffs, to ensuring affordable prices for household consumers; and the 'economic crisis' manifested by the lack of labor in key areas, rising inflation and soaring prices, the uncontrolled increase in public debt, but also the difficulties encountered by entire sectors of industry. After the change of the governmental structure, following the negotiations between the two main parties in the Romanian Parliament (PSD and PNL), taking into account the reactivation of anti-PSD NGOs, as well as the continuation of the 'free Romanians' protests, in the context of the three aforementioned crises, an intensification of the political contestation is expected. Of course, such an evolution will depend, first of all, on the response of the new Government from Bucharest (PNL, PSD, UDMR and the Parliamentary Group of National Minorities) to the expectations of the *demos*.

Conclusions: The 'Street' and democratic change

By means of this paper, we have tried to present the ways in which political myths have influenced the collective imaginary in the building of meaning, ensuring motivation, crystallizing identities, and providing legitimacy, but also in determining the mobilization and action of the 'Street'.

The relationship between protest participation and political contentions with these frames of meaning has been ambivalent. The political mythology and the frames of interpretation that they fed, manipulated and calibrated the movements, while on the other hand, the dynamics of these social movements determined the recalibration and continuous recreation of the frames, so that the strategic objectives were best served. They have created the narrative and the 'story' based on which Romanians took to the streets and remained there to 'fight' with the rulers and to correct the dysfunctions in the relationship of representation, characteristic of an insufficiently consolidated democracy.

Both the University Square from 1990–1991, and the one from 2012, but also the subsequent movements from 2015, 2017–2019 and 2020–2021 were related to the failure of political representation and of political system, being oriented towards the lack of real democracy, corruption and other grievances, real or just perceived/imagined. In the end, the myths and stories of the 'Street' managed to fuel the emotion of the *demos*, transforming people from passive spectators into active citizens, determined to bring about a change in democracy.

While analyzing the protest participation in Romania, some observers have identified a form of semi-direct democracy, a "*sui generis form of organization and leadership of the Romanian society – a representative democracy, in which power continues to belong to political parties, but whose corrections are due to the direct action of the citizens*" (Radu–Buti 2019: 278–279). In other words, the protests of the demos would, in fact, be the 'return to the people' outside the institution of the vote and the mechanisms of representative democracy.

Other commentators tended to give a less luminous interpretation of street democracy and considered it a *'brothel for utopia'* The University Square in particular, and by extension any other public square where the demos is manifested, would be nothing but the space where *"the demonstrators always lose, in which the demonstrations are never successful"* (Pătrașcu 2012). The 'Street' would be the space of the failed revolt, from 1990 until today, the place where people gather, shout, and go home. *"The University Square seems a kind of brothel of the dissatisfied, of the revolutionaries and of the utopians. Are you in the mood for a revolution? Go to University Square and your mood will pass! Here you come and 'discharge yourself' […] Behind the seductive appearance of the University Square is the memory of a disastrous defeat that the demonstrators suffered completely in front of the Power. The fear associated with this defeat, but also the history of much smaller demonstrations organized here, without any consequences for political life, undermines from the very beginning any chance of success of the demonstrations in this area"* (Pătrașcu 2012).

But is it so? Did all the manifestations of the demos remain without 'any consequences' for democratic life? Removing the discursive veil, and after decanting the different narratives – meant to legitimize, explain (create meaning), mobilize and determine action – the fundamental question is: after over 30 years of political contention what has really changed in Romanian democracy and how much did

protests, and contention influence the form of democracy today? Did they manage to produce 'consequences' and profound changes at systemic level, or did they just limit themselves to occasional changes that did not affect the 'essence' of the system?

From a study that included 2,809 protests held during 15 years in 101 countries (including Romania) we find that *"the most prevalent demand of protesters around the world in the period 2006–2020 was for real democracy"* (Ortiz–Burke–Berrada–Cortes 2021: 3). Therefore, representative democracy continues to disappoint a significant part of the world's population, and the cycles of protest are constantly resumed because there is a need for the street to 'fine tune' the democracy. But the effectiveness of this adjustment is also beginning to raise some questions.

From 1990 to 2021, the Romanian democracy underwent obvious, indisputable changes, a part of those being determined directly or indirectly by the political contestation. At the same time, however, the representative democracy in Romania was, in fact, kept within the same parameters. No political contention discussed in the previous pages can be classified as a social movement that has led to systemic change. Apart from the 'liberalization' of political competition and the emergence of some challengers, *"if the reference is the de-structuring of the political establishment, the resetting of the Romanian representative democracy, then we will have to note the failure of protest actions"* (Radu–Buti 2019: 207).

Further research will be able to fully clarify how much or how little 'real democracy' was generated by the protests of the demos and how systemic the changes were. Using the symbolic language of political myths, we now limit ourselves only to the observation that the 'Street' wanted blood, and the system, for the purpose of self-preservation, managed in one form or another to offer the ritual sacrifice that cooled the thirst of the demos. Presidents, prime ministers, governments, all came and went. The 'pawns', the 'horses' or the 'bishops' were sacrificed, sometimes even the 'kings' or 'queens' just because the chessboard needed to stay intact. The Street 'saved' Romanian democracy and defeated villains. But what good is it? The 'fight' seems a Sisyphean one: the place of yesterday's villains was taken by other villains, and the dysfunctions continued. The demonized Dragnea ended up in prison, but his 'comrades' are, today, in power again, together with their former opponents.

This is why citizens lose confidence in the rulers and the political class. But they continue to perpetuate this system even if it is a dysfunctional one, for lack of an alternative. Liberal representative democracy cannot be replaced because all the 'models' experienced in the past have been much more harmful. "Democracy is the worst form of government except for all the other forms tried over time", said Sir Winston Churchill. At the same time, the same Churchill urged us to fight for 'noble causes' and to make this world and, implicitly, this troubled democracy, a better place to live.

In the new pandemic context, and of the crisis we are in, the discussion on 'real democracy' and the nature of the change produced by the 'Street' and by political

contention becomes even more relevant. Crises are the most revealing test for assessing the 'quality' of democracy and the stability of the political system.

In a totalitarian-authoritarian state, violent street movements are perhaps the only chance to change the regime. In a consolidated democratic state, however, the 'Street' should not even appear anymore, the mechanisms of representative democracy should be sufficient to resolve the demands of the demos. Today's democracy, however, seems to have failed in its role, as evidenced by the many street protests, globally, against the rulers and the measures imposed by them. During the 'sanitary terror' (Agamben 2020), the representatives elected or appointed by the *demos* decided that the 'power' (kratos) of the *demos* must be limited, of course, to the good and the health of the *demos.*[17] Democracy has been suspended for the noble purpose of protecting the health and life of the people! Under the new conditions, peaceful change has become almost impossible.

Imagining under what new features despotism could appear in a democra-tic world, Alexis de Tocqueville foresaw in 1831 *"a huge and tutelary power", an "absolute, detailed, accurate, prudent and gentle power [...]. It works with a loving heart for their happiness; ensures their security, provides and guarantees their needs, facilitates their obtaining of pleasures, conducts their main affairs, directs their activity, regulates their wills, divides their inheritances; why can't it relieve them entirely of the anxiety of thinking and the difficulty of living? […] After thus grasping, one by one, each individual in his strong hands, after shaping him to his liking, the sovereign extends his arms over the whole of society; he covers its surface with a network of innumerable small complicated, meticulous and uniform rules, through which the most original spirits and the most vigorous souls cannot slip to rise above the crowd, he does not crush the will, but weakens it, tames it and directs it; rarely calling to action, but constantly opposed to any action; he does not destroy what exists, but prevents the appearance of the new; he does not tyrannize, but embarrasses, constrains, irritates, suffocates, emboldens, and ultimately reduces each nation to a flock of timid and hardworking flock of animals whose pastor is the government"* (Tocqueville 2017: 813–814).

The legitimate question of today's *demos*, 190 years after Tocqueville's gloomy prediction, is whether we have already reached the point where we are witnessing the establishment of this absolute gentle power? At the same time, do we know what democracy really is or did we just think we knew? And now, amid the crisis, we have realized that we are no longer so sure of what we know.

"If the powers that govern the world have decided not to miss the pretext of a pandemic – it doesn't matter yet whether true or simulated – to fundamentally transform the paradigms of governing people and things, it means that those models were, according to them, in a gradual, inexorable decline, no longer adequate to the new requirements" (Agamben 2020: 5). The Italian author calls 'biosecurity' the new governing device that resulted from *"the fusion of the new religion of health with the state's power, and its characteristics of exception"* (Agamben 2020: 7). Others consider democracy just an ideal, a myth or a utopia (Boia 2020).

Its materialization is always far from the ideal condition. 'Real democracy' is just a pale reflection of the imagined one. Thus, it would be more correct to call it *"social plutocracy, with a social touch"* (Boia 2020), in which democracy is in a permanent interaction with wealth and power, trying to both temper and to control them.

In a world-famous series,[18] an exiled princess turned into a warrior, trying not only to stop the wheel, but 'to break the wheel'. The character tried to destroy a feudal system in which the people were ruled by lords, and the lords were ruled by kings and queens. Translated into today's democracy 'to break the wheel' would mean reforming the institutional system and democracy. It would mean not only changing the leaders but improving the whole system to give the *demos* 'real democracy'.

In the narrative of the fiction[19] the revolutionary heroine finally managed to 'break the wheel' but at the cost of transforming herself into a villain, even. In our democracies, 'breaking the wheel' would require more than street protests and political contention. They can change governments, ministers, presidents or kings and queens, that is, they can bring a rotation of leaders[20] and political elites (they can spin the wheel), but they could not and will not be able to bring about change that would transform a system considered as being dysfunctional, a system that always causes disappointments, disappointments that lead to political contention, contention that leads to a change of leadership and to new disappointments and new contestations and so on. Progress was made, but not always. There were times, when the 'rotation of the staff' brought regress.[21]

Albert Einstein once said it is madness 'to do the same thing over and over again, but to expect different results.' In the case of the 'Street', old problems have found old solutions, so that the long-awaited change has been delayed. As in a vicious circle, the dysfunctions of democracy were perpetuated and generated new and new manifestations of protest participation and political contention. To some extent, this apparent vicious circle is related to the normality of democracy. Democracy is not a perfect system; it is a struggle that must be fought every day. *"It is a delicate ecosystem of mutual control and balance of power, which needs to be maintained and fed permanently"* (Shafak 2020: 49).

It is very legitimate to ask for a lot of democracy, but we should not, however, ask too much of it. The same goes for contentious politics and 'Street' protests. These are normal and natural manifestations for a democracy but let us not ask them for what they cannot provide. The *demos* cannot 'break the wheel' of democracy. If it does, it would be a new 'revolution'. But the revolution is not the solution to the problems of our democracy in Romania. It is what we do after that!

30. 11. 2021.

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Notes

[1] As the writer Mircea Dinescu, one of the leaders of the December 1989 Revolution, put it, *"with the great majority of the population, the University Square was not successful"*. An opinion poll (IRSOP, July 1990) published a month after the *mineriad* showed that 76% of Romanians agreed with the evacuation of University Square occupants by the police, and 66% agreed with the call to the population to come to the aid of the authorities, to which only the miners responded. 55% of Romanians agreed to bring in miners, while 27% approved the repression of the University Square movement by miners, including the destruction of opposition parties headquarters and the vandalism of the Bucharest University.

[2] The last two *Mineriads* took place in early 1999 (January 4–22 and February 15–17). In January 1999, using force, the miners managed to (temporarily) prevent the reform of the mining sector. President Emil Constantinescu was forced to establish a state of emergency for the first time in the post-communist history of Romania, this decision being necessary to stop the miners heading back to Bucharest again. The conflict ended following negotiations with CDR Government representatives at Cozia Monastery. The political character of this movement was manifested by the support of the miners by PRM and PSM, two opposition parties. In the sixth *Mineriad* operation, in February 1999, the miners set off for Bucharest (only 2,000–3,000, compared to 15–20,000 in January) to protest against the decision of the Supreme Court of Justice to sentence the leader Miron Cosma to 18 years of imprisonment for the *Mineriad* of 1991. They were forcibly stopped by the Gendarmerie, the actions of the miners' groups meeting the constituent

elements of the crimes of violent outrage, outrage against morals and disturbing public order. Miron Cosma was arrested and imprisoned.

[3] A strange – to say the least, manifestation of 'unity' and solidarity manifested after the end of the conflict and the signing of a protocol between Ion Iliescu and Miron Cosma, the leader of the miners. A group of miners entered the PNȚCD Congress that was taking place that day at the National Theater, and a representative of the miners took the floor, promising the audience that they would return to the Jiu Valley (the main mining area in Romania) for a general mobilization to bring down those from Government and the *communist president*. The miners and party activists chanted 'Down with Iliescu' and 'Unity' together, proof that they overcame the violence of June 14, 1990, when the miners also assaulted and devastated the PNTCD headquarters. *"The reconciliation between the party activists and the miners is applauded and accompanied by effusions. A fundraising is even made to raise the money needed to feed the miners"* (Ştefănescu 2011).

[4] According to an opinion poll conducted between January 19 and 21, 2012 by Avangarde, 87% of the population totally or partially agreed with the protests, and 50% would have been willing to participate, "if such a protest had taken place next Sunday". Traian Băsescu (27%) and the PDL government (23%) were considered guilty of the protests.

[5] Vintilă Mihăilescu and Cătălin Augustin Stoica even titled their collective volume in which they analyzed the protests of 2012: "The winter of our discontent..."

[6] In 2012, USL used the massive erosion of presidential popularity to validate itself as an alternative to the PDL Government. Coming to power following popular protests, PSD and PNL immediately launched the procedure of suspending the president. Although, from a tactical point of view, the referendum was a failure, the result being invalidated by the Constitutional Court for not reaching the minimum participation threshold, USL still managed to capitalize electorally on the frustrations of the anti-Basescu electorate. After the parliamentary elections in the autumn of the same year, USL held a two-thirds majority in Parliament, a post-December premiere, USL being the political alliance with the largest parliamentary majority, even above the FSN in the 1990s.

[7] *"All the protests, starting with 2013, had as a source of mobilization and information, among others, the Facebook page 'United We Are Saving', which was created on the occasion of the demonstrations for Roșia Montană"* (Mărgărit 2016: 251).

[8] The hashtag 'Rezist' (I resist), taken from the practice of anti-Trump and pro-LGBT protests in the United States, was adapted to the Romanian context and became the hallmark of political contestation, through which the Street showed its determination to fight to the end.

[9] The Referendum was organized only three years later, in May 2019. Overlapping with the elections for the European Parliament, the Referendum marked the victory of Iohannis (86% of the participants in the popular consultation being in favor of *"banning amnesty and pardon for corruption offenses"* and *"banning the Government from adopting emergency ordinances in the field of crimes and offenses, of the judicial organization, and with the extension of the right of the Government to appeal the ordinances directly to the Constitutional Court")*. At the same time, the presidential party, PNL managed to win the European elections by 27% in front of PSD which obtained only 22%.

[10] Starting with March 16, 2020, the state of emergency was established for two months, and from May 18, 2020, the state of alert was established on the entire territory of Romania, by Government's Decision no. 394/2020, which was adopted under Law no. 55/2020. Subsequently, every 30 days, new Government decisions were adopted by which the state of alert was extend-

ed, successively by 30 days. Currently, (November 2021) H.G. no. 1183/2021, by which the state of alert was extended throughout the country by 30 days, starting with November 9, 2021, is applying.

[11] The December 2020 General Elections were won by the main Opposition party, PSD (29%), but the surprise of the elections was the AUR party, a newly formed conservative-nationalist party whom, to everyone's surprise, managed to join the Parliament, with a score of 9%, becoming the fourth largest party in the Parliament. To the surprise of many observers, this virtually unknown party received massive votes from the Diaspora, a constituency supposedly supporting USR and, to a lesser degree, PNL.

[12] "Just like before, you brought to power a government that is, in fact, a restoration. Just like then, you crushed what was built in weeks and months (and years, this time) of clean protests demanding a European destiny for Romania. Just like then, you are about to destroy exactly the essential fuel of a nation: hope, the one that kept us in the streets for hundreds of days in a row, the one that allowed us to believe in European Romania."
https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-25202106-nu-abandonam-romania-manifest-semnat-zeci-organizatii-civice-personalitati-publice-ati-facut-mineriada-politica-ati-adus-putere-guvern-care-fapt-restauratie.htm

[13] A critical perspective on the 'civil society' in Romania that 'claimed its right to lead in democracy for the last 32 years' can be found in a recent op-ed by publicist Patrick Andre de Hillerin: *"Because, in fact, the civil society is us, the many. But, it is not known why and how, a finite number of associations took ownership of the generic name of civil society. They are the same, every time […] The civil society does not mean a few associations and twenty or thirty actors. Civil society is, in fact, the set of citizens with or without the right to vote and who are not part of state structures, are not dignitaries, elected, civil servants. Trade unions are part of civil society, the press is part of civil society, all kinds of people we love or not, are part of the civil society. But not in Romania. No, in Romania, civil society is a closed circle that includes several associations and a few citizens who are conveniently reactive at the right times. Basically, a maximum of 1,000 people breathed in the air that we would all be allowed to breathe. Absolutely everyone. Romania's 'civil society' is made up, for decades, of several associations, self-proposed as representative, and a few dozen people, always the same, who activate and sign, in case of great danger"* (Catavencii.ro, 29. 11. 2021.). https://www.catavencii.ro/editorial/ori-suntem-civili-ori-nu-mai-suntem/

[14] For the 'saviors', neither now, nor in previous cases, it did not matter that reality did not overlap with the narrative. A photo published on the social media account of the official vaccination campaign (RO Vaccinare), with a vaccination certificate issued in 1863 in 'Țerra Românesâ' (Wallachia, before the creation of Great Romania in 1918) shows, that even in 'the good old times', vaccination was an already used practice.
https://bihornews.ro/foto-cum-arata-o-adeverinta-de-vaccinare-in-urma-cu-150-de-ani/

[15] https://vaccinetracker.ecdc.europa.eu/

[16] Marga Andrei in Cotidianul.ro   https://www.cotidianul.ro/crizele-curente/

[17] From the point of view of the legislation in force today, in Romania, in order to be able to protest against vaccination, a citizen must have a green COVID–19 certificate, a certificate that is granted only to people who have been vaccinated or who have gone through the disease. Therefore, only vaccinated people can protest (legally) against the vaccine. Healthy people, but who do not have the green certificate, cannot protest in the street and can only show their 'power' illegally because they do not have proof that they are healthy / immunized. It is not the absurdity

of democracy, it is only the victory of Public Health over Democracy.

[18] Game of Thrones (HBO).

[19] For a historical and political interpretation of the TV series, see Răileanu–Mihaela (2019).

[20] Between December 1989 and November 2021, Romania had no less than 33 prime ministers and several hundred ministers. The current governing coalition has also introduced a new mechanism: the rotation of prime ministers, which means that in 2023, we will also count the 34th prime minister. If the coalition holds until then.

[21] Professor Andrei Marga notes that in addition to the health, energy and economic crisis facing contemporary society, we are also confronting two other crises: 'the crisis of ideas' and 'the crisis of leadership'.

Photo/Gábor Csanádi

THE EFFECT OF DEMOCRATIC INSTRUMENTS BETWEEN CIVIL SOCIETY EXPECTATIONS AND POLITICAL INTENTIONS: REFERENDUMS IN ROMANIA AFTER 1989

Felix Angel Popescu–Laurențiu Petrila

Introduction

The referendum is the process of directly consulting the citizens of a country on a text of law of particular importance or on a situation of national importance (Blockmans et al. 2020). It is a form of direct democracy, in contrast to representative democracy (Blokker 2010).

As a generally accepted legislative procedure, in the case of a referendum, the consultation of citizens is done by direct vote, with only two options on the ballot papers, 'yes' or 'no'. The result of the referendum is expressed by counting all the valid votes cast and publishing the final result. In order to determine the final result, a majority of referendums, with notable exceptions requiring a special law mentioning the exception, require only a simple majority (more than half of the total valid votes cast) (Marinescu 2016). The result is either a 'yes' in favor of the situation, plan, project or law or a 'no'.

The word 'referendum' refers to the practice of submitting to popular approval (Verdinas 2018), by direct vote, a legislative measure initiated by the legitimate authorities of a state or region, in a free and fair organized democratic process. The question addressed to the citizens, which is the subject of the vote in the referendum, is formulated by the authorities; the referendum is a popular vote initiated and organized 'from top to bottom' (Apostu 2018).

According to the law (3/2000): "The national referendum is the form and means of direct consultation and expression of the sovereign will of the Romanian people regarding: revision of the Constitution; the dismissal of the President of Romania;

issues of national interest" (Varga 2015). The difference between the two types of referendum emerged after the 2009 referendum, after which the dismissal of the President of Romania or the revision of the Constitution is a decision-making referendum, while issues of national interest are a consultative referendum (Simion 2019).

In this article the authors have proposed as case studies only two referendums of national interest, organized after 1989. Even if it is a consultative referendum (but not an optional one), the state institutions have the obligation to translate in the legislation or in the Constitution, as the case may be, the will of the people, holder of its sovereignty.

Any other legal provision cannot stop someone, for example the President of Romania, from putting into practice the will of the people expressed by referendum, equal in legal value (Varga 2015) to the provisions of the Constitution.

Legal considerations regarding the consultative referendum in Romania

According to Law 3/2000 on the organization and conduct of the referendum, Article 11, the President of Romania, after consulting the Parliament, may ask the people to express their will by referendum, on issues of national interest.

The issues that are subject to the referendum and the date of its holding are established by the President of Romania, by decree. The Parliament's point of view on the referendum initiated by the President of Romania is to be expressed, by a decision adopted in the joint sitting of the two Chambers, with the vote of the majority of deputies and senators present, within 20 calendar days from the President's request (Marinescu 2016).

If the Parliament does not send its point of view within the established term of 20 days, the President of Romania issues the decree regarding the organization of the referendum after the expiration of this term, the constitutional procedure of consulting the Parliament being considered fulfilled. The date of the national referendum is made public through the *Official Gazette of Romania*, Part I, and through the press, radio and television (Ianoș 2011).

Initially, in the legislation, more precisely Article 12 of the Referendum Law, adopted in 2000 and amended in 2003, it was specified that the President may convene a referendum on issues of national interest (Apostu 2018). The law also established the topics of national interest: the adoption of measures on the reform and economic strategy of the country, the adoption of special policy decisions on the general regime of public and private property, the organization of local public administration, territory, and the general regime on local autonomy, the general organization of education, the structure of the national defense system, the organization of the army, the participation of the armed forces in some international operations, the conclusion, signing or ratification of international acts, Romania's integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures and the cult regime (Iancu 2009).

The Constitutional Court of Romania ruled in 2006 that the head of state was the only one who could decide on the issues for public consultation, and that Parliament could not interfere, censoring his decision (Bărbățeanu 2018). The court declared unconstitutional the article in the Referendum Law that listed the situations and topics considered of national interest on which the president may request. In motivating the decision, the court judges explained that the president is the only one who can decide the issues of national interest, based on which the head of state can request a referendum according to the Constitution. They pointed out that the setting of themes is an 'exclusive right' (Bărbățeanu 2018) of the president, as stated in the Constitution. Thus, including the consultation of the Parliament on the subject of the referendum – request of the Constitution in case of popular consultation – can only have an advisory role, and the Legislature cannot block the approach.

The results of the referendums organized for the dismissal of the President and the revision of the Constitution are binding. The referendum launched by the President to consult the public on an issue of national interest is a consultative one, and its effects are indirect.

The indirect effect is explained by the Constitutional Court of Romania as appearing when the result "requires the intervention of other bodies, most often the legislative ones, in order to implement the will expressed by the electorate" (Bărbățeanu 2018). However, there is no deadline by which the results must be put into practice, so a decision can be postponed indefinitely, as was the case with the 300-member parliamentary referendum.

The government establishes by decision the calendar program for carrying out the necessary actions for the referendum. The executive must decide the budget and expenses necessary for the organization and conduct of the election, the model of the ballot paper, the conditions for printing, managing and using them, but also the measures to be taken by central and local public authorities for the proper organization and conduct of the election (Iancu 2009).

The operations for conducting the referendum take place in the constituencies and at the polling stations, organized according to the provisions of Law no. 35/2008 (Marinescu 2016), with the subsequent amendments and completions, based on the copies of the permanent electoral lists and of the other electoral lists provided by law.

A citizen who, on the day of the national referendum, is in a locality other than the one in which he is registered in the electoral list may exercise his right to vote in that locality, at any polling station, and shall be registered in an additional list (Șuteu 2019) by the chairman of the polling station, on the basis of the identity document or the certificate which takes the place of the identity document.

In case of organizing a national referendum, constituency electoral bureaus are set up only at county level and at the level of Bucharest municipality, electoral bureau for polling stations organized outside the country, as well as sectoral electoral offices of Bucharest municipality.

The referendum campaign begins on the date of the public announcement of the date of the referendum. In the referendum campaign, political parties and citizens have the right to express their opinions freely and without any discrimination, through rallies, public gatherings and the media (Ianoș 2011). The means used in the referendum campaign must not contravene the rule of law. As with any type of election, polling stations open at 7.00 and close at 23.00 (Marinescu 2016). Citizens are called to vote YES or NO on the issue submitted to the referendum by the President of Romania. The results, centralized at the national level by the Central Electoral Bureau, including the number of valid votes cast for each answer on the ballot paper and the number of null votes, shall be submitted to the Constitutional Court of Romania (Bărbățeanu 2018) with military security within 24 hours of the end of centralization.

The Constitutional Court of Romania presents a report to the Parliament on the observance of the procedure for organizing and conducting the national referendum and confirms its results. The referendum is valid if at least 30% of the persons registered in the permanent electoral lists participate in it, and not a threshold of 50%, attendance, as was initially provided in the legislation (Varga 2015). In addition, the result of the referendum is validated if the validly expressed options represent at least 25% of those registered in the permanent electoral lists (Simion 2019).

Case studies: consultative referendums organized in Romania after 1989

Over time, there was created an opposition between the decisional referendum (mandatory) vs. the consultative (optional, non-binding). Both types of referendums are mandatory, except that there are no tools needed to force state institutions to implement the outcome of a consultative referendum. It was based on good faith and understanding of the basic fact that in a democracy the will of the people cannot be ignored (Varga 2015).

All those who respect the popular will cannot be sanctioned by anyone, even if they violate a certain legal provision, which is abrogated, implicitly or explicitly, by the result of a referendum. Because the result of a popular referendum has the force and legitimacy of an article of the Constitution (Apostu 2018).

Referendum to amend Article 48 of the Romanian Constitution 2018

A referendum to amend the Romanian Constitution took place on October 6 and 7, 2018. The initiative was based on a citizens' initiative launched by the Coalition for the Family at the end of 2015. The initiative gathered the number of signatures needed to initiate a draft constitutional law and was actively supported by the Orthodox Church and the Roman Catholic Church (Stănescu 2020).

The initiative aimed at replacing the phrase 'between spouses' in art. 48, para. (1) of the Constitution with a more restrictive one, 'between a man and a woman' (BBC News 2018). According to the explanatory memorandum in the draft law, it aims to remove any ambiguity that the use of the term 'spouse' (...) could bring in shaping the notion of 'family', of the relationship between 'family' and the fundamental right of a man and a woman to marry and to start a family (Racu et al. 2020). Marriage is already regulated in Article 277 of the Civil Code, which prohibits other forms of cohabitation equivalent to it (same-sex marriages and civil partnerships) (Purcaru 2018).

The referendum aimed at a constitutional ban on same-sex marriage, as the Civil Code could be changed without consulting the population (Norocel et al. 2021). Human rights organizations have seen this initiative as a flagrant restriction on the rights of the LGBT minority (Gherghina et al. 2020b).

The Constitutional Court of Romania, however, endorsed the proposed amendment on July 20, 2016, noting that it does not interfere with any individual right. The revision proposal was also positively endorsed by the Chamber of Deputies on March 27, 2017, but the organization of the referendum was postponed after, in September 2017, 38 National Liberal Party and Save Romania Union senators attacked the new form of the Constitutional Court of Romania referendum law, which subsequently rejected the complaint.

On September 11, 2018, the Senate, as a decision-making body, adopted the proposal to revise the Constitution with 107 votes in favor, 13 votes against and seven abstentions. The question for the voters was: 'Do you agree with the Law on the Revision of the Romanian Constitution in the form adopted by the Parliament?' A question to which they had to answer 'yes' or 'no'. Prior to the December 2016 elections, the Coalition for the Family concluded a collaboration agreement with the Social Democrat Party, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe and National Liberal Party by which the three parties promised to support the revision of art. 48 (1) of the Romanian Constitution, which defines the notion of 'family' (Dima 2019).

The referendum failed because the validation threshold was not reached. According to the Central Electoral Bureau, 21,1% of Romanians with the right to vote went to the polls in the two days dedicated to the consultation (Norocel 2021). The referendum of 6 and 7 October thus recorded the lowest turnout since 1990 (Euronews 2018).

Romania is one of the European countries that does not grant any legal recognition to same-sex couples. In comparison, 13 European countries offer same-sex marriage. Other Eastern European countries, such as Bulgaria, Latvia, Moldova, Montenegro, Poland, Serbia, Ukraine, Croatia, Macedonia, Slovakia and Hungary, have constitutionally restricted marriages to persons of the opposite sex (BBC News 2018). Globally, same-sex marriages are allowed in 25 countries, and in Mexico only in some states (Amnesty International 2018).

Referendum on justice 2019

A consultative referendum on justice took place on May 26, 2019, simultaneously with the elections for the European Parliament, at the initiative of the President of Romania, Klaus Iohannis. The referendum was validated in the context in which 41,28% of the Romanians with the right to vote went to the polls (Euractiv 2018).

The idea of a referendum on justice has been under discussion since the winter of 2017, in the context of protests against the controversial Government Emergency Ordinance 13 (RTE 2019). On January 23, 2017, President Klaus Iohannis announced the start of a referendum on pardoning and amending the Criminal Code (Roghină 2019). The next day, Iohannis launched the referendum procedure. However, the procedure was suspended until April 2019, when the President decided to consult Parliament again to 'expand the scope of the referendum' (Selejan 2017). On April 4, Klaus Iohannis announced the topics for the referendum: banning amnesty and pardon for corruption offenses and banning the government from adopting emergency ordinances in the field of crimes, punishments and the organization of the judiciary, linked to the right of other constitutional authorities to report directly to the Romanian Constitutional Court on ordinances (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2019).

On April 16, 2019, the joint legal committees of the Senate and the Chamber of Deputies gave a favorable opinion on the organization of the referendum. On 17 April, the plenary session of the two Chambers approved the President's initiative; the opinion was advisory. The National Liberal Party and the Save Romania Union accused the Social Democrat Party of introducing several recommendations in the report that were not discussed by the legal commissions. Although the Opposition called for the removal of these recommendations, the parliamentarians of the Power disagreed, and the report was adopted in the form desired by them with 263 votes 'for', nine 'against' and one abstention. The report's recommendations state, inter alia, that amnesty and pardon cannot be the subject of a citizens' legislative initiative, and that, according to a CCR decision, the president cannot initiate a legislative referendum.

The government adopted an emergency ordinance on May 8 with measures to hold the referendum. After several criticisms, the Executive withdrew two contested provisions. Initiated by the Permanent Electoral Authority, the draft ordinance amending the referendum law banned public authorities from engaging in the election campaign (Roghină 2019).

The referendum had two questions (Gherghina et al. 2020b):
1. Do you agree with the ban on amnesty and pardon for corruption offenses?
2. Do you agree with the Government's ban on the adoption of emergency ordinances in the field of crime, punishment and the organization of the judiciary, and with the extension of the right to challenge orders directly to the Romanian Constitutional Court?

Voters had to answer 'yes' or 'no' to each of these.

On 30 May 2019, President Klaus Iohannis sent a letter to the chairpersons of the political parties and political parties represented in Parliament inviting them to consult to establish the directions for action needed to implement the referendum. On June 13, 2019, in a ceremony at the Cotroceni Palace, President Klaus Iohannis and the leaders of National Liberal Party, Save Romania Union, PRO Romania Party and Popular Movement Party signed the National Political Agreement for consolidating Romania's European path (Gherghina 2019b).

The signatories undertook to transpose into law the ban on amnesty and pardon for corruption offenses, the ban on the adoption by the Government of emergency ordinances in the field of justice laws, the measures necessary to ensure integrity in public office and the measures necessary to ensure – both in the country and abroad – of the full and effective exercise of the right to vote by Romanian citizens (Bundeszentrale fur politische Bildung 2019).

The agreement also provides for the signatories to support 'deepening integration into the European Union and strengthening the European project, as well as strengthening the transatlantic relationship' (Gherghina 2019a).

Conclusions

Our reflections on the two case studies on referendums in Romania reveal quite an interesting fact of the civil society's will to engage in the democratic process of the country: some themes, like the referendum on justice weight a lot more in the mentalities of voters given the fact that there was an obvious contest of circumstances and an unprecedent political context; other themes, like the ban of gay marriages, have no impact on the mentalities of the voters, because it was not an actuality concept and there is the tendency of people to have a very limited self-awareness about the issue in Romania and across other EU Member States.

Apart of the considerable amount of money spent just with these two referendums analysed in this paper, it could be concluded that the results of referendums in Romania are not translated into concrete actions by the political and administrative system. In fact, despite the fact it should act like a democratic instrument, referendums in Romania could transform collective active citizenship into a more dangerous area – the anti-system movement, which could be justified by the large proportion of absenteeism at the voting polls.

Then, there is the concept of uselessness of the referendums – the decisional culture of the Romanian civil society is not yet recovered after the fall of the communist regime, when people were being submerged by dictatorship and a punishment-oriented state, where laws were strict and the sense of free elections was not present. In fact, the democracy wave that came along with the fall of the communist regime was not quite totally understood: if we analyse only the referendums, it can be deduced that the politicians that have been installed after-

wards have given a false illusion of supporting the civil society by actually giving it the chance to give an opinion on certain issues or on amending the Constitution.

To make it even easier to understand, it can be concluded that referendums in Romania had been rather a 'trojan horse' for the civil society: the critical point that we want to set out here, apart the sense of humour, is that this reality also affected the participation in presidential, parliamentary or local elections, with alarming decreasing numbers of voters every 4–5 years.

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THE EVOLUTION OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN POST-DECEMBER ROMANIA

Ioana Albu–Zoltan Zakota

The Romanian transition and the emergence of civil society

◼ A democratic society is based on values such as freedom of expression, freedom of association and peaceful assembly and the right to participate in public life. They give citizens the opportunity to share their thoughts and create new ones, as well as to join others to assert their rights. The possibility of exercising individual liberty provides a space for informed decision-making regarding the setting of economic and social objectives and the manner in which they are to be achieved. Through these rights, citizens can participate in civic activities and build democratic societies, and their restriction undermines collective progress in our societies. It is no wonder, then, that the pre-1989 National-Communist dictatorship became hostile to all civil initiatives that emerged outside the official framework and sought to stifle them. Therefore, one of the most spectacular phenomena of the post-revolutionary period was the emergence and strengthening of the civil sphere, practically from scratch.

The revolution of 1989 started in Timișoara, on December 16, then spread to the whole country. Its culmination was the rally of December 22, after which the communist leaders, Nicolae Ceaușescu and his wife Elena, left the headquarters of the Central Committee. They were caught and, following a very brief legal process, the two were executed in a military unit in Târgoviște.

The rapid collapse of communism took the Romanian society and its elites completely by surprise, including the nomenclature, the so-called directocracy and the social scientists in the academic sphere. As for the latter, their situation was completely different and much worse compared to other communist countries.

The absence of any open debates about the functioning of the economy and the other social subsystems of the country influenced negatively the economic and social thinking of the post-communist period. Therefore, it can be stated that the shock provoked by the fall of communism in Romania was stronger and more severe than in other Central and Eastern European countries.

The country's economic situation has been devastating. As economist Daniel Dăianu states it in his book *Transformation as a Real Process:* "Pursuing legitimacy in the country and adopting a specific type of economic nationalism, the communist leaders – and especially Ceaușescu – sought to transform Romania into an industrial fortress; forced industrialization, hyper-centralization of decisions, and avoidance of the 'international socialist division of labour' are key concepts in describing the strategy of economic policy throughout the communist leadership. The result is well known: in addition to what defines a command economy, the country has been left with an overly diversified, oversized industry and outdated technologies, large imbalances between economic sectors, plundered agriculture and one of the lowest living standards in Europe. [...] At the end of the '80s, the Romanian economy, the country, the people offered a desolate picture. After more than four decades of forced industrialization, the competitiveness of the economy was at its lowest level within the 'communist league', the imbalances between the sectors and the shortage were growing, the suffering of the people was unimaginable; Romania was far behind neighbouring countries in terms of the institutional premises necessary for the post-communist transition, the psychological preparation of the population for brutal changes and the social basis of reforms to the market economy. In addition, the 'shock therapy' of the 80's [sic] instilled in people the hope of an immediate and substantial improvement in material conditions after the change of leaders (or regime), which led to a high degree of intolerance of new austerity measures. The legacy of communism has made the spectre of economic and institutional setbacks even more intense now that the country has entered the post-communist transition." (Dăianu, 1996, Pp. 111–117)

The impact of ideology on the social sciences has been devastating, with a poisonous academic environment and a humiliating system for professionals. With the exception of a brief period of relaxation between 1966 and 1971, the isolation from the international scientific world became more and more drastic. Reducing or destroying scientific infrastructure has been a means of eliminating any attempt to question official policy. And yet there were attempts to connect autochthonous thought to the international coordinates of scientific life. The presence of foreign ideas and Western bibliographies can be traced in the academic publications of the time, which made these publications an amalgam of realistic data expositions, imbued with politruk jargon, but often based on serious studies, with partial, but very important conclusions, legible between the lines and, finally, the official conclusions expressed ambiguously to ensure the publishing of the material.

The transition from a totalitarian state, in which there are no citizens just mere subjects, to a democratic state, in which the citizen becomes a full-fledged actor in

decision-making, implied the takeover of a system based on multipartyism, elected legislation and alternation of government. Given the fact that in Romania there was no liberal faction, unlike in the case of other socialist states, the transition to democracy did not consist in a negotiation between Ceausescu's old guard and the pro-democracy elements. The change required violence and the death of many citizens, soldiers, students, community members. The consolidation of democracy in Romania required obtaining the acceptance of elites and civil society, reforming and restructuring the economy and putting the institutions of administration and defence under democratic, civil control. The construction of non-existent civil society, political institutions, constitutionalism and the rule of law had to start from scratch. However, these elements presuppose the existence of a certain civic culture. Unfortunately, during the communist dictatorship, civil society was almost non-existent and civic culture completely atrophied. Because of this, after the turn in December 1989, as a reaction to the existing situation, civil organizations began to appear at a fast pace.

Civil society is not a concept devoid of substance, but a living mechanism, made up of citizens who, on their own initiative, associate according to their personal agenda in order to participate in public life. The key to the active participation in the public sphere lies in the purpose of this approach, more precisely in what we may call in making a statement. The motives of the members of the civil society are to bring on the public agenda and to defend the interests of certain groups of the population.

Romanian civil society was born almost immediately after the Revolution. The new government, with many members coming from the former nomenclature, opted for a "human-faced communism" instead of a true Western-style democracy, which started protests in the University Square in Bucharest. These were initiated by students, but were soon joined by representatives of the new NGOs, trade union members, intellectuals, artists and the media. This was the nucleus from which, over time, many NGOs were born. Despite the fact that it had emerged practically out of nowhere, the Romanian civil society has responsibly assumed a multitude of roles. The most important of these, which is easy to understand from the experience of decades of dictatorship, is that of a watchdog of society against the newly founded state institutions. Civil society organizations, along with the press, have taken on an important role in ensuring the transparency of political and economic life.

Although the development of associations and foundations was experiencing a real boom, the activity of non-profit organizations within communities has proved to be problematic and difficult to correlate with government programs and projects in the same activity segments. For this reason, civil society organizations could not fully fulfil their role as active promoters or coordinators of community development. Constantly constrained by their funding sources and the conditions imposed by the various funders available in the country, in its various stages of development, civil society organizations were forced to change or adjust, in turn,

their purpose, objectives, activities and discourse. This issue determined the way in which non-profit civil society organizations were born and outlined their messages during the transition period and the dialogue they initiated with the political actors with whom they had to interact in carrying out their projects.

Constitutional foundations

For the effective functioning of civil society in a state, some fundamental rights and freedoms must be guaranteed, such as the right to culture and education, freedom of ethnic and religious affiliation, on the one hand, and freedom of association and formation, on the other hand. These things must be guaranteed at the most basic institutional level, namely in the constitution.

The Constitution is the fundamental law of the Romanian state which regulates: the general principles of state organization, the fundamental rights, freedoms and duties of citizens and the fundamental public authorities. The current Constitution of Romania was adopted at the meeting of the Constituent Assembly on November 21, 1991 and entered into force following its approval by the national referendum of December 8, 1991. (Adunarea Constituantă, 1991)

In the context of the country's return to multiparty politics, the communist constitution had to be replaced, both to correspond to the new state of affairs and to guarantee respect for civil rights and to allow the development of a democratic political regime. In this spirit, the usual rights and freedoms in a democratic system are now specified: the freedom of the individual, the freedom of assembly and association, the freedom of the press, the inviolability of the home and of property, the right to vote. The document also specifies the protection of Romanian citizens abroad, as well as the protection of foreign citizens and stateless persons on the territory of Romania. The new Constitution also provides the right to life, the prohibition of torture, forced labour and the death penalty, the protection of persons with disabilities, the protection of the family, children and young people.

Title II of the 1991 Constitution enshrines fundamental rights, freedoms and duties. Their extensive catalogue is based on the provisions of the previous Romanian constitutions and the human rights treaties to which Romania is a party. The country has been connected to the international framework for the protection of fundamental rights and freedoms and the highest standards of their protection and guarantee. It has been expressly established the rule according to which the constitutional provisions regarding the rights and freedoms of citizens will be interpreted and applied in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as well as with the pacts and treaties to which Romania is a party. Any inconsistencies between them will be resolved in favour of international regulations. In 2003, the text was amended, introducing an exception for cases where the Constitution or national laws contain more favourable provisions.

In the realization of the same idea of guaranteeing fundamental rights and freedoms, the institution of the People's Advocate (Ombudsman) was consecrated at the constitutional level, also taken over from the democratic states. He acts for the public good, by protecting individual rights. In the view of the constituent, the name People's Advocate most clearly expresses the role and legal significance of this institution.

Romania's 1991 constitution was revised by Law nr. 429 from 23 October 2003, mainly due to the need for Romania's accession to the European Union and NATO, adding the necessary provisions for this purpose and also making a number of improvements to existing regulations, some of which in response to criticisms of the original wording of the constitutional text. However, this review did basically not change the fundamental rights and duties of the citizen. (Parlamentul, 2003)

Legal and institutional framework

After the December Revolution, the need for free expression of civic will arose immediately, and the first non-governmental organizations were founded. Because in the communist period, there were no civil society institutions, the legal basis for their establishment was law no. 21 of February 6, 1924. (Parlamentul, 1924) In its first article, the law gives the possibility to acquire legal personality for non-profit or non-patrimonial associations and foundations, created and organized by individuals. They are considered legal persons under private law. The law defines the two basic types of non-profit organizations: associations (Chapter 2) and foundations (chapter 3), as well as unions, federations or groups of legal entities (chapter 7). The law also establishes the conditions under which a civil organization can be set up, its mode of operation, how it can be modified or dissolved.

According to Article no. 7, it is also allowed to legal persons of private law, with non-profit or non-patrimonial purpose, which have their headquarters abroad, to benefit from their legal personality and to operate on the territory of the Romanian state in accordance with Romanian laws, if they are recognized according to the laws of their country and if they have previously obtained the authorization of the Romanian government.

Chapter 2 deals with the establishment and operation of associations. According to Article 31:

"The association is the convention by which several persons share, permanently, their material contribution, their knowledge and their activity, in order to achieve a goal that does not pursue personal or patrimonial benefits.

The purpose of the association can be either ideally, to correspond to the general interests of the community or only of a social category of which the members belong, or, finally, to correspond to the non-patrimonial personal interests of the associates."

In a similar way, Chapter 3 deals with the establishment and operation of foundations. According to Article 66: "The foundation is the act by which a natural or legal constituted person, with a distinct patrimony and autonomous from its own patrimony, destines it, in general, permanently to achieve an ideal purpose, of public interest."

The legal framework was later amended by Ordinance no. 26 of January 30, 2000 on associations and foundations. (Guvernul, 2000) According to Article 1 of the ordinance:

"(1) Natural persons and legal persons pursuing activities of general interest or in the interest of certain communities or, as the case may be, in their personal non-patrimonial interest may constitute associations or foundations under the conditions of this ordinance.

(2) The associations and foundations established according to this ordinance are legal persons of private law without patrimonial purpose.

(3) Political parties, trade unions and religious denominations are not covered by this Ordinance."

In addition to the possibility of founding associations and foundations, the law also offers the possibility of establishing federations (Chapter V).

"(1) Two or more associations or foundations may be set up in a federation.

(2) The federations acquire their own legal personality and operate under the conditions provided for in this ordinance for non-profit associations […]"

According to Article 2 of the law (in its current form), "the ordinance aims to create the framework for:

"a) exercising the right to free association;

b) promoting civic values, democracy and the rule of law;

c) pursuing a general, local or group interest;

d) facilitating the access of associations and foundations to private and public resources;

e) the partnership between the public authorities and the legal persons of private law without patrimonial purpose;

f) respecting public order."

The law sets out in detail the conditions for the establishment, organization, operation and liquidation of the defined non-profit organizations. An important element of the law is the provision of a wide range of ways to generate income for non-profit organizations. According to Chapter VII:

"(1) The income of associations or federations shall come from:

a) membership fees;

b) interest and dividends resulting from the placement of available amounts, under legal conditions;

c) dividends of companies set up by associations or federations;

d) income from direct economic activities;

e) donations, sponsorships or bequests;

g) other incomes provided by law."

    The list was later supplemented by an additional source:

"f) resources obtained from the state budget or from the local budgets;"

    The possibility thus offered can have both positive effects, by considerably increasing the resources available to non-profit organizations, and negative ones due to the increasing influence of the structures of central and local powers in the civil sphere.

    One of the deficiencies of the Romanian legal system is a certain quasi-instability that is manifested by the frequent modification of legal norms. The field of civil society regulation is no exception. Law no. 246 of July 18, 2005 for the approval of the Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 on associations and foundations introduced some amendments to it, such as the ones we mentioned earlier. (Parlamentul, 2005)

    Government Ordinance no. 26/2000 on associations and foundations, approved with amendments and completions by Law no. 246/2005, was amended and supplemented again by Law no. 276 of November 27, 2020. (Parlamentul României, 2020) In addition to the many administrative and organizational changes, an important addition is the introduction of a new category of association in Article 4:

"(2) A separate case of association shall be that of the national minority nationals'
    organization whose purpose is:

a) defending, preserving, developing and promoting the identity of a national
    minority;

b) public representation of citizens belonging to a national minority with the role of fulfilling a constitutional public mission.

(3) National minority means that ethnic group represented in the Council of National „Minorities."

    Although this division of civil society organizations may initially seem strange on an ethnic basis, the article may still provide extra security for them in terms of their long-term functioning, especially in a social environment affected, from time to time, of pronounced nationalist attacks.

    A law of particular importance for the efficient functioning of civil society organizations is Law no. 78 of June 24, 2014 on the regulation of volunteer activity in Romania. (Parlamentul, 2014) As stated in Article 1, the law recognizes the importance of volunteering in various social fields and establishes the general framework for its implementation:

"(1) This law regulates the participation of natural persons in voluntary activities
    carried out for the benefit of other persons or of the society, organized by
    legal persons of public or private law without profit.

(2) Volunteering is an important factor in creating a competitive European labour market and in developing vocational education and training, as well as increasing social solidarity."

The next article of the law states the very important individual and social importance assigned to volunteering and its support by the state:
"(1) The Romanian State recognizes the social value of volunteer activities as an expression of active citizenship, solidarity and social responsibility, as well as professional value as an expression of personal, professional, intercultural and linguistic development of the persons carrying out these activities.
(2) The State supports the development of the volunteer movement at local, national and international level, respecting its independence and diversity, in order to fulfil its artistic and cultural, sports and recreational, educational, scientific, research, youth, representation, environmental, health, social, solidarity, community development, humanitarian, civic and philanthropic aid and the like.
(3) The Romanian State supports the development of volunteering through all its institutions that operate in fields in which voluntary activities are carried out according to the law."

Voluntary work is always based on a legally concluded contract (Article 11):
"(1) The volunteering is carried out on the basis of a contract concluded in written form, in Romanian, between the volunteer and the host organization. [...] The written form is mandatory for the valid conclusion of the contract."

The legal regulation of volunteering contributes essentially to the efficiency and transparency of the activity of civil society organizations, respectively to compensate for the shortcomings arising from insufficient funding.

Regarding the legal context, the Romania Country Strategy 2020–2025, approved by the EBRD Board of Directors on 23 April 2020 concludes that: "There is a satisfactory legal framework for civil society organisations (CSOs). […] The system of public consultations is legally in place, although it is not always effectively implemented." It acknowledges that "The right to form trade unions and their freedoms are enshrined in the law and respected in practice." But it also mentions that "Legal advice for CSOs remains limited compared to the needs of the sector, with the CSOs in rural communities most affected by this situation." (EBRD, 2020)

Specific issues of the Romanian civil society

The problems of the Romanian society after December 1989 are closely related to the concept of transition. Perhaps a term too often used in the last decades, this means the transition of a society from the communist to the capitalist system. This transition could only be achieved by the new political leadership, which, in

turn, could only function at the institutional level. Thus, it could be assumed that as soon as the preconditions for changes according to the Western pattern and the new institutions have been established, the expected results at the societal level will also appear. Contrary to expectations, actors in the post-1990 political and economic system have adapted to the new conditions, often taking advantage of a framework that was still insufficiently strengthened in terms of exploiting institutional rules.

Romanian civil society has developed in the same system, based on models taken from the Western system. At the same time, the existence of civil society was an essential condition for the establishment of a democratic system in Romania. Given the above, it can be concluded that the Romanian civil society is a construction without a solid foundation, because such a society is usually born based on the mobilization of citizens and, in the existing circumstances, is consolidated after a long time. In the new democracy in Romania, in the last three decades, it has been possible to identify some important features of civil society, which impede its efficient functioning. These include their role in the society, their relation to the authorities at all levels (EU, central, regional, local), their funding and financing, communication, marketing and PR.

Non-governmental and non-profit organisations have a role to play where there is a need in society, but where the state and other institutions do not have enough resources to deal with it. One of the critical roles of the civil sector is to support disadvantaged groups to integrate into society. This role has emerged as a necessity in society due to the weak capacity of government authorities to provide appropriate services to vulnerable groups, as well as due to the generally low interest of companies for these people, who do not have high purchasing power. Thus, CSOs aim to fill this gap and provide the necessary services, but resources are usually very limited, which severely affects the ability to meet the needs of society properly.

CSOs have a critical role to play in signalling government authorities' slippage in their role in protecting the interests of citizens and in mobilizing citizens to address the issue. In order to be able to fulfil this watchdog role, it is very important that these organizations are strong, independent of political and commercial factors, and able to constantly monitor the activity of the authorities. The area of action can be very wide, from violations of the law to the adoption of decisions that limit or endanger the rights of citizens. In Romania, at present, the capacity of these CSOs in this field is generally reduced.

CSOs can influence public policy in two main ways. First, when they are genuinely consulted by government authorities or Parliament and can present their views or reports and studies done over time on the subject in question. The second possibility is through advocacy, when CSOs directly aim to change a public policy or law and make intense efforts in this regard with the competent authorities. Usually, a coalition of several CSOs is needed to succeed in this endeavour. In Romania, several laws have been changed over time through the efforts of CSOs.

The relationship of the Romanian civil society with the state has had a sinuous evolution, both in terms of political institutions and the contribution to the construction of democracy. From the beginning, civil society considered itself a democratic nucleus and continued its development in this direction. The degree of active involvement and efficiency in protecting democracy and the rule of law are determined by the involvement of non-governmental organizations in the public consultation process, in promoting good governance and the quality of political activity, and by the issue of financing the non-governmental sector. Also of major importance are the effects of education and trust on civic engagement, as well as the role of specific organizations. Increasing the efficiency of the civil sector is conditioned by the identification and removal of the main obstacles to its wider involvement in decision-making, both at local and central level.

Perhaps surprisingly, many years after the fall of the dictatorship and the end of the Cold War, the post-communist intelligence community, once a persona non grata, has surprisingly become one of the most trusted state institutions in Romania. As Cristiana Matei points it out, there are mainly two factors that can be credited with this transition of intelligence services and Romanian civil society organizations were deeply involved in this process. "First, and most interesting, is that civil society, primarily through an aggressive media, helped force the government's hand and bring about democratic reforms. Second was the imperative throughout Romanian political, economic, and civil society to institute reforms that the European Union and NATO would accept in order for Romania to accede to these pillars of the international democratic system." (Matei, 2007, p. 219)

The lack of recognition of the importance of marketing and public relations is another significant obstacle to the activities of civil society organizations. In Romania, NGOs are still facing a high dose of mistrust, both from the authorities and from the general population. There are some, partially founded, preconceptions that make their mark on the entire sector, such as the view that they are laundering money, are representing obscure interests, are unable to influence public policy or have no employees and only ask for money.

The same inefficiency in communication and promotion results in the fact that only a few of the personalities representing civil society appear in public. They are often confused with civil society itself, which is quite strange, given that civil society does not mean consolidating personalities, but promoting the interests of citizens. Without visible results, the work of civil society representatives cannot be evaluated. The work and effectiveness of its representatives is called into question by the lack of reports on how many such organizations operate in the public sector and what results they have achieved with their programs.

An important deficiency of the Romanian civil sphere organizations is that they are limiting their presence mainly to metropolitan centres. According to the above-mentioned Country Strategy: "Dozens of CSOs act as resource centres and provide support on a wide range of topics.

Most are located in the capital and other large cities; as a result, organizations in the rest of the country have limited options to access their services." (EBRD, 2020)

One of the most important among the sector's problems is the insufficient funding and over-reliance on external sources, confronting and avoiding co-operation with the actual governments, and inadequate organization and inefficient use of lobbying opportunities. As the Country Strategy states it: "CSOs' financial viability seriously deteriorated in the recent years, due to their reduced access to funding programmes, combined with limited funds from the national and local governments and foreign sources. In addition, legal changes affecting part-time labour taxation, corporate sponsorships, and incentives for purchases from protected units have reduced CSOs' options for ensuring their financial sustainability." (EBRD, 2020)

According to the legal provisions, associations, foundations and federations can carry out any other direct economic activities if they are ancillary and are closely related to the main purpose of the legal person. Nowadays, an increasingly common concept in non-profit organizations called social enterprise, can be an important component of an organization's financial strategy. In other words, it is a source of income, which comes from any activity undertaken by it, which comes to support the mission of the organization. This last category may include the fees requested by it in exchange for the services or goods offered, such as the fee for participation in an organized project or festival, the sale of handicrafts made by members, etc. All these resources gained from economic activities can be used to support the purpose of the organization.

The accusation of being just money launderers comes, in part, from the fact that in the 90's various organizations appeared with a not very clean purpose, but the situation has changed radically in recent years. Unfortunately, not everyone distinguishes between "NGOs on paper" and active organizations. Serious NGOs make a consistent effort to secure their livelihoods, but suffer severely from the general negative public perception of the population. On the other hand, the tax facilities that NGOs have, such as the tax exemption for income from non-economic activities or the sponsorships, also fuel the negative image. Nor does the existence of organizations created just to benefit from these facilities improve the overall picture.

Non-profit organizations reflect society and its degree of democratization. They represent the interests of its own members and of the community in which it operates, and in some cases of the financiers it has. In the post-December history of Romania, there have been numerous cases in which civil society organizations have carried out partisan activities in the service of politicians or political parties. Not once have they been the protagonists of scandals and acts of corruption, thus defaming the entire civil society. That is why it is very important for NGOs to be transparent, to publish annual reports and to highlight the sources of funding and

the way in which the funds received were spent, thus demonstrating their independence or position or the public policy they represent.

Currently, there are a huge number of non-profit organizations in the country. According to the Index of Legal Entities without Patrimonial Purpose, also known as National Registry of NGOs, in January 2022, there were 105402 associations, 1536 federations, 20324 foundations, 787 unions and 36 foreign legal entities registered in Romania. (MJ, n.d.) (GOV, n.d.) The big problem with this record is that it contains the registered organizations, but the number of truly active ones is unknown. It is estimated that only half of registered CSOs is active. (EBRD, 2020) An important source of error is the fact that organizations that cease de facto their activity omit to cease also de jure.

Romania's post-December history is a very winding one and so is that of its civil society. It is completely impossible to present all its aspects, with their development trajectory. The present paper only aimed to outline the framework in which this evolution took place, through a brief review of some more important aspects, more in-depth analyses to be elaborated in the coming periods.

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FOREIGN LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN ROMANIA AND EDUCATION FOR THE CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF LANGUAGES FOR DEMOCRACY

Ioana Albu

Introduction. Language policies and democratic co-existence. The European Cultural Convention fostering the study of languages

Access to foreign languages for both children and adults is one of the main areas of policy of the European Cultural Convention – *Language Policy Unit.*[1] The purpose of the Cultural Convention is in particular, promoting the study of languages, history and civilisation of the countries party to the Convention in view of an enhanced mutual understanding between countries of Europe. Ever since it was signed, in 1954, for well over sixty years by now, states of Europe, as contracting parties have participated in intergovernmental programmes on *language teaching and learning*. The plurilingual and intercultural education was established as a common goal for language teaching.

The afore-mentioned goals were based on the scientifically proven principle that languages support one another. Language education programmes have attracted considerable attention outside Europe as well. The development of language policies and common standards are meant to prove that language teaching play and important role in cohesion between states, based on the assumption that language issues have major social implications.

The first modern languages project was launched in 1957 and once with its start, the Council of Europe's Language Policy Unit[2] has been active in promoting language diversity and language learning. Signatory states to the Convention are called upon, according to Art. 2 , 'to promote the reciprocal teaching and learning of their languages'. Ensuring equality of access of learners to languages proficiency is aimed at, with the view of language learning not being reserved to a few

only, as a privilege. Further more, projects designed to the acquisition of effective communicative competences in foreign languages lead to enhanced acquisition of language skills by everyone, offering increased opportunities for mobility and thus interaction.

One of the flagship projects of the Council of Europe's series of projects carried out within the area of language learning education was implemented between 1989–1997, i.e the *Language learning and democratic citizenship programme*, followed by the ECFR (European Common Framework of Reference for Languages). New member states for Central and Eastern Europe joined as a result of their EU accession that brought along new issues to be addressed and explored, such as bilingual education, vocational language teaching gand training, establishing educational links and enabling exchances and last but not least information and communication technologies and mostly learner autonomy. Given all this, a new body was set up, the ECML (European Center of Modern Languages) based in Austria, on the inititative of eight member states, having as a concrete mission 'the implementation of language policies' (Art. 1 of the Statute) and the promotion of innovative approaches to the teaching and learning of modern languages. The ECML uses the educational policies developed by the CE Language Policy Unit as reference documents in projects concerned with the training of the language professionals and offers assistance to members states.

The shift to plurilingualism as a form of specific competence

The 1990s saw the setting out of a vision of language teaching that was no longer simply shared professional and scientific knowledge. Plurilingualism comes in place, seen as a specific competence – according to the ECML Manual – acquired by learners, in contrast to a high profficiency of the language. Plurilingualism, as the name implies, is the ability to use more languages thus allowing for contact with other cultures, meaning that relations between member states and their citizens could be conducted using all language resources, to different degrees, not only the respective state language or most often the Enlgish language. All this was summed up into a project entitled *Language Policies for Multilingual and Multicultural Europe*, encompassing activities meant to assist national authorities in promoting plurilingualism and multiculturalism, as well as raising awareness on the role played by languages in forging a European identity.

Language learning and teaching were given a new impetus, language learning from the very startg of schooling being highly promoted and many countries having adjusted their curriculum in line with the new developments. The European Day of Languages[3] was established upon recommendation from the Parliamentary Assembly, set for September 26th to be celebrated each year.

Being able to communicate in languages other than one's own is considered to be at the basis of interpersonal relations. Europe is a multilingal continent and

all its languages, as an expresion of theor identity, have the same value for people. European citizens, as a consequenc, have various language needs and should be able to acquire the desired level of competence in any language of interest to them. By this, increasing cultural diversity is sought, guarranteed by democracies, with the aim of preserving social cohesion, considering lingustic rights and enabling mutual understanding.

The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages was disseminated widely through Europe, outreaching its borders. It was designed to provide a transparent and comprehensive basis for the development of language syllabuses and curricula, teaching and learning materials and also assessment of foreign language proficiency.

It is a policy instrument serving plurilingualism and it is learner-centered, assuming that the 'native speaker' competence is the goal for every speaker of foreign languages.

In terms of cooperation with the European Union, practical cooperation was established in connection with the Europass. As of 2007, the rapid adoption of the CEFR occurred in Europe and it saw the increasingly widespread use of its proficiency levels. It is also an instrument for the organization and development of language teaching and learning.

From multilingual to pluri-lingual and intercultural education

Beginning with 2001 onwards for about the next well over ten years period of time, the teaching of all foreign languages was developed, and along with this other needs emerged, to which the CEFR (Common European Framework of Languages) responded by being the instrument providing reference level description for both national and regional languages. They served primarily as a basis for development of language teaching, be it about the first language, the second one or the foreign language, or the language of instruction, even if language syllabuses are different, yet comparable. Up to 2014 the ECFR was extensively adopted by member states' education systems. *The European Language Portfolio* was created as an instrument meant to be useful to learners, both for class and independent use. It allows its user to document linguistic knowledge and competence already acquired and to certify that self-assessment by official qualifications. It reflects, yet again, reflective learning and enhances learner autonomy. Its fundamental purpose is to confer value to all language learning experiences.

The Common European Framework for Languages in specific contexts
The Romanian case

The CEFL is an instrument that has to be adapted to specific contexts, a varied range of them, adult migrants being of wide concern nowadays.

The use of foreign languages by the Romanians in relation[4] to the attitudes to multilingualism, it is to be said that they are good speakers of languages, English ranking first, followed by French, Italian, Spanish and German. According to studies[4], half of the Romanians speak at least one foreign language, but they are of opinion that every European should speak at least one foreign language. The areas identified here are conversational, for touristic and work purposes.

In terms of education, in recent years the language learning has become important for many Romanians. The age when children begin to study a foreign language has been as early as four or even three years old. There are kindergartens with exclusive program in foreign languages, most in demand being English, followed by German or Spanish as of late.

Moreover, starting from the secondary school, school pupils study two foreign languages, one main language and a secondary language, which is studied throughout the entire highschool curriculum. *Minority languages* are to be considered in this respect as well, in the areas highly populated with minority groups, languages like Hungarian, Ukrainian, Serbian, Slovak, Czech or Croatian are taught, too. They do not necessarily classify as *foreign* languages as such, as they are available as a result of the structure of society.

Nevertheless, it seems to be the case that all changes in society lead to changes in the learning process as well as learning needs of the young generation particularly. According to experts in the field, professors and specialized trainers, Romanians do have an extraordinarily good level of English as a main language, and also German and Spanish. It is not only young people's interest to study foreign languages that has increased in recent years, but professionals' in all fields as well, be it banking, multinational corporations, media, business and/ or customer-related industries.

Progress has been made in the development of a Romanian civil society in line with those in Western Europe, being ascertained that Romanian civil society emerged during the early 20th century when cultural and sport associations started to develop.

It must be specified that since 2019 a series of national reforms and policy developments have taken place in Romania, the most comprehensive one being perhaps *Educated Romania*[5] pertaining to the Presidential Administration and adopted by the Romanian Government on July 14th 2021, focusing on education and training as well as prospects for the future of the society. English is by far the foreign language most studied in the EU, reads the latest Eurostat report on foreign language learning in the EU. The report shows that the Romanian pupils are brilliant on foreign language learning, ranking in the top five on studying at least two foreign languages in schools. Romanian is a Latin-based Romance language,

Latin still being taught in some schools, thus learning French, Italian, Spanish is based on numerous similarities in terms of both vocabulary and grammar.

It is worth emphasizing that the *multilingualism* of Romania does not imply only official and minority languages. Several foreign languages also play an important part in the society, Romania being a country with 18 officially recognized ethnic communities. In this context, the sensitivity towards a multicultural education has started to develop becoming a social competence that is crucial for a real mutual understanding among people. As such, The Romanian Ministry of Education has started to get seriously involved and take a lot of measures to introduce the multicultural education in schools, in partnership with NGOs and Cultural Centres both in the country and abroad. During the past few years the tradition of bilingual schooling has been gained enhanced interest in our country.

Thus, there are high schools teaching intensive courses in a modern language, as well as a number of high schools with most subject-matters taught in English, German, Spanish or Hungarian (e.g. the English High School, the German High School, 'Cervantes' High School, etc.).

Nowadays the Romanian teachers involved in bilingual and multilingual high school and university education have focused their attention and professional commitment on developing the content and language integrated learning, which can better serve nowadays' multicultural societal needs.

As a result, the concept of *plurilingualism* grew out of the notion of linguistic diversity. According to the Council of Europe speakers and not languages are placed at the center of policy issues. The development of individual pluri-lingualism can become a common goal of European countries' language education policies.

The promotion of pluri-lingualism therefore is one of the foundations of a critical education in *linguistic tolerance.*

Recent political events have shown how crucial language issues are to the social cohesion of states. The importance of a good command of languages has been highlighted by numerous international surveys that have been conducted (languages of schooling and foreign languages) for educational success. Whether one turns to the development of the information society, which depends on everyone having access to knowledge, this being which is also a linguistic competence, or the successful integration of migrants in the processes of democratic life, they also depend partly on their language skills. European societies have evolved and once with them language-related projects were deemed necessary. Languages have become part of policy areas for which cooperation between member states has exceeded the narrow role of language teachers and expert theorists of language. Each country's *Language Education Policy Profile*[6] has been drawn and they have led states to be more aware of the pluri-lingual education. Romania is but no exception, having undergone major adjustments to its education system and reforms.

The perception on the study of foreign languages in nowaday's Romanian society: attitude and necessity

A lot has been included under the name of globalization era, thus mastering a foreign language has proved to be insufficient for any individual. The mastering of at least two international languages is highly recommended in all fields and this is an aspect that cannot be overlooked, since the entire world is heading towards an improved communication at international level. If until not long ago the fluent spoken English language was considered to be a special advantage, now it has become a normal, basic requirement for all. What does it imply? First of all increased possibilities of communication and access to new cultures. Without mastering or using foreign languages there won't be political alliances, diplomatic missions or international relations. The learning of a foreign language, it has been demonstrated, leads to enhanced knowledge about one's native language at the same time, the explanation thereof being very simple. The learning process, individual study determines one to analyze more thoroughly one's own native language and to understand its rules which were so far to that perceived as such.

To be mentioned as well as an important aspect is that the migrationism of the past few decades all over Europe, Romania included, can be regarded as well as a factor for the research into the process of teaching and learning of foreign languages from intercultural perspective, the studies focusing particularly upon bilingualism and promoting the mother tongue and the migrants' culture of origin, particular in the formal education area. Secondly, a new impetus has arisen from the mobility of people, the free movement of persons, both in professional and touristic interest, fact that has yielded the need for enhanced communication and mastering several languages.

Two research directions have delineated in that matter in Romania: the study and learning of foreign languages as a compulsory subject of study – teaching, learning, contents, teaching methods and evaluation and the early years study of foreign languages. During the communist era the study foreign languages was banned, having had a negative impact on generations to come, who encountered difficulties when being faced with the realities of the globalized world that has been shaped. Thus *monolingualism* in the Romanian society has long become outdated, reminding one of the past century, therefore representing a major shortcoming and even a handicap for the person shaped in the realities of 2014/2015 when as seen above in the EU documents, new framework for references for the study of languages were developed. If nowaday's Europe is *multicultural*, tomorrow's Europe has got to be *intercultural*. Another aspect worth to be mention for the Romanian society is that, if studying a foreign language – such as the study of French two centuries earlier was a matter of sophisticated education of a particular social class level, to speak English and one more language besides it has become a prerequisite to carry out ones's activity and profession at an acceptable level and the demands of nowadays global context.

The notion of *multicultural education* includes the totality of educational programs that respond to the needs imposed by the coexistence within a multiethnic environment. Multicultural education must facilitate both accommodation of etno-cultural minority groups, and the accommodation and opening of the majority society to the cultural models specific to the minority groups. Through the anti-racial, anti-xenophobic, anti-discriminatory and relativization endeavors of existent cultures, this is regarded as the guarantor of a viable multicultural society, as well as a factor ate democratic stability.

The *intercultural education*, on the other hand, vises a new approach of the values horizon. Students often have difficulties in accepting and understanding diversity and alterity, and the educational process must offer as many situations as possible to facilitate the openness towards these notions. The intercultural education has at its ground the principle of mutual enriches through the recognition of diversity and promotes values such as: intercultural respect, empathy, solidarity and opposition to nationalism (Stanef, M. 2021). The study of foreign languages therefore, represents in itself the field in which knowledge is approached from an intercultural perspective, the interculturality occurring at the meeting point of two cultures, fact that has to be observed and taken into study in order for learners to become multicultural and tolerant citizens. Tolerating other cultures goes through the understanding and awareness of one's own culture.

The fast development of the technology era has enabled and helped a lot overcome a lot this necessity, as the study and mastering of a foreign language today is easily accessible through all media channels, the people being constantly exposed to anglicized words and being familiar with the sounds of the particular language of interest, thus learning it unawares, compared to the state of matters 30–40 years ago. The learning market in Romania is, now, in a very good moment. In terms of businesses as well, many Romanian companies have started to prioritize foreign language courses for employees and shall continue to do so, with an increasingly accelerated focus on digitalization and expansion.[7]

For the Romanian society nowadays, the mastering of a foreign language is a plus to having access to a better workplace, irrespective the profession. The more mastering of rare languages, the better. Since the majority of a nation's generation already speaks English, the combination with other foreign languages confers the speaker a considerable advantage, such as, for instance, Chinese has definite perspectives and so does Russian, after decades of being in disgrace. Upon choosing the choice of the second languages, the following aspects are taken into consideration as a rule: family traditions (parents/grandparents speaking or having spoken the particular language), to more or less closer perspective of emigrating to a foreign country, case in which mastering the language of the host/target country is a factor easing a person's adaptation and the career related perspectives, or, further on at another level, the economic relations with various countries and choosing the language according to future economic perspectives.

In Romania, the forming of civil society has had a different course from those in countries with a strong democratic tradition. This is because the intention of the political class was to 'create' very quickly a civil society, molded and subservient to their interests.

This may be a possible explanation for the lack of combativeness and consistency of the vast majority of actions taken by civil society organizations – associations, foundations, federations, leagues, etc. Also, the involvement of citizens in civic activity is relatively low quantitatively and qualitatively.

The civil society plays an important role in strengthening the democratic process, for the affirmation of which the economic and political modernization is a necessary condition. An important aspect of international civil society is the existence of common values shared by its constituent organizations.

From this point of view, thematic conferences on the role of foreign languages, which have multiplied since the early 2000–2014, have facilitated the establishment of transnational thematic networks as well as the emergence of notions that sometimes seem to be signs of mutual recognition.

Conclusion

Communicating in a foreign language has the same dimensions as communicating in the mother tongue: it is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret thoughts, feelings and facts both in oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in a proper range of social contexts – at the workplace, at home, in education and training – according to the individual's wishes and needs.

Communicating in a foreign language also resorts to abilities of mediation and cultural understanding. The performance level shall vary among the four dimensions, among different languages and according to the individual's own linguistic heritage and framework. After years of activity in the field of foreign language courses, language practitioners have realized that what happened classically in a classroom shall no longer be able to happen for a very long time. That is how foreign language learning has come to the concept of *agile learning*.[8] It involves a hybrid learning mode, based on individual learning and weekly sessions with a trainer. It is actually a combination of technology, human interaction and personalized content. The way we work will fundamentally change. And so the way we learn. Technology is the future of learning are but a few of the ideas used by innovative trends in the learning and development needs of learners (Dragomir, S. 2021, EuCom).

The learning of a foreign language has known a genuine revolution lately, going from traditional methods, based on grammar and translation, to audio – oral conversational methods, emphasis being placed on forming competences for communicating in a foreign language.

The traditional didactic practice in Romania, which focuses on the writing process, has been replaced with a balanced way of the two forms of communication, oral and written, the previous one having an enhanced importance in the foreign language classes. The education for communication vises enriching the communicative register and repertoire of learners by news means of expression, with the aim of facilitating the social contacts and educational ones alike.

In Romania there is deeply rooted the conviction that one must speak foreign languages, this being present at all generations. Foreign languages education is a priority domain for the Romanian civil society, education in general ranking first in the country's needs and expectations and it is in this particular field that it is to be invested in Romania.

The second plenary session of the Conference on the *Future of Europe* was held in Strasbourg on October 23-rd, where the contribution of the citizens to it so far were discussed. Here, the young people's views on EU change were heard out and progress made in pother sections of the Conference were registered. Representatives of the European Youth Event, which took place in early October, presented a Report on the ideas of young people with the 20 most popular proposals for EU reform resulting from the event. These included, among other things, an emphasis on soft skills and *the study of foreign languages* in school.

There is a desire, on the platform, to be constructive and to improve the EU project, said Verhofstadt[9]. "Certain issues are constantly recurring on certain issues, such as the end of unanimity [in decision-making], the strengthening of the social dimension ... and the need *to preserve diversity and multilingualism* as a way of promoting a truly Europe of citizens."

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To Zoom or not to Zoom?
Adapting to Online Teaching during Covid–19 Pandemic in Romanian Universities

Karla Melinda Barth–Ana Gabriela Pantea

Introduction

◼ The article uses a theoretical framework and a qualitative inquiry to provide an overview on the reactions of four Romanian universities *vis-a-vis* the Covid–19 pandemic. As the stakeholders had to adopt to online teaching and new technologies within a short period of time, the solutions and reactions varied considerably due to differences in terms of size, infrastructure, or the decision-making process of the universities themselves. We analyze the ways in which the Romanian universities slalom in these turbulent times and what perspectives they had in the last one and a half year. A key challenge for higher education in response to the pandemic has been managing the shift from face-to-face to online education, changes in the evaluation of the students, managing travel restrictions, conducting research, and ensuring the physical and psychological well-being of students, faculty, and staff. While higher education (HE) around the world and in Romania is no stranger to turbulences (for instance the financial crisis of 2007–2008, just to mention the last one), the scale and length of the Covid–19 pandemic are unprecedented in terms of impact on the university life.

Our paper points out the changes that occurred at the Romanian universities during the Covid–19 pandemic and how the sampled institutions mastered the challenges they had encountered. As the decisions were taken at faculty level at all Romanian universities without national consultation or guidance at ministerial level, the direction taken by the universities seemed contradictory. During the research, we organized 32 interviews (online or face-to-face) at four relevant Romanian universities: an internationalized Romanian university, a middle sized

university with regional impact, a local private university, and an externally funded private institution. All our respondents are linked to the field of social sciences. To each participant, we applied a semi-structured interview. For the analysis of the responses, we used the inductive thematic analysis described by Warren and Karner (2014).

The objective was to find out the perception of the stakeholders of the current unplanned educational shift. We interviewed internal stakeholders as well as parents, spouses, and political actors to compare their perceptions with those directly affected. The article highlights the personal reactions and experiences in respect to the educational changes they had encountered.

### The Covid–19 pandemic as a wicked problem

We are going to label the Covid–19 crisis as a 'wicked problem' (Mathur 2020; Moon 2020; Rittel–Webber 1973) due to the intractable, deceptive, uncertain, and difficult nature of the pandemic. Wicked problems are complex phenomena which are difficult or impossible to solve because of the incomplete, contradictory, and changing requirements. Any approach to 'wicked problems', in general terms, cannot fully solve the issues but create further problems and difficult decisions as an inevitable consequence. The main argument for such an interpretation resigns in the fact that the management issues of the current pandemic can be viewed as a 'complex intergovernmental problem' (Paquet 2020: 343). This accounts for the high levels of collaboration between all levels of government and private organizations, including medical and societal decisions while at the same time it challenges existing practices and norms of the decision-making process. As such, the last two years should be viewed more as a complex intergovernmental issue, where education plays a very important role, and not exclusively as a medical crisis. The classification of the pandemic in terms of 'wicked problems' requires comprehensive solutions to a large variety of problems that are interlinked (medical, economic, educational, political, etc.). Hence these problems can only be partially solved or temporarily managed, the strategy literature known under these terms since 1973 (Rittel–Webber 1973) recapture the attention in the context of tackling the crisis as 'true uncertainty'. None of the previous pandemics in the world have generated such fast and extensive changes in such a short time as the current one. Problems generated during the Covid–19 are 'true uncertainties', even more, if we consider solutions for health issues, these require solutions in all domains or areas of life, and at every level, starting from the individual to the community, national to global level, rendering it uniquely to communication technologies. All over the world, the immediate problem of surging the consequences of Covid–19 pandemic required isolating populations geographically by separating territories and using more technology in our daily life. Such challenges are traceable to the ways responsibility for the safety of the society is distributed, and authority is managed to

design healthcare solutions, and the power to organize healthcare (Mathur 2020). The educational system suffered as well, as the whole system had to transition to online teaching due to the closure of schools and universities.

In Romania authorities followed WHO recommendations (Romanian Ministry of Internal Affairs 2020), thus implementing measures in a similar manner to other countries on the globe. However, challenges were faced (1) due to heavy cross-border movement of population; (2) unsatisfactory healthcare system infrastructure (Dascalu 2020); (3) and sociocultural particularities including religious and antivaccine groups (Obregon 2021).

(1) Romania has one of the largest diasporas in the EU, with more than three million citizens living abroad. Due to the economic uncertainties, many expatriates returned to Romania in different phases of the pandemic. This fact posed an enormous challenge to healthcare authorities. This problem needed to be addressed rapidly (Dascalu 2020) and constantly during the pandemic. (2) In Romania most medical services are provided through the public healthcare system. In addition, Romania has the lowest health expenditure of all EU-countries in both percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) and per capita expenditure (Dascalu 2020). These shortcomings caused issues due to a lack of necessary equipment, inadequate medical facilities, and insufficient supplies. Furthermore, the Romanian healthcare system also faces the problem of understaffing. (3) Lack of trust in medical services, high influence of the Orthodox church and the campaign of the Romanian populist far-right party (The Alliance for the Union of Romanians) eroded the trust in the vaccination process. As Romania ranks among the most religious countries in the EU, with over 80% of its population identifying as Orthodox Christian, the slow response of the Church influenced the decision-making process of the population. Consequently, in December 2021, the vaccination rate is one of the lowest within the EU, 40,4% (Government of Romania 2021).

Graph 1. Evolution of New (Covid–19) Cases, recoveries, and deaths per day in Romania.
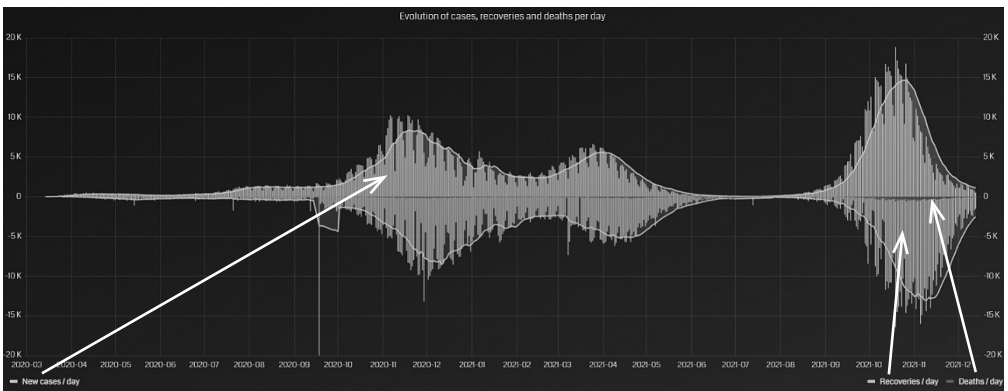
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In such a context, the decision of the universities to continue with online education, to shift to blended education or to return to fully on-site education was difficult to take and the arguments invoked by the higher education institutions differed. Our hypothesis is that the size, the research performance level, students' preferences, and the management's style of each institution had influenced the decision whether to fully return to on-site education, to develop a hybrid model, or to choose online teaching.

Higher education during Covid–19

In the last almost two years, in the context of the Covid–19 pandemic, the whole education system has changed from a classical, on-site education model to a hybrid or online one, both based on eLearning. All the students were previously convened in university rooms according to their timeline and teachers who covered their research areas, frequently through formal settings, and eLearning tools were used in a limited way.

Since 2020, digital technologies have created new opportunities, and the use of information technologies has become popular. However, despite its potential, the simple presence of technological tools does not necessary lead to progress in learning or increasing digital literacy (Li–Ma 2010) or even trust or confidence in online education.

Since all the courses were switched to online education on the globe, in the first phases of the pandemic, faculties prepared alternative scenarios for teaching, managing administrative tasks and conduct research though tele-working. An important dimension of the transformation process was the fact that many students had shown weaker involvement in the online learning process, which seriously restricted their learning effectiveness (Obrad 2020; Edelhauser 2020). To ensure that students focus on online studying, faculty had reasonably broken down the content of the teaching materials into different units and adopted a modular teaching method. In other words, on the basis of ensuring a clear knowledge structure in the curriculum, faculty divided the teaching content into several small modules. In addition, university teachers also provided consultations, tutorial activities, and answered questions for the academically less resilient or underprepared students by using email, Zoom, and other social media platforms (including Facebook or WhatsApp).

Compared with traditional lectures, faculty had less influence on online learning outcomes, and students were more likely to miss the relevant information. Therefore, the progress of online education and its learning efficiency largely depend on the individual's active learning outside of the mandatory teaching activities. Furthermore, university teachers use various methods to modify students' assessments to strengthen their active learning.

As such offline and online teaching should be interlinked:

"Faculty should consider two phases of teaching, the offline self-learning phase and the online teaching phase. In the offline self-learning phase, students are required to read the course-specific literature and submit short papers based on their reading of key materials before the class. Faculty should provide feedback to students' assignments and know the learning cognitive levels of students. This way, faculty are able to make adjustments in teaching content before class. In the online teaching phase, faculty should use a discussion section for students to exchange their understanding based on their reading. Thus, students will not learn ambiguous, fragmented, and surface knowledge. Instead, they will experience deep learning during the discussion" (Bao 2020: 2).

Though online learning might be a generous environment for developing the self-regulated capacities of students, the distance between educators and learners is perceived as a real barrier in the teaching process (Dabbagh 2004). Additionally, despite several advantages, an important challenge in eLearning is surfing and searching for information for an extended period of time, gaming, or watching videos (Edelhauser–Lupu 2020). To add an extra factor to the previously mentioned ones, mobile learning (m-learning) dominates the lives of teachers and students in a negative sense. Mobile learning technologies provide an opportunity for students, lecturers and experts to engage in learning conversations among themselves. As such, the Covid–19 pandemic has shown that higher education and technology cannot be separated anymore.

HE sector in Romania. What is the difference?

Eastern European education systems have been known for decades for lower performance (Field et al. 2007) and a peripheral position within the EU which has often been generated, partly, by governmental expenditure on education, significantly below the European overage (Mitescu-Manea et al. 2021). As educational activities shifted away to new forms of teaching (blended or online), universities and policy-makers faced important challenges in an under-financed system.

The ways in which crises like the current one are managed is highly dependent on meaning creation and the ways in which certain actors become able to impose their narrative of the crisis and promote their suggested solutions (Jessop–Oosterlynck 2008). Following the first phases of the Covid–19 pandemic, governments and the decision-making bodies tend to make use of crises by putting forward relatively radical economic and social reforms which challenge the mainstream educational practices and exacerbate, at the same time, existing inequalities.

According to the study of Mitescu-Manea et al. (2021), new categories of vulnerability are mostly unaddressed by state actors in Central and Eastern Europe. These vulnerabilities are related to the underperformances of the governmental educa-

tional crisis responses, and not to the health issues posed by the Covid–19 pandemic: digital poverty, technological infrastructure and a lack of digital competences, lack of stable Internet connection, digital proficiency, low performance of students, cyberbullying and personal data theft in the context of online education, etc.

In Romania, state actors advanced an intervention plan of quitting face-to-face educational activities in the state of emergency and shifting to online platforms. In the medium term, this involved the possibility of providing technological equipment to vulnerable students and allowing educators to use university infrastructures to conduct online educational activities or research. Yet, non-state actors highlighted the shortcomings of the government's measures: the inadequacy of proposed educational technologies for the diversity in age and students' abilities, or the lack of access of certain households to basic infrastructure (such as electricity). In Romania, the responsibility to ensure education was typically assigned to parents and teachers (avoiding state responsibility for providing equal access to education for all). Mainly articulated by non-governmental actors, budget allocation and the distribution of funds was a prominent topic in Romanian, underscoring the need to supplement and rethink budget allocation in order to adequately respond to the risks of further deepening inequities.

As been widely argued that the Covid–19 pandemic has brought the comeback of the nation state (Radil et al. 2021) and gave rise to nationalist politics and political rhetoric. Although the policy debates remained largely national. State actors in all CEE countries implemented what they perceived to be stringent crisis measures directed at protecting the health of the population. As such, states did not see beyond their borders when they were developing education policies during the pandemic, NGOs were actively engaging in transnational flows of know-how and shared spaces of policy action (Mitescu-Manea et al. 2021).

According to CNFIS data, the total number of Romanian students for the 2021/2022 academic year is 475 955 (CNFIS 2021), which represents a slight increase (0,6%) compared to the previous years. Even though, the percentage of students involved in tertiary education is still the lowest at EU level (Zay 2020). However, the Covid–19 crisis has opened opportunities for a change and quality increase. At the time of the crisis, universities cried for collective responsibility and national policy debates and stepped in with concrete actions where they felt that governments were failing the most vulnerable. Universities, or more specifically, faculties became the decision-making bodies in crisis management.

Research design

The qualitative research was conducted through online and face-to-face semi-structured interviews and the research questions (Annex 3) we posed in the article were the following:

(a) What were the shared challenges faced by four Romanian universities, different in size, research performance and objectives (Annex 2) during online and hybrid education in mitigating the impact of the Covid−19 pandemic on the stakeholders?

(b) What does the pandemic reveal on the resilience of the Romanian universities and whether there is potential for increasing the research and teaching level in the Romanian HE sector as an indirect consequence of the pandemic?

(c) What were the main factors (status of public of private funding, management style, student preferences, lobby of the teaching or administrative staff) which influenced the decision-making process in the shift to online – hybrid – face-to-face education in the four cases we scrutinised?

We conducted 32 interviews at four Romanian universities: University of Bucharest, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Agora University of Oradea, Sapientia University of Transylvania. Due to ethical reasons, we did not conduct research in our home universities.

Map1: University of Bucharest, Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu, Agora University of Oradea, Sapientia University of Transylvania

Our sample was formed by stakeholders of the four universities, gathering F/M ratio: 62,5% (female respondents), 37,5% (male respondents). We interviewed all the deans of the faculties and only tenure academics with experience between 7–30 years. The overage age of the respondents is 39,6 years. The overage length of interviews was 36,4 minutes.

Profession	No. of interviews	%
University teachers	8	25%
Administrative staff at the university	9	28,125%
Students	7	21,875%
External stakeholders	8	25%

Throughout our interviews we found out that all the four faculties conducted internal surveys which had been designed to find out the positions of the students and academic staff. The invoked surveys legitimized the decisions made at faculty level, on one side or the other of the spectrum: open online, blended, or face-to-face.

The timeline we referred to during the interviews (between March 2020 – November 2021) can be divided into three different phases. The first one, which might be considered an adaptation phase, was dovetailed with the lockdown, between March and April 2020. The second phase, between May 2020 and September 2021, was dominated by online teaching with a multiplicity of short notice changes. The last phase, which we are experiencing up to present day, in which coexists face-to-face, hybrid and online teaching, between September–November 2021.

Starting from existing literature related to the topic, the interviews were based on the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1 – the decision of the faculties in choosing between online – blended – offline education depends on the power relations exercised by the academic personnel. A key role is played by the leadership at faculty level, on its innovative or traditional style of leadership, and the perception, or fear of the stakeholders on the level of the existential threat of the virus.

Hypothesis 2 – the decision of the faculties in choosing between online – blended – offline education depends on the lobbing power expressed by students and external stakeholders. An important factor might be the influence the students have, through their tuition fees, on the budget of the faculty.

Hypothesis 3 – the authority exerted by important stakeholders who regard the Covid–19 pandemic through legalists eyes. The draconic measures imposed in October 2021 by the Ministry of Education of Romania were difficult to implement. Even though, many universities decided to open in an offline setting due to being concerned by the number of dropout students. Many other universities remained online calling on legal consideration. The opposite decisions which were taken in the same legal setting led us to conclude that Legal Departments might have had an important role to say.

Our study tests these three hypotheses and aims to find out the motivation (in terms of university policies, perception of the existential threat caused by the virus, legal perspective, lobbing power) behind the decisions which form of teaching setting had been chosen. In addition, we intended to find out the perspectives of new forms of education after the crisis through the eyes of students, faculty and external stakeholders.

Covid–19 induced changes in HE in Romania. Experiences shared by four universities

The first Covid–19 case in Romania was confirmed on the 26th of February 2020, and in less than a month Romania declared a state of emergency. Schools

and universities closed in Romania, as they had all over the world. In terms of national regulation, the chronology of the events was the following: 16 March 2020 Beginning of the state of emergency (195/2020 Presidential Decree declaring the state of emergency); 14 April 2020 Prolonging the state of emergency by 30 days (240/2020 Presidential Decree); 21 April 2020 Shifting to online education (OMEC 4135 Ministerial order on the continuity of all educational activities online).

The last one and a half years brought about a permanently changing context that vastly disrupted the social, economic, and political landscapes at a national level. Except for the existential threat which had been perceived by the population *vis-a-vis* the infection, the management of daily activities and traditional sectors of activities suffered significant changes.

For the analysis of the responses, we used the inductive thematic analysis described by Warren and Karner (2014). As a result of this inquiry, we synthesized the main finding as follows.

1. Quick shift

Talking about the time interval required to implement online teaching, most respondents confirmed the international literature (Hodges et al. 2020) that remote teaching started within days or weeks. The rapid response corresponds to the perception of an exceptional timeframe, without having a clear scenario and perspective for how long face-to-face teaching will be replaced.

"This was quite a surprise. It took us a short time, in the sense that we were, obviously, happy to discover that we have a substantial ability to adapt. However, we were not prepared in the sense of previously having had such remote online teaching experiences, nor were we reflecting upon this" (CP).

Or, in other terms, the answer reflected the very efficient answer like: "It took quite a short time. I am trying to recollect. I think in less than 3 days, the quasi-totality of the members of the faculty, both professors and students were playing the game" (TM). Obviously, not all academics were technically equipped or had the skills and pedagogical background, neither probably the vision how to start online teaching. As such, flexibility and adaptation were the mantras in the first phases of online teaching.

"Given extraordinary circumstances, our university considered that it is better not to impose anything, I mean not to have constraints. What does this adjustment mean? It means that, for instance, especially in the beginning, up to the end of the second semester, we accepted not only the use of multiple platforms, but also that the teachers chose the method that seemed most suitable to them and the most consistent and useful one from a didactical point of view" (MEL).

That technically meant a multiplicity of platforms and online tools used in the same faculty at the same time.

Platforms used in Romania for online courses

Big Blue Button   **Google Meet**   **Microsoft Teams**

Webex   **Zoom**   **8x8 Meetings**
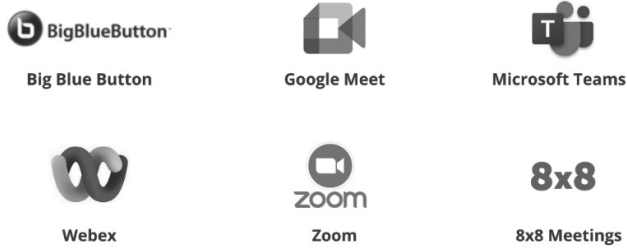
Figure 1: Most popular platforms used in Romania for online teaching according to our sample (UB, ULBS, AU, SA)

From the interviews we figured out that there had been university teachers who undertook, from the very beginning, the necessary skills, others required a longer period to adapt. For sure many Romanian teachers have rapidly implemented online learning, due to established familiarity with the necessary tools or teaching approaches, for instance the existing distance learning programmes had contributed significantly. This has resulted in less disruption for many students. Indeed, in other cases, the process was slower, requiring more time for adaptation.

Other platforms used in the online learning process

Digitaliada   **Easyclass**   **Edmodo**

My Own Conference   **Pearltrees**   **Quizizz**
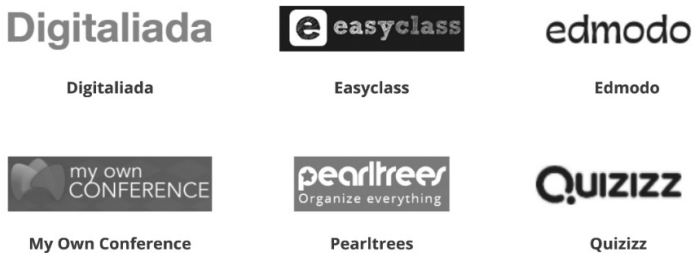
Figure 2: Other platforms used in the online teaching, but less popular in our sample (UB, ULBS, AU, SA)

Within a few months, the faculties naturally selected two platforms (Teams and Zoom), without any institutional and external pressure, and the traditional educational setting was rapidly dominated by these two platforms. Technology-driven solutions created options for both students and academic personnel which require new digital learning standards, infrastructure, as well as regulation for quality assurance, but that also encourages new pedagogical approaches. During the ongoing digital learning transformation, institutional, student, and professors' behaviours were all simultaneously shifting, making this a critical time for evaluating academic strategies through new lens.

Course data storage platforms in Romania

Adservio

Google Classroom

Google Drive

Microsoft Teams

Microsoft One Drive

Moodle

Figure 3: Course data storage platforms used in Romania according to our sample (UB, ULBS, AU, SA)

Many academic staff established contact with the students, felt at ease, and they started to enjoy the unexpected shift. "They simply changed sitting at a desk at a university with sitting in front of a screen in their own homes" (FM). It seemed tremendous to many educators, and the enthusiasm and optimism to continue the educational process was indeed overwhelming.

On the other hand, some respondents recall their anxiety at the beginning "No, I was unable to do this, I had registered my conferences" (AM). After having discovered how hard it is to see themselves on the screen, out of the desire to look good, it was necessary to record themselves several times and the time spent on preparing for online teaching was severely multiplied.

Others, as a third group of interviewees, said: "I cannot stand the idea of talking to students this way" (LP). They did something totally unusual, namely they literally wrote down their course script. It is very seldom for a teacher to put on paper the content of conferences they are going to hold, in one a way or another. "Since I am not good in front of a screen, what I will do is to write the discourse of the conference down on paper" (LP). Some of them even recorded themselves and then transcribed the text of their own conference. Universities, the Ministry of Education, students, and external stakeholders accepted all the inedited solutions, as there were no alternatives.

2. Adjustment phase

The students did not object to the diversity of teaching or storage platforms which had been used, new assessment models, changing in the examination system, and these facts had a significant importance for the further development of online teaching in Romania. From perceiving their teachers as being on the opposite side of the barricades, students worked together with them, in solidarity and a constructive manner. *"The students only objected when the professors were neglectful. There were just a few cases. They were dissatisfied when the teacher told them that the connection was not working properly, and phone conversations were recommended, actually when the teacher was replacing the course with tuto-*

rials. Apart from this, the diversity of methods did not seem inappropriate to them [the students]" (CP).

In many Romanian universities, Distance Learning Programmes and Part-Time Learning Programmes were already functioning (UB and UA). As such, the switch happened fast enough, especially concerning the posting of the courses and the communication with the students. "Firstly, we all transitioned to Zoom, until we managed to determine which platform to work with. Almost everybody began with Zoom around that period, as it seemed the easiest to use. That was what happened! Only later did we switch to other alternatives, such as Teams or Webex" (MEL).

Cybersecurity concerns were not brought into question by the respondents when they had chosen the platforms, and apparently, they didn't personally encounter or heard of illicit data leaks. Adaptability was the main driver in their strategy. Interestingly, administrative staff (GL and RB) and students (DV) were more interested in security measures.

According to the interviews, there is no correlation between the age range of the professors and their adaptability to the shift to online teaching: "I am the oldest member of the Faculty, but there are older colleagues in terms of age. I did not do such a correlation. There is no such thing […] The majority of us are of my generation, but there is no correlation. Likewise, the younger members, our former students, have experienced both, so there is no correlation" (CP). We could conclude that resilience and willpower, a bottom-up approach of the professors contributed to a rapid adaptation. The Ministry decentralised the decision-making process during Covid–19 pandemic, as such the accountability was passed to the academic staff.

3. Administrative matters

There are, clearly, diverse patterns of behaviour in terms of the reactions of the secretariat, IT department, quality assurance units, etc. Some of them took advantage to be less involved, others on contrary supported the transition period with great involvement. Probably the permissive and unregulated educational scene produced extreme responses: either very active or very passive ones.

The legitimation discourse is the following: "Generally, they have invoked the risk of contamination and fetching of the virus at home. This is a very strange situation. All the teachers are vaccinated. They have got vaccinated without hesitation from the starting point, while all the Secretary's office members reject the vaccine, even today" (RI). In our sample, some faculties monitor the vaccination rate, and the Dean's office informally periodically checks the evolution of the percentages of vaccinated employees. The respondents proudly mention the increased number of vaccinated colleagues and the creation of safer working environment. On the contrary, in faculties where the percentage does not increase, the critical and elitist discourse prevail.

"It is, generally, a matter of the ability to adapt. I might make a little speculation now, but there is a bigger distinction in the way a teacher sees the teaching process involving direct interaction versus the remote teaching technique, then in the case of how a secretary works from the office versus how she works from home. The second case involves interaction with papers. In the first case, one feels that they cannot communicate directly, that they cannot feel the response of the class when seeing numerous windows on their screen, out of which an overwhelming majority are black, most of the times. I think there is a difference in substance. The difference is not significant if you process school documents at home and not in the Secretary Office at school. But when you never see the students, like it or not, the difference is major" (SD).

As the administrative staff is focused on documents, many of them see the efficiency of e-learning and e-service. "The public hours had been reduced and moved to e-mailing. It is convenient because there is no misunderstanding with the students" (IC).

The workload has probably not been reduced, but e-administration transformed the workplace in an efficient manner.

4. The elephant in the room: exams, grading, finals

Previous research in the field has shown that Covid–19 crisis may have the unintended side effect of disincentivizing students (Kinney–Rowland 2021). For this reason, many universities created an optional or flexible grading system which could support struggling students (psychologically, socially, or economically) while still motivating the rest of the students. At the same time, universities require that the set of existing standards for grading should be maintained and any shift in grading policy needed to appear legitimate in the eyes of the stakeholders, especially on the matters of the ability to communicate academic rigor and inclusiveness (Syrdal et al. 2021). In the Romanian public debate, 'academic rigor' was questioned in the time of the pandemic disruption. The respondents legitimize their flexible examination system as follows:

"In the beginning I noticed a lot of tolerance; even a philosophy which I would resume as it follows: Any examination form needs to be validated by the students. Essentially, I accepted to change the provisions in the course syllabus. […] Due to the pandemic and to the limitation of the freedom of movement, those who wanted to organize an oral exam could not do it in the same conditions. Neither could those who announced a written exam. There are discrepancies between the organization of a written exam in a classroom or of a remotely written exam. In this case, we could make changes or add nuances to the methods mentioned in the course syllabus" (RI).

Some teachers organized online 'face-to-face' exams. The interviewed students did not object to this, even if initially something different was planned. Some educators, obviously, rephrased the subject's requirements, differently from what they would have done in a face-to-face setting. Professors reconceived the exam subjects, taking account of the fact that they have access to all sources of information.

"We avoided becoming ridiculous […] So, in this respect, we basically did not encounter negative reactions in regards to the changes. We had registered complaints from the students, but they were similar to those of the previous exam sessions concerning professors who had not notified them in due time about having changed the method of phrasing the exam subjects, or others linked to the behavior and attitude of the teachers" (CP).

Technically, in regard to the examination, there were four possibilities in the field of social sciences (oral online tests, essays, group assignments, multiple choices). Efficiency was gained by online assignments and group activity grading. Anyhow, to reduce assessment time was vital in such turbulent times, although students may have been concerned about having their work graded fairly.

"I believe that everybody tried to preserve the past system. However, aspects related to the attendance were not taken account of. We grant some points based on students` online presence, as well. Now, everybody was active on the platforms, they logged in on the platform and carried out their duties, regardless whether they had worked or had other reasons related to the pandemic. Discrepancies were seen only here. But the grades, were, basically, the same" (DP).

After we interviewed students of our sample, we learned that they had found the new online methods of examination much easier. Considering the benefits of utilizing online grading systems, students and professors feel equally comfortable adopting the practice to better mitigate the changes that the Covid–19 pandemic has enforced. Indeed, through online teaching, operating with larger class sizes requires the faculty to be innovative in being efficient with their time, keeping students engaged, and maintaining perceived fairness in the teaching process.

5. What has been gained, what has been lost?
Contrary to our initial supposition, the negative feedback on the current teaching experience was less manifest. Faculty members, students and external stakeholders regarded their experience as a challenging and innovative way to overcome the shortcomings of the Romanian university system. "I would say that there are both advantages and disadvantages. One of the advantages is that when teaching large groups of students, the number of students who joined was higher. It might have been more convenient for the students, as well" (LP). During online teaching, students are easily identified through the screen: "Finally, the professors know our names. Here [Online], since they [the teachers] constantly see our names written next to the faces, it seems that they get to know us better" (GL).

As a disadvantage, the lack of direct interaction was ubiquitously mentioned by all the respondents. "I even had some arguments with my students, as some of them were switching off their cameras. I had such problems. Now, they can join the course I teach with their cameras off, on the condition that they are at work, and they send me a message in advance, letting me know that they are working, or they have other reasons for not having the cameras on. Otherwise, they cannot join" (DP). This fact guarantees flexibility on both sides and, equally, the determination to keep on studying and teaching.

In addition, the lack of feedback behind the turned off cameras might be challenging. During a traditional in-class lesson, body language, facial expressions, and teachers' voices are all important teaching tools. However, once a course is switched to online teaching, body language and facial expressions are limited as it is difficult to use these tools through screens, and only voices can be fully heard.

Internships has been heavily affected, as well. Through face-to-face internship, students understand the contexts of their future domain and which job fields may be suitable for them in their future professional life (Karakiraz 2021). Students' experiences during their internships are essential for their career orientation. In addition, that internships are particularly useful in constructing more realistic meaning. Loosing these opportunities due to the pandemic, had been seen by their instructors as very unfortunate.

"Students complained about the lack of interaction among themselves. While internship, students used to go in groups of 3–4 in a class and teach one course each. At present, conditions requiring one student in a class were imposed in schools. They cannot interact. Obviously, meetings on platforms cannot be compared to having a coffee, a refreshment etc. during a course break at school. They also complained about missing the interactions with us [the teachers] and the discussions we had during the breaks" (TM).

One of the main concerns from all the interviews were about overwork and the psychological impact of the lockdown. The respondents have reported more extra working hours, with higher psychological impact and less frequent breaks.

"Everybody told me that, if until now their schedules were already busy, their workload doubled or tripled during the pandemic. Teachers need to prepare the materials, to upload them on the platform, to prepare other sorts of materials for the students […] Preparing so many multiple choice tests and uploading them on a platform was quite difficult for everyone. Not necessarily teaching the courses, but the preparation became more laborious, on a long-term" (MEL).

Students' perspective was similar, emphasizing higher requirements from the professors. At the same time, they see more clearly the advantages of online education. Students stated that saving time, self-paced study, fitting in better with schedules, enabling them to work part-time, or time and space flexibility were balancing somehow the disadvantages.

Indeed, the academic world has changed. Inevitably, the stakeholders learned to work with different tools, they adapted their teaching methods, and often overcome existential fears from getting infected. The impediment in performance can be attributed to a lack of institutional preparedness to cope with the unprecedented Covid–19 pandemic. Also, due to the lack of best practices, and why not, isolation,

Conclusions

In just a few months, the Covid–19 pandemic resulted in the sudden closure of the Romanian universities and moved face-to-face classes to blended or online teaching, which challenged the lives of all participants in the higher education sector. The purpose of this study was to find out the main decisions universities has implemented and what were the implications of these decisions on the professional lives of the stakeholders.

Following our investigation, we assess that the decision of the faculties in choosing between online – blended – offline education, after October 2021, was highly dependent on the positions expressed by the faculty members and students in a consensual manner. We didn't find a clear opposition between stakeholders. On contrary, all the parties worked together efficiently with a single common goal: to return to face-to-face education, even though the new offline is very different from the one we have experienced before 2020. In Romania, similarly to other parts of the world, the Covid–19 pandemic has revealed the gaps in the educational system. As a result, the stakeholders should use this period to reflect and respond. We believe that the educational systems will be evaluated by how the actors respond, cope and recover from the current disruption.

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Annex no. 1. Profiles of the Interviewees

No.	Name/ Initials	Name of the University	Sex	Age	Studied /teach Introduction to social sciences	Profession	Area of research/study/ role	Length of the interview
1	MEL	Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu	F	48	Yes	University teacher	Educational Sciences	60'
2	AM	Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu	F	43	Yes	University teacher	Early education and Inclusive education	45'
3	DV	Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu	F	22	Yes	Student	Educational Sciences	32'
4	MN	Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu	F	21	Yes	Student	Educational Sciences	40'

5	GL	Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu	F	43	No	Administrative staff in the university	University administration	30'
6	IL	Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu	F	53	No	Administrative staff in the university	University administration	25'
7	GA	Other	M	46	No	External stakeholder	Spouse	40'
8	DA	Other	F	52	No	External stakeholder	Parent	50'
9	MN	Other	F	49	No	External stakeholder	Parent	42'
10	CP	University of Bucharest	M	55	Yes	University teacher	Political science	89'
11	RI	University of Bucharest	F	42	Yes	University teacher	Political science	42'
12	IO	University of Bucharest	F	22	Yes	Student	Political science	21'
13	AD	University of Bucharest	F	22	Yes	Student	Political science	40'
14	IC	University of Bucharest	M	53	No	Administrative staff in the university	University administration	42'
15	DD	University of Bucharest	F	38	Yes	Administrative staff in the university	University administration	42'
16	SM	University of Bucharest	F	39	Yes	Administrative staff in the university	University administration	38'
17	MA	Other	M	55	No	External stakeholder	Parent	30'
18	LD	Other	M	52	No	External stakeholder	Sibling	35'
19	DP	Agora University	M	35	Yes	University teacher	Political science	22'
20	LP	Agora University	M	33	Yes	University teacher	Political science	35'
21	AD	Agora University	F	36	Yes	Administrative staff in the university	University administration	25'
22	GM	Other	F	30	No	External stakeholder	Spouse	25'

23	TM	Sapientia University	M	47	Yes	University teacher	Political science	30'
24	SD	Sapientia University	M	45	Yes	University teacher	Political science	62'
25	DP	Sapientia University	F	38	Yes	Administrative staff in the university	University administration	20'
26	RB	Sapientia University	F	38	Yes	Administrative staff in the university	University administration	30'
27	VM	Sapientia University	F	38	Yes	Administrative staff in the university	University administration	25'
28	CF	Sapientia University	M	20	Yes	Student	Political science	31'
29	FM	Sapientia University	M	21	Yes	Student	Political science	27'
30	BB	Sapientia University	F	23	Yes	Student	Political science	20'
31	TF	Other	F	53	No	External stakeholder	Representative of Ministry of higher education	35'
32	DM	Other	M	58	No	External stakeholder	Representative of town hall	35'

Annex no. 2. Profile of the University

University	University of Bucharest	Lucian Blaga University of Sibiu	Agora University	Sapientia University
National ranking (out of 79)	#2	#14	#43	#45
Funding of the institution	Public university	Public university	Private university	Public, externally funded
Location	Bucharest	Sibiu	Oradea	Cluj-Napoca
Total enrolment at the faculty level	2250 students	2 115 students	780 students	120 students
Primary resident students	No (14% international students)	Yes/no (students from the region)	Yes (majority local)	Yes/no (students from the region)

No. of full-time faculty (profile social sciences)	3 150 students	2 115 students	800 students	108 students
Type of teaching pre-COVID	Face-to-face	Face-to-face	Face-to-face	Face-to-face
Type of teaching during COVID	Online	Online	Online/Hybrid	Online/Face-to-face
No. of faculty	40	31	24	29

Annex no. 3. Interview Guide

1 How long was the adaptation phase for online teaching?

2 How well was the faculty prepared for online teaching?

3 Which platforms were used and why?

4 Do you find online/e-learning teaching a convenient method? Why?

5 What changes have occurred in the assessment process and how have the evaluation strategies changed? Please include the strategies used for identity and environment verification.

6 Please tell us more about grading policies.

7 What did and did not students like about online teaching?

8 What was the main reason students did not attend classes? How were they motivated (technical issues, unable to understand, boring, not interested)?

9 Did the stress level increase during online/hybrid teaching?

10 What were the positive and negative effects of the pandemic observed on online learning?

11 How was the recruitment process conceived?

12 How do you see the future of university teaching after COVID?

13 What remains unsatisfactory after COVID crisis in terms of teaching and learning?

14 Are you waiting for your institution to reopen?

Photo/Gábor Csanádi

DEMOCRATIC EFFECTS OF YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT: ROMANIA IN A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE[1]

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Introduction

The global trends of democracy affect how youth bond with people and political institutions. The Varieties of Democracy project (V-Dem) shows a declining trend over the last 10 years or so. It also suggests that the direct impact of the Covid–19 pandemic on democracy has been limited so far. Still, the final toll may turn out to be higher unless restrictions are lifted after the health crisis is over (Alizada et al. 2021). Foa and Mounk argued that young citizens are not just dissatisfied with the performance of particular governments, but they are increasingly critical of established political parties, representative institutions, and minority rights (Foa and Munk 2017). Moreover, the increase of inequality and precariousness have sizeable adverse effects on youth development and personal attributes, such as generalized trust, optimism, self-efficacy, integrity, empathy, positive bonds with institutions and communities. The enhanced parental involvement with their children over the past few decades, alleviated the economic hardship of their offspring, while contributing to widening existent socioeconomic gaps (Negru-Subțirică–Bădescu 2021).

It is within this context that we are investigating the extent that youth civic engagement has pro-democratic merits. Civil society organizations have been associated with several conditions that are said to 'make democracy work'. Across many studies, individuals who are members of associations tend to be more interested in politics, better informed, and more often involved in acts of political participation

than people who are not members of such associations. Additionally, being active in civil society increases the sense that individuals can influence political processes, making them more effective advocates of interests. At the same time, several studies question the ability of volunteer groups to generate positive outcomes, while also doubting the extent to which associations foster pro-democratic values and norms. These sceptical views point to the limited time allocated by citizens to be active in civic groups and the fact that participants tend to be very similar to each other within such groups. Moreover, essential values that sustain a democratic culture, such as tolerance and social trust, are often believed to be shaped during early childhood, with little room for substantial changes during adult life.

Why are we interested in the civic engagement of young people? Youth are important to study because age has been shown to be a strong predictor of a wide range of attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, and because teenagers and young adults tend to change faster when external conditions change. Also, knowing what people do at a young age is essential for the future, since research has shown that volunteering at one point is likely to lead to a higher level of civic engagement for the rest of their life (Jennings–Niemi 2014). Finally, there is a growing interest in giving youth a stronger political voice by lowering the voting age to 16 or lower. The political theorist John Wall, argues in favour of the enfranchisement of all citizens above the age of six, as a means to deepen democracy through better inclusion (Wall 2021).

Although the persistence of adolescents' political attitudes into adulthood is a perennial concern in research on developmental psychology, very few youth studies include non-Western societies. Romania presents several characteristics that justify its importance for studying its young citizens. First, it is a society that faces significant democratic risks. Second, whereas the literature maintains that inequality is harmful to democratic governance (Fukuyama–Diamond–Plattner 2012), Romania has been one of the most unequal countries among the European countries. Third, poverty and inequality are even more severe in the case of Romanian youth than among the general population (Bădescu et al. 2019).

We explore the impact of youth volunteering on civic attitudes in Romania by using a double comparative perspective. Firstly, volunteering in Romania is compared across time, between 2000 and 2018, based on a series of national and international surveys, such as WVS and EVS. Secondly, volunteering in Romania in 2018 is compared to other 9 Southeast European cases: Albania, Bulgaria, the six republics of the former Yugoslavia, and Kosovo. Based on representative samples of youth (ages 14–29), these surveys allow us to evaluate the impact that engagement in different types of associations has on democratic support, tolerance, generalized trust, political interest, and participation.

The structure of the paper is the following: first, we briefly review part of the recent literature documenting the links between associational membership and democratic attitudes, with a focus on youth. We proceed with a discussion on civil society in post-communist countries and an analysis of the specificities of the

Romanian case. The empirical analysis and its results are followed by a conclusion and discussion section.

Associational membership and democratic attitudes

Quality of democracy is believed to be enhanced by the existence of a lively civil society (Diamond–Morlino 2004). Since civil society provides the space for citizens to get together and collectively pursue interests recognized as common, it can become a valuable locus for generating ideas, learning to participate and effectively engaging in activities that affect the wider community. The grass-rooted organizations nested by civil society become essential in this regard. Voluntary associations are described by Almond and Verba (1965: 245) as "the prime means by which the function of mediating between the individual and the state is performed". An active associational life is frequently applauded for its purported positive effects exerted both on participants and on the wider milieu in which they are embedded.

Assessments of individual benefits of associational membership converge around the agreement that participation provides important tools needed in the exercise of an informed citizenry. Along these lines, participants in voluntary organizations are found by Almond and Verba (1965) to have higher civic efficacy, as well as better knowledge about and more interest for politics than those unaffiliated. Such attributes, supplemented by a more intense participation in politics, bring the affiliated member 'close to the model of the democratic citizen' (Almond–Verba 1965: 265). In Putnam's perspective (2000: 367), involvement in voluntary associations equips citizens with "habits of cooperation and public spiritedness, as well as practical skills necessary to partake in public life". According to Warren (2001: 71–77), the benefits produced by associational membership are reflected in participants' "efficacy", "information", "political skills", "civic virtues" and "critical skills".

The positive externalities of associational membership spread well beyond individual level, to the community and society at large. Voluntary associations can contribute to a dynamic public sphere, through giving public saliency to issues that are important for citizens (Warren 2001: 78–80). At societal level, an active civic sector is beneficial in relation to the proper functioning of public institutions (Putnam 1993: 176).

While membership in voluntary associations is valued for its prospected individual and societal benefits, the potential of associative behavior to automatically instill such effects is not undisputed. Newton (1997) and Hooghe (2003a) refer to the limited amount of time allocated by people for activities in organizations, often far less substantial than time spent in other socializing contexts. While limited exposure to the associational context can result in modest socialization effects on participants, further processes impede the delineation of a straightforward impact of membership. For example, in relation to trust, Stolle (1998) and Sønder-

skov (2011) warn against the peril of overlooking the self-selection bias by which individuals with already high levels of social trust are more likely to become members of voluntary associations. Moreover, to the extent that the shaping of civic orientations occurs in individuals' pre-adult life (Galston 2001) and acquired values are characterized by persistence in time, the impact of associational involvement can be further questioned in terms of its strength (Quintelier–Hooghe 2011). In addition, creating bonds with out-groups (and therefore building generalized trust) can be a difficult endeavor if associations offer socializing contexts characterized by homogeneity (Glanville 2004).

Further objections address the weight assigned to voluntary associations in the wider discussion of social capital. For example, Rothstein and Stolle (2003) challenge the thesis that social capital is generated exclusively at micro-level, through activity in voluntary organizations, claiming that the creation of trust, an important element of social capital, is also influenced by the institutional context in which citizens are embedded. From a different perspective, Newton (1997: 579) questions the relative contribution that voluntary organizations can have in the creation of social capital, for which competing sources such as "family, work, education and neighborhood" might be of greater significance.

Notwithstanding the cautions outlined above, the added value of associational membership and participation is not denied or deemed to be futile. We refer in the following to several contributions that share the common interest for scrutinizing the influence of voluntary associations in the creation of social capital and democratic attitudes.

Several attributes of membership (in particular its scope and participants' degree of involvement) are recurrent in analyses looking at the impact of voluntary organization on their members. Wollebæk and Strømsnes (2008: 258) focus on the intensity and scope of membership and find that, while active participation has a modest effect, "the number of affiliations is considerably more important for the level of trust and especially civic engagement". In a previous endeavor, Wollebæk and Selle (2002) also found support for the relevance of multiple memberships in increasing trust and civic engagement. In their study, active participation was a better predictor than passive membership only with respect to social trust and only in the case of young people. For Paxton (2007), multiple memberships are of essence as they define associations' degree of connectedness. In her study, being affiliated to connected associations generates higher trust than partaking in isolated organizations. A different take on appraising membership is used by Hooghe (2003a), who shows that when previous participation in associations is taken into account (in addition to present membership), the impact of associational involvement on democratic attitudes is higher.

Looking at the characteristics of organizations (mission, inner functioning) is a common strategy in the extant literature (Almond–Verba 1965; Stolle–Rochon 1998; Hooghe 2003b; Glanville 2004). Is membership in associations likely to generate the same positive effects for participants, irrespective of the nature of the

organization? The answer does not look definitive and it seems to depend on the type of outcomes chosen as dependent variables. Glanville (2004) focuses on the location (in terms of proximity to members' usual social circles) and the goals of organizations to assess the impact of membership on the density and diversity of participants' social networks. Her study shows that demarcating organizations along these two attributes produces more specified results on the ability of associational membership to foster social integration. In an analysis of voluntary associations membership and its impact on participants' ethnocentrism, the findings supports the tenet that favorable outcomes in relation to social capital are limited to "those associations in which a democratic culture is present" (Hooghe 2003b: 106). Stolle and Rochon (1998) find the type of association to be essential in the relationship between membership and social capital, as organizations operating in various domains are connected to different components of social capital. Furthermore, it is shown that a more diverse composition of organizations is beneficial for building social trust. From a different perspective, Van Deth (2010) finds that the nature of organizations is not always decisive, as his analyses reveal that in comparison to non-members, participants in any kind of organization are more politically engaged and more satisfied with democracy.

Voluntary associations and youth

The argument that membership in voluntary organizations shapes participants' civic attitudes unescapably includes socialization as an explanatory mechanism. The optimist approach builds on the idea that participation is meaningful because it fosters values, knowledge and an appetence for civic or political involvement. The less enthusiastic accounts highlight the frail socialization impact resulting from individuals' limited exposure to associations (both in absolute and relative terms if compared to their other daily whereabouts). Moreover, to the extent that values like trust and tolerance are already shaped in the pre-adult life, there seems to be little room left for associational membership to further mold individuals' democratic orientations.

At the same time, the literature on political socialization agrees that within the process of civic learning, early life stages are important, with childhood and adolescence being relevant time frames for gradually acquiring civic knowledge and skills (Sapiro 2004; Van Deth et al. 2011). On survey data collected from 16-year-old Belgian youth, Quintellier (2008) finds voluntary associations to have socializing effects in relation to political participation, civic participation and political consumerism. The study also reveals multiple memberships to be a relevant aspect in this relation, as well as that the type of organization is decisive for the kind of effects exerted on youth.

An important observation concerns the possibility that self-selection can also occur in the case of young people and that the difficulty to isolate the influence

of family-based civic learning limits the possibility to ascribe subsequent engagement to associational volunteering alone (Wilson–Musick 1999). One way to reduce the ambiguity created by self-selection is to employ longitudinal data. This is the strategy taken by McFarland and Thomas (2006), who use longitudinal data to assess the influence that participation in youth voluntary associations exerts on political participation during the adult years. According to their results, "selective extracurricular involvement in politically salient clubs encourages long-term political involvement seven to twelve years later, and net of a variety of background and selection factors" (McFarland–Thomas 2006: 420). Similarly, Stolle and Hooghe (2004) underline that adolescents' experiences are relevant for understanding the creation of social capital from the perspective of socialization and that while some of these experiences are circumscribed to the school context, further socializing contexts – voluntary associations among them – contribute to youngsters' civic formation. Using panel data, the authors find that early civic experiences continue to be meaningful during adult life, both at attitudinal level (reflected in the level of social trust) and in terms of participation.

Civil society in post-communist countries

Post-communist states have been heavily influenced by Western models in the way in which their local civil societies have been formed and maintained. This transfer of civil society institutions from the West to Europe's post-communist states has been criticized on several levels. Some of the most frequent points of criticism are the excessive emphasis on NGO numbers rather than quality, the concern that the NGOs frequently fail to engage citizens and local and national authorities in a proper dialogue (Grødeland–Aasland 2011), and the dependence of Eastern European NGOs on foreign donors, which leads to discussions concerning their independence. (Grødeland–Aasland 2011; Ban 2014). Grødeland–Aasland (2011) also point out that some NGOs engage in informal practices, thus affecting the output side of democracy, effectively favoring those who are able to approach state institutions informally at the expense of those who are not.

The dependence on foreign sources of funding is also a source of instability for civil society organizations in post-communist states. The adoption of specific milestones (such as accession to the EU) as indicators that a state has completed its transition to a liberal democratic regime often leads to rapid drops in external funding for the NGO sector, due to a lack of local networks of support for these organizations (Vandor et al. 2017; Ban 2014). Moreover, this can push civil society actors in post-communist countries to orient their focus around donor priorities, which may or may not overlap with the issues and concerns of the citizens towards whom civil society actions are addressed. (Vandor et al. 2017).

The positive impact of the creation of civil society institutions and the external flows of funding and expertise towards these institutions, should not be underestimated, however. Analysis on foreign civil society assistance in Poland and Slovakia has shown that strengthening local civil society institutions from abroad is possible, despite the hurdles that may be created by donor interests (Abele 2006). Outside actors can galvanize the rise and development of non-governmental organizations, compensate for the initial lack of power of non-stat actors and help introduce ideas regarding the importance of civil society organizations, but only as far as there are favorable international conditions for providing assistance, as well as local willingness to accept this assistance (Abele 2006).

We can also look towards the importance of underground civil society structures in overthrowing communist dictatorships in Eastern Bloc countries. In Poland, the 'political civil society against the state' helped erode the communist system from within. During the post-communist transition, a substantial part of these underground forms of civil society became the dominating force in the state and led the arduous process of transforming the state. Similarly, in Hungary the nascent self-organizing civil society had filled the gaps left by the recession of the state from the public sphere, in some cases by continuing processes started by communist reformers (Frentzel-Zagorska 1990).

A common theme in the development of civil society within post-communist countries is the focus on liberal values (Matveeva 2008), which are necessary in the face of the region's recent history regarding the overall lack of political freedom, as well as the poor record on issues such as LGBTQ rights, birth control and abortion rights and other similar issues. Thus, the activity of civil society organizations is seen as a solution to societal problems regarding political participation and improving governance and accountability, as well as improving the visibility of the issues of vulnerable groups. External support and empowerment of NGOs and independent media has played a crucial part in the post-communist transition to stable democracies which observe the rule of law and liberal practices (Matveeva 2008).

With countries in the region having faced in the recent past periods of slow economic growth, increased inequality, fiscal austerity policies, among other issues, significant illiberal challenges to post-communist democracies have been raised. As Ekiert (2012) pointed out, in the years following the financial crisis of 2007–2008, these challenges were to be expected especially in countries with national politics dominated by illiberal elites, which push states towards more authoritarian forms of politics. In this authoritarian shift, illiberal actors rely significantly on expanding their control of civil society institutions in order to consolidate their social base of support (Ekiert 2012). In these conditions the continued existence of a liberal segment of civil society acts as an important counterweight, providing at least some resistance towards the further monopolization of power.

Civil society in Romania

Civil society in Romania had a similar start to the rest of the post-communist bloc, with external donors paying a key role in their development and in establishing their agendas, especially with regards to NGOs dedicated to human rights, minorities rights and democratic consolidation. These investments were seen as aid for the consolidation of democracy, but also as a mechanism for setting up overall goals for the nascent Romanian civil society (Grunberg, in Kligman 2000; Ban 2014). The newly discovered freedom of association into profit or non-profit organizations after the fall of the communism seems to have been tempting, as by 1992 about 5000 NGOs were registered in Romania (Johnson–Young 1997), with that number growing throughout the past decade, reaching 127,616 organizations in 2022.[3]

The development of the NGO sector in Romania was particularly important for addressing issues regarding human rights, from NGOs that promoted women's rights, to LGBT+ rights and those of national minorities, which had been overlooked to various degrees under the communist regime but were now on the agenda of various foreign funding organizations. To a certain extent, this influx of external support led to a competition between NGOs for funding, as well as a bureaucratization of their activities, a project-oriented outlook, and the professionalization of activists, with mixed effects on the long-term flourishing of Romanian civil society (Nimu 2018). Beyond external support, universities as well as churches and religious organizations had an important role in cementing Romanian civil society, with university students (together with the academic milieu more generally) and churches becoming significant sources of civic activity (Badescu et al. 2004).

In 2007 Romania acceded to the European Union, an event which marked another shift in the dynamics of Romanian civil society. Some forms of funding became unavailable, especially regarding pre-accession funds that targeted developing democracies, and new directions of development emerged. To a certain extent, the use by external funding organizations of Romania's accession to EU as an indicator of democratic consolidation, left many NGOs without financial support and with a very short period to adjust to this situation (Vandor et al. 2017; Ban 2014).

The growth in the number of NGOs was not accompanied by an improvement in their public image however, as the level of trust that citizens have in civil society institutions has decreased over the years, with this trend accentuating in the late 2010s, when NGOs that promoted human rights came under attack from conservative groups (Enyedi 2020; Pintilescu–Magyari 2020).

This could be best exemplified by the case of the 2018 referendum for introducing an article in the constitution explicitly banning same-sex marriage, which was organized and supported by a coalition of religious groups, conservative NGOs and right-wing politicians ('The Coalition for the Family' – CpF). In the campaign leading up to the referendum, this coalition targeted various pro-LGBT+ organizations and activists, which were portrayed as agents of foreign influence, as being 'Soros-funded', and as undermining Romanian national values, despite the fact

that the groups making up the conservative coalition also came under accusation of having foreign backing, with American Christian conservative groups such the Alliance Defending Freedom and Liberty Counsel providing the CpF campaign with legal assistance, speakers for events, etc. (Ciobanu 2017; Margarit 2019). Interestingly, in such cases we can see the label of 'NGOs' being used as an invective by right-wing populist groups in Romania to portray the more liberal segments of the civil society as an alien, foreign-backed influence on the Romanian public sphere, despite these conservative groups also being NGOs with similar models of financing and support to their progressive counterparts.

More recently, with the increase in internet access (according to one survey 86% of Romanian households have access to internet)[4] the visibility of NGOs has increased, changing the way they can gather funds. Together with the emergence of crowdfunding platforms and simplified online donation mechanisms, which are more popular with younger people, this provides Romanian civil society with new instruments both to ensure fundraising, as well as to improve the overall relationship between the activist milieu and ordinary citizens.

Hypotheses and measures

Previous research revealed age to be an important predictor of associational involvement, with a non-linear effect, as the middle-aged individuals appear more prone than the young or the elderly to join and be active in voluntary organizations (Curtis et al. 1992; 2001). These results indicate life stages influences on volunteering, which capture the variability of opportunities and time for associational involvement. Our data refers to a young population, making it likely for the relationship between age and volunteering to escape previously found patterns. With this in mind, we expect that:

H1: Controlling for educational and occupational status, age has a positive effect on volunteering.

Our analysis explores the impact that activity in voluntary associations exerts over a number of outcomes that are discussed in the literature in relation to their pro-democratic benefits: generalized trust, social tolerance, support for a democratic regime, political interest and political participation.

Generalized trust describes the confidence placed generally in people (Uslaner 2002), with the important characteristic of being 'abstract' (Newton 2007: 344) thus not grounded in a profound knowledge of the others. As it facilitates openness towards one's fellows, trust is an important resource for cooperation and shared political action (Almond–Verba 1965). High trusting communities can be supportive of a democratic environment because 'the culture of trust encourages tolerance" (Sztompka 1997: 10). In line with the social capital literature (Putnam 1993, 2000) that highlights the potential of associations to foster generalized trust, we expect that:

H2: Volunteering has a positive effect on generalized trust.

Next, we tackle the issue of social tolerance, which broadly designates the willingness to accept people who are different than oneself. Having at its core a positive outlook towards the existence and expression of diversity, social tolerance can refer to the acceptance of minorities, such as ethnic groups (Weldon 2006), as well as to the readiness of accommodating "diverse lifestyles" (Norris 2002: 158). For that reason, social tolerance is an important democratic norm that sustains the recognition and inclusion of various social groups. Voluntary organizations can facilitate socializing experiences that promote learning about out-groups and open broader horizons of interactions, therefore we test whether:

H3: Membership in voluntary organizations has a positive effect on social tolerance.

Citizens' attachment to democracy as the best form of government is important particularly in contexts where democracy is still in its young age (Shin 2007). While it seems reassuring that widespread support for democratic principles has not waned in the face of disappointment towards the practical malfunctions of democracies (Norris 1999), attachment to democratic values continues to be a critical issue, perhaps even more so in the post-communist area, lately marked by illiberal leanings (Halmai 2021). We include support for democracy in our analysis, on the grounds that civic engagement reflects the recognition of the associational freedom that democracies only provide. Therefore, our next hypothesis is:

H4: Volunteering has a positive effect on support for democratic regimes.

Political interest can act as a strong drive for citizens' participation, in this sense being an important determining factor of voting (Verba et al. 1995). Moreover, interest for political matters often co-occurs with better knowledge of public issues (Galston 2001), which is relevant from the perspective of an informed and active citizenry. Involvement in voluntary organizations can be a valuable source for extending one's awareness and understanding of community and for stimulating further concern for public matters. Consequently, we expect that:

H5: Volunteering has a positive effect on political interest.

Often associated with interest in politics, political participation covers a wide range of purposeful activities that citizen perform in view of influencing outcomes at different levels of public life (Newton–Giebler 2008; Van Deth 2014). While political participation is an important ingredient of democracies as it provides the channels for citizen involvement in and response to political outcomes, it is also a valuable source for the shaping of democratic attitudes (Quintelier–Van Deth 2014). Volunteering already reflects a propensity for action and opening towards involvement, which is why we anticipate that:

*H6:* Volunteering stimulates political participation.

Data analyses

Our analyses use several survey datasets. Firstly, volunteering in Romania is compared across time, between 2000 and 2018, based on a series of national and international surveys, such as WVS and EVS. Secondly, volunteering in Romania in 2018 is compared to other 9 Southeast European cases: Albania, Bulgaria, the six republics of the former Yugoslavia, and Kosovo. These surveys were conducted face to face, and are based on representative samples of youth, ages 14–29. The Romanian sample has 1048 respondents, whereas the total sample has 10909.

Volunteering in Romania over time

A previous analysis that assessed 12 surveys conducted between May 2000 and October 2009 found that compared to other age categories, young Romanians tend to volunteer less often than middle-age people, and more often than older people (Badescu 2011). However, in the last two waves of the WVS/EVS surveys, conducted in 2012 and 2018, age and membership are negatively correlated: r =-0.06* in 2012 and r=-0.12*** in 2018 *(Figure 1)*. Among the respondents between 18-15, 45% volunteered in 2012 (compared to 35% for the entire sample), and 51% in 2018 (compared to 30% for the entire sample).

Figure 1. Age and membership to at least one association in Romania. EVS 2018.
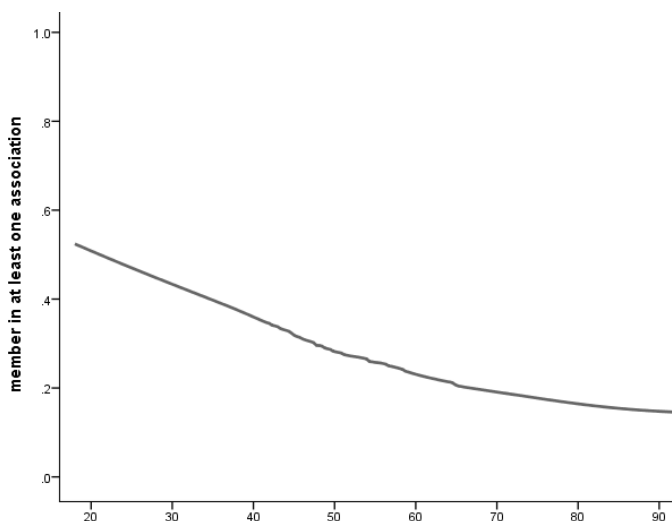
Taken together, all of these results indicate a growing level of volunteering among the Romanian youth, both in relative and absolute terms. For this reason, it is worth zooming in on representative surveys on youth, such as the FES 2018 survey data.

Measuring volunteering. Issues of validity

Only 12% of the young adults (18–29 years old) in the FES data declare that have been involved in volunteer activities, compared to 45% in the EVS data. One possible reason is that the EVS measure is based on self-reporting membership to a list of 11 types of voluntary organizations, including religious organizations (it is only 30% without religious organizations). More important, FES data refer only to the last 12 months, whereas EVS do not mention a time limit.[5]

Romania in a comparative perspective

When compared to other South East European countries in our dataset, Romania has one of the lowest proportions of volunteers, higher only than in Bulgaria and Croatia. At the same time, the proportion of those who are interested in politics is lower only in Albania. Social tolerance and political participation have higher values than in Romania in six of the countries from the region (Table 1).

Table 1. Measures of volunteering, interest in politics, social tolerance, political participation, trust in people of other religions, trust in people with other political views, and trust in people of other ethnicities, across 10 South East European countries.

	Volunteer-ing (%)	Interest in politics (not interested at all, %)	Social tolerance	Political participa-tion	Trust in people of other religions	Trust in people with other political views	Trust in people of other eth-nicities
Albania	19	67	0,66	0,25	2,9	2,2	2,6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	13	62	0,75	0,30	3,3	3	3,3
Bulgaria	9	52	0,63	0,30	2,6	2,8	3
Croatia	7	44	0,59	0,38	3,3	3,1	3,3
Kosovo	16	59	0,72	0,43	3,1	2,5	2,8
Macedonia	20	49	0,68	0,80	3,1	2,6	3,2
Montenegro	20	63	0,65	0,40	3,4	2,9	3,3
Romania	**12**	**64**	**0,63**	**0,36**	**2,5**	**2,2**	**2,7**
Serbia	22	61	0,64	0,40	3	2,7	3,2
Slovenia	33	48	0,62	0,68	3	2,8	3,2

Across the three measures of generalized trust, Romania has the lowest values among the 10 countries *(Table 1)*.

When the ten countries are compared in terms of attitudes toward several types of political regimes, Romania has one of the lowest proportion of respondents who agree that democracy is a good form of government, and has middle positions with regards of the agreement for each of the following statements: "Under certain circumstances dictatorship is a better form of government than democracy", "We should have a leader, who rules (COUNTRY) with a strong hand for the public good", and "A strong party representing the common folk in general, is what we need in (COUNTRY) right now" *(Table 2)*.

Table 2. Attitudes toward political regimes, across 10 South East European countries.

	Democracy is a good form of government in general			Under certain circumstances dictatorship is a better form of government than democracy			We should have a leader, who rules (COUNTRY) with a strong hand for the public good			A strong party representing the common folk in general, is what we need in (COUNTRY) right now		
	1 Disagree	2	3 Agree	1 Disagree	2	3 Agree	1 Disagree	2	3 Agree	1 Disagree	2	3 Agree
Albania	9.28	16.52	74.19	59.55	15.92	24.53	12.21	15.97	Agree	6.75	14.27	78.97
Bosnia and Herzegovina	11.45	23.22	65.33	37.96	26.30	35.74	11.02	16.36	72.62	9.72	19.33	70.95
Bulgaria	8.00	17.67	74.33	63.17	19.76	17.07	13.33	20.78	65.89	6.21	15.36	78.43
Croatia	7.15	26.51	66.34	53.17	26.22	20.61	19.64	28.65	51.71	7.97	23.63	68.40
Kosovo	12.24	22.63	65.13	54.89	26.57	18.54	10.80	25.66	63.54	10.20	27.36	62.44
Macedonia	13.82	22.70	63.48	64.41	18.13	17.45	11.03	17.69	71.29	13.16	18.34	68.50
Montenegro	17.59	19.50	62.91	51.28	13.81	34.91	22.61	13.84	63.55	15.19	13.81	71.01
Romania	17.11	25.08	57.81	50.22	26.90	22.88	19.44	21.05	59.51	15.43	19.24	65.33
Serbia	21.57	31.91	46.52	58.89	20.21	20.90	32.25	22.02	45.73	22.67	25.58	51.74
Slovenia	17.41	30.24	52.35	52.62	25.98	21.40	40.58	29.27	30.16	18.60	26.04	55.36
	12.93	23.71	63.36	54.72	22.49	22.79	18.78	21.70	59.52	12.05	20.68	67.26

Volunteering and age

In the FES survey data, volunteering declines with age: the proportion of respondents who declare that have volunteered is 17% among 14–17 years old, 13% among 18–24 years old, 10% among 25–29 years old. These results resonate with a study on youth participation in the EU (Kitanova 2020), which found that younger

persons are more likely to partake in organizations. However, when the sample is split between respondents who are in school or university and others the effect of age changes: the correlation is positive and statistically significant (0.13, p = 0.01) among those who are in school or university, and is close to zero among those who left school.

Volunteering and democratic attitudes

The hypotheses on the relationship between volunteering and democratic attitudes are only partially confirmed. Our results reveal no significant effects of volunteering on generalized trust, tolerance and measures of support for democratic regimes across three age categories (14–17, 18–24, 25–29). There are, however, two notable exceptions, as the analysis reveals a positive effect on trust among the 25–29 group as well as positive effects on tolerance among the 14–17 age group.

Volunteering is found to have a positive effect on political participation (an aggregated index of five forms of participation), across all three age categories, with the strongest effect among the 25–29 years old. Moreover, there is a positive effect of volunteering on political interest.

Table 2. Regression models for political interest, social tolerance, political participation, generalized trust, agreement with the statement 'Democracy is a good form of government in general', and with 'Under certain circumstances dictatorship is a better form of government than democracy', as the dependent variables, across three age categories (14–17, 18–24, 25–29): unstandardized b shown.

Age		Political interest	Tolerance	Political participation	Trust	Democracy is good	Dictatorship is good
14–17	Gender	-0.21	0.04	-0.12	0.18	-0.02	0.06
	Parents' education	0.38***	0.00	0.07	0.88**	0.11	0.05
	Type of locality	0.00	0.00	-0.04	-0.42	-0.04	-0.17
	Volunteering	0.46*	0.07	0.38*	-0.28	-0.07	0.07
18–24	Gender	0.14	-0.06*	0.08	-0.55	-0.06	0.50*
	Parents' education	0.00	0.00	0.08	0.58**	0.00	0.04
	Type of locality	-0.07	0.01	0.02	-0.21	-0.15*	-0.07
	Volunteering	0.21	-0.02	0.44**	-0.85	-0.08	-0.33
	Education	0.34*	-0.03	0.25*	0.21	0.11	0.13

	Gender	0.11	-0.03	0.02	-0.25	-0.20	0.53**
	Parents' education	-0.05	-0.02	0.01	0.01	-0.07	0.07
25–29	Type of locality	-0.03	0.01	-0.02	0.04	-0.08	-0.01
	Volunteer-ing	0.34	0.05	0.78***	0.97	-0.05	-0.12
	Education	0.33**	-0.02	0.31***	0.86**	0.24*	-0.20

Conclusion and discussions

The study of youth engagement in civil society as a form of participation is important as younger people have been shown to prefer nontraditional forms of participation (Norris 2003; Spannring et al. 2008; Sloam 2013) and to get involved with organizations with principles and beliefs closer to their own.

In the context of South Eastern European countries, results related to Romanian youth draw a disconcerting picture both from the perspective of participation in volunteering and in relation to adherence to pro-democratic attitudes. Outcomes related to the impact of volunteering on democratic attitudes are mixed but they to tend to describe a positive impact: we find that volunteering has positive effects on political interest and political participation, with trust, tolerance and support for democratic regimes being largely untouched by youth's associational behavior.

The revealed lack of effect of volunteering on tolerance (with the exception of the youngest group 14–17) suggests that volunteering carries a modest potential for modelling accepting attitudes. This result can be interpreted, on the one hand, in relation to studies showing that tolerant attitudes tend to be shaped early in life and are rather resistant to later change (Miller–Sears 1986). Alternatively, the explanation could focus on the attributes of organizations rather than on members' already crystallized opinions. From this perspective, it's worthwhile to look at the type of organizations, the range of meaningful contacts with diversity that it provides, as well as members' exposure to relevant learning experiences.

On a confident note, the positive impact of volunteering on political participation and interest in politics casts an optimist light on the potential of associational membership to foster an active citizenry that is informed and engaged politically. An alternative understanding could be that the positive effect does not necessarily reflect the formative role of associations (since many such organizations are active in areas loosely related to political topics or aims) but rather a process of self-selection, whereby young people who are prone to be active and engaged partake in both civic and political forms of action.

The overall results found on Romanian youth differ in part from those of a 2004 study comparing general public samples with members of associations in Romania and the Republic of Moldova (Badescu–Sum–Uslaner 2004).

The above mentioned research found that in Romania, the most active members of organizations were more trusting of other people than the general public. Additionally, volunteers, especially those highly engaged, were found to be more tolerant (supporting the right of minorities and unpopular groups to hold public meetings and being more tolerant of these groups as neighbours). The findings of our present study are similar to those from Badescu, Sum and Uslaner (2004) in that volunteers are more participative and more interested in politics.

Comparable results can be found in a more recent study on the Romanian youth, based on 2008 data, which found that group members tend to be more often involved in political participation acts and more interested in politics (Badescu 2011). The same study revealed that volunteers did not differ in political tolerance, while social trust was higher only among the oldest respondents (18–19 years) and not different among the other age groups.

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[2] All authors have contributed equally.

[3] https://www.just.ro/registrul-national-ong/

[4] https://www.statista.com/statistics/377760/household-internet-access-in-romania/

[5] FES: Have you engaged in voluntary activity over the last 12 months, i.e. have you done any unpaid work voluntarily?

EVS: Now I am going to read out a list of voluntary organizations; for each one, could you tell me whether you are a member, an active member, an inactive member or not a member of that type of organization?

Types of organizations: religious organization; education, arts, music or cultural activities; labour unions; political parties; conservation, the environment, ecology, animal rights; professional associations; sports or recreation; consumer groups; other groups; humanitarian or charitable organization; self-help group, mutual aid group.

Photo/Gábor Csanádi

A Situation Report of the Transylvanian Civil Sphere in the Information Society

Cristina Brînzan-Antal–Szidónia Rusu

Introduction

◼ As a result of Industrial Revolution and the rapid development of technology, important social changes were taking place, which significantly changed the conceptual framework used in previous researches.

As a result of the social processes generated by modernity, a strongly pluralistic society is emerging, consisting of groups with different perceptions, different worldviews and different interests. These groups have different abilities and can participate in the functioning mechanisms of society in many ways. According to this, the most important actor in the informational society is not the impersonal state, but the grouping of individuals, the community of actions. In this context the important question comes up: how these groups can communicate and represent their needs and interest in a changing environment (Tomka 2007). Or what kind of networks they organize into, how they communicate these interests both vertically and horizontally?

Regarding to this perspective, civil society means a bottom-up society where different group of interests find their best ways of expressing themselves and the way how they live together with other groups that have their own way of expressing themselves too. The aim of civil society is thus to assert its interests over the interests of bureaucracy and monopoly systems, through bottom-up values of self-empowerment of individuals, groups, low-level communities and institutions, so it has a significant role to play in the democratization process (Cohen 1994)

Gordon White (2007) summarizes this process in four points: on the one hand, civil society shifts the balance of power in favor of society over the state. We can even give historical examples of this function, when civic movements freed many areas from state repression and control. On the other hand, it also plays a kind of oversight role over the state, mainly in terms of the accountability of civil servants. Thirdly, civil society plays an important mediating role between the state and society itself, and this can also be seen in the conciliation process. Finally, civil society itself can enrich itself with institutions that provide predictable and legitimate answers to certain questions generated by society (Héjja n.y.).

It is impossible not to notice that in recent decades, in parallel with global processes, new social movements and demonstrations are gaining in value, who are also using information and communication tools very effectively to achieve their goals (Castells 1998).

In this context our present study has set two important goals. On the one hand, to present in a descriptive way the main development trends of the Hungarian civil sphere in Transylvania, as well as the current situation and parameters of a cross-sectional nature during the COVID–19 pandemic. On the other hand, the research also aimed to map the info-communication tools and networks that connect and form nodes between civil society actors in cyberspace, as well as their offline benefits.

Civil sphere in Transylvania

Since 1989, the country's civil society has developed a number of positive features. One of the main strengths of civil society is the formal development of the sector. Continuous development of the number of registered organizations (the number of associations – also the most common form of organization – increased from 36 997 in 2008 to 46 112 in April 2010 and the number of foundations in all areas from 16 181 in 2008 to 16 956 in April 2010, even if a significant proportion of them are inactive or sporadically active, points out that there are important resources that this third sector can mobilize (Gébel 2011).

According to Bodó Barna's (2015) study on minorities, the minority civil sphere includes organizations that have been established by the minorities themselves or that formulate goals for improving the situation of the minority. Local communities are capable of self-organization and could be called guardians of democracy because they are making good use of their freedom and more and more NGOs are working on different topics.

The role of NGOs in the decision-making process and communication

The aim of this chapter is to show, without claiming to be exhaustive, how NGOs are involved, how they influence decision-making, and what the background was. We accept the hypothesis that non-governmental organizations are closer to the citizens in terms of local decision-making and local government bodies, and have more knowledge about a problem or challenge affecting certain civilians than a local administrative, political institution. NGOs are created for a purpose, which is usually to find an answer to a social question. Just as it can be a service, such as helping certain people on the periphery of the social fabric, or organizing events that reach a certain layer and replace or complement an existing but incomplete public service, such as social services, education, the poor help. It can also be said that the non-profit, civil sphere is an intermediate sector between the state / government and the market (Kuti 1991).

The civic sphere also had its own historical developmental history, as can be read below. The Communication from the Commission of the European Communities of 1997 (Communication from the Commission on the Promotion of the Role of Voluntary Organizations and Foundations in Europe. Brussels, 6 June 1997 COM (97) 241 final) highlighted the role of the following factors: in the development of the civil sector:

1. a II. general prosperity after World War II, which has led to an increase in leisure time available;
2. in most of Europe's economies, there was a clear shift in services in the 1980s. towards;
3. newer and newer needs are gaining existence, and more and more new ones are becoming social (eg gender equality, protection of the biosphere, etc.);
4. the employment crisis in the late 1970s and 1980s led to the launch of employment programs involving voluntary organizations;
5. the changing demographic structure of Europe (increasing rates of retirement and unemployment) is forcing Member States to increasingly shift certain services to the private and corporate sectors in order to reduce public spending.

As we can see, through the above list, the strengthening of the civil sphere was accompanied by the development of society and the welfare state. They interact with each other. Using an example, the international organization called *Greenpeace*, as well as smaller organizations protecting various environments, civil society groups can show strength, one of the results of which in Romania is the prevention of gold mining in Roşia Montană. It was a successful civic coalition that saved the Roşia Montană environment from a mining intervention that blamed nature and, as a form of social tension and displeasure, took the form of a wave of protests across the country. country. In view of this, the then ruling political elite abandoned the decision and did not start mining.

Its relationship with the market or the private sector can be an alternative to the autonomy of civilians vis-à-vis government (Priller-Zimmer 2001). Indeed, the international or internal subsidies of companies, enterprises can free the civil sphere from the excessive use of public crutches. Undoubtedly, the actors and winners of the fresh post-communist market economy with no social profile at all, the new owner or manager, respectively. to measure the 'philanthropy' of the middle classes by combining the long-standing and open wolf laws of capitalism with a centuries-old tradition of socio-cultural norms, cultures of donation, aid, association and self-help. However, what is already a fairly well-illustrated reality is the system of state and semi-state regulations (foundations, tax regulations, government expectations, church aspiration, etc.) that extends beyond government and allows civil society actors to form and operate NGOs stimulate the provision of resources for their operation (Kuti 1998).

Non-profits can make a meaningful contribution to the decision-making process with their knowledge and independent expertise. This recognition has for some time encouraged governments at different levels from the local to the regional level to the national level, as well as various international institutions, to build on the experience and competencies of NGOs in the design and implementation of policies. This is because NGOs enjoy the trust of their membership and the wider society when they voice their concerns, represent their interests and take up issues, thus making a fundamental contribution to policy-making.

In order to maintain a constructive relationship, NGOs and the various levels of government must work together according to a set of general principles:

– *Participation:* NGOs collect and express the views of their members, the various user groups and the citizens concerned. This contribution brings fundamental values to the policy-making process, enhancing the quality, understanding, and long-term applicability of policy initiatives. A prerequisite is that the participation process is open and accessible and based on generally accepted parameters of participation.
– *Trust:* An open and democratic society is based on a sincere interaction between different actors and sectors. As NGOs and individual authorities play different roles, the common goal of improving the quality of human life can only be achieved satisfactorily if it is based on trust, including transparency, mutual respect and mutual trust.
– *Accountability and transparency:* Acting in the public interest requires openness, accountability, clarity and accountability on the part of both NGOs and public authorities –as well as transparency at all levels.
– *Independence:* NGOs should be recognized as free and independent entities in terms of their objectives, decisions and activities. They have the right to act independently and to take positions that differ from those of the authorities with which they might otherwise cooperate.

In conclusion, as one of the results of democratic development, non-governmental organizations strengthen the institution of democratic decision-making and thus form a pole that can resist both political and economic excesses and represent the interests of civilians and citizens. The sector has the social capital to help the current elite to respond appropriately to societal challenges. We also consider that the development of non-governmental organizations, and the widest possible existence of them, will help to successfully leave the communist past in Central and Eastern Europe and strengthen these democracies in terms of development. The active involvement of civilians, thanks to their role, can help them to develop the right answers to vital questions that contribute to better living conditions. They also have an additional role to play for those living in minority lives by slowing down or reversing the assimilation of the majority of society and replacing the institutional system. We can think here of education, faith, organizing events, or just actions that draw attention to an important public issue.

Civil sphere in the information society

The study of the relationship between the information society and the civil sphere is justified by raising legitimate questions about both the use of info communication technologies and the role of civil society. One question is how the use of new info communication tools will change decision-making processes in local and national political and social affairs and what scope it will provide for the implementation of citizens' initiatives. The other is how can NGOs be involved in decision-making in a way that can most effectively convey specific civic resources?

The way in which actors are present in the online field, and the extent to which they are an imprint of their offline presence, can also be grasped by a consistent attitude towards society, life and culture, which Bourdieu defines as a habit. Habitus defines and characterizes the behavioral and manifestational forms of different social classes. The spread of digital technology has paved new paths for both field theory and habitus (Martin 2003). On the one hand, the online field appears, which also has its own internal rules, the space for certain lifestyles, which is most manifested in consumer preferences (Ignatow–Robinson 2017). The online penetration of the civil sphere, its communication strategies, its online power relations and its platform and online community organization strategies can also be captured with these concepts. In the course of the research, the question was how Hungarian NGOs in Transylvania are present on online social platforms, what is the digital field they cover, and what patterns can be discovered regarding their digital habitus?

The role of social media and the transformation of information

The appearance of Web 2.0, and exponentially increasing trends of social media use, being one of the most important source of information has become significantly more valuable in recent years and has changed and expanded the possibilities of information spread (Pepitone 2010). We use social media not only to communicate, but also to seek up-to-date information on serious topics such as what to do and survival strategies in the event of an epidemic (Sutter 2010).

Social media-oriented information consumption, as an adapted Bourdieu concept, also presupposes a digital habitus, as it requires interactivity, reciprocity, and engagement from the user. In contrast, traditional media sources (such as 'print' media and 'broadcast' media) deliver content to their users in a linear story structure, without the possibility of interactivity, direct feedback, and the layer of opinion and information providers consists mainly of professionals (journalists, reporters, editors). In many cases, traditional media sources are also covered by social media sources, and in the face of technological challenges and possible disruptions, news in social media can spread virally and faster than through other channels. Another feature of social media as a source of information is that the user is not only a consumer, but also a collaborative, content-creating one, so social media is based on the basic features of Web 2.0 and is intended to utilize collective intelligence and collective knowledge in some way (Bunz 2010).

One of the most important questions in this context will be how aware the user (be it an individual or, in our case, an institution), how and by what means and dimensions he or she judges perceived sources and how he or she can convey his or her own message as authentically and widely as possible. The other important question in social media-oriented information transfer is who will be the most intensive consumers and what skills and abilities will this actual content producers have? Those who can compete with hype cycles, gradually changing and emerging information channels? In a rapidly changing and evolving social media application environment, it would be difficult to determine which applications will still be available by the time media researchers begin to explore the topic from a scientific perspective at all. The exponential growth of the Tik Tok application, especially during a pandemic, and its current more than 800 million active users, suggest that this technology is still far from user frustrated and could serve as a reflection of an active young generation with digital habits (Anderson 2020). In this context, where artificial intelligence, cloud-native platforms and interactive social media applications are gaining ground, the transfer of information and the rapid adaptation to change of online organizations active and active in the online space must also be matched by bottom-up movements. to be able to consume and transmit social media information as well.

Web 2.0 and non-profit organizations

In terms of communication, collaboration, user engagement, involvement and fundraising opportunities, non-profit organizations become more and more aware of the Web 2.0 resources and potentials. The social media platforms provide an outstanding opportunity for non-profit organizations to enlarge their communities and to activate them (Springer 2014). The new media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Tik Tok, Instagram or YouTube are very high rated opportunities for NGO-s in order to build an online community support. As we mentioned previously, the Web 2.0 communication is more an interactive one, which requires engagement from both sides (givers and information receivers). However, for instance Twitter is considered as a great form of one-way communication (due to its short message services), which can be a good tool for stakeholders and NGO leaders to communicate their interests, but some researches also highlight that, non-profits are using it in an ineffectively way (Lovejoy–Waters fourthcoming). One of the most preferred and used platforms not only in marketing area, but in network building as well, is Facebook. Non-profit organizations are using this social media platform not only for information dissemination, but for public engagement and building relationships too. Thanks to the new forms of information spreading platforms, Tik Tok and YouTube have also become among the preferred platforms for organizational usage. Some case studies found out that video streams are used by nonprofits to inform and educate about their mission, services and programs, but does not include fundraising, or volunteering opportunities too.

Research methodology

Our research methodology is based on two important dimensions. In order to shape the Hungarian Transylvanian civic sphere and highlight the most important participation and communication indicators, we based our analyze on a quantitative, online survey-based research in accordance with the guidelines set by previous surveys and quantitative research databases of the entire Hungarian civil sector in Transylvania in a way that is partly comparable but also complementary to the results of previous research (Kiss 2009). The present research was preceded by a pilot study in 2019–2020, which aimed to assess the activities of non-governmental organizations in three scattered counties, the relationship with the local government and the church, and on the other hand, provide methodological and sampling guides for the preparation of a civilian survey at Transylvanian level. In this analyse we will take as a comparative stample two additional pilot studies too, made in 2021 (Kovács–Brînzan 2022).

Another dimension of the research was the analyse of online presence and networking of non profits. On the one hand, we used the desk research and content analyse methodology for mapping the presence of NGOs on the virtual platforms,

and on the other hand, we used the NodeXL graphing software to analyse the social network of the YouTube channel of the most active and online most social platforms in Transylvania, and highlight it as a case study.
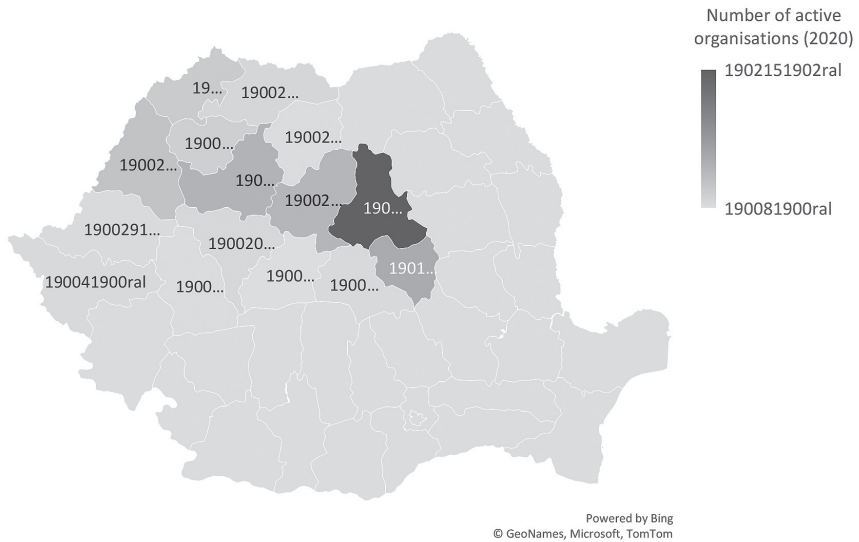
Main conclusions and topics of non-profit researches

The general goal of the Hungarian Cultural Society of Transylvania (later HCST) in 2021 was to map the strata of Hungarian houses,[1] non-governmental organizations, communities operating in public settlements in Transylvania that could be activated for public cultural purposes, to assess the resumption or upgrading of public cultural work, the human resources needed to modernize it, thereby activating them and also aiming to launch a local gate opening program. With the survey, HCST mapped the situation of Hungarian public cultural organizations and Hungarian houses in Transylvania, how they contribute to the promotion and preservation of the cultural values of minority communities, especially in the case of Hungarian communities from Transylvania counties.

We have also associated specific goals with all of the above general objectives. We planned to survey the current situation of the Hungarian houses operating in the Transylvanian counties of 11 (+ Mureş county), as well as in Bacău county and Bucharest, as a result of which the activation and encouragement to open the gates of the organizations that are no longer operating can begin. The establishment of this is ensured by consultation with and discussions with local communities. In each case, in order to be able to achieve success, we wanted to call on the help of a DAHR official, teacher and church leader who is well acquainted with the settlement in question. Determining the dynamic, stagnant or lagging nature of Hungarian houses on the basis of measurable, verifiable, traceable quantitative and professional, quality indicators compiled and defined on a single data sheet is also a specific goal of the action plan, as well as We also considered it an important task to determine the current role and position of the community. In order to move on, we set the search for active, willing people to own the community culture tools of community organization as a key goal, and together with them to determine the existing local resources and the conditions necessary for restarting. We planned to involve 21 persons and institutions in the process of conducting the survey and in the task of opening the gate.

Prior to the data collection, HCST staff first cleaned up the database of NGOs using the existing databases of HCST and Erdélystat.ro, as well as a previous group Domus survey, which was updated by dr. Bodó Barna and Brînzan-Antal Cristina (2021). The figure below shows the number of active NGOs by county.

1. figure. Map of the non-governmental organizations of the examined counties

Number of active
organisations (2020)

1902151902ral

190081900ral

Powered by Bing
© GeoNames, Microsoft, TomTom

Source: Domus Scholarship: Constraints and Breakpoints – Manuscript, Erdelystat.ro, HCST database

In order to map the NGOs by their type of activity, we used an already existing NGO database developed in previous research, with the help of which we were able to contact the active NGOs. The catalog of the Hungarian cultural associations in Transylvania was compiled from Erdelystat.ro and on the basis of the data of the National NGO Register of the Ministry of Justice. Another very important database considered for the research is the Hungarian social network database created by Dániel Botond. It is important to mention this because the hungarian social institutional system in Transylvania is considered as a part of the Hungarian minority institutional system (Dániel 2018).

By analyzing the National Register of Civil Organizations of the Ministry of Justice, we identified 670 Hungarian cultural associations in Transylvania, which were registered between 1990 and 2008 (Gébel 2011). In the e compiled a catalog of these associations by filling in the information provided in the register (name, registration number, county), with data on the place of operation and the website of the association. In the Federation of Hungarian Non-Governmental Organizations in Transylvania civil yearbook we collected 755 cultural organizations (Bodó–Brînzan 2020).

Main aggregate results and civic involvement of non-profit sphere

As one of the main results of previous pilot researches and data collection we can assume that in the diaspora the local community is incapable of survival, unable to preserve its identity from the internal strength of the community, unable to reproduce ethnically locally. The result of the process is a decrease in the number of ethnic groups, a 'ethnic decline', a gradual acceleration of the process, all of which may lead to a weakening and then cessation of the social, economic and cultural role of that community. These processes can be stopped in part by NGOs. Considering that the cultural content necessary for ethnic survival in the context of dispersal is provided by NGOs in addition to the school and the church, a conscious community policy should have more NGOs operating in such a situation than in an array or frontline where local institutions also have a Hungarian cultural offer. This, in turn, runs into a personal constraint, as the local elite is sparse and there are no personal conditions to run NGOs.

It is generally concluded that continuity is a fundamental issue in all community building activities. This continuity is ensured for municipalities (with the exception of a crisis). The community-building activities of NGOs, churches, and schools depend on several factors, perhaps the most important of which is responsibility and expertise. For civilians, there are two local reasons for positive cultural processes: demand and scarcity. Something is missing and then people with expertise are sought and then someone undertakes to raise funds. These activities are very person-dependent in a civilian context.

The unavailability of organizations, the lack of interest of Members, the postponement or outright refusal to respond, despite the fact that all the positives and benefits of usability in the call are due in part to the lack of a proper human base. At the same time, those who dealt with the survey at the local level almost without exception stated in their report that they felt the survey and the goal set out in the action plan were interesting, useful and important. This is also reflected in their work and efforts.

Online paths of institutions and organizations, media coverage and partners

As the Hungarian NGOs in Transylvania mostly organize their activities on the Internet due to the coronavirus epidemic, the question arises how do the NGOs engaged in cultural and public education activities communicate their programs and events? Based on the empirical data collection of a master's thesis by a HCST employee Kovács Lilla Nóra (2022), we examined the communication of NGOs during the coronavirus epidemic.

During the survey based on the online footprint and media coverage of the institutions and organizations present and accessible in the diasporic counties, we found out that many organizations do not have a Facebook page or website. There is also a significant number of organizations (otherwise operating in principle) where we could not find contact information, current news or posts on Facebook or the official website. Organizations that have an active social media interface

will share an entry, either multiple times a week, but for each event, occasionally, or when needed (daily, sometimes when weekly, biweekly). Due to the positive experience that many young people work and occasionally volunteer with organizations, this examination of the social media platforms usage habits shows that organizations that reach teenagers who are in these early twenties or younger ones.

The coronavirus epidemic has affected the online appearance of non-profits with two opposite results. Some have completely or almost completely ceased or suspended their activities, and others have relocated a significant portion of their activities to the online space, increasing their online activity. However, this does not significantly change the proportion of active-passive organizations.

The online footprint of the organizations was also examined based on media appearances. In our experience, the majority of the organizations' own reports and online press releases about a major event are in the majority, but these are only true for organizations with significant activity. Although not an indicator of the online presence of organizations, the information available to them on the website of the Ministry of Finance is the time when the organization last submitted its balance sheet to the Tax and Finance Office. For most unreachable organizations, we have found that accounting has not been submitted in the last 5 years (can be found on the indicated website so far).

Involvement of activable persons and organizations

A significant number of NGOs in the sample counties do not have the resources to operate continuously throughout the year. They focus their activities on the realization of the goal or one or two tasks undertaken, in addition, they are on a saving flame. According to Dénes Kiss's (2010) research, 30% of organizations do not have a headquarters, and the situation has not changed since then. Also, about 30% of them do not have adequate office equipment to operate. It is also expedient to entrust the coordination of events and trainings to the person who has the most experience in this field, both in organizing and conducting it, and a person with creativity, sophistication and a sense of beauty is best suited to handle image issues. These require separate human and material resources. The solution could be to create a flexible, modular training structure, and to provide an e-learning and training materials for non-governmental organizations in order to catch up digitally.

As the epidemic is expected to hinder the organization of traditional, live big events for some time to come, and many are afraid of meeting many people, one way to activate it could be to help online proficiency so that sleeping organizations can be launched online in the first place.

The lack of a strategy is a major concern for this kind of sustainability. As a result of our previously mentioned survey based quantitative analyze we have developed an adapted business strategic model, in order to help NGOs to make proper use of

their resources to achieve their lasting success. In order for the strategic approach to prevail within the organization and to lead to effective operation, it is necessary to strictly define the norms of behavior and internal values of the members and other contributors for the longer term. A successful strategy requires clarification of the guiding principles, the main goals for long-term survival, the directions of the formation of the scope of operation, the possibilities of diversification and the hierarchy of the goal-tool. NGOs have goals and long-term responsibilities, but in order for the representatives of the organization to think long-term, financial resources are needed.

A significant problem mainly in diaspora is the lack of human resources. If an organization does not have adequate human resources, and only has a team of one or two people the organization will get tired in the long run. A small permanent team cannot be flexible enough to meet ever-expanding challenges, and this can lead to the demise of the organization. In order to solve this problem, resources are needed to hire and pay for new employees.

Strengthening partnerships can help expand and operate. The organizations surveyed drew attention to the replacement of stable partners. This was due to a lack of money and time, or a change of management in some organizations. Many have mentioned that there is a gap between organizations with new leadership or newly formed organizations and organizations that have been in operation for a long time due to generational differences. The solution to this can be a forum, a platform of network group, which helps NGOs to communicate.

Several organizations do not have their own registered office and the legal registration is in the private homes of the management or members of the organization. In order to work efficiently, to achieve the appropriate infrastructural background, a headquarters is needed, or a common (community) space where the employees/volunteers of the organizations can work, organize meetings and events. Rethinking the Hungarian Houses into larger settlements, micro-regions and expanding their responsibilities into community spaces, a kind of so-called could be developed into incubator houses where several organizations can operate. (There are attempts to do so, such as the Hungarian House in Medgyes, the HCST Hungarian House in Szilágysomlyó, the Teleki Hungarian House in Nagybánya or the Dr. Pál Szász Association in Nagyenyed.) For the efficient and truly prosperous development of all this, it would be necessary to be able to call for much larger grants. Also these houses should be infrastructurally and technically perfectly equipped, and the issue of human resources should not be neglected either, as they could be really efficient if the appropriate person could perform administrative, part-time administrative activities.

In many organizations, management is outdated, organizations cannot be passed on to young people. Management and employees cannot catch up with new technological challenges. Due to the lack of knowledge and time, the majority of the staff of the responding NGOs only undertake the professional part, not the techniques too. As a result, many organizations are left out of the e-world (e.g.,

there is no ready-made and constantly updated website for organizations) and there is no adequate funding for a professional (if the catching-up process does not start, there is no work started). In the absence of new technological tools and technological knowledge, organizations do not respond to opportunities quickly enough. There is no follow-up to their closed projects, in many cases there is no feedback on the programs implemented. In the absence of feedback, there is a possibility that the organization will not be able to exceed its basic goals, will not be able to renew.

Another important conclusion and topic as a strategic concept, would be the relationship between young people and volunteering ('free work'). In order to better understand the young generation's attitudes towards volunteering and to better understand the relationship between the young generation and NGOs, we also interviewed young people. More than 400 students responded to the questionnaire. The question was: Do they volunteer for any of the organizations? Some important general remarks can be made about one or two counties. The young people of Mureş County actively answered the questions, who answered this question, everyone volunteered somewhere. Surprisingly, young respondents in Cluj County are not so active in the field of volunteering. This was explained by many other extracurricular activities. However, the students mentioned that they do not do free work, they choose a job that involves payment, they do not see any benefit in volunteering. A lot of people answered no to the question, and those who volunteered mentioned the Hungarian Days of Cluj-Napoca, scout teams, religious events, school student council events and KIFOR. In Bistrița-Năsăud County, most people answered no, but an organization, MADISZ, appeared, where a student volunteered. Many students mentioned the lack of communication from NGOs, students do not know where to volunteer. In Alba County, students did not answer with yes to volunteering either. Some mentioned their scout team, the Magyarlapád Folk Dance Group, the Youth Group and the BGK Student Council.

We also asked if the school might oblige them to participate in the above? The answer to absolutely everyone was that no, no obligation (Kovács 2022).

Perhaps the solution to this problem could be to introduce young people to community work as early as possible, but no later than in high school.

Another problem identified by NGOs with regard to financial resources concerns calls for proposals.

However, the issue of sustainability must not be left to wait for funding. In the case of organizations that want to work, are active and ready to act, as we have seen, it is often a problem that there are not enough people to choose which of the most diverse and diverse application sources the organization needs the most, and then carry out these projects. manage. At the same time, in addition to calling for subsidies, it would be important to encourage self-sufficiency, but many organizations also do not have the appropriate knowledge. In the case of well-functioning NGOs, economic activities compatible with being non-profit-making could be encouraged (eg tourism, trade in handicrafts, paid training, etc.), of which the

proceeds could be used to organize additional free events, pay bills, etc. could be translated. However, all of this requires that the NGO be aware that, because it is a non-profit, it can carry out an economic activity (under certain rules), as most public cultural organizations have no idea about it. This segment of sustainability would require such information and training. However, the position and role of accountants in this matter is extremely important. Only one side of the problem is that NGO accounting is not financially rewarding, but many accountants do not even understand non-profit accounting, or just give out the balance sheet (after pre-accounting), it does not help the organization with advice. In order to solve the above-mentioned difficulty, the problem of pursuing economic activities to promote self-sufficiency, it would also be necessary to have a qualified accountant in addition to non-governmental organizations (even not individually, but together) in all financial matters.[2]

With the development of technology, non-governmental organizations are facing more and more challenges, and the lack of usable knowledge is thus a social phenomenon. Organizations should provide their employees or helpers with the necessary technological equipment and training, where they can learn to use different applications and online interfaces. However, in order to have an interest in how trainings can be organized, it is necessary for the organization to be open to face the change, to find ways to reach young people, to become interesting for the younger generations. In many cases, this depends on the attitude of one person, but there are situations where a little external support (raising awareness, getting to know the ways of communicating with young people) would be sufficient.

At the same time, the generation gap, precisely because of the rapid change and impairment, can increasingly threaten even young, youth-led organizations dealing with young people.

Non-profits and Web 2.0. Presence and communication

As already mentioned, in the subchapter discussing the research methodology, besides the survey results and conclusions we examined the activities and relationships on the Twitter and YouTube social media platforms with data mining and network analysis. We were curious about how many Hungarian NGOs in Transylvania are present on these platforms, with what activity and frequency. We were also interested in whether the imprint of online networks and presence is the same as the results of previous research, ie that Hungarian NGOs in Transylvania are less able to utilize new media tools and platforms. In this regard, our data analysis unit was YouTube content and Twitter and Tik Tok social media interfaces. The choice of these community platforms was made on the one hand for methodological reasons and on the other hand for literature reasons. For data mining, we used the NodeXL Pro plug-in, which allowed us to extract time series and cross-sectional data from various social sites, as well as manually search and crawl for the infor-

mation we wanted.[3] However, based on the fact that the more platforms an organization is able to expand, the wider the range of digital indigenous, short- and interactive content-producing platforms.[4]

The importance and semantic elements of civic network analysis and networking as well as presence were demonstrated by a detailed presentation of the online activities of a non-governmental organization, the Green Sun Association.

To better understand social media-oriented connectivity and communication in the nonprofit sphere, it is essential to put into context the frequency of use of different platforms as well as the online presence indicators of NGOs in the light of previous research.

The figure below shows the usage rates of different social media platforms in 2021. Although YouTube and Twitter lag significantly behind Facebook use in Romania, they are still the third and fifth most popular social media platforms, respectively. Although the figure below does not include data sets for Tik Tok, this platform is still popular with digital natives, with more than 800 million users during the COVID–19 pandemic.

2. figure. Social media platform usage Romania 2021
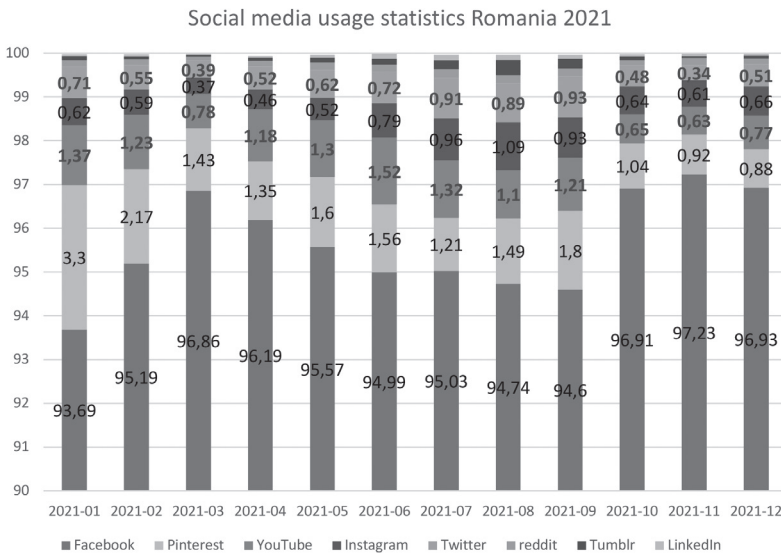
Sourse: Statcounter Global Stats, 2021

For the Hungarian Transylvanian non-profit sector the most preferred and used social media platforms were Facebook and Instagram. A total of three Hungarian Transylvanian associations have Twitter account: Solidaris Association, Living Transylvania Association and the Green Sun Association. With YouTube users YouTube search engine optimization does not allow full mapping of users, only manual

search, so we do not cover the mapping and accurate estimation of YouTube channels in the Hungarian civil sphere in the framework of this study, but all three of the above organizations have YouTube channels. Only the Green Sun Association has a Tik Tok user, taking into account the online activities of the Hungarian civil society in Transylvania. The intensity and diversity of the online community presence, as we can read in the theoretical part, is decisive for the communication and digital convergence of the civil sphere. The more social media-oriented communication is, the more extensive the organization can integrate into communication and relationship networks, with which it can promote the micro- and macro-level development of the given community.

In the last chapter of the study, we present the importance of social networks in the life of an NGO with the help of a case study.

A case study about non profit social networking and digital habitus

In this chapter, the social media-oriented communication and digital habitus of the Green Sun Association and its social networks will be analyzed and examined. For data mining we used the network analysis software Node XL. For the analysis, we were interested in the extent of the online network of the NGO Green Sun Association, which has a YouTube channel, and its presence on other social media platforms. The Green Sun Association was founded in the summer of 2009 and operates as an environmental, professional-scientific organization. It aims to promote environmental awareness. They organize numerous events, publish articles in newspapers, and in 2010 they received the Organization of the Year Award from the Transylvanian Association of Hungarian NGOs. They also participate in Erasmus+ programs, act as EVS sending and hosting organizations and are involved in international youth exchanges. At the same time, they are active on the most used social networking sites: their Facebook page has 4773 likes, their Twitter page has 546 likes, their YouTube channel has 162 subscribers, their Instagram page has 1033 followers and their Tik Tok channel has 53 followers. They have regular activity on all channels.

In the following, we will look at the network connected to their YouTube channel. In the network analysis, we looked at the extent of the network and the frequency of appearances and connections. Below is a graphical representation of the network and the key indicators of the network developed in the analysis. The graph represents the network of YouTube videos whose title, keywords, description, categories, or author's username contain „Zöld Nap Egyesület" (Green Sun Association). The following network was limited to 500 videos, is a directed graph and the vertices were grouped by cluster using the Clauset-Newman-Moore cluster algorithm, and it was laid out using the Harel-Koren Fast Multiscale layout algorithm.

3. figure. Social network of YouTube channel of Green Sun Association
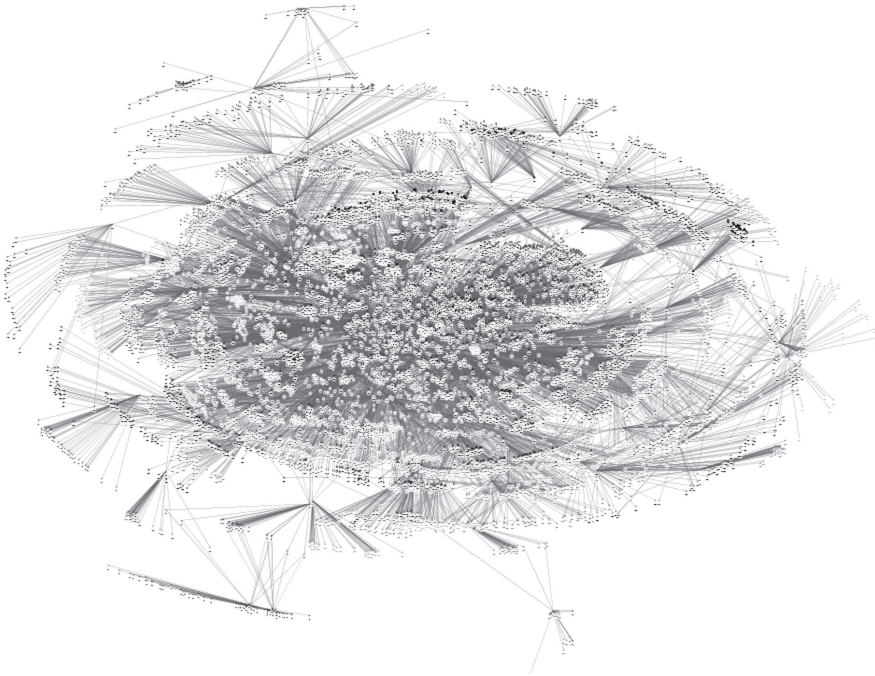
Sourse: YouTube API, generated with Node XL

In the middle of the network are topos close to the association, at the edge are those that have less contact with the association, and the colors indicate each distinct cluster. Also the key indicators of the network developed in the analysis are shown below.

1. table. The most important indicators of network analysis

Name of indicator	Values
Vertices (nodes)	11 221
Edges	18 113
Connected Components	14
Maximum Vertices in a Connected Component	10 404
Maximum Edges in a Connected Component	17 277
Maximum Geodesic Distance (Diameter)	16
Av. Geodesic Distance	6,28
Graph Density	0,0001
Modularity	0,818

The total number of Vertices (Nodes) used in the analysis is 11221, these are 18113 times connected (Edges). The average density of the network, the degree that shows the average number of connections a given node has, in this case is 0.0001, which means these videos are also linked to other thematically related groups too. Based on the indicators published in the table, it can be said that the Green Sun Association has a compact YouTube network, in which the key concepts are reduced into different clusters, which can be easily noticed. A total of 79 such groups were identified after analysis.

In the directed graph the indegree of a node is the number of edges leading into that node and its outdegree, the number of edges leading away from it. In our graph the topics with the most indegrees are: *The Russian chat club with Neve and Lili has started* video, for a total of 177 contacts, followed by the Videos of the *Year and the Year-End Entrance Camp* with 176 contacts, followed by the *Lilit vlog video* with 176 contacts. This result is important to the network of the association, because those with high impact are their own videos, with an international opening up (the vlog videos are in English), so they connect to other users through them, by extending their YouTube network.

The vertices with higher outdegrees, with a connection between 64 and 61, they are related to news, musical or cultural event videos.

In graph theories, networks created by indicators based on mutual centrality start from the shortest step. The shortest step indicates which is the shortest path between two random nodes, that is, how many steps need to be taken to get from one point to another. This indicator is widely applicable in network analysis as it sheds light on the degree to which nodes are close to each other. For example, in a telecommunications network, a point of higher centrality has a greater influence on the network as more information passes through it.

From the point of view of our analysis, this means that certain videos not only shape the emerging topics, but also have a greater influence on the given platform (in our case, the YouTube channel) compared to the others, and make connections between the given topics. Based on the central indicator, we have shown the top eight content in the table below, which is not only topic-determining but also relationship-building within the given content.

The table below illustrates this order based on the indicator of betweenness-centrality.

2. table. Order of YouTube videos based of Betweenness-Centrality

Graph Metrics			
Label/Title of YouTube video	*In-Degree*	*Out-Degree*	*Betweenness Centrality*
Farming Simulator 22–8.ep.	48	0	1767 1150.0 15
Polgár Jenő/ when the ceiling was cracked	39	0	1152 4800.339
Hooked energy theft is dangerous	35	0	1140 8470.0 19
Evaluation of Kalith Attila Sportday in Profi Radio	174	50	538 7637.52 1
The Russian chat club with Nane and Lilith has started	177	40	522 3337.22 1
An opening camp was organized	176	50	477 1254.183
2.ep.: koncert of Vikidál Gyula 2021 aug.20	0	66	455 0555.845
A year ending camp was organized	176	50	425 8484.33 1

Although there are videos on the YouTube channel and in our graph that, although related to the organization, are very popular and shared in themselves, it is worth noting that three videos have the highest community centrality index (The Russian chat club with Nane and Lilith has started, An opening camp was organized and A year ending camp was organized), which are the content of the Green Sun Association's own production, so they also appear as an important element in the complexity of the network. The Green Sun Association's own video is in an important place on their YouTube network, so more consumers from more places with wider networks and subscriptions are watching it.

As a conclusion of this case study, we can assume that the Green Sun Association is relatively well placed in the digitization palette, is actively present on several social platforms, produces content regularly and in English too, but YouTube has an extensive international network with high metrics of self-uploaded videos too, in this sense they are important for the evolution of the given network. The network is divided into 79 clusters, in which a number of topics appear, but mainly topos organically related to organizational life, culture and volunteering as important topics for a well organized non profit.

Conclusions and summary

This review gives a comprehensive picture of the current situation of the Hungarian civil sphere in Transylvania, with special regard to civic participation, major issues and resolution strategies affecting the civil sphere, and online communication, networks and presence in social media.

As a conclusion of many researches, we can state that both in the diaspora and in other areas of Transylvania, the civil sphere must develop long-term strategies in order to remain sustainable and have a real impact on society. To this aim, it needs to strengthen and catch up with the changes brought by the information society in terms of access to resources, human resources and technological development.

In connection with this, one of our main questions was what kind of online representations Hungarian NGOs have and how they are connected to each other.

During the analysis and evaluation of preliminary research, we found that nearly 3,000 NGOs are active in Transylvania, but many of them do not have extended social media presence and networks. As we have seen from network and graph analysis, online networks provide an opportunity for civil society to expand their communication and content production and to expand the online field, while at the same time providing access to information and knowledge that they can use in order to remain sustainable and build an online community.

This findings echo the previous results of researches on how the civil sphere can catch up with latest online and social media trends, how can they organize themselves online in order to avoid failing to harness the potential offered by developments of Web 2.0 and its extending acceptance and use.

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Notes

[1] A Hungarian House is a building owned by a non-governmental organization or a historical Hungarian church, in which cultural activities are carried out in Hungarian, in a cultural system that seeks to reach wider groups than sacred congregations. The concept of the Hungarian House clearly indicates the Hungarian nature of the institution in a medium that is ethnically underrepresented from a Hungarian point of view. Such institutions were established in Romania where our Hungarian community lives in a minority or scattered. An institution that satisfies the above conditions can be considered a Hungarian House even if it does not indicate it in its official institutional name, or the building has not entered the community consciousness with such a name during its operation. https://muvelodes.net/sites/default/files/pdf/magyar-hazak-romaniaban.pdf

[2] Brînzan-Antal Cristina and Széman Emese Rózsa: A Hungarian Cultural Society of Transylvania project no. RKU-21 / 1-11 submitted to the Communitas Foundation: Branches and affiliates of

the Hungarian Cultural Society of Transylvania to promote the sustainability of public cultural organizations.

[3] The NodeXL data mining and network analytics plugin does not allow Facebook or Instagram data mining.

[4] The concept is linked to the name of Marc Prensky (2001), who argues that digital and info-communication tools change the behavioral patterns of children and the younger generation and their attitudes toward education. The Internet is practically becoming the mother tongue of digital natives, while digital immigrants (in our case, parents, earlier generations) are forced to learn and master new technologies and innovations in order to understand younger people.

Photo/Gábor Csanádi

CIVIL SOCIETY AND EDUCATION IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

Zoltan Zakota–István Péter Németh

The all-pervasive role of civil society

Building a real democratic society takes a long time. Moreover, we can say that this is a continuous process of seeking a balance between the interests of various actors in public life. But what is certain is that the first step in founding a functioning democracy is to strengthen democratic institutions and mechanisms. In this context, one of the most important regulatory mechanisms for democratic societies is civil society.

Civil society institutions are needed not only in countries where democracy is built but also in those with a strong democratic tradition. These are necessary not only to be able to establish a democracy but also to keep it functioning in the long run. Often, the interests of political and economic actors, such as party and business interests, intertwine and act against the public interest. In such situations, in order to correct the malfunctions, other institutions are needed, which are neither part of the social political nor the economic subsystem.

In a democratic society, civil society must have the right to influence political, economic or public interest decisions. Obviously, the existence of such rights is not enough, and adequate mechanisms are needed for their implementation. The reactions of civil society to administrative, economic, social, etc. policies that contradict its interests are varied: demonstrations, press campaigns, protests, etc. As such actions are difficult to organize and often have a short-term impact, it is necessary to create parallel structures with those of the state. These can be non-governmental

organizations, professional associations, trade unions, employers associations, etc. which are willing and able to monitor the activity of state institutions and the way of resolving claims and which maintain a constant pressure on decision makers. They need to work with the structures involved in the management of the society to find the right solutions and continuously improve the quality of life.

Civil society needs to be involved in a wide range of issues, such as central and local governance, international relations, economic development, social and public health issues or the protection of the environment. To attain this goal, it needs to be made up of as many organizations as possible, specializing in as many areas as possible in the organization and administration of society. These institutions need to be aware of current policies and policy proposals in order to monitor how political or economic factors respect the interests of the majority of the population in those areas.

Civil society in the European Union

As stated by the European Union, "[c]ivil society refers to all forms of social action carried out by individuals or groups who are neither connected to, nor managed by, the State" (EU, n.d.). Its main building block is the civil society organisation, as "an organisational structure whose members serve the general interest through a democratic process, and which plays the role of mediator between public authorities and citizens" (EU, n.d.).

Such organisations usually mean social partners, non-governmental organisations and grassroots organisations. This is a pretty exhaustive interpretation, although many authors do include in their discourse only the two latter ones. On the other hand, a more inclusive interpretation is also in use, by including into the civil society the religious bodies too. Despite the fact that in most countries churches and religious institutions have their own legal status and their functioning is independently regulated, considering them as part of the civil society still seems to be a pertinent point of view. Not to mention the fact that they often operate not for profit organizations.

Civil society has an accentuated role in the EU's good governance. Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union stresses the need for transparency in the functioning of the Union. As it is worded:
1. "The institutions shall, by appropriate means, give citizens and representative associations the opportunity to make known and publicly exchange their views in all areas of Union action."
2. "The institutions shall maintain an open, transparent and regular dialogue with representative associations and civil society." (EU, 2012, p. C 326/21)

Article 15 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union also recognises civil society's role in the Union's good governance: "In order to promote

good governance and ensure the participation of civil society, the Union's institutions, bodies, offices and agencies shall conduct their work as openly as possible." (EU, 2012, p. C 326/54) Further on, in chapter 3, regarding the Union's advisory bodies, article 300 states that "[t]he Economic and Social Committee shall consist of representatives of organisations of employers, of the employed, and of other parties representative of civil society, notably in socioeconomic, civic, professional and cultural areas" (EU, 2012, p. C 326/177). Additionally, article 302 stipulates that the Council "may obtain the opinion of European bodies which are representative of the various economic and social sectors and of civil society to which the Union's activities are of concern" (EU, 2012, p. C 326/178).

The importance of the civil sphere for the Union is very well illustrated by the expectations that countries waiting for the accession have to face in this area. Because in some of them civil groups may not be sufficiently effective, or they are not able to enter into dialogue with the public authorities, or the legislation may need improvement citizens do not have sufficient influence on and ownership of the reforms leading to enlargement. So, the EU:
– promotes citizen participation in their social and political life;
– monitors their policies towards their civil society bodies;
– provides financial support from the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) programmes, and especially the Civil Society Facility (EU, n.d.).

The Civil Society Facility (CSF) was established in 2008 and its aim is "to support the development of a civil society which is participating actively in the public debate on democracy, human rights, social inclusion and the rule of law, and has the capacity to influence policy and decision-making processes" (EU, n.d.).

Towards a better EU civil dialogue and the involvement of citizens for better policymaking, the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) Liaison Group drafted a Roadmap for the implementation of Articles 11(1) and 11(2) of the Treaty on European Union which was adopted at the NGO Forum in Riga in March 2015 (EU2015.LV, 2022). The roadmap outlines a vision on better civil dialogue in the EU and provides an action plan, aiming to put Article 11 into practice, according to which civil society dialogue:
– should be multi-level, inclusive, transparent and building on existing dialogues and consultations;
– should offer a space for joint action and strengthen the link between citizens and their elected representatives;
– should ultimately lead to a stronger sense of European identity (EU, 2022).

By building on existing structures and including best practices for the implementation of civil dialogue in the most effective way with the widest range of supporters and stakeholders, the action plan comprises steps to establish three levels of dialogue:

– structured dialogue at both the national and European level;
– structured dialogue at both the national and European level;
– a space to publicly exchange views in all areas of Union action and at all levels (EMI, 2022).

In order to be able to fulfil their roles, civil society organisations need to operate in an efficient manner and this presupposes besides being well-prepared with technical knowledge also having a solid financial background. This means that they need support that aims at strengthening the organisations and enabling them to participate in the public debate.

In 2017, the European Economic and Social Committee issued an own-initiative opinion on 'Financing of civil society organisations by the EU' (EU, 2018). In this document, the EESC "calls on the European institutions to promote a positive image of CSOs, preserve their independence and strengthen their capacity for action". It contains 26 "recommendations for better civil dialogue and access to resources, including ideas for the post-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework" (EU, n.d.).

Currently, civil society, non-governmental and non-profit organisations are eligible for EU funding where their areas of activity relate to EU policies. Approximately 80% of EU funding sources for NGOs are managed by EU countries themselves and the rest are managed by the Commission or other EU bodies (EU, n.d.).

As for the 2019 study, it makes a number of important findings on European civil society organizations, especially regarding the transparency and accountability, where EU funds are concerned. According to it, "there is still no common legal definition at the EU level, and the EC operates a pragmatic definition based on a number of key features (most prominently, non-profit character), with potential differences depending on the implementing DG, or even program". This leads to a lack of common understanding and consistency within the Union or between the member states and, according to Civil Society Europe, "the existence of different definitions of NGO might have some implications for their accountability and transparency, due to difficulty in classifying them" (Blomeyer & Sanz, 2019, Pp. 20–21).

The other main source of concern is the consistency and reliability of grant data. "While the FTS data are extracted from a single system, the Commission's Accrual Based Accounting System (ABAC), the latter is based on data from multiple databases managed by different Commission departments.

There are no plans to establish a single, centralised database for the management of grant and contract information" (Blomeyer & Sanz, 2019, Pp. 7–8).

Education in the European Union

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union sets out those fundamental rights that must be respected both by the EU and the member countries when implementing EU law. Its Article 14 deals with the right to education, as follows:

1. "Everyone has the right to education and to have access to vocational and continuing training.
2. This right includes the possibility to receive free compulsory education.
3. The freedom to found educational establishments with due respect for democratic principles and the right of parents to ensure the education and teaching of their children in conformity with their religious, philosophical and pedagogical convictions shall be respected, in accordance with the national laws governing the exercise of such freedom and right (EU, 2012, P.: C 326/398)".

As stated in Article 6 (e) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU, "the Union shall have competence to carry out actions to support, coordinate or supplement the actions of the Member States. The areas of such action shall, at European level, be [among others] education, vocational training, youth and sport" (EU, 2012, p. C 326/52). Although the entire Title XII of the Treaty is dedicated to these fields, we have to acknowledge that the role of the Union is so to say complementary, because the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems is a Member State task. As stated in Article 165:

"The Union shall contribute to the development of quality education by encouraging cooperation between Member States and, if necessary, by supporting and supplementing their action, while fully respecting the responsibility of the Member States for the content of teaching and the organisation of education systems and their cultural and linguistic diversity" (EU, 2012, p. C 326/120).

Access to quality and inclusive education, training and lifelong learning is a right for all European citizens, because education is the foundation for personal fulfilment, employability and active, responsible citizenship. Education is essential to the vitality of European societies and economies (EU, n.d.). Based on this premises, the European Education Area (EEA) strategic framework was established, in order to promote collaboration between EU Member States and key stakeholders and allows the monitoring of progress towards the achievement of their collective vision (EU, n.d.). Its idea was first endorsed by European leaders at the 2017 Social Summit in Gothenburg, Sweden. In September 2020, the European Commission issued a communication on achieving the European Education Area by 2025 (EU, 2020). This was followed by a resolution on a strategic framework for European cooperation in education and training towards the European Education Area and beyond for the 2021–2030 period (EU, 2021).

Together, the Member States and the Commission want to bring about a significant shift in education and training in Europe, ensuring that everybody has access to quality education along the following overarching priority areas:
– "improving the quality of education and training through a variety of actions;
– ensuring inclusion and gender equality to reduce inequalities;
– promoting policies and investments to bring about the green and digital transitions through a series of actions;
– enhancing competence and motivation in the education profession;
– reinforcing higher education institutions;
– promoting lifelong learning and mobility;
– achieving a geopolitical dimension — education as part of a stronger Europe in the world" (EU, n.d.).

Deficiencies of public education

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN) states that education is a human right, and most countries have pledged to guarantee the right to universal, free and compulsory education by ratifying at least the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN, 1989). Civil society organizations are important actors in social responsibility processes that pursue the effect of equality and the effectiveness of public education policies. The value of the knowledge, analysis and opinion these organizations can mobilize in representing marginalized groups should not be belittled.

Unfortunately, in many cases, countries' governments cannot fulfil their legal commitments to provide universal, free and quality education for all. In such cases, civil society can play a significant role by offering support, critique and expertise for the government to close the gap between its own promises and abilities.

Although total exclusion from education is no more characteristic for European countries there still are particularly poor and marginalised groups that are denied quality education, such as children living in extreme poverty, those belonging to certain ethnic or linguistic minorities or children with disabilities. It is undeniable that in many countries numerous adolescents having the age to be enrolled in secondary education cannot come further than primary school.

Another question of great concern is the quality of education and training. Being enrolled in school does not automatically guarantee learning. There are many schools where the main goal is keeping the students inside the building during classes and to avoid massive drop-out. Children with a more disadvantaged background risk to meet up in school sick and tired, which impede them to pay attention in class and to actually learn. On the other hand, countless teachers are confronting themselves with burn-out syndromes at different levels. Although children and adolescents have the right to education apart from their social status and/or financial background, in many countries there still exists a great inequality problem

among the richest and poorest groups of the population when it comes to receiving quality education. Regrettably, children or adolescents coming from families with scarce economic background who do not have the means to buy obligatory school requisites, such as uniforms, manuals, notebooks, etc. can end up expelled from school. But discrimination has not only economic roots. It is also taking place inside some schools where students coming from socially marginalised or discriminated families are directly or indirectly pushed out. Subjects of discrimination may be members of certain ethnic or religious minorities, children of refugees, pregnant adolescent girls, or adolescents belonging to the LGBTQ community.

Among the most notorious causes of the many professional problems encountered through and through public education there are:

– lack of well-trained teachers, trainers and auxiliary personnel;
– underpayment in the educational sector;
– inadequate learning, training and teaching materials;
– poor school facilities and the lack of community spaces;
– lack of adequate social policies for economically and socially disadvantaged children.

There is also a large spectrum of motives why governments are not complying with their obligation to guarantee free and quality education for all, among which we can enumerate the lack of political will, missing prerequisites to prioritise the education system, institutional incapability, or the overall burdensome economic circumstances.

The role of civil society in education

As we mentioned it, there is a whole gamut of reasons why governments face difficulties in fulfilling their promise to guarantee free and quality education for all, but there is also a spectrum of possibilities how civil society could play a role in enforcing compliance with it. Civil society organisations may be part of policy dialogues, so they have the opportunity to receive information about the progresses and drawbacks in the elaboration and implementation of education policies.

They also have the possibility to articulate the concerns of the different social groups related to the impact of the education policies on them. Therefore, it is essential to have efficient civil society organisations that can amplify the voice of underprivileged and marginalised groups in order to address decisionmakers and support them in their efforts to stop the reproducing or even deepening of social inequality. Civil society organisations which have members from certain marginalised groups are particularly important because they can talk on their behalf. Their discourse seems to be even more legitimate, so they can contribute with valuable information and arguments for shaping the education policies in favour of the population groups they represent.

Civil society organisations can also advocate for educational issues on any local, regional, national or even EU-level. They have the possibility and means to monitoring the educational processes. They can acknowledge how far learning and training go horizontally and vertically and they can translate the parents' expectations and requests in terms of the educational policy. As professional organizations, they can influence the curricula and promote teaching of knowledge and skills they consider to be of major importance for the children and adolescents, such as communication, problem-solving, critical thinking and reflection.

Civil society organisations are usually more closely connected with local communities, so they can be the link between student, parent or teacher on the one side and policy makers on the other. They are also in key positions in order to gather and generate data and evidence from communities and to analyse, research and evaluate activities in their respective countries and at the regional and EU level. At this level, civil society organisations could, through a joint effort, determine the national education policies to move towards accomplishing their goal and assuring the right to education for every child or adolescent. The means they have at their disposal to fulfil their role in social accountability and to advocate for improvements in the education system are: constructive critique, proposals and knowledge in policy discussions.

At local level, developing beneficial relationships between schools and the community they deserve can have considerable outcomes on the educational process. One of the most effective solutions in this regard are school-civil society partnerships. In the medium and long term, these relationships can also change those structural factors that promote and perpetuate inequality in education. Institutions and organizations that bring students and their families together in a variety of activities, supporting access to learning opportunities and related services, such as libraries or youth and sports clubs, can be effective partners for strengthening the links between schools, families and students. Such links may be of particular importance to families with disadvantaged background or to parents who have had previous negative experiences with school.

These types of partnerships require a better understanding of the impact of schools on the community as a whole, in order to influence the family and social contexts in which pupils and young people learn. On the other hand, there is a need for a better understanding of how families and the communities in which they lead their daily lives influence schools and the educational process. If there is mutual attention and prompt feedback from the parties, school, community and civil society can work together to improve young people's life prospects by encouraging their self-esteem and self-confidence.

Schools that are more effective in building strong relationships with local communities, with precise and lasting goals, can develop community involvement strategies that can be achieved over time and that demonstrate community-wide benefits. Schools that have common areas, such as libraries, sports and cultural centres, may have the capacity to promote the extended access of outsiders to

their places. Opening these spaces beyond the program for extracurricular and informal activities can be very beneficial. In this way, they can engage the adults, or can promote lifestyles that actively support the participation of community members. Such an approach promotes community empowerment and helps to bridge the gap between schools and parents, especially those unfamiliar with or reluctant to the education system.

There is another realm of education where civil society can be successfully implied, namely that of informal education, with special regard on lifelong learning. There are several fields traditionally considered as playground (or battlefield) of civil society organisations, such as ecology, human rights and democracy, local economic development and entrepreneurial culture. In these fields, such organisations can provide quality educational services because they are more mobile and flexible than formal institutions and they have plenty of on-field experience.

One of the activities in which civil society is frequently involved is the protection of the environment and the education for the environment. Unfortunately, we still can talk of a true ecological illiteracy in most countries of the world. This is characterized by an irresponsible behaviour of the average citizen, but also the decision makers that leads to massive deforestation, floods, landslides, ozone depletion, long periods of drought, radioactive infestation, etc. In order to form a general culture and a responsible attitude towards the environment, it is recommended to involve family, school, civil society in actions aimed at analysing and understanding the problems facing the environment, as well as their effects. It is also necessary to organize debates on environmental issues, to involve the citizens in environmental protection campaigns, etc.

Another aspect to which civil society allocates significant resources is the strengthening of democracy and human rights. Democracy as one of the fundamental values of society is learned and lived together with all responsible factors – family, school, media, group of friends, NGOs, etc. – and involves building interpersonal relationships based on trust and mutual respect, active involvement in community destinies, participation in associative life, sharing positive experiences with others, etc.

Another educational aspect in which civil society is frequently involved is the economic development of the community and the support of the population in leading a decent life from a material point of view. In the long run, one of the most effective ways to overcome material difficulties is to educate people about economic education. It is about that dimension of education that allows citizens to be self-sufficient, to manage their material resources properly and to know how to invest in order to make a profit. In this way, the individual will no longer be totally dependent on others and will become able to take responsibility for his own destiny.

An educational dimension relatively close to the previous one is entrepreneurship education. Through its specificity, it promotes a type of behaviour relevant to people willing to be actively involved in the life of their community.

Such participation could imply civic involvement, economic investment, social responsibility, leadership, etc. In fact, increasing the degree of participation of young people in social life, in all its forms of manifestation – economic, civic, political, cultural, educational, etc. – is one of the priority objectives of the European Union. Civil society organizations could attract young people into the social life of the community and train them to become responsible adults, with a harmonious and creative personality, perfectly integrated in the society of the future, in a more efficient manner than formal institutions could do it.

One of the most efficient ways to implement these informal education activities is to encourage citizens to participate in the associative life of their community, represented by the civil society organisations. These allow their members to associate and initiate activities designed to contribute to their personal evolution, as well as to the development of the community in which they live.

The effects of the pandemic on education

In education, the pandemic has generated a number of new problems and shed new light on a number of old ones. The ideas presented here are based on conversations with students learning and colleagues teaching at different levels of education, as well as with several parents but mostly on personal experience. We have also taken into account, however, the abundant literature that has appeared since the outbreak. A much more detailed explanation of the ideas to be presented here can be found in an article published last year by one of the authors in Hungarian (Zakota, 2020) On the other hand, we try to chalk out the potential of civil society organizations in helping to solve the actual problems.

In the last decades, economic aspects became more and more prevalent at every level of education. The overcoming of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) over face-to-face education and the ever-increasing cost of education, which is becoming more and more burdensome for most families suggests that the education market is ripe for a change. As a side effect of the epidemic, the rise of online education could also have a significant impact on education, by reducing its costs. Civil society organisations, being smaller, as well as more dynamic and flexible than formal institutions, can take over a considerable part of the educational supply.

Since online education began to gain ground over traditional forms, and especially following quarantine closures, more and more institutions have experienced the burdensome character of their infrastructure. Traditional forms of education, the most important element of which is the time teachers and students spend together, presuppose the existence of certain well-defined spaces (classrooms, laboratories, workshops, gyms, etc.), whose maintenance consumes significant sums of money. Following the introduction of quarantine, educational buildings were closed, and most administrative operations moved to online platforms. Under such circumstances, alternative sources of revenue should be found to cover

the costs of maintaining and preserving the buildings, as very limited state support can be expected in this context. In such conditions, as shown above, some school–civil society partnerships can significantly contribute to the sustenance of the educational spaces.

To assure access to technology, in recent decades, educational institutions around the world have spent huge sums on building and developing their technological infrastructures. In students' university lives, due to its portability, versatility and efficiency, the laptop is the most important electronic device, being used for research in classrooms, solving homework and preparing for exams. The rate of smartphone use is really high, and since a significant proportion of students have only a smartphone, we can expect its role to appreciate in the near future.

Nowadays, many professionals fear the emergence of a new digital divide. Apart from the institutional infrastructure, there is another reality for many students. Access to laptops and the internet in classrooms is almost universal, but in their homes, the cost of the service and the lack of accessibility create barriers in both urban and rural areas. While students enjoy their infrastructural benefits during their stay in institutions, the transition to distance learning and the cancellation of all face-to-face meetings in the physical classroom places the responsibility for accessing technology on students and their families, some of whom may not be able to afford available and/or effective internet access.

Since mobile devices appeared on the market at a reasonable price, we face a steep rise of this kind of technology. A few years ago, the student took one or two devices with him, but the number of them already exceeded half a dozen in the period before the epidemic. Computers, smart phones, smart watches, digital gaming devices and more are on the list. Students are more likely to communicate with their peers and teachers mainly through more diverse circles of social media, email, and sms.

Starting with the lockdown, students became accustomed with platforms and virtual spaces. Although digital learning technologies have proven successful in many areas, they seem to leave much to be desired in terms of deepening relationships between students. Usage patterns on social media platforms vary significantly by age and gender, but unlike social media platforms, video streaming sites are consistently very popular at all ages. Cloud technology could provide a suitable tool for bringing together a geographically dispersed but virtually cohesive community. This could play a key role in emerging distance learning networks for two reasons: on the one hand, because it provides users with relatively easy-to-use interfaces and, on the other hand, because there has been considerable experience in this area over the last decade.

When it comes to all these technological issues, from mobile phones to laptops and notebooks to broadband internet connections, civil society organizations may have a crucial role in providing access to technology for disadvantaged individuals and groups. They can mobilize social and financial resources more quickly and in a more efficient way then members of the formal educational system.

Regarding the available human resources, it can be a problem that many of the teachers have different experiences with the use of computer science in education.

Now that students have suddenly switched to online learning platforms, teachers and staff also need to develop competencies in this area to provide at least a quality education and a level of class commitment that can compete with personal courses and lessons. Among educators, those who have a lower level of digital alphabetization are the most averse to online forms of education. Many of them fear that their role will be significantly lost due to the new online education, and their fears are not entirely irrational. And again, civil society organizations, specialised in different forms of education, as well as teachers' professional organisations may help teachers and trainers to get through this hard transition period which is outlining in front of us.

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Sorin-Gelu Borza

The European Way of Thinking and the Crisis of Democratic Practices within Procedural Societies

In modern societies, the European rationalism gave birth to a „European way of thinking". Starting with the twentieth century, the contractual political model appears to be crushed by successive crises. Their causes have non-convergent interpretations. The rationalist interpretation of knowledge as the foundation of progress in modern procedural societies can be legitimately questioned by considering the challenges facing the show society (and the technical civilization).

The functioning of political institutions enshrines the dominance of procedures, but the way in which institutions remain key instruments of the exercise of a will remains transparent. In modern political systems, the will of the leaders (and of the dominant elite) resorts to instrumentalization: a whole procedural scenario justifies the executive action for which a corresponding set of "rational" arguments was identified post-factum. However, the criteria on the basis of which we establish the rational character of a support remain strongly rooted culturally. We decide and argue the rational character of actions on the horizon of judgments determined by historical experiences. All these arguments then receive collective validation and become a way of thinking.

The easy access to knowledge resources does not materialize directly in the ability to understand and interpret facts, and the declarative democratization of access to information does not automatically lead to free and ethical access to authentic resources of authorized decision-making. A process of ideological exploitation of the results of open source science – against the background of which science in general finds itself in an identity crisis – has led to a crisis of the foundations of classical contractual democracy. Democratic communities are called upon to seek solutions to the continuing tendencies to limit the decision-making powers that remain at the level of the citizen.

Keywords: Reflective democracy; procedural society; European way of thinking; social technologies; postmodern vasality; knowledge communities.

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Sorin-Gelu Borza

Az európai gondolkodásmód és a demokratikus gyakorlatok válsága a procedurális társadalmakban

A modern társadalmakban, az európai racionalizmus megszülte az „európai gondolkodásmódot". A huszadik századtól kezdve úgy tűnik, hogy a szerződéses politikai modellt szétzúzták az egymást követő válságok. Okainak nincs konvergens értelmezése. A modern procedurális társadalmakban a tudás, mint a haladás alapjaként értelmezett racionalista értelmezés jogosan megkérdőjelezhető, ha figyelembe vesszük a show-társadalom (és a technikai civilizáció) előtt álló kihívásokat.

A politikai intézmények működése szentesíti az eljárások dominanciáját, de átlátható marad a mód, ahogyan az intézmények valamely akarat gyakorlásának kulcsfontosságú eszközei maradnak. A modern politikai rendszerekben a vezetők (és az uralkodó elit) akarata az instrumentalizációhoz folyamodik: egy egész procedurális forgatókönyv igazolja azt a végrehajtó intézkedést, amelyhez utólag azonosították a megfelelő „racionális" érvek halmazát. Azonban azok a kritériumok, amelyek alapján megállapítjuk egy alátámasztás racionális jellegét, továbbra is erősen kulturálisan meggyökerezettek. A cselekvések racionális mivoltáról a történelmi tapasztalatok által meghatározott ítéletek horizontján döntünk és érvelünk. Mindezek az érvek aztán kollektív megerősítést kapnak, és gondolkodásmódokká válnak.

A tudásforrásokhoz való könnyű hozzáférés nem valósul meg közvetlenül a tények megértésének és értelmezésének képességében, az információhoz való hozzáférés deklaratív demokratizálódása pedig nem vezet automatikusan az engedélyezett döntéshozatal hiteles forrásaihoz való szabad és etikus hozzáféréshez. A nyílt forráskódú tudomány eredményeinek ideológiai kiaknázásának folyamata – amelynek hátterében a tudomány általában véve identitásválságba kerül – a klasszikus szerződéses demokrácia alapjainak válságához vezetett. A demokratikus közösségek arra hivatottak, hogy megoldást keressenek azokra a tendenciákra, amelyek az állampolgárok szintjén maradó döntési jogkört korlátozzák.

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Sorin-Gelu Borza
Modul european de gândire și criza practicilor democratice în cadrul societăților procedurale

Raționalismul european a dat naștere în societățile moderne unui „mod european de gândire". Începând cu sec XX. modelul politic contractual apare măcinat de crize succesive. Cauzele acestora cunosc interpretări neconvergente. Interpretarea raționalistă a cunoașterii ca fundament al progresului în societățile procedurale moderne poate fi legitim repusă în discuție luând în considerare provocările cu care se confruntă societatea spectacolului (și civilizația tehnică). Funcționarea instituțiilor politice consfințește dominația procedurilor, dar rămâne transparent modul în care instituțiile rămân instrumente cheie ale exercitării unei voințe. În sistemele politice moderne voința liderilor (și a elitei dominante) recurge la instrumentalizare: un întreg scenariu procedural justifică acțiunea executivă pentru care s-a identificat post-factum un set corespondent de argumente „raționale". Criteriile pe baza cărora stabilim caracterul rațional al unei susțineri rămân însă puternic înrădăcinate cultural. Noi decidem și argumentăm caracterul rațional al acțiunilor în orizontul unor judecăți determinate de experiențe istorice. Toate aceste argumente primesc mai apoi validare colectivă și se convertesc într-un mod de gândire.
Accesul facil la resurse de cunoaștere nu se concretizează direct în capacitate de înțelegere și interpretare a faptelor, iar democratizarea declarativă a accesului la informație nu conduce automat către un acces liber și etic la resurse autentice de decizie autorizată. Un proces de exploatare ideologică a rezultatelor științei din surse deschise – pe fondul căreia științele în genere se regăsesc într-o criză de identitate – a atras după sine o criză a fundamentelor democrației contractuale clasice. Comunitățile democratice sunt chemate să caute soluții de răspuns în fața tendințelor continue de limitare a competențelor decizionale pe care rămân la nivelul cetățeanului.
Cuvinte cheie: Democrație reflexivă; societate procedurală; mod european de gândire; tehnologii sociale; vasalitate postmodernă; comunități de cunoaștere.

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Bogdan Popoveniuc
Moral-democratic Competence as a Pillar of Civic Society – The Romanian Case

The task of circumscribe of what is civil society is not as simple at it seems. This special issue propose two versions on it. A rather general and ideal one: "civil society encompasses all human and institutional resources that facilitate social equity and the well-being of a community" and a more concrete and operational one: "civil society is ultimately represented by the social and civic institutions and organizations that are necessary for a functioning democracy." The former is too broad for permitting a clear delineation from state power. The latter remains included in the long time debates among political philosophers on positioning the civil society within the continuum between the state (power) and private social institutions: nearly superposition (Hobbes, Locke), partial antagonism (Montesquieu and Tocqueville) or completely opposition (Marxists such as Gramsci). Regardless their surface characteristics, the

core characteristic of civil institutions are something distinctive for democratic regimes. This article focuses on the psychosocial reality that lays behind the civic institutions. The main hypothesis is that the latent deep-seated values and norms of a civic culture underlying the civic organizations are those that ensure the stability and viability of a democracy. Strictly speaking, the political democracy has a secured functioning only if it is integrated in other social/cultural institutions from the society as a whole and which are related only indirectly with the political ones.

Culture denotes deep-rooted values and norms, underlying social structures as a whole. The democratic institutions can be engrafted on most of the social patterns, excepting maybe religious fundamentalist ones, but their viability is ensured by the compatibility and reciprocal influences with in-built social ones. The civic institutions could act as an immunosuppressive mechanism for democratic grafts acceptance or as an immune rejections response. In fact is a conundrum. The viability and stability of democracy depends on the subtle interplay between the intrinsic values of a society/culture and democratic institutions. Particularly, with their reception, how they are recoded in terms and meaning of genuine values of particular individuals and groups.

In "actualized democracies", even in the most consolidated ones, we are witnessing, from time to time, on such axiological clashes between democratic advance and resistance of traditional values. These clashes are not so much between opposing values, but between opposing meanings, representations, and conceptions assigned to these values. For this reason, we see difference on the moral public sensibility between countries, populations, social classes, ages, gender and so forth. Traditional family referendum, green certificate or vaccination resistance, will illustrate the Romania's case.

The most important dimension for democratic sustainability are not the institutions, essentially, without question, because they can be shapes without substance, as in the case of illiberal democracies. The underling democratic mentality is the key. I argue that the development of media and information literacy, critical thinking and moral-democratic competence (ethical reasoning) are the prerequisite tools for accommodating the democratic required abilities with any particular pattern of values, as long as, the incompatibility is not between values as such, but as how people understand these values**.**

Keywords: Moral-democratic competence; critical thinking; civic competence; fake-news; information literacy.

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Bogdan Popoveniuc

Az erkölcsi-demokratikus kompetencia, mint a civil társadalom pillére. Románia esete

A feladat, hogy körülírjuk, mit értünk civil társadalom alatt, nem olyan egyszerű, mint amilyennek első pillantásra tűnik. Ez a tanulmány a civil társadalom két értelmezését javasolja. Egyik meglehetősen általános és ideális: „a civil társadalom minden olyan emberi és intézményi eszközt magába foglal, amely elősegíti a társadalmi méltányosságot és a közösség jólétét", míg a másik konkrétabb és operacionális: „a civil társadalmat végső soron a társadalmi intézmények és szervezetek, valamint a civilek képviselik, amelyek szükségesek egy működő demokráciához." Az első túl tág ahhoz, hogy lehetővé tegye az államtól való egyértelmű elhatárolást. A másik továbbra is megkérdőjelezhetetlenül az állam és a magán társadalmi intézmények közötti kontinuumban helyezkedik el, amelyet oly hevesen vitatnak a politikai filozófusok: szinte teljes átfedés (Hobbes, Locke), részleges ellentét (Montesquieu és Tocqueville) vagy teljes szembenállás (marxisták, mint Gramsci). A polgári intézmények alapvető tulajdonsága, felületi sajátosságaitól függetlenül, a demokratikus rendszerek megkülönböztető jegye.

Ez a tanulmány a civil intézmények mögötti pszichoszociális valóságra összpontosít. A fő hipotézis az, hogy a civil kultúra mélyen gyökerező rejtett értékei és normái, amelyek a civil szervezetek mögött állnak, azok, amelyek biztosítják a demokrácia stabilitását és életképességét. Szigorúan véve a politikai demokrácia csak akkor működik stabilan, ha beépül az adott társadalom egészének egyéb társadalmi/kulturális intézményeibe, amelyek csak közvetve kapcsolódnak a politikaiakhoz. A kultúra mélyen gyökerező értékeket és normákat jelöl, amelyek a társadalmi struktúrák egészének hátterében állnak. A demokratikus intézmények a legtöbb társadalmi mintába beolthatók, talán a vallási

fundamentalizmus kivételével, de életképességüket a meglévő társadalmi mintákkal való kompatibilitás és kölcsönhatások biztosítják. A polgári intézmények immunszuppresszív mechanizmusként működhetnek a demokratikus átültetés elfogadására, vagy fordítva, az elutasítás immunválaszaként. Valójában ez egy dilemma. A demokrácia életképessége és stabilitása a társadalomban rejlő kulturális értékek és a demokratikus intézmények közötti finom kölcsönhatástól függ. Különösen a fogadtatásuk, az átkódolás módjai és az eredeti értékek jelentése.

Az „aktualizált demokráciákban", még a legkonszolidáltabbakban is, időről időre tanúi lehetünk a demokratikus haladás és a hagyományos értékek ellenállása közötti axiológiai ütközéseknek. De ezek a konfliktusok nem annyira ellentétes értékek, mint inkább az ezeknek az értékeknek tulajdonított ellentétes jelentések, reprezentációk és felfogások között vannak. Emiatt különbségeket látunk az egyes országok közerkölcsi érzékenységében. A hagyományos családért, a zöld bizonyítványért vagy az oltással szembeni ellenállásért szervezett népszavazások Románia esetét fogjuk szemléltetni.

A demokratikus fenntarthatóság legfontosabb dimenzióját nem a demokratikus intézmények képezik, amelyek ugyan nélkülözhetetlenek, de lehetnek csak lényeg nélküli formák is, mint az illiberális demokráciák esetében. Ám a mögöttes demokratikus mentalitás meghatározó. Megmutatom, hogy a média- és információs műveltség, a kritikai gondolkodás és az erkölcsi-demokratikus kompetencia (etikai érvelés) fejlesztése a szükséges előfeltételei annak, hogy a nélkülözhetetlen demokratikus készségek egy adott értékmintához illeszkedjenek, mindaddig, amíg az értékek között nem áll fenn összeférhetetlenség, mint olyan, hanem ahogyan az emberek ezeket az értékeket értik.

Kulcsszavak: Erkölcsi-demokratikus kompetencia; kritikai gondolkodás; állampolgári kompetencia; álhírek, információs alfabetizáció.

Bogdan Popoveniuc, Dr. hab. tudományfilozófiából szerzett PhD-fokozatot. Emellett pszichológiából, valamint pszichoszociális intervenció és pszichoterápia szakon szerzett mesterfokozatot és pszichológus PhD-hallgató. Oktató a filozófiai tanácsadás és szervezeti tanácsadás területén (American Association of Philosophical Practitioners, APPA). A Társadalom-Humán Tudományok Doktori Iskola és az Alkalmazott Etikai Kutatóközpont igazgatója a Suceava-i „Ştefan cel Mare" Egyetemen, valamint az „Erkölcsi-Demokratikus Kompetencia Intézet" (IMDC) alapító tagja. Tanfolyamokat tart a kulturális antropológia, pszichológia, kritikai gondolkodás és az etika, valamint az akadémiai integritás témakörökben. Három könyv és két alapképzési kurzus szerzője és több mint 100 tudományos közleménye jelent meg, többségük interdiszciplináris és transzdiszciplináris perspektívából a filozófia, az antropológia és a pszichológia területén. Jelenlegi kutatási területe a morális-demokratikus kompetencia és a kritikai gondolkodás filozófiája és pszichológiája.
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Bogdan Popoveniuc

Competenţa moral-democratică ca pilon al societăţii civice. Cazul României

Sarcina de a circumscrie a ceea ce înţelegem prin societate civilă nu este atât de simplă după cum pare la prima vedere. Acest număr special propune două înţelesuri ale societăţii civile. Una destul de generală şi ideală: „societatea civilă cuprinde totalitatea mijloacelor umane şi instituţionale prin care se facilitează echitatea socială şi bunul mers al unei comunităţi" şi una mai concretă şi operaţională: „societatea civilă este reprezentată în cele din urmă de instituţiile şi organizaţiile sociale şi civice care constituie necesarul unei democraţii funcţionale." Prima este prea largă pentru a permite o delimitare clară faţă de stat. Cealaltă rămâne indecis poziţionată în continuum-ul dintre stat şi instituţiile sociale private, atât de dezbătut de către filosofii politici: suprapunere aproape totală (Hobbes, Locke), antagonism parţial (Montesquieu şi Tocqueville) sau opoziţie completă (marxiştii precum Gramsci). Indiferent de caracteristicile lor de suprafaţă, atributul de bază al instituţiilor civile reprezintă trăsătura distinctivă a regimurile democratice.

Acest articol se concentrează pe realitatea psihosocială care se află în spatele instituţiilor civice. Ipoteza principală este aceea că valorile şi normele latente profund înrădăcinate ale unei culturi civice care stau la baza organizaţiilor civice sunt cele care asigură stabilitatea şi viabilitatea unei democraţii. Strict vorbind, democraţia politică are o funcţionare stabilă doar dacă este integrată în alte instituţii sociale/culturale ale societăţii respective în ansamblul ei şi care sunt legate doar indirect cu cele politice. Cultura denotă valori şi norme adânc înrădăcinate, care stau la baza structurilor sociale în ansamblul lor. Instituţiile democratice pot fi grefate pe majoritatea tiparelor sociale, cu excepţia poate celor fundamentaliste religioase, dar viabilitatea lor este asigurată de compatibilitatea şi influenţele reciproce cu cele sociale existente. Instituţiile civice ar putea acţiona ca un mecanism imunosupresiv pentru acceptarea grefei democratice sau, dimpotrivă, ca răspuns imunitar de respingere. De fapt, este o dilemă. Viabilitatea şi stabilitatea democraţiei depind de interacţiunea subtilă dintre valorile culturale intrinseci societăţii respective şi instituţiile democratice. În special, recepţia lor, modul în care sunt recodificate în termeni şi semnificaţiile valorilor originare.

În „democraţiile actualizate", chiar şi în cele mai consolidate, asistăm, din când în când, la astfel de ciocniri axiologice între avansul democratic şi rezistenţa valorilor tradiţionale. Dar aceste conflicte nu sunt atât între valori opuse, cât între

sensuri, reprezentări și concepții opuse atribuite acestor valori. Din acest motiv, vedem diferențe în ceea ce privește sensibilitatea publică morală între diferite țări, populații, clase sociale, vârste, genuri și așa mai departe. Referendumul pentru familia tradițională, certificatul verde sau rezistența la vaccinare, vor ilustra cazul României.

Cea mai importantă dimensiune pentru sustenabilitatea democratică nu sunt instituțiile democratice, esențiale, fără doar și poate, deoarece acestea pot fi doar forme fără fond, ca în cazul democrațiilor iliberale. Decisivă este însă mentalitatea democratică subiacentă. Voi arăta că dezvoltarea alfabetizării media și informaționale, a gândirii critice și competenței moral-democratice (raționamentul etic) reprezintă premisele necesare pentru acomodarea abilităților democratice cerute cu orice tipar particular de valori, atâta timp cât incompatibilitatea nu este între valori ca atare, ci despre cum înțeleg oamenii aceste valori.

Cuvinte cheie: Competență moral-democratică; gândire critică; competență civică; știri false, alfabetizare informațională.

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Andrei Țăranu–Cristian Romulus Pîrvulescu

The Crisis of Liberal Democracy between Populism and Technocracy

As the latest studies of Freedom House or the American Enterprise Institute show, but also many other researches, the global social phenomenon at large seems to be the crisis of liberal democracy and its underlying principles and values. Thus, the concept of "political crisis" has become extremely popular, used by both the media and political analysis in general. Our article is proposed to question the concept of "political crisis" in relation to the institutional crisis and the crisis of representation of political parties. There is an increasing number of cases of states considered consolidated democracies or flawed democracies in which the normal election cycles are completely upset due to the inability to structure governmental majorities (Israel, Italy, Spain) or where legislative changes cause major institutional blockages (Romania, France, USA), degenerating into social cleavages near the limit of violence. Therefore, there are more and more voices who believe that democracy has been replaced by post-democracy and that the liberal principles of the state are being replaced by illiberal and populist principles.

Therefore our research question would be: are the changes of political paradigm the effect or cause of the political crisis of democracy or on the contrary, we are witnessing only a change of political tendency within democracy? Our analysis is based on the comparative perspective between states and regimes considered liberal democracies and flawed democracies. But in contrast to previous analyzes based more on quantitative studies, we want to use qualitative analyzes starting with some variables: the rule of law, accountability and responsiveness – as qualitative principles, as well as access to rights and freedoms – as quantitative principles. The fact that states such as USA, Hungary or Turkey limit citizen rights and freedoms, considered a decade ago as fundamental to the definition of democracy, can be empirically questioned in the analysis of the crisis of democracy.

Keywords: Democracy; populism; technocracy; political parties and elections.

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Andrei Ţăranu– Cristian Romulus Pîrvulescu

A liberális demokrácia válsága a populizmus és a technokrácia között

Amint azt a Freedom House vagy az American Enterprise Institute legújabb tanulmányai, de sok más kutatás is mutatják, úgy tűnik, hogy korunk globális társadalmi jelensége általában a liberális demokráciának, valamint alapelveinek és értékeinek a válsága. Így rendkívül népszerűvé vált a „politikai válság" fogalma, amelyet a média és általában a politikai elemzés egyaránt használ. Írásunk a „politikai válság" fogalmának vizsgálatára tesz kísérletet az intézményi válság és a politikai pártok képviseleti válsága kapcsán. Egyre több az olyan konszolidált demokráciának vagy hibás demokráciának tekintett állam, amelyben a szokásos választási ciklusok teljesen felborulnak, mert nem tudnak kialakítani egy kormányzati többséget (Izrael, Olaszország, Spanyolország), vagy ahol a jogszabályi változások jelentős intézményi akadályokat teremtenek (Románia, Franciaország, USA), az erőszak határához közeli társadalmi hasadékokká fajulva. Ezért egyre több az olyan hang, amely szerint a demokráciát felváltotta a posztdemokrácia és a liberális államelveket illiberális és populista elvek váltják fel.

Kutatási kérdésünk tehát az lenne, hogy a politikai paradigmaváltások a demokrácia politikai válságának következményei vagy okai, vagy éppen ellenkezőleg, csak a demokrácián belüli politikai tendencia változásának vagyunk tanúi? Elemzésünk a liberális demokráciának és a hibás demokráciának tekintett államok és rezsimek összehasonlító perspektíváján alapul. A korábbi, inkább kvantitatív vizsgálatokra épülő elemzésekkel szemben azonban néhány kvalitatív változóval induló elemzést kívánunk alkalmazni: a jogállamiság, az elszámoltathatóság és a válaszkészség – mint minőségi elvek, valamint a jogokhoz és szabadságokhoz való hozzáférés – mint mennyiségi elvek. A demokrácia válságának elemzése során empirikusan vizsgálható az a tény, hogy olyan államok, mint az USA, Magyarország vagy Törökország korlátozzák az állampolgári jogokat és a szabadságjogokat, amelyet egy évtizeddel ezelőtt a demokrácia meghatározása szempontjából alapvetőnek tartottak.

Keywords: Demokrácia; populizmus; technokrácia; politikai pártok; választások.

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Andrei Ţăranu– Cristian Romulus Pîrvulescu

Criza democraţiei liberale între populism şi tehnocraţie

După cum arată cele mai recente studii ale Freedom House sau American Enterprise Institute, dar şi multe alte cercetări, fenomenul social global, în general, pare a fi criza democraţiei liberale şi a principiilor şi valorilor care stau la baza acesteia. Astfel, conceptul de „criză politică" a devenit extrem de popular, folosit atât de mass-media, cât şi de analiza politică în general. Articolul nostru îşi propune să pună în discuţie conceptul de „criză politică" în raport cu criza instituţională şi criza reprezentării partidelor politice. Există un număr tot mai mare de cazuri ale unor state considerate democraţii consolidate sau democraţii viciate în care ciclurile electorale normale sunt complet bulversate din cauza incapacităţii de a structura majorităţi guvernamentale (Israel, Italia, Spania) sau în care modificările legislative provoacă blocaje instituţionale majore (România, Franţa, SUA), degenerând în clivaje sociale aproape de limita violenţei. Prin urmare, sunt din ce în ce mai multe voci care cred că democraţia a fost înlocuită cu post-democraţie şi că principiile liberale ale statului sunt înlocuite cu principii iliberale şi populiste. Prin urmare, întrebarea noastră de cercetare ar fi: schimbările de paradigmă politică sunt efectul sau cauza crizei politice a democraţiei sau, dimpotrivă, asistăm doar la o schimbare a tendinţei politice în cadrul democraţiei?

Analiza noastră se bazează pe perspectiva comparativă între state şi regimuri considerate democraţii liberale şi democraţii viciate. Însă, spre deosebire de analizele anterioare bazate mai mult pe studii cantitative, dorim să folosim analizele calitative începând cu unele variabile, cum ar fi: statul de drept, responsabilitatea şi receptivitatea – ca principii calitative, precum şi accesul la drepturi şi libertăţi – ca principii cantitative. Faptul că state precum SUA, Ungaria sau Turcia limitează drepturile şi libertăţile cetăţenilor, considerate în urmă cu un deceniu drept fundamentale pentru definirea democraţiei, poate fi investigat empiric în analiza crizei democraţiei.

Cuvinte cheie: Democraţie; populism; tehnocraţie; partide politice; alegeri.

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Laurenţiu Petrila–Marius Ţepelea

The Church as Civil Society

During the years, the Church played a significant role in structuring and maintaining the society stable. However, civil society gained a prominent place in the decisional public sphere lately, while the Church became just a common voice. With regards to civil society, Nicolae Manolescu said that it is a form of organization that assures "solidarity and the potentiality of spontaneous reaction of an individual or group of people against the decisions of the State and more generally, against the daily life of the country." Nowadays, we could say that we must refer to what happens around the globe and not just in one country. The globalizing phenomenon has, among other things, the implication

of leveling regional mentalities and identities. However, when these mentalities and identity practices reach other geographical areas, we may have to deal with an even procedural clash of mentalities. When it comes to family customs, we can no longer talk about a "global village", as Marshall McLuhan named the globalizing phenomenon, but of a myriad of global villages which come to question the way man functions. Let me give you Bodnariu's family case as an example, whose children were taken by Barnevernet, the Norwegian child welfare services. This aroused a spontaneous and sustained reaction whose goal was the reunification of the family. Nearly on each continent manifestation took place through which the central authorities of Norway were asked to reconsider the decision. The Romanian evangelical community showed a formidable capacity for reaction. If the participants of manifestation in the diaspora were mainly neo-protestants, Romania succeeded in uniting all the present denominations in this pursuit. This study's foray seeks to expose and explain the overlap between faith and the specific behavior of civil society. The Bodnariu/Barnevernet case was a phenomenon that included extremely complex elements. From the public manifestation to the Romanian-Norwegian bilateral relations and the involvement of different international organizations of high diplomacy. All of this was the result of the Church's or faith's self-identification as civil society.

Keywords: Civil society; family, diaspora; diplomacy; human rights.

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Laurenţiu Petrila—Marius Ţepelea
Az egyház, mint civil társadalom

A történelem során az egyház rendkívül fontos szerepet játszott a társadalom kialakításában és stabilitásában. Az utóbbi időben azonban a civil társadalom a nyilvános harcok döntőbírájává vált és az egyház elszigetelte magát, mint közös hang. Nicolae Manolescu szerint a civil társadalom egy olyan szerveződési forma, amely biztosítja „az egyének és azok csoportjainak szolidaritását és spontán reakcióképességét az állam döntéseire és általában mindenre, ami a mindennapi életben történik az. országban". Mondhatnánk, hogy ma már nem korlátozhatjuk magunkat arra, ami egy országban történik, hanem csak arra, ami az egész világon történik. A globalizáció jelensége többek között a regionális mentalitások és identitások standardizálódását vonja maga után, de amikor ezek a mentalitások és identitásgyakorlatok más földrajzi területekre is eljutnak, akár procedurális mentalitások összeütközésével is szembesülhetünk. Amikor bizonyos családi szokásokról van szó, azt tapasztaljuk, hogy már nem egy globális faluról beszélhetünk, ahogy Marshall McLuhan a globalizáló jelenséget nevezte, hanem több globális faluról, amelyek végül megkérdőjelezik az ember működését. Spontán és tartós reakciót váltott ki annak a Bodnariu családnak az esete, akik a norvég szociális és családi szolgálat, a Barnevernet beavatkozását követően veszítették el gyermekeiket. A világ szinte minden kontinensén tüntetések zajlottak és döntésük újragondolására sürgették a norvég központi hatóságokat. A román evangélikus közösség félelmetes reakcióképességet tudott felmutatni. Ha a diaszpórában inkább a neoprotestánsok jelenlétével zajlottak a tüntetések, Romániában az utcán jelenlévő összes felekezet egységét sikerült elérni ennek a vágynak a támogatására. Tanulmányunkban bepillantást fogunk tenni annak megismerésére és megértésére, hogy a hit miként van átfedésben a civil társadalomra jellemző viselkedéssel. A Bodnariu/Barnevernet-ügy rendkívül összetett elemeket magában foglaló jelenség volt. A tartós demonstrációktól kezdve a román-norvég kétoldalú kapcsolatokon át a magas diplomácia nemzetközi szervezeteinek bevonásáig. Mindez az egyház/hit civil társadalomként való kifejezéseként jelent meg.

Kulcsszavak: Civil társadalom; család; diaszpóra; diplomácia; emberi jogok.

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Laurențiu Petrila–Marius Țepelea

Biserica ca societate civilă

În decursul istoriei, biserica a avut un rol extrem de important în tot ce însemna configurarea și stabilitatea unei societăți. Mai recent însă societatea civilă a devenit arbitrul bătăliilor din ringul public, iar biserica s-a autoizolat ca voce comună. Nicolae Manolescu spunea că societatea civilă este o formă de organizare care asigură "o solidaritate și o capacitate de reacție spontană a indivizilor și a grupurilor de indivizi față de deciziile statului și, mai în general, față de tot ce se petrece în viața de zi cu zi a țării." Am putea spune că nu ne putem limita astăzi doar la ce se petrece într-o țară ci la ceea ce se petrece în întreaga lume. Fenomenul globalizator are printre altele și implicația de a uniformiza mentalitățile și identitățile regionale dar în momentul în care aceste mentalități și practici de identitate ajung în alte spații geografice putem avea de a face cu o ciocnire de mentalitate chiar procedurală. Când vine vorba de anumite cutume familiale ne trezim că nu mai putem discuta de un sat global așa cum numea Marshall McLuhan fenomenul globalizator ci de mai multe sate globale care ajung să chestioneze modul în care omul funcționează. Cazul familiei Bodnariu care a rămas fără copiii în urma unei intervenții a serviciului social și familial din Norvegia: Barnevernet, a stârnit o reacție spontană și sus-ținută pentru ca reîntregirea familiei să aibă loc din nou. Aproape pe toate continentele globului pământesc au avut loc loc manifestații în care s-a cerut autorităților centrale din Norvegia să revină asupra deciziei. Comunitatea evanghelică română a reușit să aibă o capacitate de reacție formidabilă. Dacă în diaspora manifestațiile au fost mai mult cu prezența neoprotestanților, în România s-a reușit o unitate a tututor confesiunilor prezente în stradă în sprijinul acestui deziderat. În studiul nostru vom face o incursiune cu scopul de a vedea și de a înțelege modul în care credința se suprapune cu un comportament specific societății civile. Cazul Bodnariu/Barnevernet a reprezentat o fenomen care a cuprins elemente extrem de complexe. De la manifestațiile susținute, la relațiile bilaterale româno-norvegiene și până la implicarea altor organizații internaționale de diplomație înaltă. Toate din exprimarea bisericii/credinței ca societate civilă.
Cuvinte cheie: Societate civilă; family, diaspora; diplomacy; drepturile omului.

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Dénes Kiss

The Role of the Non-profit Sector and the Churches in the Institution-building Strategy of the Hungarian Minority of Transylvania in the Post-communist Period

One of the basic structural functions of the non-profit sector is to supply social needs that are not adequately met by the public sector for some reason, and to provide services for this purpose. Ethnic and national minorities, if they are dissatisfied with public goods, can also take advantage of this correction function of the non-profit sector. Based on the above, it is also reasonable to assume that the less a social group has access to public goods provided by the state, or the more dissatisfied with them, the greater its efforts to produce these public goods independently – this is the basis of Weisbrod's (1988) heterogeneity thesis. According to this, the more heterogeneous a population is, the more differentiated public services it desires, so the more segments receive less of the public goods produced by the state than required. As a result, the more heterogeneous a population is, the larger the size of the nonprofit sector it creates and operates. Ethnic and national differences, among other (social, linguistic etc.) factors, are one source of this heterogeneity. Thus, for example, members of an ethnic minority often have a need for education in their own language, which is rarely provided by the majority state, which is why non-profit organizations with an educational profile are more common in the non-profit sector of these minorities (Bielefeld 2000: 2).

Although the heterogeneity-thesis has not been unanimously supported by empirical analyzes, some analyzes have shown, for example, that ethnic and linguistic heterogeneity can also lead to a decline in general trust, which tends to lead to underdevelopment in the nonprofit sector (Anderson-Paskeviciute 2006), however, several authors have shown that nonprofits can be of exceptional importance to ethnic minorities in a number of areas. Thus, they can serve as an effective tool in the political representation of ethnic and national minorities, both at the local political level (Hula et al. 2001) and in macro-politics, in which NGOs very often provide formal political representation for minorities as an integral part of the political system (Cârstocea 2013).

My study is based on the assumption that the characteristics of the non-profit sectors created by ethnic minorities differ from those of the non-profit sector of majority societies. Thus, the specific functions of minority non-profit sectors discussed so far result in minority organizations being active in other areas compared to majority organizations, or at least these organizations are distributed in different proportions between each area of activity. However, many other parameters of minorities also determine the characteristics of these non-profit sectors. In one of my previous analyzes, I argued that different types of minority nonprofit sectors may develop depending on the size of the minority population, the degree of territorial concentration, its rural or urban nature, the level of knowledge of the minority language, and the existence of a supporting kinstate (Kiss 2010).

The importance of the existence of a supporting motherland is given by the fact that it can make the resource structure of the minority non-profit sector different from that of the majority non-profit sectors. As in the case of majority NGOs, the sources of income for minorities are membership fees, donations and state subsidies. However, in the presence of a supporting motherland, the resources of two states may become available to the minority. And in countries where own revenues and donations make up a small portion of the resource structure and the state is the primary maintainer of the nonprofit sector, the doubling of public resources can fundamentally determine the structure of the minority nonprofit sector.

In my study, I present the case of the Hungarian minority in Romania, how the members of this minority used the opportunities provided by the non-profit sector to satisfy their specific needs different from those of the majority society after the collapse of the socialist regime and the establishment of a democratic political system. I try to show that with the help of the minority non-profit sector thus formed, the members of the minority established alternative, minority institutions to independently perform the functions of the majority state institutions, thus creating a minority institutional system analogous to the majority society. However, in addition to this similarity, the structure of this minority non-profit sector differs significantly from that of the majority, Romanian and Hungarian non-profit sectors most in contact with it. In contrast to the majority nonprofit sectors, one of the striking features of the case analyzed is that churches have gained a prominent role. For the Hungarian minority institutional system, which was built between the two state institutional systems, the minority churches implement and ensure the functioning of Romanian state institutions as their own ethnic institutions (in the case of educational institutions), and establish and maintain their own Hungarian institutions to provide certain public services (in the social sphere). At the same time, they play a QUANGO role in mediating public funding for the maintenance of many institutions (higher education, sports academies), as well as fundraising and direct funding. As a result, church-affiliated and partly religious organizations have a prominent presence in the resulting minority non-profit sector. In my analysis, I use the results of a questionnaire survey conducted among Hungarian NGOs in Romania, and I rely on the analysis of the websites of some minority organizations.

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Kiss Dénes

A nonprofit szektor és az egyházak szerepe az erdélyi magyar kisebbség intézményépítési stratégiájában a posztkommunista időszakban

A nonprofit szektor egyik alapvető strukturális funkciója olyan társadalmi igények ellátása, e célra szoltáltatások kialakítása, amelyeket az állami szektor valamilyen okból kifolyólag nem lát el kielégítően. Az etnikai és nemzeti kisebbségek, közjavakkal való elégedetlenségük esetén szintén élhetnek a nonprofit szektor e korrekciós funkciója nyújtotta lehetőségekkel. A fentiek alapján ésszerű azt is feltételezni, hogy egy társadalmi csoport minél kevésbé képes hozzáférni az állam nyújtotta közjavakhoz, vagy minél elégedetlenebb azokkal, annál nagyobb tagjai körében e közjavak önálló előállítására tett igyekezet – ez a gondolat képezi Weisbrod (1988) heterogenitás-tézisének alapját. E szerint minél heterogénebb egy népesség, annál differenciáltabb közszolgáltatásokra vágyik, így annál több szegmense részesül az igényeltnél kisebb mértékben az állam által előállított közjavakból. Ennek következtében minél heterogénebb egy népesség, várhatóan annál nagyobb lesz az általa létrehozott és működtetett nonprofit szektor kiterjedtsége is. Az etnikai és nemzeti másság – a szociális, nyelvi és egyéb tényezők mellett – egyikét képezik e heterogenitás forrásainak. Így például egy etnikai kisebbség tagjai gyakran tartanak igényt a saját nyelvükön megszervezett oktatásra, amit a többségi állam ritkán biztosít, ebből kifolyólag e kisebbségek körében az oktatási profilú nonprofit szervezetek gyakoribbak (Bielefeld 2000: 2)
Bár a heterogenitás tézisét az empirikus elemzések nem támasztották alá egyértelműen, egyes elemzések például kimutatták, hogy az etnikai és nyelvi heterogenitás az általános bizalom csökkenését is eredményezhetik, amely inkább a nonprofit szektor alulfejlettségéhez vezet (Anderson–Paskeviciute 2006), azt azért több szerző is kimutatta, hogy a nonprofit szervezetek az etnikai kisebbségek számára több területen is kivételes fontossággal tudnak bírni. Így hatékony eszközként tudnak szolgálni az etnikai és nemzeti kisebbségek politikai érdekképviseletében, mind a lokális politika szintjé (Hula et al. 2001), mind a makropolitikában, amelyben igen gyakran a politikai rendszer szerves részeként civil szervezetek biztosítják a kisebbség számára a formális politikai képviseletet (Cârstocea 2013).
Tanulmányom alapjául az a feltételezés szolgál, hogy az etnikai kisebbségek által létrehozott nonprofit szektorok jellemzői eltérnek a többségi társadalmak nonprofit szektorának jellemzőitől. Így az eddigiekben tárgyalt sajátos funkciók azt eredményezik, hogy a kisebbségek által létrehozott nonprofit szervezetek más területeken tevékenyek, vagy legalábbis a többségi szervezetekhez képest más arányokban oszlanak meg az egyes tevékenységi területeken. E mellett azonban a kisebbségek számos egyéb paramétere is meghatározza e nonprofit szektorok jellemzőit. Egy korábbi elemzésemben amellett érveltem, hogy a kisebbségi nonprofit szektorok eltérő típusai alakulhatnak ki a kisebbségi népesség nagysága, területi koncentráltságának mértéke, rurális vagy urbánus jellege, a kisebbségi nyelv ismeretének mértéke, valamint egy támogató anyaország megléte függvényében (Kiss 2010).
A támogató anyaország létének fontosságát az adja, hogy az a kisebbségi nonprofit szektor erőforrás-szerkezetét alakíthatja a többségi nonprofit szektorokétól eltérővé. Akárcsak a többségi civil szervezetek esetében, a bevételi források a kisebbségek esetében is tagsági díjak, adományok és állami támogatások képezik. Egy támogató anyaország megléte esetén azonban a kisebbség számára két állam erőforrásai is elérhetőkké válhatnak. Olyan országokban pedig, amelyekben a saját bevételek és az adományok az erőforrás-struktúra kis hányadát képezik, és a nonprofit szektor elsődleges fenntartója az állam, az állami források megduplázódása alapjaiban meghatározhatja a kisebbségi nonprofit szektor szerkezetét.
Tanulmányomban a romániai magyar kisebbség kapcsán mutatom be, hogy a szocialista rezsim összeomlását és a demokratikus politikai rendszer kialakulását követően e kisebbség tagjai hogyan használták ki a nonprofit szektor nyújtotta lehetőségeket a többségi társadalométól eltérő igényeik kielégítésére. Azt igyekszem kimutatni, hogy az így kialakult kisebbségi nonprofit szektor segítségével a kisebbség tagjai a többségi állami intézmények funkcióinak

önálló ellátására hoztak létre alternatív, kisebbségi intézményeket, ezáltal egy a többségiekkel analóg, kisebbségi intézményrendszert teremtve. E hasonlóság mellett azonban e kisebbségi nonprofit szektor szerkezetében lényegesen különbözik a vele leginkább érintkezésben levő többségi, romániai és magyarországi nonprofit szektoroktól. A többségi nonprofit szektorokkal szemben a vizsgált eset egyik feltűnő sajátossága, hogy az egyházak kiemelkedő szerepre tettek szert. A két többségi, állami intézménystruktúra köztes terében kiépült kisebbségi magyar intézményrendszer számára az egyházak egyrészt román állami intézmények magyar intézményként való működését valósítják meg és biztosítják (oktatási intézmények esetében), egyes közszolgáltatások biztosítására pedig magyar intézményeket hoznak létre és tartanak fenn (a szociális szférában). Ugyanakkor számos intézmény fenntartására szánt anyaországi állami finanszírozás közvetítésében QUANGO-szerepet betöltő szervezeteket hoztak létre (felsőoktatás, sportakadémiák), e mellett forrásszerző, illetve közvetlen finanszírozói szerepeket is betöltve. Mindezek eredményeként a létrejött kisebbségi nonprofit szektorban az egyházi kötődésű és részben vallási jellegű szervezetek kiemelkedő súllyal vannak jelen. Elemzésemben a romániai magyar civil szervezetek körében végzett kérdőíves kutatások eredményeit használom, valamint a kisebbségi szervezetek honlapjainak elemzésére támaszkodom.

Kulcsszavak: Etnikai nonprofit szektor; romániai magyar civil szervezetek; egyházak és a nonprofit szektor; egyházak mint közvetítő szervezetek.

Kiss Dénes a kolozsvári Babeş-Bolyai Tudományegyetem oktatója. Kutatási tevékenységet a vallásszociológia, a vidékszociológia és a nonprofit szektor szociológiája területein folytat. Kutatásai a vidéki lakosság rétegződésére, a posztszocialista vidéki elit változásaira, a román vallási tájkép dinamikájára, a nonprofit szektor területén pedig az etnikai kisebbségek tagjai által létrehozott nonprofit szervezetek szociológiai jellemzőinek vizsgálatára fókuszálnak. A romániai nemzeti kisebbségek nonprofit szektorával kapcsolatos több kutatást is koordinált. Egyetemi oktatóként az általa tanulmányozott kutatási területekhez kapcsolódó tantárgyakat tanít, vallásszociológiát, vidékszociológiát és a vidékfejlesztés szociológiáját.
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Dénes Kiss

Rolul sectorului nonprofit şi al bisericilor în strategia de construire instituţională a minorităţii maghiare din Transilvania în perioada postcomunistă

Una dintre funcţiile structurale de bază ale sectorului non-profit este de a satisface nevoi sociale care nu sunt satisfăcute în mod adecvat de sectorul public din anumite motive şi de a furniza servicii în acest scop. Minorităţile etnice şi naţionale, dacă sunt nemulţumite de bunurile publice, pot profita şi de această funcţie de corecţie a sectorului non-profit. Pe baza celor de mai sus, este, de asemenea, rezonabil să presupunem că, cu cât un grup social are acces mai limitat la bunurile publice furnizate de stat, sau cu cât este mai nemulţumit de acestea, cu atât eforturile sale de a produce aceste bunuri publice în mod independent sunt mai mari – această idee stă de fapt la baza tezei de eterogenitate a lui Weisbrod (1988). Potrivit acesteia, cu cât o populaţie este mai eterogenă, cu atât îşi doreşte servicii publice mai diferenţiate, şi cu atât mai multe segmente ale populaţiei primesc mai puţine bunuri publice produse de stat decât consideră necesar. Ca urmare, cu cât populaţia este mai eterogenă, cu atât este mai mare sectorul nonprofit pe care îl creează. Printre alţi factori, cum ar fi cel social şi lingvistic, diferenţele etnice şi naţionale constituie una dintre sursele acestei eterogenităţi. Astfel, de exemplu, membrii unei minorităţi etnice simt adesea nevoia educaţiei în propria limbă, care este rareori asigurată de statul majoritar, motiv pentru care organizaţiile non-profit cu profil educaţional sunt mai frecvente în sectorul non-profit al minorităţi (Bielefeld 2000: 2).

Deşi teza de eterogenitate nu a fost unanim susţinută de analizele empirice, unele analize au arătând de exemplu, că eterogenitatea etnică şi lingvistică poate duce şi la o scădere a încrederii generale, ceea ce tinde să conducă la subdezvoltare în sectorul nonprofit (Anderson-Paskeviciute 2006), cu toate acestea, mai mulţi autori au arătat că organizaţiile nonprofit pot avea o importanţă excepţională pentru minorităţile etnice într-o serie de domenii. Astfel, ele pot servi ca un instrument eficient în reprezentarea politică a minorităţilor etnice şi naţionale, atât la nivel politic local (Hula et al. 2001), cât şi în macro-politică, în care reprezentare politică formală a minorităţilor deseori se realizează prin ONG-uri (Cârstocea 2013).

Studiul meu se bazează pe presupunerea că caracteristicile sectoarelor non-profit create de minorităţile etnice diferă de cele ale sectorului non-profit al societăţilor majoritare. Astfel, funcţiile specifice ale sectoarelor non-profit minoritare discutate până acum fac ca organizaţiile minoritare să fie active în alte domenii în comparaţie cu organizaţiile majoritare, sau cel puţin aceste organizaţii sunt distribuite în proporţii diferite între domeniile de activitate. Totodată anumiţi parametri ai populaţiilor minoritare determină şi ei caracteristicile acestor sectoare non-profit. Într-una dintre analizele mele anterioare, am susţinut că se pot dezvolta diferite tipuri de sectoare minoritare nonprofit, în funcţie de dimensiunea şi de gradul de concentrare teritorială a populaţiei minoritare, de natura rurală sau urbană a acesteia, de nivelul de

cunoaștere a limbii minoritare și de existența unui stat-mamă susținătoare (Kiss 2010).

Importanța existenței unei stat mamă susținătoare este dată de faptul că poate conduce la o structură de resurse a sectorului minoritar non-profit diferită față de cea a sectoarelor non-profit majoritare. Ca și în cazul ONG-urilor majoritare, sursele de venit pentru minorități sunt cotizațiile de membru, donațiile și subvențile de stat. Cu toate acestea, în prezența unui stat mamă care sprijină minoritatea, resursele ambelor state pot deveni disponibile minorității. Iar în țările în care veniturile proprii și donațiile reprezintă o mică parte a structurii resurselor și statul este principalul menținător al sectorului nonprofit, dublarea resurselor publice poate determina fundamental caracteristicile sectorului minoritar nonprofit. În studiul meu voi prezenta cazul minorității maghiare din România, modul în care membrii acestei minorități au folosit oportunitățile oferite de sectorul non-profit pentru a-și satisface nevoile specifice, diferite de cele ale societății majoritare după prăbușirea regimului socialist și instituirea unui sistem politic democratic.

Încerc să arăt că cu ajutorul sectorului minoritar non-profit astfel format, membrii minorității au înființat instituții alternative, minoritare, pentru a îndeplini în mod independent funcțiile instituțiilor majoritare ale statului, creând astfel un sistem de instituții minoritare analog celui majoritar. Cu toate acestea, pe lângă această asemănare, structura acestui sector minoritar non-profit diferă semnificativ de cea a sectoarelor non-profit majoritare, românești și maghiare, cu care se află în contact. Una dintre trăsăturile izbitoare ale cazului analizat este că, spre deosebire de sectoarele nonprofit majoritare, în acesta bisericile au dobândit un rol proeminent. Pentru sistemul instituțional minoritar maghiar constituit în spațiul intermediar al celor două state, bisericile implementează și asigură funcționarea unor instituții de stat românești ca instituții proprii, maghiare (în cazul instituțiilor de învățământ), iar pentru a furniza anumite servicii publice înființează și mențin instituții maghiare proprii (în sfera socială). În același timp, aceștia joacă un rol QUANGO în medierea finanțării publice Ungare pentru întreținerea mai multor instituții (învățământ superior, academii sportive), precum și în strângerea de fonduri și finanțarea directă a mai multor instituții. Ca rezultat, organizațiile afiliate bisericii, de multe ori parțial și religioase, au o prezență proeminentă în sectorul non-profit minoritar rezultat. În analiza mea mă bazez pe rezultatele unor sondaje realizate în rândul ONG-urilor maghiare din România, cât și pe analiza site-urilor web ale unor organizații minoritare.

Cuvinte cheie: Sector nonprofit etnic; ONG-uri maghiare din România; sectorul nonprofit si bisericile; bisericile ca organizații intermediare.

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Rita Pásztor–Katalin Gál
Social Enterprises in Bihor county

Researchers and socially sensitive individuals with an entrepreneurial mindset show an active interest in social enterprises as a form of potentially innovative and sustainable business. Social enterprises have also become an important public policy issue in Romania as in recent years, a great number of European Union founding programmes have targeted this area. Both the legal framework and access to funding have been made available, the latter accounting for the sharp increase in the number of entities. The presence of a measurable social mission behind the business idea is an important question from the point of view of sustainability. These circumstances serve as a starting point for our research, as well as the specific Eastern European context, which provides the framework for interpreting the characteristics of the social economy and social enterprises in Bihor County and in Romania. The coercive measures and restrictions imposed by the socialist government in Central and Eastern European countries, Romania included, suppressed social organization. These countries have found or still find it difficult to catch up with western countries in this respect, fact which partly accounts for the slower process of promoting social economy as well as social enterprise as a business opportunity. The current study presents the findings of an exploratory research carried out in 2021. The aim of the research was to investigate the characteristics of social enterprises which fall within the social economy in Romania, more specifically in Bihor County, and paint a picture of the current situation. Research questions focused on the social aims of the social enterprises in the Bihor county region; the extent to which economic objectives surface in this form of enterprise; successes and challenges; and the way the enterprises see themselves

in the socio-economic context in which they operate. We started with secondary data analysis investigating the available data in order to acquaint ourselves with the characteristics of the social economy in Romania. The next step was primary data collection using a qualitative approach: interviews with social entrepreneurs as well as with the community of experts from the region.

The study highlights the fact that though social enterprises are not a new social phenomena, we have come across serious theoretical and methodological dilemmas in particular relating to the measurability of the economic and social mission of the enterprises. This dilemma has a strong presence in the day-to-day realities of social enterprises since the legal framework is also confined to focusing on certain aspects, concentrating more on the employment of the underprivileged. Funders also concentrate mostly on these aspects as the main aim is to create jobs. It can be concluded that the society and the business sector in Romania are not sufficiently inclined to perceive the social economy as an opportunity for the implementation of innovative and sustainable enterprises.

Keywords: Social enterprise; social economy; sustainability; social mission; economic mission.

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Pásztor Rita–Gál Katalin

Társadalmi vállalkozások Bihar megyében

A társadalmi vállalkozások, mint lehetséges innovatív és fenntartható vállalkozási formák élénken foglalkoztatják mind a kutatói, mind pedig a társadalmilag érzékeny, vállalkozói hajlandósággal rendelkező egyéneket, ugyanakkor hazánkban fontos közpolitikai kérdés is, hiszen az elmúlt években számos, Európai Uniós finanszírozású pályázati kiírás is ezt a területet célozta. Mára mind a jogi keret, mind pedig a támogatási források a rendelkezésre állnak – ez utóbbi hatása meg is mutatkozik a létrehozott entitások ugrásszerű növekedésében, ugyanakkor fontos kérdés ezen entitások esetében a vállalkozói ötlet mögött rejlő, mérhető társadalmi küldetés megléte a fenntarthatóság kontextusában. Ezt az állapotot tekintjük a kutatásunk kiinduló pontjának, ugyanakkor adott egy specifikus kelet-európai kontextus, amelyben értelmezhetjük a szociális gazdaság és a társadalmi vállalkozások romániai és Bihar megyei jellemzőit. A kelet-közép-európai országokban ugyanis, így Romániában is, a szocialista hatalom korlátozásai és kényszerítő intézkedései következtében visszaszorult a társadalmi szerveződés. Ezek az országok nehezen hozták/ hozzák be az ezen a területen szerzett hátrányaikat a nyugati országokkal szemben, részben ezzel is magyarázható, hogy lassabban sikerült meghonosítani a szociális gazdaság fogalmát, valamint a társadalmi vállalkozást, mint üzleti lehetőséget. Tanulmányunkban egy 2021-ben végzett feltáró jellegű kutatás eredményeit mutatjuk be. A kutatás a szociális gazdasághoz tartozó társadalmi vállalkozások romániai, ezen belül pedig a Bihar megyei jellemzőinek vizsgálatát célozta meg, pillanatnyi helyzetképet vázol az aktuális állapotokról. Kutatási kérdéseink arra vonatkoznak, hogy a társadalmi vállalkozások milyen szociális célokkal jelennek meg a Bihar megyei térségben, milyen mértékben jelenik meg a gazdasági célkitűzés ebben a vállalkozói formában, miben sikeresek és milyen területeken szembesülnek nehézségekkel, hogyan látják saját maguk helyzetét abban a gazdasági-társadalmi kontextusban, amelyben működnek. Mindenekelőtt szekunder adatelemzésből indultunk ki, feltérképeztük a rendelkezésre álló adatokat a szociális gazdaság romániai jellemzőinek megismerése céljából. Ezt követte a primer adatgyűjtés, amelynek választott módszertana kvalitatív megközelítést alkalmaz: szociális vállalkozói interjúk, valamint a térség szakértői közösségével folytatott szakértői interjúk révén.

Tanulmányunkban rávilágítunk arra, hogy bár a társadalmi vállalkozások világa nem egy új társadalmi jelenség, tudományelméleti szempontból is komoly elméleti-definíciós és módszertani dilemmákkal találkozhatunk főként a vállalkozások gazdasági és társadalmi küldetésének mérhetősége tekintetében. Ez a dilemma a társadalmi vállalkozások hétköznapi valóságában is erősen megmutatkozik, hiszen a jogi keret is korlátozódik néhány aspektus nyomon követésére ezeknél az entitásoknál, amely többnyire a hátrányos helyzetű munkavállalók foglalkoztatására koncentrál, s javarészt ugyanezek az aspektusok köszönnek vissza az egyes finanszírozási lehetőségekben is, hiszen a fő cél a munkahelyteremtés. Elmondható, hogy hazánkban még nem kellőképpen felkészült a társadalom, valamint a vállalkozói szektor, hogy innovatív és fenntartható vállalkozások működtetésének lehetőségét lássa a szociális gazdaságban.

Kulcsszavak: Társadalmi vállalkozás; szociális gazdaság; fenntarthatóság, társadalmi küldetés; gazdasági küldetés.

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Rita Pásztor–Katalin Gál
Întreprinderi sociale în județul Bihor

Întreprinderile sociale, ca forme inovatoare și durabile de antreprenoriat, sunt în centrul atenției atât din perspectiva cercetării științifice cât și din perspectiva societății prin indivizi sensibili din punct de vedere social implicați în economia socială, totodată reprezintă o problemă importantă de politică publică, deoarece în ultimii ani s-au lansat propuneri de finanțare din fonduri Europene vizând acest sector economic. Astăzi atât cadrul legal, cât și surse de finanțare sunt disponibile – ceea ce se reflectă și în creșterea bruscă a numărului entităților sociale nou create în ultimii ani, dar în același timp, existența unei misiuni sociale măsurabile în spatele ideii antreprenoriale în contextul sustenabilității este o întrebare centrală în cazul acestor entități.

Această situație o considerăm, ca punct de plecare al cercetării noastre, dar în același timp avem și un context specific est-european în care interpretăm caracteristicile economiei și întreprinderilor sociale din România și județul Bihor. Ca o moștenire a restricțiilor și măsurilor coercitive ale autorităților socialiste dinainte de 1989, în țările din Europa Centrală și de Est, inclusiv în România, organizarea socială este mai limitată, subdezvoltată, deși există antecedente istorice în acest sens. Sunt discrepanțe și dezavantaje în acest domeniu față de țările occidentale – ceea ce poate explica introducerea și adaptarea mai lentă în societatea noastră a conceptelor precum economie socială și întreprindere socială, ca oportunitate de afacere.

În acest studiu prezentăm rezultatele unei cercetări exploratorii efectuate în 2021, care și-a propus descrierea situației actuale prin analiza caracteristicilor întreprinderilor sociale aparținând economiei sociale din România, inclusiv județul Bihor. Întrebările noastre de cercetare vizează misiunea și obiectivele sociale ale întreprinderilor sociale din județul Bihor, în ce măsură apare misiunea economică în această formă de antreprenoriat, în ce domeniu au succes și unde se confruntă cu dificultăți antreprenorii sociali și cum își văd situația în contextul socio-economic în care își desfășoară activitatea. În primul rând ne-am bazat pe o analiză secundară, colectând datele disponibile pentru a cunoaște caracteristicile economiei sociale din România. Metodologia colectării datelor empirice primare s-a bazat pe o abordare calitativă, prin interviurile semi-structurate efectuate cu antreprenori sociali din Bihor și experți din regiune și din țară ai domeniului economiei sociale.

În analiza noastră subliniem faptul că, deși, lumea întreprinderilor sociale nu este un fenomen nou, putem întâlni dileme teoretico-definiționale și metodologice serioase, în special în ceea ce privește măsurabilitatea misiunii economice și

sociale ale întreprinderilor sociale. Această dilemă se reflectă și în realitatea de zi de zi a întreprinderilor sociale din România, deoarece cadrul legal se restrânge la monitorizarea unor aspecte în cazul acestor entități, concentrându-se în primul rând la angajarea persoanelor provenite din grupuri vulnerabile, și tot aceste aspecte se regăsesc și în oportunitățile și apelurile de proiecte europene, deoarece obiectivul principal este înființarea noilor locuri de muncă prin întreprinderile sociale finanțate.

Putem concluziona, că societatea țării noastre, precum și comunitatea antreprenorială nu este suficient de pregătită și matură, pentru a vedea în totalitate potențialul afacerilor inovatoare și durabile în contextul economiei sociale.

Cuvinte cheie: Întreprindere socială; economie socială; sustenabilitate; misiune socială; misiune economică.

Rita Pásztor în anul 1990 a absolvit matematică- fizică la Universitatea din Timișoara, iar în anul 2000 a terminat Politică Socială la Universitatea din Debrecen și în 2017 tot aici a obținut titlul de Doctor în Sociologie. În prezent este lector universitar la Departamentul de Științe Socio-Umane din cadrul Facultății de Științe Economice și Sociale a Universității Creștine Partium, Oradea. Predă cursuri de politici sociale, organizarea și managementul serviciilor de asistență socială, diagnoză socială, protecție și securitate socială. Principalele domenii de interes științific sunt: traseul educațional al minorităților etnice si a tinerilor cu dublă minoritate, economia de argint, economia socială. Este autor și coautor a mai multor publicații de specialitate cu teme din domeniile de cercetare. Este implicat si in alte activități conexe ca trainer persolog (test de comportament personal) și formator in educația adulților.
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Adrian Hatos—Beáta-Fatime Gyarmati

The Role of Right-Wing Authoritarian Attitudes in Explaining COVID–19 Pandemic Related Conspiracy Beliefs. An Exploration with Romanian Data

Examining and explaining conspiracy theory beliefs (CTBs) became a major purpose of investigation in social sciences in early 2020 with the sudden outbreak of the COVID–19 pandemic. Since then, large segments of populations around the world have been holding on to CTBs in the face of evidence and the assurances to the contrary provided by experts and authorities on the origin and spread of the pandemic. The issue is conspicuously relevant in Romania from a policy point of view as after two years of pandemic the country authorities achieved one of the lowest vaccination rates in EU by the end of November 2021 much of this lack of success being explained by widespread CTBs in Romanian population.

Our paper contributes to the research and theorization on CTB that has exploded during the pandemic, building on past and current literature and proposing novel instruments for measuring this psychosociological constructs and a parsimonious yet powerful explanation for one's adherence to a conspiratorial mindset about the pandemic and the issue of vaccination. In this paper, first, a CTB scale is proposed and then several hypotheses concerning the variation of CTBs are tested using data from an online survey of Romanian adults. Besides the evident controls – gender, education and age, the literature supported a theoretical model with institutional trust, communitarianism, stress, core political values and political partisanship as independent variables. The least accepted item from the CTB scale was accepted by 47,8% of the sample but almost 80% of them considered that there are people reaping the advantages of the epidemic and 49,9% agreed that the pandemic is part of a campaign to eliminate older people. The results of the multivariate analyses show that pandemic related anxiety, institutional trust, and political partisanship are significant predictors of the levels of CTBs on the proposed scale. In addition to the current literature, the results of the hierarchical multiple regressions show that right-wing authoritarian values are also important predictors of the dependent variable, mediating the effect of education and suppressing the impact of communitarian vs individualist values. This final result underlines the difference between authoritarian and non-authoritarian communitarianism of which only the latter is capable of alleviating CTBs. Moreover, the correlation between CTBs and right-wing authoritarianism is so strong as if the latter was a proxy for the former.

Keywords: Conspiracy theory beliefs; COVID–19 pandemic; right-wing authoritarianism.

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Adrian Hatos—Gyarmati Beáta-Fatime

A jobboldali tekintélyelvű attitűdök szerepe a COVID–19 pandémiával kapcsolatos összeesküvés-elméleti meggyőződések magyarázatában. Egy romániai adatokkal végzett felmérés

Az összeesküvés-elméleti meggyőződések vizsgálata és elmagyarázása 2020 elején, a COVID–19 világjárvány hirtelen kitörésével a társadalomtudományok egyik fő vizsgálati céljává vált. Azóta a lakosság nagy része világszerte ragaszkodik az összeesküvés-elméletekben való hithez, szemben a bizonyítékokkal és a szakértők és hatóságok által a világjárvány eredetéről és terjedéséről adott ellenkező értelmű bizonyosságokkal. A kérdés politikai szempontból kiemelkedően fontos Romániában, mivel a világjárvány két éve után az ország hatóságai 2021 novemberének végére az egyik legalacsonyabb oltási arányt érték el az EU-ban, és a sikertelenséget nagyrészt a román lakosság körében elterjedt összeesküvés-elméleti meggyőződésekkel magyarázzák.
Dolgozatunk hozzájárul az összeesküvés-elméleti meggyőződések kutatásához és elméletalkotásához, amely a világjárvány során rohamosan terjedt, a korábbi és a jelenlegi szakirodalomra építve, valamint új eszközöket javasol e pszichoszociológiai konstruktumok mérésére és egy egyszerű, mégis erőteljes magyarázatot a világjárvánnyal és az oltás kérdésével kapcsolatos összeesküvés-elméleti gondolkodásmódhoz való tartozásra. Ebben a dolgozatban először egy összeesküvés-elméleti meggyőződés-skálát javasolunk, majd a romániai felnőttek körében végzett online felmérés adatainak felhasználásával tesztelünk néhány hipotézist az összeesküvés-elméleti meggyőződések változatosságára vonatkozóan. A nyilvánvaló kontrollváltozók – a nem, az iskolai végzettség és az életkor – mellett a szakirodalom egy olyan elméleti modellt támogatott, amelyben független változóként az intézményi bizalom, a kommunitarizmus, a stressz, a politikai alapértékek és a politikai pártállás szerepelt. Az összeesküvés-elméleti meggyőződés-skála legkevésbé elfogadott elemét a résztvevők 47,8%-a vállalta, de közel 80%-uk úgy vélte, hogy vannak olyanok, akik hasznot húznak a járványból, és 49,9%-uk egyetértett azzal, hogy a világjárvány az idősek kiirtására irányuló kampány része. A multivariáns elemzések eredményei azt mutatják, hogy a világjárvánnyal kapcsolatos aggodalmak, az intézményi bizalom és a politikai pártállás szignifikáns előrejelzői az összeesküvés-elméleti meggyőződések szintjének a javasolt skálán. A jelenlegi szakirodalom mellett a hierarchikus sokszoros regressziók eredményei azt mutatják, hogy a jobboldali tekintélyelvű értékek szintén fontos előrejelzői a függő változónak, közvetítve az oktatás hatását, és elnyomva a kommunitárius vs. individualista értékek hatását. Ez a végső eredmény hangsúlyozza a tekintélyelvű és a nem tekintélyelvű kommunitarizmus közötti különbséget, amelyből csak az utóbbi képes enyhíteni az összeesküvés-elméleti meggyőződéseket. Sőt, az összeesküvés-elméleti meggyőződések és a jobboldali tekintélyelvűség közötti korreláció olyan erős, mintha az utóbbi az előbbi helyettese lenne.
Kulcsszavak: Összeesküvés-elméleti meggyőződések; COVID–19 világjárvány; jobboldali tekintélyelvűség.

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Rolul autoritarismului de dreapta în explicarea convingerilor conspiraționiste legate de pandemia COVID–19. O explorare cu date din România

Examinarea și explicarea credințelor în teoriile conspiraționiste a devenit un obiectiv major de investigație în științele sociale la începutul anului 2020, odată cu izbucnirea bruscă a pandemiei COVID–19. De atunci, segmente mari de populație din întreaga lume au continuat să creadă în teoriile conspiraționiste, în ciuda dovezilor și a faptului că experții și autoritățile au confirmat contrariul cu privire la originea și răspândirea pandemiei. Această problemă este deosebit de relevantă în România din punctul de vedere al politicilor, deoarece, după doi ani de pandemie, autoritățile din această țară au realizat una dintre cele mai scăzute rate de vaccinare din UE până la sfârșitul lunii noiembrie 2021, o mare parte din acest eșec fiind explicat prin credințe foarte răspândite în teoria conspirației în rândul populației românești.
Articolul nostru contribuie la cercetarea și teoretizarea privind credințele în teoriile conspiraționiste, care au explodat în timpul pandemiei, bazându-se pe literatura de specialitate din trecut și din prezent și propunând instrumente noi pentru măsurarea acestor constructe psihosociologice, precum și o explicație prudentă, dar puternică, pentru aderența la o mentalitate conspiraționistă cu privire la pandemie și la problema vaccinării. În prima parte a acestui articol este propusă o scală care măsoară credințele în teoriile conspiraționiste, iar apoi sunt testate mai multe ipoteze privind variația credințelor în teoriile conspiraționiste, folosind date dintr-un sondaj online realizat pe adulți români. Pe lângă variabilele de control evidente – gen, educație și vârstă, literatura de specialitate susține un model teoretic care are ca variabile independente încrederea instituțională, comunitarismul, stresul, valorile politice fundamentale și partizanatul politic. Cel mai puțin agreat item din cadrul scalei a fost considerat adevărat de către 47,8% din eșantion, în timp ce aproape 80% dintre respondenți consideră că există persoane care profită de pe urma pandemiei, iar 49,9% au fost de acord cu faptul că pandemia face parte dintr-o campanie de eliminare a persoanelor în etate. Rezultatele analizelor multivariate arată că anxietatea legată de pandemie, încrederea instituțională și partizanatul politic sunt predictori semnificativi ai nivelurilor de credință în teoriile conspiraționiste pe scala propusă. În completarea literaturii actuale, rezultatele regresiilor multiple ierarhice arată că valorile autoritariste de dreapta sunt, de asemenea, predictori importanți pentru variabila dependentă, mediind efectul educației și suprimând impactul valorilor comunitare vs. individualiste. Acest rezultat final subliniază diferența dintre comunitarismul autoritar și cel neautoritar, dintre care doar cel din urmă este capabil să atenueze credințele în teoriile conspiraționiste. În plus, corelația dintre credințele în teoriile conspiraționiste și autoritarismul de dreapta este atât de puternică, ca și cum cel din urmă ar fi un substitut al primului.
Cuvinte cheie: Credințe în teoriile conspiraționiste; pandemia COVID–19; autoritarism de dreapta.

Adrian Hatos (1972) este cercetător și profesor titular de sociologie la Universitatea din Oradea (România), unde este șeful Școlii Doctorale în Sociologie și la Universitatea din Debrecen (Ungaria) unde coordonează doctoranzi în domeniul educației. Cele mai constante interese de cercetare ale sale au fost în domeniul sociologiei educației. A fost timp de 8 ani vicepreședinte al Societății Sociologilor Români, președinte al secției de Sociologie a educației din aceeași organizație. De asemenea, a fost membru în consiliul de conducere al Consiliului Național de Statistică și Prognoză în Învățământul Superior. În prezent, îndeplinește un mandat în Senatul României ca reprezentant al județului Bihor și este membru în comisiile senatoriale pentru Educație, Tineret și Sport și, respectiv, Știință, Inovare și Tehnologie. A făcut cercetări și a publicat pe larg în domeniul sociologiei educației, cum ar fi: Hatos, A., „Serving the New Class: The Dynamics of Educational Transitions for Romanian Adults Born Before 1985 When Communism and Afterwards" Social Indicators Research 119 numărul 3 (2014): 1699–1729; și Hatos, A. Sergiu Bălțătescu, 'Structura familiei și rezultatele școlare: Analiza multivariată a răspunsurilor elevilor adolescenți într-un oraș românesc', cu, Child Indicators Research Volume 6, Issue 2 (2013), Pp. 281–295. De asemenea, este interesat de mișcările sociale și de cercetarea atitudinilor și a comportamentului prosocial. Alte publicații relevante sunt: Cioban, S., Lazăr, A. R., Bacter, C., & Hatos, A. (2021). Adolescent Deviance și Cyber-Deviance. O revizuire sistematică a literaturii. Frontiers in Psychology, 4416.; Lazar, A. și Hatos, A. (2019). Modele de comportament filantropic european: donații caritabile, regimuri non-profit și de bunăstare în Uniunea Europeană. Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences, 15(SI), 21–40.
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Ana Gabriela Pantea–Sergiu Mișcoiu

"Family, Faith and Freedom" for Whom? The Reactions of the Roma Civil Society to the 2020 Re-emergence of the Romanian Far-right

The rise of far-right movements has accelerated in the last decade as the effects of financial crisis, intersectional social injustice and the COVID pandemics which has led to a disillusionment with politics and fostered the rise of populist actors and claims. Post-communist Central and Eastern Europe has seen radical movements and populist parties gain considerable ground by drawing on nativist and ethnic claims to call for a return to an imagined past, free present and utopian future. In Romania, populist parties have been able to capitalize on a sense of social injustice, national conservative discourse, while also playing on historically negative feelings towards ethnic minorities. These patterns have been observed through the rise of AUR (The Alliance for the Union of Romanians) party which has established a foothold over the past two years.

The aims of the article are to examine the evolution of AUR and the reaction of the Roma community towards it, and to analyse the ways in which the representatives of the Roma community are polarized towards the discourse of AUR. The findings of the article show that pre-existing prejudices, long-lasting injustice and newly build conspiracies can be a powerful force that not only targets marginalized communities, but also challenges the mainstream representatives of the party. The reaction of the Roma community is trifold, partly being absorbed by the populist movement, partly reacting against the divisive message expressed by AUR, partly approving the violent discourse of AUR. The second part of article consists in the organization and the interpretation of the main results of a qualitative inquiry we conducted in October-November 2021. During the inquiry, we interviewed online 20 leaders of "Roma NGOs" (non-governmental organizations specialized in the defence of the human, social, economic, political and/or cultural rights of the Romanian Roma ethnics). The selection of the respondents was based on the principle of reasonable balance in terms of gender, age, location and education as reported to the average Roma civically and politically active citizens. To each participant, we applied a semi-structured interview. For the analysis of the responses, we used the inductive thematic analysis described by Warren and Karner (2014).

As a result of this inquiry, we synthesized three main arguments of the Roma NGO militants with regard to the AUR's emergence's consequences over the future of the Roma communities. Firstly, the Roma civil society representatives believe that AUR is a potential threat for the Roma communities, given the party's ideological lineage with the

interwar fascist movements and regimes. Secondly, they believe that, as it is deeply Eurosceptic, AUR will affect Romania's European path, with negative repercussions on all the majority-minority relations. Thirdly, but on a contrary, the Roma NGO militants think that AUR has a socio-economic platform oriented towards more redistribution, which could be favourable to the disadvantaged and marginalized Roma communities.

Keywords: Populism; far-right party; AUR; Roma community; NGO representation of Roma.

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„Család, hit és szabadság", de ki számára? A roma civil társadalom reakciói a román szélsőjobboldal 2020-as újbóli megjelenésére

A szélsőjobboldali mozgalmak térnyerését okozta a pénzügyi válság, az interszekcionális társadalmi igazságtalanságok és a COVID-járvány, minek következtében felgyorsult az elmúlt évtizedben, amely tényezők a politikából való kiábrándultsághoz vezettek és elősegítették a populista szereplők és követelések megerősödését. A posztkommunista Közép- és Kelet-Európában a radikális mozgalmak és a populista pártok jelentős teret hódítottak bevándorlásellenes és nemzeti retorikájukkal, amelyek egy elképzelt múlthoz és egy utópisztikus jövőhöz való visszatérésre szólítanak fel. Romániában a populista pártok a társadalomban meglévő igazságtalanság érzését használták ki, miközben a roma közösséggel szembeni történelmileg negatív érzelmeket is kijátszották. Az AUR (Románok Egyesüléséért Szövetség párt) felemelkedésének hátterében is hasonló tényezőket figyeltek meg, amely párt az elmúlt két évben épp azáltal tudott megerősödni, hogy romákat hibáztatta az épített örökség elvesztéséért és az elkobzott ingatlanok visszaszolgáltatásának meghiusulásáért.

A cikk célja, hogy bemutassa az AUR térnyerésének okait és a romák megbélyegzésének módjait, valamint megvizsgálja, hogyan polarizálódott maga a roma közösség is. A cikk megállapításai azt mutatják, hogy a már meglévő előítéletek és az újonnan kialakult összeesküvés-elméletek tudnak olyan erőt képviselni, amelyekkel nemcsak támadják a marginalizált közösségeket, hanem a mainstream pártokat is komoly kihívás elé állítják. A roma közösség válasza kettős, részben a populista mozgalom résztvevője lett, részben az AUR által megfogalmazott romaellenes üzenetek ellen próbál fellépni. A cikk második része egy általunk 2021. október-novemberben lefolytatott kvalitatív vizsgálat megszervezését és főbb eredményeinek értelmezését foglalja magában. A vizsgálat során a roma civil szervezetek 20 vezetőjét kérdeztük meg online a romániai roma etnikum emberi, társadalmi, gazdasági, politikai és/vagy kulturális jogainak védelméről). A válaszadók kiválasztása a nem, életkor, elhelyezkedés és iskolai végzettség ésszerű egyensúly-elve alapján történt. A vizsgálat eredményeként a roma civil szervezetek militáns tagjainak három fő érvét szintetizáltuk az AUR megjelenésének a roma közösségek jövőjére gyakorolt következményeivel kapcsolatban. Először is, a roma civil társadalom képviselői úgy vélik, hogy az AUR potenciális veszélyt jelent a roma közösségekre, tekintettel a párt ideológiai láncolatára a két világháború közötti fasiszta mozgalmakra és rezsimekre. Másodszor, úgy vélik, hogy mivel mélyen euroszkeptikus, az AUR hatással lesz Románia európai útjára, negatív hatással lesz az összes többség-kisebbség viszonyra. Harmadszor, de éppen ellenkezőleg, a roma civil szervezetek militánsai úgy gondolják, hogy az AUR-nak van egy nagyobb újraelosztásra orientált társadalmi-gazdasági platformja, ami kedvező lehet a hátrányos helyzetű és marginalizált roma közösségek számára.

Ana Gabriela Pantea (1978) nemzetközi kapcsolatok adjunktusa a kolozsvári Babes-Bolyai Tudományegyetem Európai Ta-nulmányok Karán (Románia), ahol a Nemzetközi Kapcsolatok és Germanisztika Tanszék vezetője. Filozófiából PhD-fokozatot szer-zett (Babes-Bolyai Tudományegyetem). Két könyvet írt a nemzetközi kapcsolatok interszubjektivitásáról, 5 kötetet szerkesztett és társszerkesztett, és több mint 20 cikket írt, főleg angol, francia és román nyelven. Fő kutatási területe a délkelet-ázsiai nemzetépítési folyamatokra alkalmazott konstruktivista elmélet, valamint a kelet-ázsiai társadalmi átalakulás dinamikája. Cikkeket publikált a román posztkommunista társadalmi átalakulásról, és terepkutatást végzett a roma közösségekben a társadalmi egyenlőtlenségre és margin-alizációra összpontosítva; terepkutatást végzett Délkelet-Ázsiában és Kínában is.
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Ana Gabriela Pantea–Sergiu Mişcoiu

„Familie, credinţă şi libertate" pentru cine? Reacţiile societăţii civile de etnie romă la reapariţia în 2020 a ext-remei drepte româneşti

Mişcările de extremă dreapta s-au accelerat în ultimul deceniu, ca urmare a efectelor crizei financiare, a nedreptăţii sociale intersecţionale şi a pandemiei COVID, acestea conducând la o dezamăgire sporită faţă de politică şi a stimulat ascensiunea actorilor şi revendicărilor populiste. Europa Centrală şi de Est post-comunistă a fost martoră la ascensiunea mişcărilor radicale, partidele populiste câştigând teren considerabil, bazându-se pe pretenţiile nativiste şi etnice de a re-vendica întoarcerea la un trecut imaginat, un prezent liber şi un viitor utopic. În România, partidele populiste au reuşit să valorifice sentimentul de nedreptate socială, discursul naţional conservator, jucând în acelaşi timp cartea sentimentelor negative din punct de vedere istoric faţă de minorităţile etnice. Aceste modele s-au manifestat în creşterea popularităţii AUR în ultimii doi ani.
Scopul articolului este de a examina evoluţia AUR şi reacţia comunităţii romei faţă de aceasta şi de a analiza modurile în care reprezentanţii comunităţii de romi sunt polarizaţi faţă de discursul AUR. Concluziile articolului arată că prejudecăţile preexistente, nedreptatea de lungă durată şi teoriile conspiraţioniste nou construite pot fi o forţă puternică care nu numai că vizează comunităţile marginalizate, ci provoacă şi reprezentanţii mainstream ai partidului. Reacţia comunităţii de romi este triplă, parţial fiind absorbită de mişcarea populistă, parţial reacţionând împotriva mesajului de excludere socială exprimat de AUR, parţial aprobând discursul violent al AUR. A doua parte conţine rezultatele unei unei cercetari calitative organizare în noiembrie 2021 şi interpretarea principalelor sale rezultate. În cadrul studiului, am intervievat online 20 lideri ai „ONG-urilor rome" (ONG-uri care militează pentru protecţia drepturilor sociale, economice, politice şi/sau culturale ale etniei romilor din România). Alegerea respondenţilor s-au bazat pe principiul echilibrului rezonabil de gen, vârstă, profesie şi educaţie. Au fost realizate interviuri semi-structurate cu fiecare participant în parte. Analiza tematică inductivă descrisă de Warren şi Karner (2014) a fost utilizată ca metodă de investigare a răspunsurilor.
În urma studiului, am sintetizat trei argumente principale ale militanţilor civici cu privire la consecinţele apariţiei AUR asupra viitorului comunităţilor de romi. În primul rând, reprezentanţii societăţii civile rome consideră că AUR reprezintă o potenţială ameninţare pentru comunităţile de romi, având în vedere dependenţa ideologică a partidului de mişcări şi regimuri fasciste dintre cele două războaie mondiale. În al doilea rând, se crede că, fiind profund eurosceptic, AUR ar avea afecta drumul european al României, cu un impact negativ asupra relaţiilor cu toate minorităţile majore. În al treilea rând, însă invers, militanţii din ONG-urile de romi consideră că AUR are o platformă socio-economică mai orientată spre redistribuire, ceea ce poate aduce beneficii comunităţilor de romi dezavantajate şi marginalizate.

Cuvânt cheie: Populism; partid de extremă dreapta; AUR, comunitate de romi; reprezentarea ONG-uri rome.

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Sorin-Gelu Borza—Victor Papp

When the Demos Takes to the Street. Political Contestation in Romania, between Myth and Change (1990–2021)

Viewed as forms of participation and political contestation, democratic protests in post-communist Romania had a direct impact on the functioning of democracy, often leading to important social and political changes. Beyond their historical reality, these social movements can be and have been interpreted in different ways, depending on the collective imaginary and the political myths employed, either by protesters, or by the targets of their actions: the Romanian Governments of the last 30 years.

The scope of this paper is to analyze the interpretation given by the protagonists of these movements themselves, in an ideological context, through the intentional use of political mythologies and Manichaean approaches, both serving the narratives employed, in the sense of creating meaning and determining action. Using this perspective, our analysis follows the manifestations of the demos in the "street" and in the "public square" between 1990 and 2021. We consider "Golania" and "Mineriadele" from 1990–1991, "Bucharest Spring – 2012", the post-Collective "Political Revolution" of 2015, the #Rezist Phenomenon from 2017–2019, and the "Protest of Free People" during the COVID–19 pandemic. Our goal is a better understanding of the „street" and the „public square" and, with them, of democracy in Romania during the last 30 years. Finally, our interest is to evaluate how the Romanian political system has changed, if it has changed at all, after 30 years of street democracy.

In the first part of the paper we will define the general conceptual framework, so that we can further analyze the different episodes of political contestation using the interpretation given by the collective imaginary and political myths. In the last part of the paper, through a personal approach, of a theoretical and philosophical nature, we will aim to open new horizons of reflection on democracy and real, systemic changes, which all these political challenges have brought, and can still bring, in the Romanian political system.

Keywords: Democracy; contentious politics; protest movements; political myths, change.

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Victor Papp is currently a PhD candidate at the University "Ștefan cel Mare" (Suceava, Romania) with a research on the philosophical foundations of democratic decisions in crisis periods. After graduating Political Science at the University of Oradea (Romania), he followed two Master Programs in The Netherlands – European Public Affairs at Maastricht University and Public Administration at Twente University. Papp`s main fields of interests are political philosophy, policy analysis, protest movements and democratic theory.
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Sorin-Gelu Borza–Victor Papp
A Démosz az utcán. Romániai politikai tiltakozás a mítosz és a valóság között (1990–2021)

Részvételi formának és politikai tiltakozásként tekintve, a demokratikus tiltakozások a posztkommunista Romániában társadalmi és történelmi valóságok, a demokrácia és a civil társadalom valós intézményévé váltak. E tiltakozó mozgalmak különféle formái közvetlen hatással voltak a demokrácia működésére, gyakran jelentősnek vélt társadalmi és politikai változásokhoz vezetvén. Ugyanakkor ezeket a társadalmi mozgalmakat a kollektív képzelettől és a munkába állított politikai mítoszoktól függően különbözőképpen értelmezték, akár a tiltakozók, akár a tiltakozás célpontjai, Románia vezetői az elmúlt 30 évben.

A cikk célja, hogy e történelmi események főszereplői által adott értelmet elemezze ideológiai kontextusban, a politikai mitológiák és manicheus megközelítések szándékos felhasználásán keresztül, mindkettő az érintett felek narratíváját szolgálván, az értelemteremtés és a cselekvést meghatározó értelemben. Ezt a perspektívát használva, az elemzés követi a démosz „utcai" és „piaci" megnyilvánulásait, az 1990 és 2021 között felemésztett politikai tiltakozások főbb epizódjainak értelmezését kínálva a politikai képzelet és mítoszok adta kulcsok alapján. Figyelembe vettük a „Golania" és az 1990–1991-es „Mineriadele", majd a „Bukaresti tavasz 2012", a 2015-ös „Politikai Forradalom", a #Resist jelenség – 2017–2019, és a „Szabad románok tiltakozását" a COVID–19 világjárvány idején. A cél az „utca" és a „piac" és ezzel együtt az elmúlt 30 év romániájának demokráciájának jobb megértése. Végül pedig értékeljük, hogy változott valójában a román politikai rendszer 30 év utcai demokrácia után.

Az első részben meghatározzuk az általános fogalmi keretet, így a következő fejezetben a kollektív képzelet (meaning framing) és a politikai mítoszok értelmezése alapján elemezzük a politikai tiltakozás különböző epizódjait. A dolgozat utolsó részében néhány általános, elméleti-filozófiai jellegű személyes megfontolás kap helyet, melyeknek célja, hogy új távlatokat nyissanak a demokrácia és a valós, rendszerszintű változások reflexiójában, amelyet mindezen politikai viták hoztak és elő tudnak idézni a román politikai rendszerbe.

Kulcsszavak: Demokrácia, vitás politika; tiltakozó mozgalmak; politikai mítoszok; változás.

Sorin-Gelu Borza, PhD hab., egyetemi docens a filozófiatörténet doktora 2003 óta. Szakdolgozatát – Az eikon fogalma Platón filozófiájában – magna cum laude védte meg a kolozsvári Babes-Bolyai egyetemen. A Nagyváradi Egyetem nemzetközi kapcsolatokért felelős rektorhelyettese. Kurzusokat tart a politikai eszmetörténet, valamint az etika és a politika témakörből. Hét könyv szerzője, és több mint 70 tudományos cikket publikált a politikai filozófia és etika témakörében. Több mint 25 éves tudományos tapasztalattal, a procedurális társadalmakkal kapcsolatos új kutatási területek és kutatások, a társadalmi befolyási hálók és azok modern tudásközösségekhez való kapcsolódása iránt érdeklődik. Jelenlegi kutatási területe a politikai eszmetörténetre és a politikai elméletekre irányul.
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Sorin-Gelu Borza–Victor Papp
Demos-ul în stradă. Contestarea politică din România între mit și schimbare (1990–2021)

Privite ca forme de participare și de contestare politică, protestele democratice din România postcomunistă au avut un impact direct asupra funcționării democrației, de foarte multe ori determinând schimbări sociale și politice importante. Dincolo de realitatea lor istorică, aceste mișcări sociale pot fi și au fost interpretate în chei diferite în funcție de imaginarul colectiv și de miturile politice puse la lucru, fie de protestatari, fie de ținta contestării, guvernanții României din ultimii 30 de ani. Intenția lucrării este de a analiza interpretarea dată de protagoniștii acestor mișcări într-un context ideologizat, prin prisma utilizării intenționale a mitologiilor politice și a abordărilor maniheiste, ambele servind narativelor utilizate, în sensul de creare de sens și determinare de acțiune.

Folosind această perspectivă, analiza noastră urmărește manifestările demos-ului în "stradă" și "piață" consumate între 1990 și 2021. Avem în vedere "Golania" și "Mineriadele" din 1990–1991, "Primăvara de la București – 2012", "Revoluția politică" post-Colectiv din 2015, Fenomenul #Rezist din perioada 2017-2019 și "Protestul oamenilor liberi" din timpul pandemiei COVID–19. Scopul este o mai bună înțelegere a "străzii" și a "pieței" și, odată cu ele, a democrației din

România ultimilor 30 de ani. În final, interesul este de a evalua cum s-a schimbat, dacă s-a schimbat, sistemul politic românesc după 30 de ani de democrație a străzii.

În prima parte a lucrării vom defini cadrul conceptual general, astfel încât în continuare să analizăm diferitele episoade ale contestării politice folosind interpretarea dată de imaginarul colectiv și de miturile politice. În ultima parte a lucrării, câteva problematizări personale, de natură teoretică și filosofică, își vor găsi locul, intenția fiind de a deschide noi orizonturi de reflecție asupra democrației și a schimbărilor reale, sistemice, pe care toate aceste contestări politice le-au adus și le pot produce sistemului politic românesc.

Cuvinte cheie: Democrație; contestare politică; mișcări de protest; mit politic; schimbare.

Sorin-Gelu Borza, conf. univ. dr. hab., este doctor în Istoria Filosofiei din 2003 (teză despre Conceptul de Eikon în filosofia lui Platon – magna cum laude Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai din Cluj). Este prorector (Vizibilitate și Relații Internaționale) la Universitatea din Oradea. Predă cursuri de Istoria ideilor politice, de etică și politică. Este autor a șapte cărți și a publicat peste 70 de articole științifice în domeniul filosofiei și eticii politice. Cu peste 25 de ani de experiență academică, este interesat de noi domenii de cercetare privind societățile procedurale, noile cercetări despre societățile procedurale, rețelele sociale de influență și conexiunea acestora la comunitățile moderne de cunoaștere. Interesul lui actual de cercetare se concentrează pe istoria ideilor politice și a teoriilor politice.
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Felix-Angel Popescu–Laurențiu Petrila

The Effect of Democratic Instruments between Civil Society Expectations and Political Intentions: Referendums in Romania after 1989

The Romanian Constitution states that the people represent the greatest power in the state, therefore its will is manifested by referendum, for issues related to the revision of the constitution, the dismissal of the president, or issues of national interest. These provisions have been designed by virtue of the fact that society is evolving, and certain constitutional or legislative provisions may contradict these developments. Over time, it has been observed that the ruling political parties have used the pretext of holding referendums rather to alternate from opposition to power or, in other cases, to simply know the electoral tendencies. of citizens. The paradox of these referendums is that there were no steps to implement their results, and civil society was falsely induced by politicians the idea that the referendum distinguishes between the consultative and the decision-making one, not existing anywhere. text of this distinction. If the first referendum in 1991 had the role of approving a new constitution for Romania, and the one in 2003 came to amend the constitution, the next referendums did not produce visible effects in the functioning of the state, proving to be rather consuming of financial resources. public: in 2007, referendum for the dismissal of the president and in the same year, a few months later, a referendum invalidated for the uninominal vote, in 2009 referendum for the unicameral parliament and for reducing the number of parliamentarians, in 2012 referendum for the dismissal of the president, in 2018 referendum invalidated for amending the constitution, in 2019 a referendum on justice (organized in the context of protests against Government Emergency Ordinance No. 13 of 2017). On the one hand, a simple definition of democracy addresses notions such as the separation of powers in the state, the organization of free elections, political pluralism, respect for civil rights and freedoms, within the limits established by law. On the other hand, what goes wrong when it comes to democracy through referendums is that there is always a double pun – on the one hand, the state invokes obligations to citizens and often forgets about their rights, and on the other. on the other hand, citizens invoke rights and often forget obligations.

In order to understand, as a whole, the concept of decisional culture and its relation to the true values of a people that considers itself democratic, it is necessary to apply the distinction between the client vote and the ideological vote. Because, in the end, with or without a quorum, the clientele vote and the ideological vote prevail, as the case may be, over each other, merging and forming a consensus – the will of the people.

Keywords: Referendum; civil society; Romania; politics.

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Felix-Angel Popescu—Laurenţiu Petrila

A demokratikus eszközök hatása a civil társadalmi elvárások és a politikai szándékok között: népszavazások Romániában 1989 után

A román alkotmány kimondja, hogy a nép képviseli a legfőbb hatalmat az államban, ezért akarata népszavazás útján nyilvánul meg az alkotmány felülvizsgálatával vagy az elnök felmentésével, illetve más nemzeti érdekű kérdésekben. Ezeket a rendelkezéseket a társadalom fejlődése miatt alakították ki és egyes alkotmányos vagy jogszabályi rendelkezések ezekkel a fejleményekkel ellentétesek lehetnek. Az idő múlásával megfigyelhető, hogy a kormányzó politikai pártok a népszavazások ürügyét inkább az ellenzékből a hatalomba való átváltásra használták fel, vagy más esetekben egyszerűen azért, hogy megismerjék a polgárok választási tendenciáit. E népszavazások paradoxona, hogy nem történtek lépések az eredményeik megvalósítására és a politikusok hamisan keltették azt az elképzelést civil társadalomba, hogy különbség van konzultatív és döntéshozó népszavazási formák között, ilyen megkülönböztetés nem lévén semmilyen jogi szövegben. Ha az első, 1991-es népszavazásnak Románia új alkotmányának elfogadásában volt a szerepe, a 2003-as pedig az alkotmánymódosításra irányult, akkor a következő népszavazások nem jártak látható hatással az állam működésére, inkább meglehetős közforrás-emésztőnek bizonyultak: 2007-ben népszavazás az elnök felmentéséről és ugyanebben az évben néhány hónappal később az érvénytelenített népszavazás az uninominális szavazásról, 2009-ben az egykamarás parlamentről és a képviselők számának csökkentéséről, 2012-ben népszavazás az elnök felmentéséről, 2018-ban érvénytelenített népszavazás az alkotmánymódosításról, 2019-ben az igazságszolgáltatásról szóló népszavazás (a 2017. évi 13. számú sürgősségi kormányrendelet elleni tiltakozásokkal összefüggésben). A demokrácia egyszerű meghatározása egyrészt olyan fogalmakkal operál, mint az állam hatalmi ágainak szétválasztása, a szabad választások szervezése, a politikai pluralizmus, az állampolgárok jogainak és szabadságainak tiszteletben tartása, a törvény által meghatározott kereteken belül. Másrészt, a népszavazáson keresztüli demokráciánál az a baj, hogy mindig kettős beszéd zajlik – egyrészt az állam kötelezettségekre hivatkozik az állampolgárokkal szemben és gyakran megfeledkezik azok jogairól, másrészt a polgárok jogokra hivatkoznak és gyakran megfeledkeznek kötelezettségeikről.

A döntéshozatali kultúra fogalmának és a magát demokratikusnak valló nép valódi értékeivel való kapcsolata egészének megértéséhez meg kell különböztetni a kliensi és az ideológiai szavazatot. Mert végeredményben, kvórummal vagy anélkül, a kliensi vagy az ideológiai szavazás érvényesül, adott esetben egymás felett, összeolvadva, konszenzust alkotva hozza létre a népakaratot.

Kulcsszavak: Népszavazás; civil társadalom; Románia; politika.

Felix-Angel Popescu (1989) közgazdasági doktori fokozatot szerzett és a nagyváradi Agora Egyetemen (Románia) betöltött asszisztensi beosztása mellett, jelenleg a Nagyváradi Egyetem (Románia) közgazdaságtudományi posztdoktori kutatója. Regionális fejlesztés, nemzetközi kapcsolatok és szervezetek, az európai kormányzás alapjai témakörökben tanult alap- és mesterképzésben

és tart szemináriumokat jelenleg. Tanult ugyanakkor a tanárképzésben alkalmazott pszicho-pedagógiai modulokat is. A Nagyváradi Agora Egyetem Szenátusa Nemzetközi Kapcsolatok Bizottságának elnöke (2020-tól napjainkig), valamint az Erasmus Iroda tanszéki koordinátora. Szakmai vonalon több, kutatási érdeklődéséhez kapcsolódó – az európai finanszírozású projektek hatását felmérő – képzést tartott és tovább tudta adni tudását, a bukaresti Nemzeti Közigazgatási Intézet okleveles oktatója lett. Jelenleg egy nemzetközi tudományos és kutatói konzorciumon keresztül koordinál egy Erasmus projektet, amely a kreativitáson keresztüli vállalkozói szellemhez kapcsolódik az iskolákban.

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Felix-Angel Popescu–Laurenţiu Petrila

Efectul instrumentelor democratice între aşteptările societăţii civile şi intenţiile politice: referendumurile în România după 1989

Constituţia României enunţă faptul că poporul reprezintă cea mai mare putere în stat, prin urmare voinţa acestuia se manifestă prin referendum, pentru chestiuni ce ţin de revizuirea constituţiei, de demiterea preşedintelui, sau de probleme de interes naţional. Aceste prevederi au fost gândite în virtutea faptului că societatea evoluează, iar anumite prevederi constituţionale sau legislative pot să contravină acestor evoluţii. De-a lungul timpului, s-a observat faptul că partidele politice aflate la guvernare s-au folosit de pretextul necesităţii organizării referendum-urilor mai degrabă pentru a alterna de la opoziţie la putere sau, în alte cazuri, de a cunoaşte pur şi simplu tendinţele electorale ale cetăţenilor. Paradoxul acestor referendum-uri este că nu au existat demersuri de punere în aplicare a rezultatelor acestora, iar societăţii civile i-a fost în mod fals indusă de către politicieni ideea potrivit căreia referendum-ul se distinge între cel consultativ şi cel decizional, neexistând nicăieri în vreun text de lege această distincţie. Dacă primul referendum din 1991 a avut rolul de a aproba o nouă constituţie pentru România, iar cel din 2003 a venit să modifice constituţia, următoarele referendumuri nu au produs efecte vizibile în funcţionarea statului, dovedindu-se a fi mai degrabă mari consumatoare de resurse financiare publice: în 2007, referendum pentru demiterea preşedintelui şi în acelaşi an, câteva luni mai târziu, un referendum invalidat pentru votul uninominal, în 2009 referendum pentru parlament unicameral şi pentru reducerea numărului de parlamentari, în 2012 referendum pentru demiterea preşedintelui, în 2018 referendum invalidat pentru modificarea constituţiei, în 2019 referendum pe tema justiţiei (organizat în contextul protestelor împotriva Ordonanţei de Urgenţă a Guvernului Nr. 13 din anul 2017). Pe de o parte, o definiţie simplă a democraţiei abordează noţiuni precum separaţia puterilor în stat, organizarea de alegeri libere, pluralism politic, respectarea drepturilor şi libertăţilor cetăţeneşti, în limitele stabilite de lege. Pe de altă parte, ceea ce se greşeşte atunci când se vorbeşte despre democraţie prin referendum, este faptul că întotdeauna se desfăşoară un joc dublu de cuvinte – pe de o parte, statul invocă obligaţii către cetăţeni şi uită adeseori de drepturile lor, iar pe de altă parte, cetăţenii invocă drepturi şi uită frecvent de obligaţii.

Pentru a înţelege, per ansamblu, conceptul de cultură decizională şi raportarea lui la adevăratele valori ale unui popor care se consideră democratic, este necesar să se aplice distincţia între votul clientelar şi votul ideologic. Pentru că, în final, cu sau fără cvorum, votul clientelar şi votul ideologic prevalează, după caz, unul asupra celuilalt, contopindu-se şi formând un consens – voinţa poporului.

Cuvinte cheie: Referendum; societate; civilă; România; politică.

Felix-Angel Popescu (1989) este doctor în Economie şi pe lângă postul de asistent la Universitatea Agora din Oradea (România), în prezent este cercetător postdoctoral în Economie la Universitatea din Oradea (România). În prezent, predă seminarii de Dezvoltare Regională, Relaţii şi Organizaţii Internaţionale, Bazele Guvernării Europene – teme pe care le-a studiat şi la nivel de licenţă şi master, alături de modulele psihopedagogice de formare a cadrelor didactice. Este preşedintele Comisiei de Relaţii Internaţionale a Senatului de la Universitatea Agora din Oradea (2020-prezent) şi este coordonator departamental la Biroul Erasmus. În sectorul profesional, a realizat mai multe training-uri legate de interesele sale de cercetare – evaluarea impactului proiectelor cu finanţare europeană – şi a reuşit să-şi împărtăşească în continuare cunoştinţele, devenind formator certificat la Institutul Naţional de Administraţie, din Bucureşti (România). În prezent, coordonează un proiect Erasmus legat de antreprenoriat prin creativitate în şcoli, prin intermediul unui consorţiu internaţional academic şi de cercetare.

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Ioana Albu–Zoltan Zakota

The Evolution of Civil Society in Post-December Romania

The efficient functioning of a modern state involves, among other things, ensuring that it has all the economic, political, social, cultural, legal conditions that actively support the competence and capacity of persons to engage, individually or in association. with other people, in civic activities. An eloquent example of this is the case of post-December Romania, where civil society organizations have played a significant role in consolidating the new democracy and monitoring the rule of law. Despite a continuous presence in the daily press, many authors agree that civil society and its role in post-December public life is an insufficiently analysed and debated topic so far. In this study we aim to present some aspects of the formation process of civil society in post-December Romania. We insist, above all, on the institutional and legal ones. Our writing is synthetic and multidisciplinary in nature. We will try to outline the development curve of the civil sphere formed after the turn in December, showing how this path was formed, what factors had an impact on it, both positive and negative, and what characteristics and qualities it acquired.
Keywords: Civil sphere; non-governmental sector; civil society, civic culture; post-December transition, Romania.

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Ioana Albu–Zakota Zoltán
A civil társadalom alakulása a poszt-decemberi Romániában

A modern állam hatékony működése feltételezi, többek között, annak biztosítását, hogy rendelkezzen mindazon gazdasági, politikai, társadalmi, kulturális, jogi feltételekkel, amelyek aktívan támogatják a személyek egyéni vagy másokkal való társulási kompetenciáját és képességét, civil tevékenységekben. Beszédes példa erre Románia esete a december fordulat után, ahol a civil szervezetek jelentős szerepet játszottak az új demokrácia megszilárdításában és a jogállamiság ellenőrzésében. A napi sajtó folyamatos jelenléte ellenére sok szerző egyetért abban, hogy a civil társadalom és szerepe a december utáni közéletben eddig nem kellően elemzett és vitatott téma. Ebben a tanulmányban a civil társadalom kialakulási folyamatának néhány aspektusát szeretnénk bemutatni a fordulat utáni Romániában. Mindenekelőtt az intézményi és jogi szempontok bemutatását tűztük ki célul. Írásunk szintetikus és multidiszciplináris jellegű. Megpróbáljuk felvázolni a decemberi fordulat után kialakult civil szféra fejlődési görbéjét, bemutatva, hogyan alakult ki ez az út, milyen pozitív és negatív tényezők hatottak rá, milyen jellegzetességeket, illetve tulajdonságokat szerzett.

Kulcsszavak: Civil szféra; nem kormányzati szektor; civil társadalom; állampolgári kultúra; decemberi fordulat; Románia.

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Ioana Albu–Zoltan Zakota
Evoluția societății civile în România postdecembristă

Funcționarea eficientă a unui stat modern presupune, printre altele, asigurarea faptului că acesta dispune de toate condițiile economice, politice, sociale, culturale, juridice care susțin în mod activ competența și capacitatea persoanelor de a se angaja, individual sau în asociere cu alte persoane, în activități civice. Un exemplu elocvent în acest sens este cazul României postdecembriste, unde organizațiile societății civile au jucat un rol semnificativ în consolidarea noii democrații și monitorizarea statului de drept. În ciuda prezenței continue în presa cotidiană, mulți autori sunt de acord că societatea civilă și rolul ei în viața publică postdecembristă este un subiect insuficient analizat și dezbătut până acum. În acest studiu ne propunem să prezentăm câteva aspecte ale procesului de formare a societății civile în România postdecembristă. Insistăm, înainte de toate, pe cele instituționale și juridice. Scrierea noastră este de natură sintetică și multidisciplinară. Vom încerca să conturăm curba de dezvoltare a sferei civile urmată după cotitura din decembrie, arătând cum s-a format această cale, ce factori au avut impact asupra ei, atât pozitiv, cât și negativ, și ce caracteristici și calități a dobândit.

Cuvinte-cheie: Sferă civilă; sector nonguvernamental; societate civilă; cultură civică; decembrie 1989; România.

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Ioana Albu

Foreign Language Education in Romania and Education for the Civil Society in the Context of Languages for Democracy

Foreign language education has been profoundly affected by globalization and communication has changed alike. The massive flows of migration that have occurred in the recent time, the new way of interaction and forging relationships at all levels, the need to adapt to the novel multi-lingual and multicultural realities have lead to the need of forging a new approach to the language education in Romania.

A host of new approaches have been put on the scene with regard to foreign language teaching. Among them, the present study makes reference to works such as 'Redefining the role of language in a globalized world'; 'Language and globalization'; 'Intercultural language teaching and learning', 'Culture in second language teaching and learning'; 'Context and culture in language teaching' to mention but a few important ones of the of the vast host of issues.

It must be admitted that English, with its cultural and intercultural dimension remains the lingua franca in the Romanian setting, though many other foreign languages have gained ground, notably Italian, French, German and Chinese in the past few years, being widely ascertained that the Romanians are among the best language speakers (notably English speakers as well) in the world, according to a study made by Education first (2017) Romania being among the first countries in the world as speakers of English, ranking 16.

When speaking of civil society, there is the need to make the link with globalization, since it is the multinational and transnational corporations, banks, financial markets, investors a.o. that have come to the foreground, imposing their status and put pressure on the public powers to redefine national economy first and foremost. The present article aims at focusing solely on one of the dimensions of the multiple ones inferred by globalization, i.e. that of the social and cultural one. Out of the multitude of approaches to globalization, we shall hereby focus on the inter-relational aspect, the interaction of people with one another, which implies compressing the distances through new technologies internet, mobile communication), inter-connectedness and increase of mutual dependency, integration financial and commercial markets, developing trans-national identities, to mention but a few. All these have imposed the need to a new approach of foreign language education in Romania that has in a way 'de-stabilized' core ideas that have helped to form national languages and, on the other hand, foreign languages. It is but a known fact that globalization is a future stage of the mankind's political, economic and cultural development, being a complex

geo-economic, geo-political and last but not least, a geo-cultural process. The debates that have taken place lately and the works published in the past few years on the activity of the civil society have been considerably more and more, irrespective of the area of manifestation, this meaning, among other, increasing the role of the civil society organizations and their degree of involvement in organizing, sustaining and consistent participation to complex activities meant to solve problems mankind and ultimately state actors are confronted with, as well as recognizing this role by the other state and non-state actors, national, regional and international ones. Taking out of the various facets or civil society the power of culture as being the one that prevails, according to some authors (Perlas, N.) its stated that 'culture is the social space wherein identity and sense take shape', the two being inseparable components. The cultural power of the civil society reveals topics related to sense, truth, moral, credibility and legitimacy. It follows, then, that the civil society stands for the capital of trust, that something in which many invest hopes and expectations.

The study aims at showing the aspect of intercultural foreign language teaching and learning in higher education contexts in Romania and well as aspects related to the inter-culturality and the predominantly English language classroom, as well as both intercultural and institutional communication in all walks of life in nowadays Romanian society.

Keywords: Language and globalization; languages for democracy; Romanian cultural identity; civil society; inter-culturality.

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Ioana Albu

Idegen nyelvű oktatás Romániában és oktatás a civil társadalom számára az idegen nyelvek összefüggésében a demokrácia érdekében

A nyelvoktatást és a nyelvtanulást mélyen érintette a globalizáció és ugyanakkor a kommunikáció is megváltozott. A közelmúltban bekövetkezett hatalmas migrációs hullámok, az interakció és a kapcsolatteremtés minden szinten tapasztalható új módjai, az új többnyelvű és multikulturális valósághoz való alkalmazkodás szükségessége a nyelvoktatás újfajta megközelítéséhez vezetett Romániában.

A nyelvoktatás terén számos új megközelítési mód alakult ki. Közülük ez a tanulmány olyan szempontokra utal, mint „A nyelv szerepének új meghatározása a globalizált világban", „Nyelv és globalizáció", „Interkulturális nyelvek oktatása és tanulása", „Kultúra a második nyelv oktatásában és tanulásában"; „Kontextus és kultúra a nyelvoktatásban", hogy csak néhány fontosabb elemét említsem e hatalmas témakörnek.

El kell ismerni, hogy a román kontextusban az angol nyelv, kulturális és interkulturális dimenzióiban, továbbra is lingua franca marad, bár sok más idegen nyelv is teret nyert, különösen az olasz, a francia, a német és az utóbbi években, a kínai. Széles körben ismert, hogy a románok a világ legjobb idegennyelv-beszélői (főleg angolnyelv-beszélők) közé tartoznak, – derül ki az Education first (2017) tanulmányából.

Amikor a civil társadalomról beszélünk, e jelenséget a globalizációval szoros összefüggésben kell megközelíteni, mert a multinacionális és transznacionális vállalatok, bankok, pénzügyi piacok, befektetők azok, akik előtérbe kerültek, kikényszerítve saját státuszukat és nyomást gyakorolva a hatóságokra, hogy újradefiniálják a nemzetgazdaságot. E cikk célja, hogy kizárólag a globalizáció számos aspektusának egyik dimenziójára összpontosítson, nevezetesen a társadalmi és kulturális aspektusokra.

A globalizáció sokféle szempontjából az egymás közötti kapcsolatokat, az emberek egymás közötti interakcióját fogjuk kiemelni, (amely magában foglalja a távolságok tömörítését az új internetes technológiák által, a mobiltelefonos kommunikáció segítségével), az összekapcsoltságot és a fokozott kölcsönös függést, a pénzügyi és kereskedelmi piacokat, a transznacionális identitások kialakulását, hogy csak néhányat említsünk, és amelyek közvetlenül összefüggenek az idegen nyelveken és az ezek segítségével folytatott kommunikációval.

Mindezek a nyelvoktatás új megközelítését tették szükségessé Romániában, ami bizonyos módon „destabilizálta" azokat az alapeszméket, amelyek elősegítették egyrészt a nemzeti, másrészt az idegen nyelvek kialakítását. Jól ismert tény, hogy a globalizáció az emberiség politikai, gazdasági és kulturális fejlődésének közeli állomása lesz, mint összetett geogazdasági, geopolitikai és nem utolsó sorban geokulturális folyamat.

A civil társadalom tevékenységéről a közelmúltban lezajlott viták és az elmúlt években megjelent művek egyre kiterjedtebbek, függetlenül a megnyilvánulási területtől, ami többek között a civil társadalom és a szervezetek szerepének növelését jelenti és következetes részvételük mértékét azoknak a komplex tevékenységeknek a szervezésében és támogatásában, amelyeknek célja olyan problémák megoldása, amelyekkel az emberiségnek szembesülnie kell, nem végső soron állami és nem állami, nemzeti, regionális és nemzetközi szereplők által.

Kiemelve a civil társadalom különböző elemei közül a kultúra hatalmát, néhány szerző (Perlas, N.) a következőket állítja: „a kultúra az a társadalmi tér, amelyben az identitás és az értelem életre kelnek", mint két elválaszthatatlan fogalom. A civil társadalom kulturális ereje feltárja az értelemhez, igazsághoz, erkölcshöz, hitelességhez, illetve a legitimitáshoz kapcsolódó témákat. Ez a civil társadalom a bizalom tőkéje, amelybe sokan (gyakran magas) reményeket és elvárásokat fektetnek be.

A tanulmány célja, hogy szemléltesse az idegen nyelvek oktatásának és tanulásának interkulturális aspektusait a Romániai felsőoktatás terén, az interkulturális és főleg az angol nyelv terén, valamint azokat a szempontokat amelyek összefüggenek a mai román társadalom minden kategóriájának interkulturális és intézményi kommunikációjával.

Kulcsszavak: Nyelv és globalizáció; idegen nyelvek a demokráciához; román kulturális identitás; civil társadalom; interkulturalitás.

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Ioana Albu

Educația în limbi străine în România și educația pentru societatea civilă în contextul limbilor pentru democrație

Educația în limbi străine si studiul limbilor străine au fost profund afectate de globalizare și comunicarea s-a schimbat la fel. Fluxurile masive de migrație care au avut loc în ultima perioadă, noul mod de interacțiune și de stabilire a relațiilor la toate nivelurile, necesitatea de a se adapta la noile realități multilingve și multiculturale au dus la necesitatea de a făuri o nouă abordare a educației lingvistice în România.

O serie de noi abordări au fost conturate în ceea ce privește predarea limbilor străine. Printre acestea, prezentul studiu face trimitere la abordări precum „Redefinirea rolului limbajului într-o lume globalizată"; „Limbă și globalizare"; „Predarea și învățarea limbilor interculturale", „Cultura în predarea și învățarea limbii a doua"; „Contextul și cultura în predarea limbilor străine" pentru a menționa doar câteva dintre cele importante fațete al acestei vaste problematici.

Trebuie admis faptul ca că limba engleză, cu dimensiunea sa culturală și interculturală, rămâne lingua franca în contextul românesc, deși multe alte limbi străine au câștigat teren, în special italiană, franceză, germană și chineză în ultimii ani, fiind recunoscut pe scară largă că românii sunt printre cei mai buni vorbitori de limbi straine (în special vorbitori de engleză) din lume, potrivit unui studiu realizat de Education first (2017), România fiind printre primele țări din lume ca vorbitori de engleză, ocupând locul 16.

Când vorbim de societatea civilă, este necesar să se se discute in strânsă legătură cu globalizarea, deoarece corporațiile multinaționale și transnaționale, băncile, piețele financiare, investitorii a.o. sunt cele care au ajuns în prim-plan, impunându-și statutul și punând presiune asupra puterilor publice pentru a redefini în primul rând economia națională. Prezentul articol își propune să se concentreze exclusiv pe una dintre dimensiunile multiplelor aspecte pe care globalizarea le implică, anume pe cea socială și culturală. Din multitudinea de abordări ale globalizării, ne vom concentra pe aspectul inter-relațional, interacțiunea oamenilor între ei, ceea ce implică comprimarea distanțelor prin intermediul noilor tehnologii internet, comunicare prin intermediul telefoniei mobile), interconectare și creșterea dependenței reciproce, integrarea piețelor financiare și comerciale, dezvoltarea identităților transnaționale, pentru a menționa doar câteva dintre acestea si care sunt direct dependente de comunicare in și prin intermediul limbilor străine. Toate acestea au impus necesitatea unei noi abordări a educației în limbi străine în România, care are într-un fel „destabilizate" ideile de bază care au ajutat la formarea limbilor naționale și, pe de altă parte, a limbilor străine. Este un fapt bine cunoscut că globalizarea este o etapă viitoare a dezvoltării politice, economice și culturale a omenirii, fiind un proces geo-economic complex, geo-politic și nu în ultimul rând, un proces geo-cultural. Dezbaterile care au avut loc în ultima vreme și lucrările publicate în ultimii ani despre activitatea societății civile au fost din ce în ce mai ample, indiferent de zona de manifestare, ceea ce înseamnă, printre altele, creșterea rolului societății civile organizațiile și gradul lor de implicare în organizarea, susținerea și participarea consecventă la activități complexe menite să rezolve problemele cu care se confruntă omenirea și în cele din urmă actorii de stat, precum și recunoașterea acestui rol de către ceilalți actori de stat și non-statali, naționali, regionali și internaționali.

Extragand din diferitele fațete ale societății civile pe puterea culturii ca fiind cea care predomină, potrivit unor autori (Perlas, N.), observăm ca se afirmă că, „cultura este spațiul social în care identitatea și sensul prind contur", cele două fiind componente inseparabile. Puterea culturală a societății civile dezvăluie subiecte legate de sens, adevăr, morală, credibilitate și legitimitate. Prin urmare, societatea civilă reprezintă capitalul încrederii, acel lucru în care mulți investesc (adesea mari) speranțe și așteptări.

Studiul își propune să ilustreze aspectul predării și învățării interculturale a limbilor străine în contextul învățământului superior din România, precum și aspecte legate de interculturalitate și clasă predominant de limba engleză, precum și comunicarea interculturală și instituțională în toate categoriile din societatea românească din zilele noastre.

Cuvinte cheie: Limbă și globalizare; limbi straine pentru democratie; identitate culturală românească; societate civilă; interculturalitate.

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Karla Melinda Barth–Ana Gabriela Pantea

To Zoom or not to Zoom? Adapting to Online Teaching during Covid–19 Pandemic in Romanian Universities

The unexpected outbreak of COVID–19 pandemic and the lockdown which followed led to an interruption in education worldwide and a major shift towards online mode of teaching. The global context has multiplied in Romania, creating new challenges and opportunities in a traditional and restrained teaching setting. The present study explores the specific trends of online teaching methods used during the pandemic in Romania in four higher education institutions and analyses the perceptions from the perspectives of the students, academic staff, support personnel and external stakeholders towards new teaching methods and educational policy decisions. In opposition to the theoretical advantages on the technology-based teaching methods, the article captures the reasons of the

anxiety in applying these methods in an unprepared social and teaching context; and shows the socio-political background in the preferences of teaching strategies at individual and collective level.

In our article we interpret the main results of a qualitative inquiry we conducted in October–November 2021. Our goal was to find out how Romanian universities adapted to online teaching during COVID and how they mastered the challenges they encountered. During the research, we organized 32 interviews (online or face-to-face) in four relevant Romanian universities: a top Romanian university, a middle size university with regional impact, a local private university, and an externally funded private institution. All our respondents are related to the field of social-science. For the analysis of the responses, we used the inductive thematic analysis described by M. Bloor,et al. (2001).The objective was to find out the perception of the stakeholders of the current unplanned educational shift on learning outcomes, stress level and pedagogical shift. We interviewed external stakeholders as well to compare their perceptions vis a vis the views from inside. The article highlights the personal reactions and experiences in respect to the educational shift they had encountered.

Online teaching and learning practices are related to social, cognitive, and teaching particularities, as such we identified several specificities derived by organizational culture of the Romanian higher education practices. Additionally, our findings from the interviews reveal the need for a comprehensive view of the pedagogy that integrates technology to support teaching and learning, but without a full shift to online education. The current study on the recent development of online teaching and learning practices in Romanian universities shows the responses, highlighting future directions for hybrid education and points of improvement in Romania.

Keywords: Online education; Romanian universities; pedagogy; qualitative research; comprehensive approach in education.

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Karla Melinda Barth–Ana Gabriela Pantea
Zoomoljunk vagy ne zoomoljunk? Hogyan alkalmazkodtak az online oktatáshoz a román egyetemek a COVID–19 világjárvány idején

A COVID–19 világjárvány váratlan kitörése és az azt követő lezárások az oktatás szüneteltetéséhez vezetettek világszerte és jelentős elmozdulás következett be az online tanítási módok irányába. A globális kihívások többszörösen érintették Romániát, új helyzeteket és lehetőségeket teremtve a hagyományos és korlátozott tanítási környezetben. Ez a tanulmány azt vizsgálja meg, hogy a világjárvány idején Románia négy felsőoktatási intézményében milyen online oktatási módszereket vezettek be, illetve ezeket az új tanítási módszereket és oktatáspolitikai döntéseket elemzi a hallgatók, az oktatók, az egyéb, az oktatásban dolgozó személyzet, és minden más, az oktatás által érintett személy szemszögéből. A technológiaalapú oktatási módszerek elméleti előnyei ellenére a cikk azt mutatja be, hogy egy felkészületlen társadalmi és tanítási közegben milyen feszültségekhez vezetett ezeknek a mószereknek a bevezetése, illetve az egyes oktatási stratégiák preferálása mögött milyen társadalmi és politikai okok húzódtak meg egyéni és kollektív szinten.

Ebben a cikkben a 2021 október-novemberében végzett kvalitatív vizsgálat legfontosabb eredményeit értelmezzük. A célunk az volt, hogy megtudjuk, hogy a román egyetemek hogyan alkalmazkodtak az online oktatáshoz a Covid alatt és hogyan bírkoztak meg az előttük álló kihívásokkal. A kutatás során 32 (online vagy személyes) interjút

készítettünk négy különböző román egyetemen: egy román elit egyetemen, egy közepes méretű egyetemen, egy kisebb magán egyetemen és egy külső finaszírozású magán intézményben. Az összes válaszadó a társadalomtudományok területéről érkezett. A válaszok elemzéséhez a M. Bloor és munkatársai (2001) által kidolgozott induktív tematikus elemzést használtuk. Az interjúk célja az volt, hogy megismerjük, hogy a jelenlegi, nem tervezett, az oktatásban bekövetkezett váltás hogyan hatott az érintettek tanulási eredményeire, stressz szintjére és pedagógiai módszereire. Külső érintetteket is megkérdeztünk, hogy összehasonlíthassuk a véleményüket azokéval, akik közvetlenül voltak érintve. A cikk rávilágít azokra a személyes reakciókra és tapasztalatokra, amelyeket ezek a személyek az oktatási módszerekben történő váltás hatására megéltek.

Az online oktatási és tanulási gyakorlatok társadalmi, kognitív és tanítási sajátosságokhoz kapcsolódnak és ezek alapján több, a romániai felsőoktatás szervezeti kultúrájából fakadó jellemzőt azonosítottunk. Ezen túlmenően, az interjúk arra világítanak rá, hogy olyan pedagógiára van szükség, amely felhasználja a technológiát a tanítás és a tanulás támogatására, anélkül azonban, hogy teljes mértékben áttérne az online oktatásra. A jelenlegi tanulmány a romániai egyetemek online oktatási és tanulási gyakorlatának közelmúltbeli felődését mutatja be és rávilágít a hibrid oktatás jövőbeli irányaira, valamint arra, hogy mik azok a területek, amelyek fejlesztésre szorulnak Romániában.

Kulcsszavak: Online oktatás; román egyetemek; pedagógia; kvalitatív kutatás; átfogó megközelítés az oktatásban.

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Karla Melinda Barth—Ana Gabriela Pantea

A fi sau a nu fi pe Zoom? Adaptarea la predarea online în timpul pandemiei de COVID–19 în universitățile din România

Izbucnirea neașteptată a pandemiei de COVID–19 și lockdown-ul care a urmat au dus la o tulburare în educație la nivel mondial și la o schimbare majoră a modului de predare online. Contextul global s-a reprodus și în România, creând noi provocări și oportunități într-un cadru de predare tradițional și restrâns. Prezentul studiu explorează tendințele specifice ale metodelor de predare online utilizate în perioada pandemiei în România în patru instituții de învățământ superior și analizează percepțiile din perspectiva studenților, personalului academic, personalului administrativ și părților terțe față de noile metode de predare și deciziile de politică educațională. Spre deosebire de avantajele teoretice ale metodelor de predare bazate pe tehnologie, articolul surprinde motivele anxietății în aplicarea acestor metode într-un context social și didactic nepregătit; și arată fondul socio-politic în preferințele strategiilor de predare la nivel individual și colectiv. În articolul nostru interpretăm principalele rezultate ale unei anchete calitative pe care am desfășurat-o în octombrie-noiembrie 2021. Scopul nostru a fost să aflăm cum s-au adaptat universitățile din România la predarea online în timpul COVID și cum au stăpânit subiecții interviévați provocările pe care le-au întâmpinat. Pe parcursul cercetării, am organizat 32 de interviuri (online sau față în față) în patru universități românești relevante: o universitate românească de top, o universitate de mărime medie cu impact regional, o universitate privată locală și o instituție privată finanțată extern. Toți respondenții noștri sunt legați de domeniul științelor sociale. Pentru analiza răspunsurilor am folosit analiza tematică inductivă descrisă de M. Bloor, et al. (2001). Obiectivul a fost acela de a afla percepția părților interesate asupra actualei schimbări educaționale neplanificate asupra rezultatelor învățării, a nivelului de stres și a schimbării pedagogice. Am intervievat și părțile externe interesate pentru a le compara percepțiile față de opiniile din interior. Articolul evidențiază reacțiile și experiențele personale cu privire la schimbarea educațională pe care au întâlnit-o.

Practicile de predare și învățare online sunt legate de particularitățile sociale, cognitive și de predare, astfel am iden-

tificat câteva specificități derivate de cultura organizațională a practicilor din învățământul superior românesc. În plus, constatările noastre din interviuri dezvăluie necesitatea unei viziuni cuprinzătoare asupra pedagogiei care integrează tehnologia pentru a sprijini predarea și învățarea, dar fără o trecere completă la educația online. Studiul actual privind dezvoltarea recentă a practicilor de predare și învățare online în universitățile din România arată răspunsurile, evidențiind direcțiile viitoare pentru educația hibridă și punctele de îmbunătățire care trebuie aduse în România.

Cuvinte cheie: Educație online; universități românești; pedagogie; cercetare calitativă; abordare cuprinzătoare în educație.

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Daniela Angi—Gabriel Bădescu—Sorana Constantinescu
Democratic Effects of Youth Civic Engagement: Romania in a Comparative Perspective

Citizen participation in civil society organizations has been posited to have many pro-democratic merits. Apart from its essential role in countering authoritarian regimes, active involvement in civic organizations is valued for its potential to sustain democratic processes and democratic culture. Along these lines, volunteering is expected to have considerable pro-democratic effects both on participants and on the wider milieu in which they are active. At the same time, the literature accommodates a less than perfect agreement on the potential of civil society to produce remarkable democratic effects. Criticism on the matter questions the ability of volunteer groups to generate positive outcomes, while also doubting the extent to which associations foster pro-democratic values and norms. The grounds of these skeptical attitudes point to the limited time allocated by citizens to be active in civic groups, as well as to the fact that within such groups participants tend to be very similar to each other. Moreover, important values that sustain a democratic culture, such as tolerance and social trust, are often believed to be molded during childhood and adolescence, with little room for substantial changes during the adult life.

We explore the impact of volunteering on civic attitudes in Romania by using a double comparative perspective. Firstly, volunteering in Romania is compared across time, between 2000 and 2018, based on a series of national and international surveys, such as WVS and EVS. Secondly, volunteering in Romania in 2018 is compared to other 9 Southeast European cases: Albania, Bulgaria, the six republics of the former Yugoslavia, and Kosovo. These surveys, based on representative samples of youth (ages 14–29), allow us to evaluate the impact that engagement in different types of associations have on democratic support, tolerance, generalized trust, political interest and participation.

Our analyses indicate a growing level of volunteering among the Romanian youth, both in relative and absolute terms, between 2000 and 2018. At the same time, we found no significant effects of volunteering on generalized trust, tolerance and two measures of support for democratic regimes across three age categories (14–17, 18–24, 25–29), with two notable exceptions: there is a positive effect on generalized trust among the 25–29 years old, and positive effects on tolerance among 14–17 years old. Moreover, volunteering has a positive impact on political participation and political interest. Taken together, these results suggest that youth civic engagement plays a positive role in democratic development in Romania.

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Daniela Angi–Gabriel Bădescu–Sorana Constantinescu

*Az ifjúság polgári részvételének demokratikus hatásai: Hogyan alakítja az önkénteskedés
a dél-kelet-európai fiatalok demokratikus hozzáállását*

Az állampolgárok részvételének a civil társadalmi szervezetekben sok demokratikus érdemet szoktak tulajdonítani. Az autoriter rendszereknek való ellenállásban gyakorolt fontos szerepe mellett a civil szervezetekben való aktív részvétel értékét a demokratikus folyamatok és a demokratikus kultúra fenntartásában szokták megjelölni. Ebben az értelemben az önkénteskedéstől jelentős demokráciapárti hatásokat szoktak várni mind a szereplőkre vonatkoztatva, mind pedig arra a tágabb környezetre vonatkoztatva, amelyben ők aktiválnak.

Ugyanakkor a szakirodalomban az is megjelenik, hogy a civil társadalom nem feltétlenül produkál jelentős demokratikus hatásokat. Ez a kritika megkérdőjelezi egyrészt az önkéntes csoportok azon képességét, hogy pozitív hatásokat generáljanak, másrészt arra is rákérdez, hogy ezek a csoportok milyen mértékben támogatják a demokratikus értékeket és normákat. Ennek a szkeptikus attitűdnek az alapja az állampolgárok által a civil kezdeményezésekre szánt idő korlátozott volta, illetve az a tény, hogy ezekben a csoportokban a résztvevők általában nagyon hasonlítanak egymáshoz. Továbbá úgy tűnik, hogy a demokratikus kultúrát fenntartó fontos értékek, mint például a tolerancia és a társadalmi bizalom gyerek- és tinédzserkorban alakulnak ki, tehát felnőttkorban már kevés lehetőség van ezek jelentős változására.

Az önkénteskedés állampolgári viselkedésre gyakorolt hatását vizsgáljuk Romániában kettős összehasonlító perspektíva használatával. Először kizárólag a romániai önkénteskedést vizsgáljuk időbeli összehasonlításban a 2000 és 2018 közötti időszakra vonatkoztatva, olyan országos és nemzetközi felmérések alapján, mint a WVS és az EVS. Másrészt a

2018-as romániai önkénteskedést hasonlítjuk össze kilenc másik délkelet-európai országéval: Albániával, Bulgáriával, az egykori Jugoszlávia hat utódállamával és Koszovóval. Ezek a felmérések, amelyek fiatalok (14–29 évesek) reprezentatív mintáin alapulnak, lehetővé teszik, hogy megítéljük a különböző típusú egyesületekben való részvétel hatását a demokrácia támogatására, a toleranciára, az általános bizalomra, a politikai érdeklődésre és részvételre.

A mi elemzéseink szerint a román fiatalok körében növekedett az önténkeskedés mind relatív, mind abszolút viszonylatban 2000 és 2018 között. Ugyanakkor nem tudtuk kimutatni, hogy az önkénteskedésnek jelentős hatása lenne az általános bizalomra, toleranciára és a demokratikus rendszerek támogatásának két mérhető vonatkozására három korosztály (14–17, 18–24, 25–29 évesek) esetében, két jelentős kivétellel: a 25–29 évesek esetében kimutatható a pozitív hatás az általános bizalomra, míg a 14–17 évesek esetében szintén pozitív a hatás a toleranciára. Ezen túl az önkénteskedésnek pozitív a hatása a politikai részvételre és politikai érdeklődésre. Mindezeket figyelembe véve elmondható, hogy a fiatalok civil részvétele pozitív hatást gyakorol Románia demokratikus fejlődésére.

Kulcsszavak: Civil szerepvállalás; általános bizalom; tolerancia; demokratikus támogatottság; politikai érdek; politikai részvétel.

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Daniela Angi–Gabriel Bădescu–Sorana Constantinescu

Efectele democratice ale implicării civice a tinerilor: impactul voluntariatului asupra atitudinilor democratice ale tinerilor din Europa de Sud-Est

Participarea cetățenilor în organizații ale societății civile este asociată cu numeroase valențe democratice. Pe lângă rolul important în opoziția față de regimurile autoritare, implicarea activă în organizațiile civice este apreciată pentru potențialul său de a susține procesele democratice și o cultură democratică. În acest sens, se așteaptă ca voluntariatul să aibă efecte pro-democratice considerabile atât asupra participanților, cât și asupra mediului mai larg în care aceștia sunt activi.

În același timp, literatura de specialitate e departe de a reflecta un acord perfect asupra potențialului societății civile de a produce inevitabil efecte democratice remarcabile. Punctele de vedere critice pun la îndoială capacitatea grupurilor de voluntari de a genera efecte pozitive, ridicând totodată semne de întrebare despre măsura în care asociațiile formează valori și norme pro-democratice. Aceste poziționări critice subliniază timpul limitat alocat de cetățeni activităților în grupuri civice, precum și faptul că în cadrul unor astfel de grupuri participanții tind să fie foarte asemănători între ei. Mai mult, valorile civice importante care susțin o cultură democratică, cum ar fi toleranța și încrederea socială, sunt adesea considerate a fi modelate în timpul copilăriei și adolescenței, ceea ce lasă puțin loc pentru schimbări notabile în timpul vieții adulte.

Examinăm impactul voluntariatului asupra atitudinilor civice din România, folosind o dublă perspectivă comparativă. În primul rând, voluntariatul în România este comparat în timp, între 2000 și 2018, pe baza unei serii de sondaje naționale și internaționale, precum WVS și EVS. În al doilea rând, voluntariatul în România în 2018 este comparat cu alte 9 cazuri sud-est europene: Albania, Bulgaria, cele șase republici din fosta Iugoslavie și Kosovo. Aceste sondaje, bazate pe eșantioane reprezentative de tineri (14-29 de ani), ne permit să evaluăm impactul pe care îl are implicarea în diferite tipuri de asociații asupra sprijinului democratic, toleranței, încrederii generalizate, interesului politic și participării.

Analizele noastre indică un nivel în creștere al voluntariatului în rândul tinerilor români, atât în termeni relativi, cât și absoluți, în perioada 2000 – 2018. În același timp, nu am găsit efecte semnificative ale voluntariatului asupra încrederii generalizate, toleranței și asupra a două măsuri de sprijin pentru regimurile democratice, la nivelul a trei categorii de vârstă (14–17, 18–24, 25–29), cu două excepții notabile: există un efect pozitiv asupra încrederii generalizate în rândul persoanelor de 25–29 de ani și efecte pozitive asupra toleranței în rândul persoanelor de 14–17 ani. În plus, voluntariatul are un impact pozitiv asupra participării politice și interesului politic. Luate împreună, aceste rezultate sugerează că implicarea civică a tinerilor joacă un rol pozitiv în dezvoltarea democratică în România.

Cuvinte cheie: Angajament civic; încredere generalizată; toleranță; sprijin democratic; interes politic; participare politică.

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Cristina Brînzan-Antal–Szidónia Rusu

The Case of Transylvanian Civil Society within the Information Society

As a result of the Industrial Revolution and the rapid development of technology, significant social changes are taking place that will in turn significantly change the terminology used in previous research. We can explore two main directions in the development of the information society. According to one paradigm, current societies have undergone radical changes, and this would be related to the theoretical categories designed by Frank Webster and the theories of post-industrialism, postmodernism, the information and knowledge society as well as Beck's other theses on modernity, risk society and reflexive modernity. (Varga, 2002). The other line includes the theories that emphasize mostly continuity. According to this trend, we cannot talk about a radical turning point in the development of the information and knowledge society. At the same time, new technologies as well as new forms of information processing will not significantly change societies and the way their actors operate. Moreover, researchers stress the key role of information, networking, and the importance of globalization processes, all of them being however seen as subordinated to power and economic interests. (Roszak, 1990).

 As a result of the social processes generated by modernity, a strongly pluralistic society is created, consisting of groups with different perceptions, different worldviews as well as different interests. These groups possess different abilities and can participate in the functioning of society as a whole, in many ways. According to this, the key player in the functioning of society is not the impersonal state, but rather the groups individuals, the community of action. Thus, in this pluralized society, it should not be rejected if a group may have specific needs. But rather the question arises as to how these groups can communicate and represent their needs and interests. (Tomka, 2007). As well as the network nodes in which they are organized, how and by what means do they communicate these interests both vertically and horizontally?

Civil society, therefore, means a bottom-up society in which different groups find their way of self-expression and manage to live together with other groups having their own means of self-expression. The purpose of civil society

is thus to assert its interests against the interests of bureaucracy and monopoly systems, through bottom-up construction, the means of self-assertion of individuals, groups, low-level communities, and institutions, having thus a significant role to play in democratization. (Cohen, 1994) Gordon White (2007) has summarised this process in four points: on the one hand, civil society shifts the balance of power in favour of the society over the state. We can even give historical examples of this function, when citizens' movements delivered many areas from state repression and control. On the other hand, it also plays a kind of controller role over the state, mainly in terms of the accountability of civil servants. Thirdly, civil society plays an important mediating role between the state and society, visible in consultations. Finally, civil society itself can design its own institutions providing predictable and legitimate answers to certain questions generated by society. (Héjja, n.y.).

In this context, it cannot be overlooked that in recent decades, alongside with global processes, new social movements and demonstrations have been given greater emphasis that can also use information and communication tools very effectively to achieve their goals. (Castells, 1998).
This study has set two important goals. On the one hand, it aims to present descriptively the main evolution trends of the Hungarian civil society in Transylvania and the current cross-cutting condition and parameters during the COVID–19 pandemic. On the other hand, the research also aimed to map the infocommunication tools and networks that connect and form nodes among the civil society actors in the cyberspace, and we also wished to examine their offline benefits. On the one hand, the tools of our research are the data sets of a non-governmental organization research conducted by EMKE (Hungarian Cultural Society of Transylvania) in 2021, presented as a pilot so far, depicting a general overview of the civil context using statistical descriptive and explanatory methods. On the other hand, we focused on the online activities and networks present on the social media platforms We have used secondary analysis to present the trends of civil society organisations and their general situation. We have used the time series data on civil organizations collected by Erdélystat and the Transylvanian Association of Hungarian Civil Society Organisations. We have sought answers to the main questions on the parameters of the most active civil society organisations in the information society, their activities, how they fit into the mechanisms of global society, and how social media and infocommunication tools organize civil society organisations into online networks, along which dimensions the nodes are shaped and what edges define these networks the strongest. On the whole, we can state that both the global and the Transylvanian civil society are defined and shaped by the novel trends and the use of information society processes as well as the infocommunication tools, allowing them to strengthen their civic role and communication platforms, activities and advocacy.
Keywords: Civil society organisations; information society; civil society; infocommunication tools.

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Cristina Brînzan-Antal–Rusu Szidónia
Az erdélyi civil szféra helyzetképe az információs társadalomban

Az ipari forradalom és a technológia rohamos fejlődése következtében jelentős társadalmi változások következnek be, amelyek az eddigi kutatásokban használatos fogalomrendszeren is jelentőset változtatnak. Az információs társadalom kialakulásának két fő irányvonalát fedezhetjük fel. Az egyik paradigma szerint a jelenlegi társadalmak radikális változásokon mentek keresztül, ide köthetőek a Frank Webster által létrehozott elméleti kategóriák is, valamint a posztindusztrializmus, posztmodernizmus, információs és tudástársadalom elméletei is, ugyanakkor Beck másik modernitás, kockázattársadalom és reflexív modernitás tézisei is ide köthetőek. (Varga, 2002). A másik vonulatba azon elméletek tartoznak, melyek a kontinuitást, a folytonosságot hangsúlyozzák leginkább. Ezen irányvonal szerint nem is beszélhetünk az információs és tudástársadalom kialakulásában egy radikális fordulópontról. Ugyanakkor az új technológiák, valamint az információ újfajta feldolgozása nem fogja lényegesen megváltoztatni a társadalmakat és aktorainak működését. Mindemellett a kutatók kiemelik az információ kulcsfontosságú szerepét, a hálózatiságot és a globalizációs folyamatok fontosságát, viszont ezeket leginkább a hatalomnak és gazdasági érdekeknek alárendelten. (Roszak, 1990).

A modernitás által generált társadalmi folyamatok következtében egy erőteljesen plurális társadalom jön létre, amely különböző felfogású, különböző világnézetet valló, és különböző érdekeket képviselő csoportokból áll. Ezen csoportok különféle adottságokkal rendelkeznek, és többféleképpen tudnak részt vállalni a társadalom egészének működésében. Eszerint a társadalom működésében a kulcsszereplő nem is a személytelen állam, hanem az egyének csoportosulása, a cselekvő közösség, így, ebben a pluralizált társadalomban az sem elvetendő, hogyha egy csoportnak sajátos igényei vannak. Inkább ott tevődik fel a kérdés, hogy ezen csoportok miként tudják igényeiket, érdekeiket közvetíteni és képviselni? (Tomka, 2007). Valamint az is, hogy milyen hálózati csomópontokba szerveződnek, hogyan és milyen eszközökkel kommunikálják ezen érdekeiket úgy vertikális, mint horizontális vonalon?

A civil társadalom tehát azt jelenti, hogy egy olyan alulról építkező társadalom, amelyben különféle csoportok találják meg az önkifejeződési módjukat, illetve azt, hogy hogyan éljenek együtt más, saját önkifejezési móddal rendelkező csoportokkal. A civil társadalom célja így nem más, mint érdekeinek érvényesítése a bürokrácia és a monopol rendszerek érdekeivel szemben, az alulról építkezés, az egyének, csoportok, alacsony szintű közösségek és intézmények önérvényesítési eszközeivel, tehát jelentős szerepe van a demokratizálás folyamatában. (Cohen, 1994) Gordon White (2007) ennek a folyamatát négy pontban foglalja össze: egyrészt a civil társadalom a hatalom egyensúlyát a társadalom javára billenti az állammal szemben. Erre a funkcióra akár történelmi példákat is hozhatunk fel, amikor a polgári mozgalmak számos területet szabadítottak fel az állami elnyomás, kontroll alól. Másrészt egyfajta felügyelő szerepet is betölt az állam felett, főként a köztisztviselők elszámoltathatósága szempontjából. Harmadrészt fontos közvetítő szerepet játszik a civil társadalom az állam és maga a társadalom között, ez egyeztetési folyamatokban is tetten érhető. Végül pedig maga a civil társadalom is gyarapíthatja önmaga számára azokat az intézményeket, amelyek kiszámítható és legitim válaszokat adnak a társadalom által generált bizonyos kérdésekre (Héjja, é.n.).

Ebben a kontextusban nem lehet nem észrevenni, hogy az elmúlt évtizedekben a globális folyamatokkal párhuzamosan az új társadalmi megmozdulások, demonstrációk is felértékelődnek, nagyon hatékonyan használják céljaik elérésére az információs és kommunikációs eszközöket is. (Castells, 1998).

Jelen tanulmányunk két fontos célt tűzött ki maga elé. Egyrészt leíró jelleggel az erdélyi magyar civil szféra legfőbb alakulási trendjeit, valamint a COVID–19 világjárvány alatt keresztmetszeti jellegű aktuális helyzetét és paramétereit bemutatni. Másrészt a kutatás célja az is volt, hogy feltérképezzük azokat az infókommunikációs eszközöket és hálózatokat, amelyek a virtuális térben összekapcsolják és csomópontokat képeznek a civil társadalom aktorai között, valamint ezek offline hozadékait is górcső alá szerettük volna venni.

Kutatásunk eszközei egyrészt egy 2021-ben, az EMKE (Erdélyi Magyar Közművelődés Egyesület) által készített civil szervezeti kutatás eddigiekben pilot jelleggel összegyűlt adatsorai, mely során statisztikai leíró és magyarázó módszerekkel a civil helyzet általános képét mutatjuk be. Másrészt a közösségi media platformjaink jelenlevő szervezetek online aktivitásai és hálózatai. A civil szervezetek trendjeinek és általános helyzetük bemutatására másodelemzést használunk. Az Erdélystat által összegyűjtött civil szervezetek és a Magyar Civil Szervezetek Erdélyi Szövetségének civil szervezetekre vonatkozó idősoros adatait használjuk. Azokra a fő kérdésekre kerestük a választ, hogy milyen paraméterek mentén irhatóak le az információs társadalomban legaktívabb civil szervezetek, milyen tevékenységeik vannak, ezek hogyan illeszkednek be a globális társadalom működési mechanizmusaiba, valamint a közösségi media és az infokommunikációs eszközök miként szervezik a civil szervezeteket online hálózatokba, milyen dimenziók mentén alakulnak ki a csomópontok és milyen élek határozzák meg ezen hálózatokat a legerőteljesebben.

Összességében elmondhatjuk, hogy úgy a globális, mint az erdélyi civil szférát az információs társadalmi folyamatok

és az infokommunikációs eszközök újszerű trendjei és használata is meghatározza, átalakítja, lehetővé téve azt, hogy civil szerepüket és kommunikációs platformjaikat, tevékenységüket és érdekképviseletüket is megerősítsék.
Kulcsszavak: Civil szervezetek; információs társadalom; civil társadalom; info-kommunikációs eszközök.

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Cristina Brînzan-Antal–Szidónia Rusu
Situaţia sferei civile transilvănene în societatea informaţională

Ca urmare a revoluției industriale și a dezvoltării rapide a tehnologiei, au loc schimbări sociale semnificative, care vor schimba și cadrul conceptual utilizat în cercetările anterioare. Putem explora două direcții principale în dezvoltarea societății informaționale. Potrivit unei paradigme, societățile actuale au suferit schimbări radicale, inclusiv categoriile teoretice create de Frank Webster și teoriile post-industrialismului, postmodernismului, societății informaționale și cunoașterii, în timp ce celelalte teze ale lui Beck despre modernitate, societatea riscului și modernitatea reflexivă. (Varga, 2002) Cealaltă linie include teoriile care subliniază cel mai mult continuitatea. Conform acestei linii, nici măcar nu putem vorbi de un punct de cotitură radical în dezvoltarea societății informaţiei și cunoașterii. În același timp, noile tehnologii și noile forme de prelucrare a informațiilor nu vor schimba în mod semnificativ societățile și modul în care își desfășoară activitatea indivizilor. Cu toate acestea, cercetătorii evidențiază rolul cheie al informației, al rețelelor și importanța proceselor de globalizare, toate acestea fiind subordonate puterii și intereselor economice. (Roszak, 1990).
Ca urmare a proceselor sociale generate de modernitate, se conturează o societate puternic pluralistă, formată din grupuri cu percepții diferite, viziuni diferite asupra lumii și interese diferite. Aceste grupuri au abilități diferite și pot participa la funcționarea întregii societăți în multe feluri. Potrivit acesteia, rolul cheie în funcționarea societății nu îl are statul impersonal, ci gruparea indivizilor, comunitatea de acțiune. Astfel, în această societate pluralizată, nu este exclus ca un grup să aibă nevoi specifice. Mai degrabă, se pune întrebarea cum pot aceste grupuri comunica și cum își pot reprezenta nevoile și interesele . (Tomka, 2007).
Precum și în ce noduri de rețea se organizează, cum și prin ce mijloace comunică aceste interese atât pe verticală, cât și pe orizontală?
Societatea civilă înseamnă, deci, o societate de jos în sus în care grupuri diferite își găsesc modul de a se exprima și modul în care trăiesc împreună cu alte grupuri care au propriul mod de a se exprima. Scopul societății civile este acela de a-și afirma interesele asupra intereselor birocrației și sistemelor de monopol, prin mijloace de jos în sus de auto-împuternicire a indivizilor, grupurilor, comunităților și instituțiilor de nivel inferior, deci are un rol semnificativ de jucat în procesul de democratizare. (Cohen, 1994) Gordon White (2007) rezumă acest proces în patru puncte: pe de o parte, societatea civilă schimbă balanța puterii în favoarea societății asupra statului. Putem da chiar exemple istorice ale acestei funcții, când mișcările civice au eliberat multe zone de represiunea și controlul statului. Pe de altă parte, joacă și un fel de rol de supraveghere asupra statului, în principal în ceea ce privește responsabilitatea funcționarilor publici. În al treilea rând,

societatea civilă joacă un rol important de mediere între stat și societatea însăși, iar acest lucru se poate observa și în procesul de conciliere. În sfârșit, societatea civilă însăși se poate îmbogăți cu instituții care oferă răspunsuri previzibile și legitime la anumite întrebări generate de societate (Héjja, n.)

În acest context, este imposibil să nu observăm că în ultimele decenii, în paralel cu procesele globale, noi mișcări și demonstrații sociale capătă valoare, acestea folosesc foarte eficient și instrumentele de informare și comunicare pentru a-și atinge obiectivele. (Castells, 1998).

Studiul nostru de față și-a stabilit două obiective importante. Pe de o parte, să prezinte în mod descriptiv principalele tendințe de dezvoltare ale sferei civile maghiare în Transilvania, precum și situația actuală și parametrii cu caracter transversal în timpul pandemiei de COVID–19. Pe de altă parte, cercetarea și-a propus, de asemenea, să cartografieze instrumentele și rețelele de info-comunicații care conectează și formează noduri între actorii societății civile din spațiul cibernetic, precum și beneficiile lor offline.

Pe de o parte, instrumentele cercetării noastre sunt seturile de date ale unui sondaj de organizații neguvernamentale realizat de EMKE (Asociația Transilvană de Cultură Publică Maghiară) în anul 2021, în cadrul căruia prezentăm imaginea generală a situației civile folosind statistici descriptive și explicative. Pe de altă parte, platformele noastre de social media sunt activitățile și rețelele online ale organizațiilor prezente. Folosim analiza secundară pentru a prezenta tendințele ONG-urilor și situația lor generală. Folosim date de serie cronologică privind organizațiile non-guvernamentale colectate de Transilvania și Asociația Transilvană a Organizațiilor Civile Maghiare.

Am căutat răspunsuri la principalele întrebări referitoare la parametrii celor mai active ONG-uri în societatea informațională, activitățile acestora, modul în care acestea se încadrează în mecanismele societății globale și modul în care rețelele sociale și instrumentele de info-comunicare organizează ONG-urile în rețele online, care sunt nodurile formate și care sunt mariginile care definesc cel mai puternic aceste rețele.

În general, sfera civilă globală și transilvăneană sunt definite și transformate de tendințe noi și de utilizarea proceselor societății informaționale și a instrumentelor de info-comunicare, permițându-le să își consolideze rolul civic și platforme-le de comunicare, activitățile și reprezentarea acestora.

Cuvinte cheie: ONG-uri; societate informațională; societate civilă; instrumente de info-comunicare.

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Zoltan Zakota–István Péter Németh

Civil Society and Education in the European Union

Education is at a turning point around the world. Teachers and educators now face a major challenge in defending freedom, accepting lifelong learning as a human right, and reinterpreting the institutional vision, mission, and values. The aim is to be compatible with the emerging world paradigms of globalization, social responsibility and sustainable development. This is particularly true in the countries of the European continent, in both the horizontal and vertical dimensions of education. Access to quality, inclusive and lifelong learning is a fundamental right for all European

citizens. Education is the basis for personal fulfilment, employability and active and responsible citizenship. Education is a prerequisite for the viability of European societies and economies. Both education and civil society are key areas for the long-term development of the European Union. Our article briefly describes their role and status in the EU and attempts to outline their relationships and how NGOs can be involved in educational processes.

Keywords: Civil society; education; European Union.

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Civil társadalom és oktatás az Európai Unióban

Az oktatás szerte a világon fordulóponton van. A tanárok és oktatók most komoly kihívással szembesülnek a szabadság védelmének, az egész életen át tartó tanulás emberi jogként való elfogadtatásának, valamint az intézményi jövőkép, küldetés és értékek újraértelmezésének terén. Mindennek célja, hogy azok összeegyeztethetők legyenek a globalizáció, a társadalmi felelősségvállalás és a fenntartható fejlődés kialakulóban lévő világparadigmáival. Különösen jól nyomon követhető mindez az európai kontinens országaiban, az oktatásnak mind horizontális, mind pedig vertikális dimenzióiban. A minőségi, inkluzív és egész életen át tartó tanuláshoz való hozzáférés alapvető joga minden európai polgárnak. Az oktatás a személyes kiteljesedés, a foglalkoztathatóság, valamint az aktív és felelősségteljes állampolgárság alapja. Az oktatás elengedhetetlen feltétel az európai társadalmak és gazdaságok életképességének biztosításához. Az oktatás és a civil társadalom egyaránt kiemelt jelentőségű terület az Európai Unió hosszú távú fejlődése szempontjából. Cikkünk röviden bemutatja szerepüket és státuszukat az Unióban és kísérletet tesz arra, hogy felvázolja kapcsolataikat, valamint azt, hogy a civil szervezetek hogyan vonhatók be az oktatási folyamatokba.

Kulcsszavak: Civil társadalom; oktatás; Európai Unió.

Zakota Zoltán a nagyváradi Partiumi Keresztény Egyetem oktatója, a Menedzsment, illetve a Bank és Pénzügy tanszékek társalapítója. Jelenleg számítástechnika, informatika közgazdasági és társadalomtudományi alkalmazásai, irodaautomatizálási és integrált vállalati rendszerek témákban ad elő. Emellett a Debreceni Egyetem Mérnöki Karán oktat mérnöki informatika, programozás, elektrotechnika és elektronika tárgyakat. Az évek során a tanítás mellett a magán- és civil szférákban is dolgozott. 1995 és 1999 között a Pro Európa Liga Szatmárnémeti fiókjánál dolgozott, mint CEO (1998–1999), a Koordinációs Bizottság tagja (1996–1999) és projektmenedzser. Számos hazai és nemzetközi projektben is részt vett, főként az oktatás és a kutatás területén. Fő érdeklődési területei az információs és tudásalapú társadalom, az IKT társadalomra, gazdaságra és oktatásra gyakorolt hatásai. Jelenleg két nagyobb projektben vesz részt: az egyik az európai felsőoktatással, a másik pedig a román-magyar határon átnyúló együttműködés regionális hatásaival foglalkozik.
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Societate civilă și educație în Uniunea Europeană

Educația se află într-un moment de cotitură în întreaga lume. Profesorii și educatorii se confruntă acum cu o sfidare majoră în apărarea libertății, acceptarea învățământului pe tot parcursul vieții ca drept al omului și reinterpretarea viziunii,

misiunii și valorilor instituționale. Scopul este de a fi compatibil cu paradigmele mondiale emergente ale globalizării, responsabilității sociale și dezvoltării durabile. Acest lucru este vizibil mai ales în țările continentului european, atât în dimensiunea orizontală, cât și în cea verticală a educației. Accesul la un învățământ de calitate, incluziv și pe tot parcursul vieții este un drept fundamental pentru toți cetățenii europeni. Educația este o cerință de bază pentru împlinirea personală, capacitatea de angajare și cetățenia activă și responsabilă. Educația este o condiție prealabilă pentru viabilitatea societăților și economiilor europene. Atât educația, cât și societatea civilă sunt domenii cheie pentru dezvoltarea pe termen lung a Uniunii Europene. Articolul nostru descrie pe scurt rolul și statutul lor în UE și încearcă să sublinieze relațiile lor și modul în care ONG-urile pot fi implicate în procesele educaționale.

Cuvinte cheie: Societate civilă; educație; Uniunea Europeană.

Zoltan Zakota este lector la Universitatea Creștină Partium, din Oradea. Este co-fondator al departamentelor de management și al celui de bănci și finanțe. În prezent, el ține cursuri de informatică, aplicarea informaticii în economie și societate, birotică și sisteme integrate de conducere. De asemenea, predă la Facultatea de Inginerie a Universității din Debrecen informatică în inginerie, programare, respectiv electrotehnică și electronică. De-a lungul anilor, pe lângă predare, a muncit atât în sfera privată, cât și în cea civilă. Între 1995–1999 a lucrat pentru Liga Pro Europa – Filiala Satu Mare (România), în calitate de CEO (1998–1999), membru al Comitetului de Coordonare (1996–1999) și manager de proiect. De asemenea, a participat la numeroase proiecte interne și internaționale, în principal în domeniile educației și cercetării. Principalele sale domenii de interes sunt societatea informațională și bazată pe cunoaștere, efectele TIC asupra societății, economiei și educației. Actualmente este implicat în două proiecte majore: unul dintre ele legat de învățământul superior european și celălalt de efectele cooperării transfrontaliere româno-maghiare asupra dezvoltării regionale.
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■■ "A process of ideological exploitation of the results of open source science […] has led to a crisis of the foundations of classical contractual democracy." *(Sorin-Gelu Borza)* ■■ "[L]atent deep-seated values and norms of a civic culture underlying the civic organizations are those that ensure the stability and viability of a democracy." *(Bogdan Popoveniuc)* ■■ "[T]here are more and more voices who believe that democracy has been replaced by post-democracy and that the liberal principles of the state are being replaced by illiberal and populist principles." *(Andrei Țăranu, Cristian Pârvulescu)* ■■ "[C]ivil society gained a prominent place in the decisional public sphere lately, while the Church became just a common voice." *(Laurențiu Petrila, Marius Țepelea)* ■■ "The importance of the existence of a supporting motherland is given by the fact that it can make the resource structure of the minority non-profit sector different from that of the majority non-profit sectors." *(Dénes Kiss)* ■■ "[S]ociety and the business sector in Romania are not sufficiently inclined to perceive the social economy as an opportunity for the implementation of innovative and sustainable enterprises." *(Rita Pásztor, Katalin Gál)* ■■ "[T]he correlation between [conspiracy theory beliefs] and right-wing authoritarianism is so strong as if the latter was a proxy for the former." *(Adrian Hatos, Beáta Fatime Gyarmati)* ■■ "Post-communist Central and Eastern Europe has seen radical movements and populist parties gain considerable ground by drawing on nativist and ethnic claims to call for a return to an imagined past, free present and utopian future." *(Ana Gabriela Pantea, Sergiu Mișcoiu)* ■■ "[D]emocratic protests in post-communist Romania had a direct impact on the functioning of democracy, often leading to important social and political changes." *(Sorin-Gelu Borza, Victor Papp)* ■■ "[R]uling political parties have used the pretext of holding referendums rather to alternate from opposition to power or, in other cases, to simply know the electoral tendencies of citizens." *(Felix-Angel Popescu, Laurențiu Petrila)* ■■ "[T]he existence of civil society was an essential condition for the establishment of a democratic system in Romania." *(Ioana Albu, Zoltan Zakota)* ■■ "[T]he need to adapt to the novel multilingual and multicultural realities have led to the need of forging a new approach to the language education in Romania." *(Ioana Albu)* ■■ "Online teaching and learning practices are related to […] several specificities derived by organizational culture of the Romanian higher education practices." *(Karla Melinda Barth, Ana Gabriela Pantea)* ■■ "[Y]outh civic engagement plays a positive role in democratic development in Romania." *(Daniela Angi, Gabriel Bădescu, Sorana Constantinescu)* ■■ "[B]oth the global and the Transylvanian civil society are defined and shaped by the novel trends and the use of information society processes as well as the infocommunication tools […]." *(Cristina Brînzan-Antal, Szidónia Rusu)* ■■ "Civil society organisations are usually more closely connected with local communities, so they can be the link between student, parent or teacher on the one side and policy makers on the other." *(Zoltan Zakota, István Péter Németh)*