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## FORGIVENESS OF POPE FRANCIS TOWARDS WOMEN WHO COMMITTED ABORTION: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF CATÓLICAS POR EL DERECHO A DECIDIR, A CONTROVERSIAL RESPONSE

VALENTINA DEL PILAR CARRASCO ROSALES<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** This work aims to present an analysis of the response from three countries which are part of the Red Latinoamericana Católica por el Derecho a Decidir (CDD): Argentine, Bolivia, Mexico, face to Catholic Church forgiveness to those women who had an abortion and regret having done it. The development of analysis has considered a model presented by professor Nitrihual that allows working with journalistic texts. The model has been adapted to the documents studied. The analysis was based on the perspective and conceptual fundamentals of CDD.

**Keywords:** *Forgiveness, discourse analysis, abortion, Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir.*

**RESUMEN.** Este trabajo tiene como objetivo presentar el análisis de la respuesta de tres países de la Red Latinoamericana de Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir (CDD): Argentina, Bolivia y México, ante el otorgamiento del perdón por parte de la Iglesia Católica, comunicado a través del Papa Francisco, a mujeres que se han practicado un aborto y se presenten arrepentidas. Para desarrollar el análisis se toma un modelo de análisis presentado por el profesor Nitrihual y

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que permite trabajar con textos periodísticos, dicho modelo se modifica para adaptarlo a los documentos analizados. El análisis se hace desde la mirada y fundamentos conceptuales del CDD.

*Palabras clave:* Perdón, análisis del discurso, aborto, mujeres, Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir.

### **Context of the work**

Abortion and its legalization in Chile implies controversial opinions, mostly related to moral and religious influence in our society discourse. Moreover, this particularity is more stressed between the conservative wings. The Christian discourse and the one of a country which according to the Census 2002 is declared 70% catholic, is mainly against abortion and in that context, appears the movements “provida” (in favor of life) (Censo,2002). Nonetheless, there are groups of people who are against this conservative discourse, these people consider valid the position of the church notwithstanding, the Chilean State is secular therefore, is free to develop and to suggest laws in agreement with the reality that as society we cannot keep on avoiding: in Chile there is a rate of abortion committed illegally which means a public health problem. This problem is not only presented in Chile but also in a Latin American scale.

The importance of this work is related to the context in which Chile is. The 31<sup>st</sup> of January 2015, the President Michelle Bachelet sent a bill to the Parliament. In that document is highlighted the following:

“The State cannot, as it has been represented by the international organizations of Human Rights, keep on avoiding the situation that women from different ages and social conditions such as: economic, educational and cultural vulnerability are living, nor even the one related in how they have to face the total criminalization of abortion.

In accordance with the International Law of Human Rights the denial of termination of pregnancy, under determined circumstances, may constitute a violation of fundamental rights [...]

The decriminalization of abortion without exceptions in our country constitutes an unequivocal implementation of the international duties contracted by the State of Chile in relation with the guarantees that should exist according to the full enjoyment of rights of life and physical integrity and psychic of women. That is why the United Nations, when it reviewed the compliance of the international commitments of the State arising from international treaties, has made many suggestions to the State of Chile, by requesting to amend the current regulation that penalize without exceptions the termination of pregnancy". (Secretaría General de la República de Chile, 2015: 12-13).

Is in that context of violation of fundamental rights, such as sexual and reproductive rights of women, that diverse movements bearer with the struggle of decriminalization of abortion make sense and gain strength not only in Chile but also in some other countries of Latin America.

According to what is exposed above this work is going to be focused in the analysis of documents published in the official websites of the movement CDD of three countries: Argentine, Bolivia and Mexico. All those documents are related to opinions linked to the granting of forgiveness of the Catholic Church towards women who committed abortion. This mandate comes from the Pope Francis. While it is true that at the beginning this work is framed within a national reality, the fact that it is also present in almost all Latin America make the publishing of those documents more interesting.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Abortion and Theology*

To undertake the CDD discourse analysis regarding abortion and particularly the reaction face to the Pope Francis sayings, it is important to consider the general conceptions in which the CDD builds its discursive proposal. Then, to complement the conceptual



framework, the aspects to consider for the analysis of these documents are the following: **Feminist theology: considerations of the base of the movement. Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir.**

### **Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir**

This movement is called *Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir* (CDD) is a feminist movement of Catholic women who works and fights for the recognition of sexual and reproductive women's rights. This network exists all over Latin America and it also has the support of Catholics for free choice, a foundation from USA. In addition, this group defines itself as Catholic but it does not belong to the Catholic Church formally. From the Christian perspective, they rescue the following set of values: solidarity, the fact that as feminist Christians they must fight for the women rights according to: sexual education, contraceptive methods, health in general terms and the decriminalization of abortion. They consider that both women and men have the moral capacity to make important and serious decisions in relation to their own life.

For the purposes of this study, it is relevant to take into consideration the aspects in which this movement validates morally and fundamentals their polemic, controversial and why not, subversive position about abortion and its decriminalization and legalization. Within its discourse it can be found the following aspects which are relevant to consider in the present research, those aspects are taken from the paper "*Feminismo y Religión: apuntes sobre Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir*" (Feminism and religion: notes about Catholics for the right to choose) whose author is Beatriz Escudero Rava (2008). There are many arguments in which this movement base their discourse, nonetheless, for the effects of this study not all of them are going to be mentioned, instead we are going to give more details about the ones that are considered more relevant to be highlighted. The arguments are presented below:

a) *The human life respect because life is sacred.* This principle is based on the proposal of faith which indicates that life is sacred, a divine gift therefore, an attempt against it is also an attempt against God. In consonance with the Catechism of the Catholic Church (Argentine Episcopal Conference, 1993), the covenant between God and humankind is woven of calls to recognize human life as divine. Since the moment of conception, every innocent human individual has right to live. Hence, and according to the fifth commandments, the voluntary homicide of an innocent is strongly against to the dignity of the human being and therefore, the creator (Escudero, 2008).

The CDD argues that the concept of "life" is used ambiguously to refers to a person. They fundament that medicine, philosophy and even the theology itself have discussed the exact moment in which the human existence. The scientists acknowledge that exists a reality different from the egg cell and spermatozoid, and a zygote gifted with DNA is unquestionable human life, nonetheless, the existence of a genetic code does not mean necessarily the existence of a human life. Thus, during the first two weeks the zygote will cross the processes in which both endogens and exogenous factors are going to be conjugated that is why it cannot be argued that the person is potentially in the zygote and that its formation as human is automatic (*op. cit.*)

b) *They said that the Church does not have a clear position about the exact moment the fetus becomes a person.* Alongside the Catholic Church history, considering the different periods, popes and time, there have existed diverse positions in relation to when the human life begins. When starts the hominization, considering that it could be at the beginning of the conception or later when the pregnancy process already started. Nonetheless, besides all the positions, the one that prevails nowadays is the one who comes from the Second Vatican Council in the chapter of *Gaudium et Spes*, in which it is pointed out that life and the hominization start since the moment of conception. Therefore, is reinforced the idea of: to attempt against human life is to attempt against the divine gift given by God (*op. cit.*).

c) *The Catholic Church has not always condemned abortion for the same reasons.* In the document quoted, it is presented that during the first millennia of history if the Catholic Church, abortion was not punished as they were other crimes. The fundamentals were mainly based on the believe of the exact moment of the hominization was late and it was related to a more advanced development of the fetus. On the other hand, these differences and penance criteria about the judgement of diverse sins, were related to norms which in that period were created and implemented in a local scale. The moral rules had a base, nonetheless, they were punished by different penitential canons (*op. cit.*).

d) *Magisterium and law of the Catholic Church.* As it was mentioned in the subtitle, the Catholic Church considers two main core ideas, the one of legislation and the one of magisterium. In the first case, the Church is the one that determines the morality laws that the Catholics should follow in their daily life, within those parameters, is the one that outlaw the punishment when the laws are disobeyed. On the other hand, in the second case the magisterium has a function more formative and is restricted to what concerns about education on moral values and matters of faith. In relation to abortion, the Church magisterium states that life must be respected in all the ethics demanding of human being since its conception. According to CDD there exist two canonical laws referring to abortion: The Canon 1329 which declares that who commits abortion incurs in excommunication and the Canon 1329 notes that who are necessary participates in the practice of a defense are not excusable. Although, the last one does not make an accurate reference to abortion, as reported by the movement, it is plausible principle to be applied. Other relevant aspects in this point are that there exists extenuating around the commitment of abortion or any other crime condemned by the Church. Before apply any sanction is important to review the situation in which the fault is originated. For instance, in the case of abortion, to study the situation of analysis before its realization or if the involved people were under the influence of alcohol, etc. within the extenuating, in the case of Christian and Catholic women, they make an inner process of reflection around the commitment of abortion,

because it is wide possible that these women have already judged themselves in a conscious and reflective state (*op. cit.*).

e) *The prohibition of abortion is not infallible; therefore, it cannot demand to the devoted people absolute obedience.* The infallibility is the supreme degree of the papal involvement in the authority of Christ and it is extensive to all the establishment of divine revelation, and without them the saving truths cannot be protected nor exposed nor observed (Argentine Episcopal Conference, 1993 *op. cit.*). What makes this prohibition not infallible is the same story of the Church about the subject, thus it has found contradictory situations. Therefore, the CDD relies on that situation to justify that decision of practicing or committing abortion can be included within the framework established by the Declaration of Religious Freedom (Second Vatican Council) which states the relevance of the psychological freedom and the immunity against external coercion, by expressing that people should never been forced to act against their own consciousness (*op.cit.*).

f) *In morals subjects there are no dogmas of the Catholic Church and the doctrine foresees the principle of freedom of conscience as a base of the human dignity.*

g) *Women we have moral authority to make decisions and we them in agreement with the dictates of our consciousness.*

h) *The penalization does not avoid abortion and its negative consequences.* This point indicates that despite the penalization of abortion, this is a public health problem because it is still one of the main reason of maternal mortality due to the hiding way in which abortions are executed and the consequences for commit them without the necessary proper sanitary conditions. Unfortunately, the most affected people are women who have the most lower-income and with a vulnerability social situation (*op. cit.*).

i) *The State cannot impose motherhood without guarantee the basic conditions for a life with dignity for both, the mother and her child.*

j) *The State is separated from the Church.*

### *The relevance of the new communication media*

Nowadays, it is important to take into consideration the function that media have and how the new technologies and the development of Internet allows to have more and better access to information. As Anderson (2007) states *"I have always imagined the information space as something to which everyone has immediate and intuitive access and not just to browse but to create"* (Tim Berners-Lee, 1999, p. 169, quoted in Anderson, 2007). On the other hand, it is also necessary to point out that not only exists more development and access but also in the way we express and communicate ourselves have been modified. For instance, and in concordance with the quotation above, today exists a bigger autonomy in relation with is aimed to be presented on the web since the social networks encourage a more active participation in the construction of communication spaces in the virtual world of internet and in the contents presented in those spaces. From that point of view "[...] With a few clicks of the mouse a user can upload a video or photo from their digital camera and into their own media space, tag it with suitable keywords and make the content available to their friends or the world in general. In parallel, individuals are setting up and writing blogs and working together to create information through the use of wikis [...] (Anderson, 2007: 15). In agreement with the quotation above, in this case, the commotion generated is not more than the result of the active participation of users in the construction of the virtual space and to make it as much real as possible.

## **Methodological framework**

### *1. Corpus analysis*

The corpus of analysis consists of three opinion documents of the Red Latinoamericana Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir in relation with the forgiveness given by Pope Francis towards women who have committed abortion.

To describe the elements of the corpus an analysis model is going to be used. That model was presented by professor Nitrihual and his Semiotica II course which is inspired by the work of Mayorga, J. et al (2013) entitled “La construcción socioimaginaria de la mujer en la crítica literaria periodística: resultados del estudio de la producción cultural de la revista de libros del diario El Mercurio de Santiago de Chile” and whose model is going to be subject to some modifications with the aim of adapting it to the needed criteria for the present study.

## *2. Corpus selection criteria*

The selection criteria of corpus was mainly based on a specific news related to the forgiveness of Pope Francis towards women who have committed abortion in the context of the year of Mercy. That news generated reactions of the CDD and for the purposes of this study three of the documents produced by the network were selected to be analyzed. Those documents belong to the CDD of Argentine, Bolivia and México.

<b>1. Type of discourse</b>	<b>Opinion essay</b>
<b>2. Type of gender</b>	The opinion essays deal with a determined topic and in general terms present the reactions about those topics.
<b>3. Type of communication media</b>	Official websites of the CDD were considered.
<b>4. Identification of the publishing media</b>	CDD opinion essays from the following countries: Bolivia, Mexico y Argentine
<b>5. Identification of the communication media selected</b>	Opinion essays of CDD: such as releases, letters, etc.
<b>6. Temporality</b>	September 2015

### 3. *Corpus description*

Corpus 1		Corpus 2		Corpus 3	
<b>Publishing source</b>	Website CDD Bolivia	<b>Publishing source</b>	Website CDD México	<b>Publishing source</b>	Website CDD Argentina
<b>Type of document</b>	Editorials, columns, letters	<b>Type of document</b>	letter	<b>Type of document</b>	Presse release
<b>Title of document</b>	Papa 'libera' el perdón del aborto y en Bolivia se preparará a curas	<b>Title of document</b>	Posiciona miento de CDD por las declara- ciones del Papa sobre el aborto	<b>Title of document</b>	Papa y aborto   Comuni- cado CDD Argentina
<b>Document's author</b>	Andrea Ramírez	<b>Document's author</b>	CDD México	<b>Document's author</b>	CDD Argentina
<b>Publishing date</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> of September 2015	<b>Publishing date</b>	2 <sup>nd</sup> of September 2015	<b>Publishing date</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> of September 2015

### 4. *Description of the analysis method*

#### *Components of the discourse analysis*

Level of analysis	Discourse structure
<b>Topics</b>	Is the topic that includes the sense of a discourse or part of it and at the same time, possesses an internal logic in relation to the context.
<b>Figure/Role</b>	Consist on identify the different figures (actors, institutions, time, places) that are present in the discourse and the assigned role that each of them have.

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<b>Positions of power</b>	Is the meaning built from the relations between the figures and its figurative rounds. Therefore, the figures have a value from its relation with others.
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*Analysis*

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<b>Level of analysis</b>	<b>Discourse structure</b>
<b>Topics</b>	<p>In relation with the topic, from the three documents analyzed, the central focus is linked to abortion and forgiveness in the context of the Year of Mercy that Pope Francis wants to give to people who have committed this kind of sin. Between those “sinners” the Church offers the forgiveness to women who have committed abortion and have regretted it. In addition, to those people who have participated in a different degree in the abortion process. Besides abortion, it is also found the topic of sin which is directly related to forgiveness. From the perspective of CDD the three cases analyzed, as it is pointed out in the research of Escudero (2008), abortion is not considered as sin if it is committed under full awareness.</p> <p>On the other hand, the value of life is also presented. From that perspective, there is a clear debate in relation to the conception of the value of life from the Catholic Church and the CDD due to the agreement with the traditional dogmas of the Catholic institution. That value of life includes the protection of rights of the unborn child. Nonetheless, it does not imply that who commit abortion do not consider those rights, thus, according to CDD when a woman commits abortion, that decision is made after a deep and complex process of reflection in which are also considered factors such as the value of life among others.</p>

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In the documents analyzed it is also present the patriarchal point of view that is still valid within the Catholic Church, which does not consider the fact that women can decide about the termination or continuity of a pregnancy by considering all the pros and cons of their personal situation and the reproductive and sexual rights that they have.

Finally, what the CDD points out in its published documents is that despite all the intentions of the Pope to open the possibilities of forgiveness towards women who have committed abortion and allow them to receive communion, the Church is still stigmatizing them by treating them as sinner and promoting the feeling of guiltiness.

### **Figures/Role**

Within the figures or roles in the analyzed documents it was found the following:

In the role of actors, it can be found the Pope Francis, the bishop of Rome and the mayor authority of Catholic Church, then there are the priest and all the hierarchy and all the believers of the Catholic religion. On the other hand, it was found the Catholic Church as institution and the women invited to receive the forgiveness.

Finally, there are also present the women who make up the CDD. Those women present themselves as opponent of the traditional dogma of the Catholic Church on the base of a theological-ideological fundament and they fight for the sexual and reproductive rights of women, which also includes abortion as a way out. In addition, they consider that who reach to that determination, have already made the decision after a deep process of reflection and awareness, moreover, they defend the women freedom to decide what to do with their bodies and how to do it with responsibility.

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In relation with places, on one hand there is the mandate that comes from the hierarchy of the European Catholic Church represented by a Latin-American Pope and on the other hand, the reply of the CDD, the movement who feels interpellated face to this “forgiveness” and that acts from the perspective of the Latin-American reality itself, particularly in the countries from where the documents analyzed were taken: Bolivia, Mexico and Argentine.

**Position of power** According to this point of analysis, the positions of power presented in all the documents analyzed point to two opposing “trenches” which interpellated each other constantly. From one side, it is the openly traditional and mercy position of the Catholic Church under the representation of Pope Francis, who points out the possibility of giving the forgiveness towards women who committed abortion under certain conditions such as have regretted it. On the other hand, there is the interpellation of CDD who under a deep reflection consider that this new situation of forgiveness is meaningful in the sense of opening the doors towards the women who committed abortion, nonetheless, it also stigmatizes those women by making them equivalent to criminals and conditioning them to have the feeling of regret to finally receive that forgiveness. All of that is consider by the CDD like a perpetuation of the conservatism and it does not contemplate free consciousness of women who committed abortion.

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### *Frequency Word analysis*

With the aim of expanding the study already presented and considering an analysis not only of content but also in the level of word frequency, it was used the *Voyant Tools*. It consists on an online



Corpus 2



Total of words of Corpus 2: 714

Word	Frequency
Abortion	7
Life	9
Women	11

Corpus 3



Total of words of Corpus 3: 372

Words	Frequency
Abortion	6
Pope	5
Women	7
Decisions	3

According to the exposed graphics from the whole corpus analyzed, the average of the most used words are the following:

Word	Media of the frequency of the corpus analyzed
Abortion	8
Women	9,3
Forgiveness	10
Pope	5
Life	9
Decisions	3

In relation with the previous chart, the most highlighted words are women, abortion, forgiveness. Those words are the most repeated too. Thus, it can be deduced from them that in terms of discourse analysis those words are also the most relevant according to the content of the documents.

## **Conclusions**

This study presents a brief and quick discourse analysis through a model taken from the examples given in some courses of Semiotics which consider throughout the application of the instrument to see and analyze the content of the discourse of the movement CDD in response to the gift of forgiveness from the Catholic Church towards women who committed abortion. With that purpose, three documents were taken to be analyzed. Those documents are the reaction from what was presented by Pope Francis in the context of the year of Mercy and in which it opens the doors of the Church to forgive people who committed sins considered serious and have as punishment excommunication of "sinners". The analyzed presented in this work is established from the position of the CDD and its fundamentals exposed in the study of Escudero (2008), presented in the theoretical framework. Finally, through that position are built the confrontations as reaction of CDD which consider as progress the opening from the Church towards women who decided to commit abortion after a process of deep reflection. Nonetheless, from the critical perspective of CDD, the Church deny that process of freedom of choice or freedom of conscience and as consequence, the Church consider them as sinner. On the other hand, according to the CDD fundamentals, the fact that women experiment a process of reflection around the decision of committing an abortion, let them free of sin. Thus, the CDD replies in a controversial way and consider that this forgiveness offer does not fulfill the inclusion of women that committed abortion inside the Church because it keeps on judging them, by putting them in a situation of stigmatization and encouraging the feeling of guiltiness.

In addition, it is also important to mention that the spaces used by CDD, for instance, the virtual spaces of each country in which the CDD is located such as Argentine, Peru or Bolivia, are very important for the divulgation of the discourse of the movement. Moreover, in a way those spaces work as “officials” to make more popular the opinion of the movement in relation with some determined topics. Which is interesting is that this network uses virtual spaces and platform such as *Facebook* and *Twitter*, even *Youtube*, to create in a certain way a sort of questioning issue between the devoted people. Those virtual spaces were designed in a way that users can do both update their information and leave some comments related to some issue. Is in those comments where can be found or studies aspects of the discourse such as cultural and political backgrounds, among others. Despite of the phenomenon of the ideological discourse in the virtual world, this is a topic that still needs to me more develop in future studies.

Finally, within the limitations that this project has I can mention the corpus because it is limited and does not allow to do a lot of generalizations, in fact, it allows to analyzed from the perspective more related to the specific movement CDD. In addition, the application of statistics models such the one to analyze the frequency of words, which meant a difficulty because of the barely used of the tool. As consequence, this work allows not only to explore deeply in a subject but also to have an approach to the new tools for information analysis.

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## A N E X O S

### Corpus 1: CDD Bolivia

#### **Papa ‘libera’ el perdón del aborto y en Bolivia se preparará a curas**

2 septiembre, 2015 *por* Andrea Ramírez • Iglesias, Nacional, Noticias  
• 0 comentarios

Feministas aseguran que ‘otra vez’ se arremete contra derechos de mujeres.

La Razón (Edición Impresa) / Guimara Calle, Angélica Melgarejo / La Paz, Cochabamba.

El papa Francisco concedió a los sacerdotes de todo el mundo la facultad de absolver del “pecado” del aborto, a lo largo del Jubileo de la Misericordia, a las mujeres que lo practicaron y a quienes lo facilitaron. La Iglesia de Bolivia anuncia preparación a los curas.

“Pienso, de forma especial, en todas las mujeres que han recurrido al aborto. Conozco bien los condicionamientos que las condujeron a esa decisión. Sé que es un drama existencial y moral. He encontrado a muchas mujeres que llevaban en su corazón una cicatriz por esa elección sufrida y dolorosa”, dice el Papa en una carta enviada ayer a Rino Fisichella, presidente del Consejo Pontificio para la Promoción de la Nueva Evangelización.

Francisco justifica que el perdón de Dios no se puede negar a todo aquel que se haya arrepentido. “Por ese motivo he decidido conceder a todos los sacerdotes para el Año Jubilar, no obstante, cualquier cuestión contraria, la facultad de absolver del pecado del aborto a quienes lo han practicado y arrepentidos de corazón piden por ello perdón”. La misiva, publicada por el portal católico ACI Prensa, fue enviada por el Pontífice ante la cercanía de dicho Año Jubilar o Año de la Misericordia, que se desarrollará del 8 de diciembre de 2015 al 1 de septiembre de 2016.

Pecado. En la actualidad, según la doctrina de la Iglesia, las mujeres que abortan son excomulgadas y solo pueden ser absueltas del “pecado” por obispos de cada diócesis o por sacerdotes autorizados. La sanción también llega a hombres, madres y médicos porque, según el Derecho Canónico, “quien procura el aborto, si éste se produce, incurre en excomunión latae sententiae (pena impuesta)”.

En la carta, el Obispo de Roma pide a los sacerdotes prepararse para esta tarea con el uso de palabras de reflexión que ayuden a comprender el pecado cometido y llegar a “acoger el auténtico y generoso perdón del Padre que todo lo renueva con su presencia”.

Al respecto, el padre Miguel Manzanera, presidente de la Comisión Doctrina y Fe, de la Conferencia Episcopal Boliviana (CEB), anunció que tras conocer la carta de Francisco, se preparará a los clérigos del país para que otorguen el perdón por el aborto, a través de cursillos o charlas sobre las normas de la Iglesia, la práctica del aborto y su significado.

“El Papa ha querido habilitar a todos los sacerdotes para que levanten la excomunión desde el 8 de diciembre en las parroquias, y en Bolivia comenzaremos la tarea una vez que él apruebe el decreto con las especificaciones”, expresó.

Charlas. El religioso reconoció que no todos los curas cuentan con formación adecuada para enfrentar “un tema considerado por el Concilio Vaticano II como un crimen abominable, por el asesinato de un ser humano indefenso e inocente”. Teresa Lanza, directora de Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, consideró que el Vaticano colocó a las mujeres a la par de los delincuentes porque el Año de la Misericordia también perdonará a los reclusos en las cárceles.

“La Iglesia muestra un poco de soberbia, ve al aborto como 100% pecado. No creo que esto alegre a las católicas porque otra vez nos colocan como incapaces de tomar decisiones éticas sobre nuestra sexualidad y reproducción”, expresó.

Patricia Flores, feminista y presidenta del Círculo de Periodistas, opinó que la determinación del Vaticano sigue la estructura patriarcal y no entiende que las mujeres deciden abortar en situación extrema, la

mayoría por violación.” Ojalá el Papa condenara con esa misma rigurosidad a los hombres violadores y maltratadores, y destapara así la responsabilidad que tienen ellos”, resaltó Flores.

A Patricia Bráñez, activista feminista, la absolución por el aborto le parece “ridícula”. “Va en contra de los derechos humanos de las mujeres, que se construyen progresivamente. No necesitamos el perdón de nadie para la toma de nuestra decisión. Con esto más bien se promoverá la culpa en ellas”.

## **La Carta del Papa**

### **Peregrinación**

“Deseo que la indulgencia jubilar llegue a cada uno como genuina experiencia de la misericordia de Dios, la cual va al encuentro de todos con el rostro del Padre que acoge y perdona, olvidando completamente el pecado cometido. Para vivir y obtener la indulgencia, los fieles están llamados a realizar una breve peregrinación hacia la Puerta Santa, abierta en cada catedral o en las iglesias establecidas por el obispo diocesano”.

### **Reclusos**

“Mi pensamiento se dirige también a los presos, que experimentan la limitación de su libertad. El Jubileo siempre ha sido la ocasión de una gran amnistía, destinada a hacer partícipes a muchas personas que, incluso mereciendo una pena, sin embargo, han tomado conciencia de la injusticia cometida y desean sinceramente integrarse de nuevo en la sociedad (...). Que a todos ellos llegue realmente la misericordia del Padre que quiere estar cerca de quien más necesita de su perdón”.

### **Enfermos y ancianos**

“Pienso, además, en quienes por diversos motivos se verán imposibilitados de llegar a la Puerta Santa, en primer lugar los enfermos y las personas ancianas y solas, a menudo en condiciones de no poder salir

de casa (...) recibiendo la comunión o participando en la santa misa y en la oración comunitaria (...) será para ellos el modo de obtener la indulgencia jubilar”.

### **Opiniones sobre el ‘perdón’ al aborto**

*‘No creo que haya fila en la iglesia’: Teresa Lanza, Católicas por Derecho a Decidir*

“No creo que las mujeres vayan a hacer largas filas en las puertas de las iglesias para que las perdonen por abortar. El aborto es un tema serio de salud pública y justicia social”.

*‘Abortos por irresponsabilidad’: Miguel Manzanera, Conferencia Episcopal*

“La mayoría de los abortos es por mantener relaciones irresponsables: tomaron bebidas alcohólicas o las mujeres fueron engañadas. El país debe afrontar el embarazo no deseado”.

*‘No necesitamos ningún perdón’: Patricia Flores, activista feminista*

“Las mujeres no necesitamos ningún tipo de perdón porque encima de cualquier creencia religiosa, sea la que fuese venga de donde venga, están los derechos humanos”.

## Corpus 2: CDD México

02 SEP 2015

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DESTACADAS

### Posicionamiento de CDD por las declaraciones del Papa sobre el aborto



México, D.F. 1 de septiembre de 2015

Estimado papa Francisco:

Como Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir, apreciamos sinceramente que, en el marco del Año de la Misericordia, usted haya comprendido el dilema en que muchísimas mujeres se encuentran ante el imperativo de interrumpir un embarazo no deseado y en consecuencia haya concedido a los sacerdotes, ya no única y exclusivamente a los obispos, la facultad de absolver lo que han denominado el pecado del aborto.

Como creyentes, al igual que muchísimas teólogas y teólogos, consideramos que el aborto no es pecado cuando las mujeres han tomado esta decisión en conciencia, de manera informada y orada y obligadas por las circunstancias: cuando el embarazo ha sido producto de una violación, por problemas de salud, por correr peligro su vida, porque están viviendo una difícil situación económica o se trata de niñas que han sido abusadas sexualmente. En ningún caso, las mujeres, ni en las situaciones más extremas, vivimos el dilema del aborto de manera superficial, como lamentablemente usted lo ha mencionado.

Para las mujeres, como para cualquier ser humano, la vida es muy valiosa. Quienes abortan no lo hacen porque han perdido la sensibilidad ante la vida. Para la gran mayoría de ellas, la vida es tan valiosa que no están dispuestas a traer una persona al mundo en condiciones de violencia, pobreza e infelicidad tanto para esa vida en ciernes como para sus familias.

Muchísimas mujeres hemos encontrado en algunas legislaciones civiles más misericordia y justicia que en nuestra propia Iglesia porque dichas leyes nos consideran personas adultas con capacidad para tomar decisiones sensatas y responsabilizarnos de ellas. Algunas leyes han dejado de considerar el aborto como un delito porque ponderan dos bienes, el de la vida en ciernes y el de la mujer, y han considerado las distintas circunstancias que viven las mujeres que abortan sin que sean castigadas por ello. Lamentablemente, muchos obispos en el mundo continúan estigmatizando a estas hermanas nuestras y presionando a las autoridades civiles para que sean castigadas.

Valoramos profundamente sus esfuerzos por suscitar una Iglesia incluyente, misericordiosa, amorosa, acogedora, que comprenda las alegrías y tristezas de todas las personas, que recupere la plena comunión sin estigmatizar a nadie. Valoramos que haya comprendido las circunstancias que han conducido a las mujeres a tomar esta difícil decisión, que reconozca que en la mayoría de los casos subyace “un drama existencial y moral” y una decisión dolorosa. Ciertamente, sería fundamental que también considerara que la despenalización del aborto ha ayudado a salvar la vida de muchísimas mujeres, ha reducido su práctica clandestina y en condiciones insalubres, ha favorecido que las familias continúen viviendo con una presencia tan importante como la de la madre, ha permitido a las niñas abusadas sexualmente que tengan mejores condiciones de vida y ha dado un poco de paz a quienes han sido violadas.

Para el Año Jubilar, y desde estas reflexiones, proponemos que:

- Se incluya a las mujeres que, aunque sufren y se equivocan, también se esfuerzan diariamente por ser mejores, más libres, responsables, más justas; por equivocarse menos; por guiarse por los caminos de la sabiduría.

- Se considere que el aborto no es pecado cuando ha resultado de una decisión en conciencia y de manera informada y orada, y cuando el embarazo ha sido producto de una violación, haya problemas de salud, corra peligro la vida de la mujer, se viva una difícil situación económica o se trate de niñas que trágicamente han sido abusadas sexualmente.

- Las autoridades eclesiásticas de todo nivel dejen de estigmatizar a las mujeres que abortan y dejen de presionar a las autoridades civiles para que ellas sean castigadas y perseguidas como delincuentes, porque, como usted lo ha mencionado, la convivencia respetuosa y pacífica depende de la laicidad del Estado.[1]

- Todas las autoridades eclesiásticas pidan perdón por el daño físico, moral y espiritual que han generado a millones de mujeres que han abortado a causa de su falta de misericordia.

Como en nuestras cartas anteriores, le agradecemos profundamente su atención.

Atentamente,  
Católicas por el Derecho a Decidir

[1] “El papa Francisco defiende la ‘laicidad del Estado’”,  
27 de julio de 2013. Disponible en:  
[http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/07/27/actualidad/1374948221\\_344203.html](http://internacional.elpais.com/internacional/2013/07/27/actualidad/1374948221_344203.html)

### **Corpus 3: CDD Argentina**

#### **Papa y aborto | Comunicado CDD Argentina**

Comunicado de Prensa, 1ero de septiembre, 2015

Las declaraciones del Papa dan cuenta de un avance en la posición de la Jerarquía de la Iglesia Católica frente al aborto, en tanto reconoce las situaciones complejas que llevan a las mujeres a decidir sobre su cuerpo y el dilema moral que ello supone, cuando deciden en el marco del mal menor según la doctrina católica.

Como líder religioso es importante que el Papa se identifique con una postura más flexible sobre la construcción del pecado y su conexión con el aborto. Que nos saque una carga más en el marco de subordinación en el cual la religión nos ha colocado. Nos han asignado el mandato de portadoras de la obligatoriedad de la procreación, del sacrificio, de la voluntad de amar sobre todo las cosas y en todas las circunstancias. Estos mandatos no le fueron asignados a los varones con la misma fuerza. Sin embargo, en estas declaraciones quedan afuera aquellas mujeres que no lo viven como drama, sino como una elección, una decisión consciente y moralmente válida, en la cual pudieron reconciliar sus decisiones reproductivas, su proyecto de vida con sus creencias religiosas.

Pero el Papa es también el líder político de una de las Instituciones que más han hecho para criminalizar el aborto en nuestra región y para considerar “delincuentes” a las mujeres que voluntariamente deciden interrumpir un embarazo. El aborto como crimen es un acto de opresión y de violencia que, como mujeres católicas, tenemos que confrontar. Como sociedades democráticas nos debemos un marco legal amplio que permita incluir el pluralismo y la libertad de conciencia necesarios para albergar la diversidad de prácticas y decisiones de las mujeres.



Si el mismo Papa no condena a las mujeres que abortan ¿Por qué nuestros/as representantes se escudan en reparos religiosos para eludir debatir la inmoralidad de la criminalización penal que todavía subsiste en nuestra legislación? Legalizar el aborto es la única estrategia democrática que permitirá resguardar la libertad de conciencia y la toma de decisiones éticas de las mujeres, en un país respetuoso de los derechos humanos.

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## THE EFFECTS OF DIGITAL GAMES CONSUMPTION

CREȚU CĂLIN<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** The paper *The effects of digital games consumption* is a literature review of existing studies conducted by scholars from multiple fields that have studied the effects of digital games on the audience's physical and psychological lives as well as the ways digital games influence social groups and the relations between individuals.

While the effects of other, more "traditional" media, such as television or radio, have been thoroughly studied by scholars from domains such as medicine, psychology, communication and sociology, the digital game industry has remained myth ridden for a long time before scholars started treating digital games as a media product that has effects on their target audience.

The present paper aims to show how in time, scholars have proven or disproven claims, myths and theories regarding the effect of digital games consumption. Among these theories, we can find those supporting claims such as: violent digital games create violent behavior in children, digital game consumption leads to non-social behavior in youth or the ill-effects of long-term digital game consumption on player's health.

**Keywords:** *digital games, effects, media consumption, social skills, violence*

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## Introduction

Digital games (also referred to as computer games, video games or electronic games, depending on a few minor variables) can be defined as games that are being played on electronic platforms such as personal computers, consoles that are linked to TV sets, tablets, mobile phones, arcade games and other devices powered electrically and have a graphical display (Prundaru, 2013).

The industry has entered public attention in the early 1970's with the fast growing popularity of arcade and home console games. At first, digital games were considered a waste of time while games like *Death Race* created a real moral panic in the United States due to the violent content presented in the game.

Financially, the industry showed success during the early 1980's. If by 1978, the arcade game industry amounted sales of \$50 million, by 1982, the industry sold game devices worth \$8 billion. To put into perspective, in 1982, the pop music industry was grossing \$4 billion in sales every year while Hollywood films amounted \$3 billion (Rogers & Larsen, 1984), (Rogers & Larsen, 1984).

While digital games and the gamers have the subjects of multiple stereotypes (mostly negative), scholars and researchers have worked to prove or disapprove various beliefs regarding digital games and their impact on the audience. While scientists have debunked misconceptions such as violent games creating violent behavior, some negative events, such as mass shootings and murders, are still being linked in mass media with consumption of violent games.

Other scientists have worked out ways to use digital games as tools of learning for young children or even therapy for patients suffering the aftereffects of strokes and other ailments. Psychologists also use games to treat multiple issues while professionals use simulators to train skills such as flying or even police interventions.

The present paper is a literature review of existing studies conducted by scholars from multiple fields that have studied the effects of digital games on the audience's physical and psychological

lives as well as the ways digital games influence social groups and the relations between individuals. The paper aims to show the importance of digital games in today's culture and the importance of research in all aspects of digital games.

## 1. Addiction and treatment

The World Health Organization and American Psychiatric Association define substance addiction when three of the following criteria are met (American Psychiatric Association, 2000) (World Health Organization, 2016): as a brain disease in which the following things happen:

- Tolerance - The consumer requires bigger doses of the substance over time
- Withdrawal - Physical or emotional withdrawal is experienced when the substance is not being used
- Limited control - Consumer cannot stop consuming once started
- Negative consequences - Continued use even though there have been negative consequences on user's professional or personal life
- Neglected or postponed activities - Consumer puts aside or reduces social, recreational, work or household activities due to substance consumption
- Significant time or energy spent - obtaining, using, hiding, using or recovering from the substance abuse
- Desire to cut down - Trying to quit consuming a substance

In 2010, a South Korean couple became so obsessed with a videogame in which they raised a virtual baby that they left their three-month-old daughter starve to death. As they realized what has happened, the parents tried to flee from the authorities but were soon caught. One of the police officers told the press that *the couple seemed to have lost their will to live a normal life because they did not have jobs and gave*

*birth to a premature baby* (Tran, 2010). The tragic event can easily highlight three of the criteria indicating addiction: negative consequences, neglected activities and significant time or energy spent.

While digital games are not a substance, playing videogames will provoke chemical reactions inside the player's brain, quickly releasing dopamine as studies have shown (Lidhen, 2011). However, the same studies found weak relations with real addictions. The American Psychiatric Association has not yet classified excessive video game consumption as a disorder; however, it is discussed if excessive gaming is an effect of other existing disorder (American Psychiatric Association, 2013).

The addictive nature of video games is considered by some psychologist to be caused by other elements than the rush of dopamine inside the player's brain. The nature of digital games is to provide a challenge followed by a reward once the requirements have been met. A study conducted by Nick Yee showed that the achievement system was the main motivational factor for playing digital games in male players while female players focused more on the social aspect, especially the relationship component of the game (Yee, 2006)

The social aspect preferred by female gamers is also related to the addictive nature of video games. Online communities and groups have been linked to show peer pressure like behavior inside the groups. Stories such as that of *World of Warcraft* player Ryan van Cleave (Lush, 2011) shed light on how gamers tend to feel the need of satisfying their needs by playing the video games while stories such as the one posted by user Fenryck on the *World of Warcraft* forums shows how players feel guilty for letting down their groups due to not being in the mood to play the game anymore (WoW Forums, 2015).

Despite not being officially classified as an addiction, rehabilitation clinics offer inpatient and outpatient rehabilitation programs for *videogame addicts*. Using similar techniques as with treating gambling addiction, clinics perceive video game *addiction* as a clinical impulse control disorder, thus treating it with cognitive behavioral therapy (PsychGuides, 2016) (Rehabs.com, 2016).

Professional rehab can last from 30 to 60 days varying from person to person time in which they can suffer from withdrawal symptoms (depression, difficulty to focus, anxiety, irritability, loneliness, lack of interest and more) and even have suffer a relapse (Computer Gaming Addicts Anonymous, 2016).

## 2. Physical effects

Popular culture loves portraying gamers as young obese (or sometimes extremely thin and muscle-less) teenage boys that suffer from countless allergies, must wear glasses at all times and have their pale complexion covered in zits. Such representations have led to stereotyping gamers as leading an unhealthy style of life, eating junk food and not exercising.

Studies show that gamers consume more calories after a session of playing games compared to other sedentary activities (Wang & Perry, 2006). The same study shows that overall various metabolic and physiologic variables are increased in children when playing videogames, showing a small physical effort increase on behalf of the test subjects. While the study recommends not comparing gaming with watching television when evaluating sedentary activities due to the metabolic and physiologic increase, it places the effort bellow that observed during standard physical exercise or that recommended by health professionals.

A study on 17-year-old teenagers led by Robert G. McMurray showed little to no relation between watching television or playing video games and a higher Body-Mass Index (BMI) (McMurray, et al., 2000). However, a study led by Elizabeth A. Vandewater showed an increased BMI in children under eight that played games while those watching television showed normal values (Vandewater, Shim, & Caplovitz, 2004)

Another study involving 482 children, with an average age of 12, conducted by Michigan State University, psychology professor Lynda Jackson found no statistical link between playing video games, using the Internet or cellphones and the BMI of the participants. The study showed that most BMI differences between the test subjects were caused by race, income and age of the children (Jackson, von Eye, Fitzgerald, Witt, & Zhao, 2011).

The release of active gaming devices such as the Nintendo Wii, the Xbox Kinect or the PlayStation Move announced the coming of active digital games. These games were seen at first as tools against teenage obesity, reaching children through their preferred medium. Playing the Wii and other devices would require players to actively move instead of passively using a controller. While the active gaming devices and active games cater to a different type of market (pre-teen girls, senior citizens) and different type of gaming habits (Sterlicchi, 2007), they have not been proven to be very efficient against fighting obesity (Baranowski, et al., 2012 ). Most researchers have repeatedly agreed that physical activity and proper nutrition are required to having a healthy style of life.

While playing video games was not successfully linked to obesity, other types of injuries have, some even having deadly effects. A survey over 436 schoolchildren reported moderate to severe pain in the neck/shoulder area, head and eyes. The same study showed moderate/severe inconvenience to everyday life usually attributed to pain in the head, neck/shoulders, and low back areas. The study linked the occurrence of pain to computer usage, the intensity of the pain increasing with the time spent at the computer (Hakala, Saarni, Punamäki, Wallenius, Nygård , & Rimpelä, 2012). The studied focused mostly on computer use; however, other illnesses have been attributed to console games only.

The *PlayStation thumb* is an injury attributed to the use of console controllers and other thumb operated devices. The condition can be characterized by blistering, numbness and tingling in the thumbs (Jenkins B. , 2012). Repetitive strain injuries are a common

occupational hazards, however, repetitive movements in active gaming devices have resulted in injuries such as tendonitis (mockingly called *nintendonitis*) or even broken bones resulted in falling from the Wii balance board (the Wii fractures), (Birdwell, 2011), (Macgregor, 2000 ), (Herwees, 2013).

Long sessions of gaming can have serious negative effects on the player's health. Gamers and doctors alike report symptoms from blurry vision, sensitivity to light and dry eyes (American Optometric Association) to fatal deep vein thrombosis, a blood clot that forms from sitting to long without breaks of stretching which can kill the person (Hsien-Cheng, Burbridge, & Wong, 2013).

### 3. Social life

Scholars have studied the link between digital game consumption and its impact on the player's social skill level. One study showed that low frequency use of computer games does not conflict with the social development of young people. However, the study showed that high and heavy frequency users found themselves in positions of social self-exclusion. Those categorized as high and heavy frequency users preferred computer games to socializing and reported that computer games conflicted with their existing social life (Griffiths, 2010).

The same study also suggested that playing digital games might not necessarily be the cause of social-exclusion but an effect of anxiety, the players avoiding social interaction and receiving social rewards through digital games (Griffiths, 2010). A different study associated high usage of video games (over 5 hours a week) with a decrease in peer relationship problems and in prosocial deficits in children aged between 6 and 11 (Kovess-Masfety, et al., 2016).

One of the main reasons the image of social isolation in the case of digital game players have been so successful is also linked to the



early single player aspect of games. While most digital games released before the early 2000's were designed for single players, most recent games are developed to involve a degree of social activity (playing online, cooperative modes, group tasks etc.) (Kulman, 2015). One popular depiction that shows the opposite of social isolation could be seen in arcade game venues in the late 1970's, early 1980's. These venues would gather children together, some even skipping school, to play on the popular arcade games. Social isolation was never considered as an issue during this period, quite the contrary, youngsters would often gather around a player, cheering, admiring and making remarks regarding their game (Nash & Calonico, 1996).

In an article written for *Additude*, a magazine dedicated for those with attention deficits, founder and president of LearningWorks for Kids, Randy Kulman, pointed out that in today's world, children do not have the same freedom of playing safely in the neighborhoods they had in the past. Kulman points to multiple reasons due to which this is happening, such as two parents working, safety concerns, overschedule and even the lack of opportunity for kids to engage in afterschool and weekend activities with other children (Kulman, 2015).

A study released by Entertainment Software Association, a non-profit body that assign computer game ratings, in 2016 gathered data from over 4000 American households showed that 54% of the most frequent gamers in those specific homes play games with others. Of the respondents, 40% stated they play with friends, 21% with family members. Most (53%) consider that games help them connect with their friends and 42% of them feel that video games help them spend time with family (Entertainment Software Association, 2016).

The same ESA report shows that parents play video games with their kids due to the following factors: Fun/entertainment for the entire family (88%), are asked to (76%), to socialize with their children (76%), can monitor the content their children consume (59%), they enjoy the content (57%) (Entertainment Software Association, 2016).

#### 4. Therapeutic and educational use

Scholars are developing treatments and therapeutic tools for both children and adults by using digital games. Such treatments are being developed for children with autism (Tyrrell, 2016), anxiety (Moser, Moran, & Leber, 2015), stress related issues (Elkin, 2011), post-traumatic stress syndrome, depression and bipolar disorder (Nixon, 2012).

Alongside the therapeutic use, psychologists and game developers have realized the educational aspect of digital games. Research has shown that children who played videogames had better creativity scores, (Jackson, Witt, Games, Fitzgerald, von Eye, & Zhao, 2011) improved sensory, perceptual, and spatial cognitive functions than those who did not play digital games (Feng & Spence, 2010).

Flying and driving simulators have been used to fully immerse future pilots in a virtual world environment in which the purpose is learning how to drive a car or fly an airplane. While the experiences are not 100% real, the games are designed to match real life situations without having to put the players at a risk. Researchers proved that electronic games and simulations encourage *“exploration and experimentation, stimulating curiosity, discovery learning and perseverance”*, enhance the player’s confidence (Klawe, 1994) and self-esteem (Dempsey, Lucassen, Gilley, & Rasmussen, 1993) and even reduces the learning time and instructor load (Ricci, 1994).

In 2015, a study that followed over 3000 European children between 6 and 11 discovered that 20% of them spent more than 5 hours a week playing video games. After removing other external factors, the researchers discovered that high usage of videogames in children can be associated with 1.75 times the odds of high intellectual functioning and 1.88 times the odds of high overall school competence (Kovess-Masfety, et al., 2016).

In 1987, a study conducted on participants above 9 years of age (with a mean age of 12) undergoing chemotherapy on a regular basis showed that playing video games is beneficial in countering nausea.

Those playing digital games reported a significant decrease of nausea and anxiety. When the video games were withdrawn for a period of ten minutes, their nausea began to rise again, only to decrease again once the children were exposed to video games again (Redd, Jacobsen, Die-Trill, Dermatis, McEvoy, & Holland, 1987).

Distraction with video games also proved beneficial in the case of burn victims. The patients had their wounds debrided and dressed while being partially submerged in a hydrotank. Patients perceived significantly less pain when playing an immersive virtual reality game during the procedure than when they underwent the procedure without playing the game (Hoffman, Patterson, Seibel, Soltani, Jewett-Leahy, & Sharar, 2008). The study showed that immersive virtual reality can be used effectively as a therapeutic tool to distract patients undergoing painful procedures.

## 5. Violent games and behavior

In 2008, Tyrone Spellman, a 27 year old Xbox player was sentenced to prison after beating to death his 17 months old daughter for knocking over his Xbox console (Arendt, 2008). The 1999 Columbine High School Massacre shootings that ended with 13 deaths and the suicide of the shooters was linked with the perpetrator's consumption of violent digital games (Nizza, 2007). Other mass shootings such as the Sandy Hook that resulted with death of 28 and the Oslo/Utøya island attacks that ended with 77 deaths were linked to the consumption of video games.

Whether video games were the cause of the violent behavior, respectively of the killing sprees, or if the attackers due to prior existing conditions preferred them has been a heated debate between psychologists, media outlets and concerned parents.

A statement signed by the American Academy of Pediatrics considers that *"Children who see a lot of violence are more likely to view*

*violence as an effective way of settling conflict...are more likely to assume that acts of violence are acceptable behavior."* The same statement notes that children are experiencing emotional desensitization when playing violent video games and that *"Viewing violence may lead to real life violence. Children exposed to violent programming at a young age have a higher tendency for violent and aggressive behavior later in life than children who are not so exposed."* (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2000). Other scholars and researches have noted the emotional desensitization effect violent games have on children (Greenfield, 2013) (Strasburger & Donnerstein, 2013) and their link with causing violent behavior (Anderson, 2009).

Brad J. Bushman, Professor of Communication and Psychology at The Ohio State University mentioned that it is hard to prove a causality relation between videogames and violent behavior. Bushman thinks that people want to believe that games are harmless by pointing to the fact that not everyone playing violent videogames becomes a killer. However, he indicates that researchers have not managed to prove that video games directly cause violent behavior, nor have they managed to prove it does not. Bushman also points out that an experiment to test if playing violent videogames may push a person into violence could not be ethically ran (Bushman, 2013).

Other researchers consider that it is not violent games that create violent behavior but violent behavior happens to be attracted to violent games. Scholars point out that juvenile violent crime rate is at a 30 year **low** (Jenkins H. , 2004) and that during the last 33 years, *"homicides tended to decrease in the months following the release of popular M-rated violent video games..."* (Markey & Markey, 2014). In 2010, the United States Supreme Court ruled, in a 7-2 decision written by Justice Antonin Scalia that *"it cannot show a direct causal link between violent video games and harm to minors."* (Supreme Court Of The United States, 2011)

## Conclusions

Arguments pro and against have been made on most aspects when talking about digital games and their impact on society and individual. Mass media engorges in publishing stories about the “*devastating*” effects of digital games by hastily linking negative stories to the consumption of digital games. During the last 30 years, scholars have been studying the effects of digital games in all aspects of our daily life. From digital game addiction to obesity and violent behavior, psychologists, sociologists and other scholars have provided answers (sometimes conflicting) on how digital games are shaping our society.

While misconceptions such as video games cause obesity have been disproved, other type of injuries, strains and accidents have been linked to computer use and video game consumption. However, regular physical activity and proper stretching breaks when using the computer for long times have been recommended to negate the effects of long gaming sessions.

Another misconception regarding is the correlation between the quality of social life and the habit of playing digital games. While a link does indeed exists between social isolation and playing digital games, some scholars have concluded that digital games are not the cause of poor social skills but the effect of social interaction issues such as increased anxiety.

Since the late 1980's, mass media and concerned parents have stigmatized digital games, especially violent ones, believing they create violent behavior in children and teenagers. While multiple studies showed that there is indeed a link between playing violent games, emotional desensitization and the manifestation of violent behavior other scholars have argued against naming violent games as the causal factor. Similar to the link made in the case of social skill level, scholars have suggested that violent people are attracted to violent games.

Other researchers and game designers have used digital games to develop treatment tools for different psychological and mental issues. Hospitals have been successfully using video games to help

and educate patients undergoing difficult, unpleasant or even painful treatments and are constantly experimenting and trialing with ways to use games as a treatment or aiding tool for those in need.

Educational tools have also been developed in the form of games and simulators for both children and adults alike. While studies have encouraged teaching through digital games due to their benefits, it becomes the parents' responsibility to control how, what and how long their children consume digital games. Adults must also find a balance between their gaming habits and a healthy way of life.

## **Discussions**

Different effects can also be seen in different game genres or platforms. A 2007 study showed that those playing computer games spent in average more time than console and arcade gamers did. In the case of computer games, those playing MMORPG games (online) spent significantly more game time compared to those playing single player games. MMORPG players also reported worse sleep quality and overall health quality compared to other computer, arcade and console gamers (Smyth, 2007).

While studies show both positive and negative effects of games, most conclusions show a correlation between the two and rarely identify a causality relationship. For more accurate data, long term research is required in order to differentiate causality to causation. Issues that long term research can encounter are constant change of game design and technological improvements.

Due to constant release of new games, new gaming peripherals, gaming platforms and increase of accessibility to digital games, scholars studying the gaming industry, and new media in general, should update topics that were previously researched in order to check their availability even more often than in other domains. The constant stream of changes in the gaming industry can make some studies obsolete in only a few years.

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## DEEPENING EUROPEAN INTEGRATION THROUGH THE EUROPEAN CAPITAL OF CULTURE ACTION

HORAȚIU DAN<sup>1</sup>

**ABSTRACT.** This paper aims at analyzing the potential that the European Capital of Culture action has of fostering the complex European integration process via its identity function. For this purpose, we have examined a wide range of European Capital of Culture programs and, using a combination between the diverse and the typical case study selection methods, we have chosen for a deeper analysis three cases that could generate conclusions applicable to the entire action (Maribor 2012, Istanbul 2010 and Essen/Ruhr 2010). The main findings of the paper highlight some limited merits of the action in promoting European identity and supporting the European integration process, coupled with the indication of discrepancies in this regard between small and large hosts of the European Capital of Culture. Also, the study sets forward a set of measures that could improve the action's results along its European dimension.

*Keywords:* European integration; European Capital of Culture; European identity; European culture.

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## Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the European Capital of Culture action from the perspective of a common European identity, focusing on the function that should, through the activities implemented along its cultural dimension, support a wide and multi-sectorial European integration process. Consequently, a series of representative European Capitals of Culture (ECoC) are to be examined to determine the potential and limitations of the action as a catalyst for cultural, political, economic or social integration and whether this function of the action could be enhanced to produce superior results.

As it has already been noticed, in the new European climate which began with the Maastricht Treaty, national identity, as perceived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, has become obsolete, something that does not mean however that attachment towards a mutated version cannot be (or has not) developed<sup>2</sup>. In this context, one way to perceive things is that deepening European integration would be antagonist to the further development of hard-core national identities and that an enhanced European identity, which should coexist with a difference-celebrating and non-exclusive national identities, would be needed to ensure the continuation of integration efforts.

The study was conducted bearing in mind that fostering European integration is not among the explicitly stated objectives of the action, which aims however at developing a “European dimension” through strengthening common cultural aspects<sup>3</sup> and providing with the opportunity to “highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater

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<sup>2</sup> Ciprian Păun and Adrian-Gabriel Corpădean, *European Regions and Multiculturalisms: Beyond the Nation?*, Transylvanian Review, Vol. XXIV, sup. 1, pp. 55-64, 2015.

<sup>3</sup> European Parliament and Council of the EU, *Decision No 1622/2006/EC of The European Parliament and of The Council of 24 October 2006 establishing a Community action for the European Capital of Culture event for the years 2007 to 2019*, Official Journal of the European Union, 3.11.2006, L304/1, art. 4.

mutual understanding between European citizens”<sup>4</sup>. Nonetheless, the program’s focus on common cultural elements and on the chance “to experience the feeling of belonging to the same European community”<sup>5</sup> constitute elements which are central to the wider European integration process.

Moreover, one of the issues that we feel are not sufficiently addressed at a policy level concerns the role of the media in promoting both the idea of a well-defined European cultural identity and the features of each ECoC program. In this context, we view successful communication by the European Commission and each of the ECoC hosts as crucial to the accomplishment of the objectives regarding European integration.

## Methodology

From a methodological perspective, we have aimed at selecting case studies that have the potential to generate conclusions that are relevant for the European integration potential of the entire ECoC action. Having this in mind, we must note that the ECoC was subject to several changes in vision along the years and thus has changed dramatically since its first implementation in 1985. As a consequence, in order to ensure that the conclusions of the study are relevant for the current form of the action, we have narrowed the range of cases to be taken into consideration to those implemented in the 2010 – 2014 period, taking the year 2010 as a threshold because of the fact that beginning with 2010 new monitorization criteria have been applied<sup>6</sup>, contributing to a more efficient implementation, the facilitation of the evaluation process and improvement in its accuracy. The 2015 Capitals were discarded due to the insufficient time that has passed

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<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, art. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Jose Manuel Barroso, *Foreword*, in *European Capitals of Culture: the road to success*, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, 2009, p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> European Parliament and Council of the EU, *Op. cit.*, art. 14 (1).

from their program implementation, thus making evaluation conclusions potentially incomplete. In this context, we have taken into consideration the eleven cities or regions that have held the ECoC title in this period: Istanbul, Essen/Ruhr, and Pecs in 2010; Turku and Tallinn in 2011; Guimaraes and Maribor in 2012; Marseille/Provence and Kosice in 2013; Riga and Umea in 2014.

For the purpose of ensuring external validity, the selection of cases was done using a method adapted to the characteristics of the study and represents a combination between the diverse and typical case selection criteria, while the sources of the analysis consist mainly of official documents of EU institutions, external reports and other documentation regarding the implemented ECoC actions.

Recognizing the complexity of the examined phenomenon, in the first phase of the case selection process we have defined relevant categories of ECoCs. The main difference from the rigors of the diverse case selection method is that, due to the high degree of heterogeneity of the cases, it was impossible to define relevant categories that were perfectly homogenous, i.e. the random selection of any case within the category would generate the same results. Consequently, once categories are defined, the next step is to proceed in selecting a case from each category using the typical case selection method, thus analyzing the most representative case from each category in the attempt to draw conclusions that have a high generalization potential<sup>7</sup>.

Regarding the criteria that are to be used to define the categories, we have identified two possible approaches.

The first approach focuses on the size of the city, departing from the idea that the implementation dynamic differs because of the differences in capacity to coalize the community around the project (usually greater in small cities) and of the differences in touristic

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<sup>7</sup> For more details regarding the main methods of case study selection, consult John Gerring, *Case Selection for Case-study Analysis: Qualitative and Quantitative Techniques*, in Janet Box-Steffensmeier, Henry Brady and David Collier (eds.), "The Oxford Handbook of Political Methodology", New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 645-684, 2010.

infrastructure and the capacity to attract external visitors (usually greater in big cities). Also, the usually better cultural infrastructure of bigger cities should not be neglected, even if creating infrastructure can be among the program's objectives.

The second approach has at its core the location of the ECoCs, with the degree of economic development at a national level being the main feature. This could be relevant due to differences that can appear in infrastructure levels (both touristic and cultural), the capacity to finance the project (which is crucial, since the European Commission contributes with only 1.5 Million Euros to the budget of each Capital) and, possibly, the difference in administrative capacity, as public institutions in more developed countries may be (on average) more efficient than those in poorer countries.

When it comes to the disadvantages of the two category building methods, on one hand we note that most ECoCs from the considered series are small, which would imply discrepancies in category content and implicitly a smaller selection range for large cities/regions. On the other hand, applying the criterion of national economic development seems to be in contradiction with the objectives of the action and the principle of improving organizational capacity, ensuring regional development and even the idea of European integration.

Taking all these into consideration, it emerges that defining the categories according to the size of the city hosting the ECoC represents the better approach. Moreover, we have established the 400,000 inhabitants level as a threshold between small and large cities. We are aware that, in a broader context, having more than 400,000 inhabitants is not sufficient for calling a city large. However, observing that the action, even if does not discourage the participation of large cities in the competition, seems however to favor smaller cities, as it emerges from the large proportion of smaller ECoCs. Consequently, by taking a closer look at the cities from the considered series, the 400,000 mark seems to be the optimal level for setting the threshold.

Additionally, since the action allows the title to be held by a region, a third category must be constructed to reflect the existence of



such ECoCs. The approach is validated by the fact that the cooperation and implementation dynamics is different when more local entities (with potentially varying interests) are involved.

Because of the above, the defined categories are the following: small cities (Pecs, Turku, Guimaraes, Maribor<sup>8</sup>, Kosice and Umea), large cities (Istanbul, Tallinn and Riga) and regions (Essen/Ruhr and Marseille/Provence).

The first criterion that we looked at when choosing a case from each category was project evaluation reports accuracy, as derived from the positions of the European Commission on each of the five annual reports. After analyzing these documents, one can notice some issues with the 2013 ECoC (Marseille/Provence and Kosice)<sup>9</sup> and the 2014 ECoC (Umea and Riga)<sup>10</sup> reports. Namely, the Commission, even though considers that there are sufficient arguments for the dissemination of the general conclusions of the evaluation, points out that the two reports lack hard data and independent evidence that would lead to solid conclusions regarding the efficiency and impact of the projects. Moreover, the Commission suggests the insufficiency in generating reliable conclusions of qualitative indicators resulted from online polls and interviews with participation limited to respondents

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<sup>8</sup> Even though the Maribor 2010 project has included partnerships with five other Slovenian cities (Murska Sobota, Ptuj, Slovenj Gradec, Novo Mesto and Velenje), thus conferring it a certain regional dimension, its characteristics remain those of a local project, reason why, correlated with the small size of its population, it was included in the small cities category.

<sup>9</sup> European Commission, Report from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions. Ex Post Evaluation of the 2013 European Capitals of Culture (Košice And Marseille-Provence), Bruxelles, 2<sup>nd</sup> of March 2015, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/ALL/?uri=CELEX%3A52015DC0074>, [05.02.2016].

<sup>10</sup> European Commission, Report from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions. Ex Post Evaluation of the 2014 European Capitals of Culture (Umeå and Riga), Bruxelles, 26<sup>th</sup> of November 2015, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/en/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52015DC0580&from=EN>, [25.02.2016].

who were directly involved in the projects or beneficiaries of thereof. Taking into consideration these issues, as expressed by the European Commission, we conclude that they affect, if not necessarily the representativeness of the cases, then at least the accuracy of the process determining said representativeness. Therefore, the 2013 and 2014 ECoCs were eliminated from the potential typical cases from each category.

The next step is to perform a preliminary analysis in each case in order to determine the relevance for their respective categories. Regarding the small cities category, the characteristics linked to the collaborative dimension represented strong arguments in choosing Maribor 2012 as the case to be analyzed. More precisely, the “Cultural Embassies” section of the project involved 80 cultural institutes and embassies from 16 Member States and 15 non-Member States, aiming at developing a content that would reflect the cultural identity of each partner country and would encourage cultural coproduction between local entities and foreign partners<sup>11</sup>.

From the large cities category, Istanbul 2010 emerged as the ECoC to be subject to a deeper analysis due to the amplitude of its cultural program (during the entire year, almost 10,000 activities or events were implemented<sup>12</sup>) and its collaborative dimension at a European level, the “41°-29° Istanbul Network” section of the project facilitating interaction between fifteen European cities and setting up the foundations for cultural partnerships between young artists<sup>13</sup>. The third category, consisting of regions, is to be represented in the next part of the analysis by Essen/Ruhr 2010<sup>14</sup>, whose slogan

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<sup>11</sup> Nick McAteer, Neringa Mozuraityte and Neil McDonald, *Ex-post Evaluation of 2012 European Capitals of Culture*, ECORYS, Final Report for the European Commission, 2013, p. 44.

<sup>12</sup> James Rampton et. al., *Ex-Post Evaluation of 2010 European Capitals of Culture*, ECORYS, Final report for the European Commission Directorate General for Education and Culture, 2011, p. 77.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 80.

<sup>14</sup> The Ruhr region is an industrial urban area containing cities such as Essen, Dortmund, Bochum and Duisburg.

“transformation through culture, culture through transformation” successfully summarizes the structure of a program focusing on cultural, social and economic regeneration. Moreover, the project displayed an “inductive, collaborative and bottom-up approach”<sup>15</sup>, which, as the evaluation report pointed out, has generated a significant impact<sup>16</sup>.

In the following section, we will perform the in-depth analysis of the three case studies which were selected in order to evaluate the practice, potential and limitations of the ECoC action with regard to its capacity to provide impetus to the wider European integration process via cultural integration and European identity genesis.

### **Maribor 2012, Istanbul 2010 and Essen/Ruhr 2010 – Vectors of European Integration?**

The results of the chosen ECoC programs were positively evaluated by official reports: Maribor, for implementing an “extensive and innovative cultural program”<sup>17</sup>; Istanbul, deemed as one of the biggest and most substantial cultural capitals up to that date<sup>18</sup>; and Essen/Ruhr, which was deemed as a coherent program with a significant impact, including regarding the social, spatial and administrative development of the Ruhr region<sup>19</sup>. Thus, even if not fully free of negative aspects, especially regarding

(1) the lack of a clear communication of the project’s metropolitan/regional identity (in the case of Essen/Ruhr)<sup>20</sup>,

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<sup>15</sup> James Rampton et. al, p. 42.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>17</sup> European Commission, *Report from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions. Ex Post Evaluation of the 2012 European Capitals of Culture (Guimarães and Maribor)*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> James Rampton et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 43.

(2) a deficient governance structure, which had a negative impact on the artistic vision of the project, constituting an obstacle for the emergence of a singular and coherent character (in the case of Istanbul)<sup>21</sup>,

(3) the political dissensions, at a local level, regarding the institutional arrangements of the project and its public financing sources (in the case of Maribor)<sup>22</sup>, and

(4) the incapacity of Maribor 2012 to generate significant results regarding infrastructure development<sup>23</sup>, which has negatively contributed to the sustainability and durability of the Slovenian project (in contrast with the implemented activities and the results of the Essen/Ruhr 2010 and Istanbul 2010 projects<sup>24</sup>), the three Capitals have managed to achieve their proposed objectives.

Starting from this general context, the analysis will be focused on the European dimension of the three projects, identifying relevant elements for determining, from a European integration perspective, the merits of the ECoC action regarding integration deepening and the potential contribution brought to strengthening a common European identity among Member and Candidate States.

Ensuring a European dimension of the projects represents one of the action's priorities, being a criterion within the selection process and an element that is closely analyzed in the monitorization and evaluation phases. Thus, promoting Europe's cultural diversity, intercultural dialogue, shared cultural elements, the participation of European artists to the program and the international cooperation between them are aspects that are present in the expression of the

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<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 77.

<sup>22</sup> Nick McAteer, Neringa Mozuraityte and Neil McDonald, *Op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>23</sup> European Commission, *Report from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions. Ex Post Evaluation of the 2012 European Capitals of Culture (Guimarães and Maribor)*, p. 5.

<sup>24</sup> European Commission, *Report from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council and The Committee of The Regions. Ex Post Evaluation of the 2010 European Capitals of Culture (Essen for The Ruhr, Pécs, Istanbul)*, Bruxelles, 20<sup>th</sup> of December 2011, p. 7-8, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52011DC0921&from=EN>, [02.02.2016].

European dimension, as understood by the European Commission, a dimension that is positioned in the center of the ECoC action.<sup>25</sup> In this context, one of the predominant visions on the European dimensions is focused on the complementarity between European and local identity<sup>26</sup>, a complementarity that is generated by the opportunity and the mutually explorative character of the interaction between the two. The fact that, according to the estimates of the organizers, both in the case of Maribor and Essen/Ruhr, more than half of the local population has participated to the program's activities (in the case of Istanbul, the lack of such a high percentage is understandable due to the dimensions of the Turkish metropolis, the approximately 950,000 residents that participated to activities representing a mere 7,2% of the city's population<sup>27</sup>), correlated with the implementation of artistic programs that have shown the complexity of European culture both horizontally (internationality) and vertically (intersectoral and intercultural)<sup>28</sup> and with the positive results with respect to tourism<sup>29</sup>, indicates the action's high impact potential for the European level of identity genesis.

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<sup>25</sup> European Commission, *European Capitals of Culture 2020 – 2033. Guide for cities preparing to bid*, [https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/library/capitals-culture-candidates-guide\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/sites/creative-europe/files/library/capitals-culture-candidates-guide_en.pdf), [02.02.2016].

<sup>26</sup> Beatriz Garcia and Tamsin Cox, *European Capitals of Culture: Success Strategies and Long-Term Effects*, European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, 2013, p. 13, [http://iccliverpool.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/IPOL-CULT\\_ET2013513985\\_EN.pdf](http://iccliverpool.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/IPOL-CULT_ET2013513985_EN.pdf), [02.02.2016].

<sup>27</sup> Bulent Ozan and Can Unver, *Exploring the impact for Istanbul of being a European Capital of Culture*, Performance, No. 4, Vol. 4, pp. 52-59, 2012, p. 58, [http://performance.ey.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/11/Performance\\_Volume-4\\_Issue-4-November-2012.pdf](http://performance.ey.com/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/11/Performance_Volume-4_Issue-4-November-2012.pdf), [03.02.2016].

<sup>28</sup> For more details, consult James Rampton et. al., *Op. cit.*, pp. 30-31 (for Essen/Ruhr), pp. 69,73, 77-79 (for Istanbul) and Nick McAteer, Neringa Mozuraityte and Neil McDonald, *Op. cit.*, pp. 51-52.

<sup>29</sup> For more information on the comparative situation of the total overnight stays in the years before each of the three projects, consult Beatriz Garcia and Tamsin Cox, *Op. cit.*, p. 140.

The European dimension has exhibited extra nuances in the case of Istanbul 2010, as the designation of the title to the Turkish city has represented an attempt of building a cultural bridge between Europeans and Turks<sup>30</sup>, and, in the same time, an opportunity to bring arguments in favor of Turkey's EU membership bid.<sup>31</sup> In this context, Turkish Prime Minister Recep Erdogan observed that "Istanbul, with its history, culture, civilization and people is a city that has its face turned toward Europe. As much as this city has internalized European culture, European culture has been shaped by Istanbul"<sup>32</sup>. Even more, as noticed by Brindisi, the Istanbul ECoC project has sought to demonstrate the capacity of a secular Muslim country to be integrated in an EU composed of countries with Christian majorities<sup>33</sup>. The European stake of Istanbul 2010 was thus augmented by the political and historical context, the project containing "some exploration of the role of culture and civil society in the context of Turkey's application for EU Membership"<sup>34</sup>. This has probably contributed to the fact that implemented activities were heavily focused on the European dimension<sup>35</sup>.

Consequently, at the levels of expectations and impact pertaining to the European theme component, Istanbul 2010 has ensured among the participants to the project's activities a better level of knowledge of the European diversity and the shared cultural

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<sup>30</sup> Jennifer Brindisi, *European Cultural Identity and Its Impact on Turkey's Bid for EU Membership*, in Mensur Akgun and Lenka Petkova (eds.), "Young Minds Rethinking the Mediterranean", Istanbul Kultur University Publication No. 159, Istanbul: Global Political Trends Center, pp. 48-68, 2011, p. 60.

<sup>31</sup> Jennifer Brindisi, *Istanbul: How Turkey's Cultural Capital Has Shaped Its Foreign Policy*, Euxeinos, No. 10, pp. 30-36, 2013, p. 30.

<sup>32</sup> Istanbul 2010 ECoC Agency, *Istanbul is a World Within the World*, 2010, p. 28, *apud*. Jennifer Brindisi, *European Cultural Identity and Its Impact on Turkey's Bid for EU Membership*, p. 61.

<sup>33</sup> Jennifer Brindisi, *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>34</sup> European Commission, *Report from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council and The Committee of The Regions. Ex Post Evaluation of the 2010 European Capitals of Culture (Essen for The Ruhr, Pécs, Istanbul)*, p. 7.

<sup>35</sup> James Rampton et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

heritage, an important vector in this regard being the inclusion of a course in the academic programs of the city's universities<sup>36</sup>. As a result, approximately 500,000 city residents have declared that their vision of European culture has improved, while more than 310,000 have stated that they developed their knowledge on different cultures due to foreign participants to the project's activities<sup>37</sup>.

In this context, the independent evaluation report of Istanbul 2010 has concluded that the project has achieved a certain degree of success regarding the European cultural dimension objective, even if specific elements were not present in the entire cultural program or in the marketing campaigns<sup>38</sup>.

Before proceeding to the analysis of other ECoC projects, it must be mentioned that, like in the case of Istanbul 2010, the program benefited from the involvement of the academic environment, which was facilitated by already existing international networks<sup>39</sup>.

Let us now turn our attention to the results and impacts of the other two analyzed projects (Essen/Ruhr and Maribor), from the perspective of the European theme. In the case of Essen/Ruhr, the project has focused, beginning from the application phase, on a series of concepts which were relevant to the European dimension, constituting a sort of pilot meant to develop and test good practices linked to the reinvention through culture and creativity of European regions with an outdated industrial structure. The objective was to use the integrating force of culture as a main driver for achieving unity through a bottom-up process and for facilitating the transition from a heavy industry center towards a cultural metropolis<sup>40</sup> through the exploitation of synergies between culture and creative economy as a

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<sup>36</sup> According to the annexes to James Rampton et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. A46, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/more\\_info/evaluations/docs/culture/ecoc2010-annexes\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/culture/ecoc2010-annexes_en.pdf), [02.02.2016].

<sup>37</sup> Author's calculations based by data provided by Bulent Ozan and Can Unver, *Op. cit.*, p. 58.

<sup>38</sup> James Rampton et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. 79.

<sup>39</sup> Nick McAteer, Neringa Mozuraityte and Neil McDonald, *Op. cit.*, p. 45.

<sup>40</sup> James Rampton et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. 26.

means of ensuring economic development<sup>41</sup>. The activities of the project were focused on the exchange of ideas /creative practices and on the creation of networks through transnational projects, the visits of European artists in the region being sacrificed<sup>42</sup>. This approach was consistent with the objectives targeting the profound transformation of the region and managed to deliver a substantial contribution to a program that, compared to the other 2010 ECoC projects, has had perhaps the highest rate of European theme permeability<sup>43</sup>.

When looking at the results corresponding to the operational objective linked to implementing activities with a European theme, one can observe the improvement of participant's knowledge on European diversity and common cultural heritage, leading to a more European perspective of the region's inhabitants and the founding of a European center for creative economy<sup>44</sup>, whose later activities included cooperation with artists and professionals from the creative sector in projects focused on the idea of cultural and creative economy<sup>45</sup>.

The case of Maribor is somewhat different. First, the organizers have not collected data referring to the citizens' perception on their own European identity and the degree of European culture awareness. Nonetheless, most survey respondents have agreed with the statement that Maribor can be proud of its ECoC title with an average intensity score of 4.5/5<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>41</sup> For more details, consult Wirtschaftsförderung metropol Ruhr and European Center for Creative Economy, *Creative Economy Ruhr. Driver for innovation in economy, culture and urban development*, 2013, [http://business.metropolruhr.de/fileadmin/user\\_upload/Dokumente/Publikationen/Kreativwirtschaft/Creative\\_Economy\\_Ruhr\\_02.pdf](http://business.metropolruhr.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Dokumente/Publikationen/Kreativwirtschaft/Creative_Economy_Ruhr_02.pdf), [04.02.2016].

<sup>42</sup> James Rampton et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. 31.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>44</sup> According to the annexes to James Rampton et. al., *Op. cit.*, p. A34, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/more\\_info/evaluations/docs/culture/ecoc2010-annexes\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/culture/ecoc2010-annexes_en.pdf), [02.02.2016].

<sup>45</sup> European Centre for Creative Economy website, <http://www.e-c-c-e.de>, [02.02.2016].

<sup>46</sup> According to the annexes to Nick McAteer, Neringa Mozuraityte and Neil McDonald, *Op. cit.*, p. A64, [http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education\\_culture/more\\_info/evaluations/docs/culture/ecoc2012-annexes\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/education_culture/more_info/evaluations/docs/culture/ecoc2012-annexes_en.pdf), [03.02.2016].



Regarding the specific objective concerning the development of the European dimension through cultural supply and transnational partnerships, although Maribor 2012 contained relatively few projects involving European partners (128 out of a total of 405 projects), it constructed an instrument, namely the “Cultural Embassies” section, that involved 80 organizations out of 31 countries<sup>47</sup>, including 16 Member States<sup>48</sup>. The section was made up out of activities meant to promote the cultural heritage of each of the partners under the umbrella of a concept based on forming an “embassy” for each state that would function for a period varying from a month to a full year (the case of the activities of the Goethe Institute)<sup>49</sup>. However, even though, as noticed also in the European Commission’s evaluation report, the Maribor 2012 project has included programs which were relevant for the EU level objectives of the action, including promoting the European cultural diversity and highlighting common cultural traits<sup>50</sup>, it has been concluded that the lack of intensive promotion at an international level lead to missing an opportunity<sup>51</sup> that could have generated extra positive effects. Consequently, a better use of media channels could have ensured much better results both for the Maribor 2012 project and the ECoC action in general.

### **Maribor 2012, Istanbul 2010 and Essen/Ruhr 2010 – Results from a European Integration Perspective**

Considering the before mentioned aspects, it is our opinion that, despite the existence of activities which were relevant for the

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibidem*, p. A63.

<sup>48</sup> Nick McAteer, Neringa Mozuraityte and Neil McDonald, *Op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>50</sup> European Commission, *Report from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions. Ex Post Evaluation of the 2012 European Capitals of Culture (Guimarães and Maribor)*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7.

European dimension, the Maribor 2012 project did not manage to considerably add value with regards to the development and promotion of European identity, values and culture.

Although our analysis of the three projects (Istanbul 2010, Essen/Ruhr 2010 and Maribor 2012) from a European identity perspective does not represent a complete exploration of the results generated by the ECoC action, they do show, due to a satisfactory degree of representativeness ensured by the selected cases, some aspects that transcend every given project and constitute a good barometer with regard to the action's capacity to develop a European dimension by strengthening common cultural elements, thus influencing the European integration process from a cultural direction.

As a result of the preformed analysis, a series of observations centered on several key features that could contribute to a more efficient and effective ECoC action can be formulated.

Firstly, the results of the conducted analysis confirm the validity of the Commissions statement which considers that the "ECoC remains of key importance and thus of significant relevance for the EU Treaty, particularly Article 167<sup>52</sup>, through contributing to the flowering of Member State cultures, highlighting common cultural heritage as well as cultural diversity and increasing cultural co-operation between Member States and internationally"<sup>53</sup>. Thus, projects organized within the action promote a harmonious interaction between different expressions of national cultures which, in the presence of a strong collaborative element, contribute to the development of a common European cultural environment.

Secondly, the atmosphere created around the action and the prestige that is conferred by the title significantly contribute to increasing the visibility of the events and a better promotion of the European culture idea among the public. Taking this into

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<sup>52</sup> Article 167 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union refers to key aspects regarding the cultural dimension of the EU.

<sup>53</sup> European Commission, *Report from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions. Ex Post Evaluation of the 2012 European Capitals of Culture (Guimarães and Maribor)*, p. 4.

consideration, we must highlight that the positive effects generated by the ECoC action regarding the creation/consolidation of European culture and identity have a cumulative character, which, correlated with the incremental and relatively small changes produced by each project within the action, mean that a long period is needed for the effects of the action to become truly significant.

Thirdly, we must mention the presence of some deficiencies regarding the promotion of the European identity, values and culture, especially in the case of small cities (besides Maribor 2010, which is more thoroughly analyzed in this study, the Commission's reports identify elements that suggest similar shortcomings in other small ECoCs like Guimaraes 2012<sup>54</sup>, Kosice 2013<sup>55</sup>, and, in a lesser extent, Turku 2011<sup>56</sup>). Although there are counterexamples, like Sibiu 2007, this phenomenon must be seriously approached in order to identify viable solutions, especially in the context in which most of the cities designated to be ECoC in the next years are of small sizes. On the other hand, there are clues which indicate that medium and large cities/regions which host the ECoC could constitute a more efficient channel for promoting elements which are specific to the formative aspects of the European dimension. Although some may fear that such locations could lead to a dilution of the message due to a much richer urban or regional cultural life, recent experiences like Istanbul 2010, Ruhr 2010, Liverpool 2008, or Luxembourg 2007<sup>57</sup> constitute examples against this vision.

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 7-8.

<sup>55</sup> European Commission, *Report from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of The Regions. Ex Post Evaluation of the 2013 European Capitals of Culture (Košice And Marseille-Provence)*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>56</sup> European Commission, *Report from The Commission to The European Parliament, The Council, The European Economic and Social Committee and The Committee of the Regions. Ex Post Evaluation of the 2011 European Capitals of Culture (Tallinn And Turku)*, Bruxelles, 23<sup>rd</sup> of January 2013, pp. 7-8, <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:52013DC0013&from=EN>, [05.02.2016].

<sup>57</sup> For more details regarding the Luxembourg 2007 and Liverpool 2008 projects, consult ECOTEC, *Ex-post Evaluation of 2007 & 2008 European Capitals of Culture. Final Report*, 2009,

## Conclusion

The European Capital of Culture action represents a way in which European institutions seek to create and implement identity policies<sup>58</sup>. This is one of the few such tools that they can employ, since the cultural field is among the EU's supporting competencies, with no requirements of harmonization between Member States, the capacity to legislate in such matters being located fully at a national level. In this context, the effectiveness and efficiency of the action bears an even greater importance. However, as concluded by Ooi, Hakanson and LaCava, there is a high degree of disagreement regarding the success of the already implemented ECoC projects, which also reflects the lack of agreement regarding the methods and criteria that should be employed in the evaluation procedure<sup>59</sup>. Nonetheless, it is our opinion that the analysis performed within this study has generated a series of observations about the action's capacity to enhance European integration that can prove to be relevant in the optimization of future projects.

Let us begin with the positive aspects revealed, as the analysis has identified elements that indicate the action's capacity to facilitate a constructive interaction between the different expressions of national culture, to promote the diffusion of ideas and to develop a strong collaborative cultural climate at a pan-European level, thus contributing to the cultural and identity genesis process that the EU seems to have such a great need for. All these are enhanced by the effervescence created around the ECoC, as the prestige conferred by

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[http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/documents/ecoc/expost-2007-08\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/programmes/creative-europe/actions/documents/ecoc/expost-2007-08_en.pdf), [05.02.2016].

<sup>58</sup> Tuuli Lähdesmäki, *Identity Politics in the European Capital of Culture Initiative*, Publications of the University of Eastern Finland Dissertations in Social Sciences and Business Studies, No. 84, p. 64, [http://epublications.uef.fi/pub/urn\\_isbn\\_978-952-61-1486-6/urn\\_isbn\\_978-952-61-1486-6.pdf](http://epublications.uef.fi/pub/urn_isbn_978-952-61-1486-6/urn_isbn_978-952-61-1486-6.pdf), [05.02.2016].

<sup>59</sup> Can-Seng Ooi, Lars Hakanson and Laura LaCava, *Poetics and Politics of the European Capital of Culture Project*, *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Vol. 148, pp. 424-427, 2014.

hosting the Capital substantially contributes to increasing the visibility of the organized events and improving the view of the public on European culture. The effects are indeed limited, but, on the other hand, they have a cumulative character, which means that a long period marked with successfully implemented projects could lead to significant results at a European level.

The study has found also some deficiencies in promoting the European identity, values and culture when the host cities were of smaller size, something which is not however true for all such ECoCs. The observation is important especially in the context in which so many of the cities that held the title in previous years and that are already designated to do so in the future are small. Although this preference which seems to emerge among selection commissions could be motivated by a greater potential for regional development, practice so far suggests, with some exceptions, more modest results regarding the European dimension of the action.

It must be underlined that none of the above constitute a plea for excluding or limiting in any way small cities from hosting the ECoC, but merely an invitation to identifying concrete ways to enhance the European dimension of the action. One of the possible such strategies lies in the instrumentalization of the action, by defining more functional objectives and strengthening the connection between the activities implemented and the specific objectives. Moreover, a better-defined framework and stricter rules for project design and implementation should be accompanied by more extensive financing provided by the Commission, a combination that could encourage organizers to have a better focus on the EU level objectives of the program, which would not be subordinated to the local or regional ones.

Finally, the European Commission and the organizing bodies of each ECoC should not underestimate the importance the efficient use of media channels for the communication of the projects' objectives, program, implementation details and results, as this could prove to be an important catalyst to the cultural features of the European integration process.

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# TRANSMEDIA USAGE IN THE SELF-HELP INDUSTRY

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**ABSTRACT.** The paper explores how motivational speakers use different media in order to transmit their messages to their target audience by using transmedia elements. The analysis focuses on audience and market, media platforms and genres, narrative, world building, structure and extensions. The significance of the research is meaningful for journalists, media scholars and consumers, as it provides substantial insight into how transmedia storytelling and transmedia branding are experienced on different channels.

*Key terms:* transmedia storytelling, transmedia branding, self-help, motivational speakers

## 1. Introduction

As we live in a digital era, with numerous information and communication technologies, media is forced to transform itself and create new ways of communication with its target audience. People no longer use only a single medium to inform or entertain themselves, but multiple media platforms that create a bigger picture to the same story. Due to this digital evolution, numerous terms such as *transmedia*, *transmedia storytelling* or *convergence media* have come into focus for

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media scholars, producers, marketers or advertisers. The main idea behind the terms relies in the diverse media and multiple environments for expression.

The term *transmedia* storytelling was first coined by Professor Henry Jenkins in his 2003 essay *Transmedia Storytelling* where he described how Hollywood producers worked with game designers in order to produce a franchise that was delivered on multiple media platforms. In 2006, Jenkins better described the concept in his book *Convergence Culture* where he described transmedia storytelling as “stories that unfold across multiple media platforms, with each text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to our understanding of the world.” (Jenkins 2006). In describing the concept, Jenkins (2006) argued that “each medium does what it does best - so that a story might be introduced in a film, expanded through television, novels and comics; its world might be explored through game play or experienced as an amusement park attraction.”

Transmedia storytelling is therefore, a way of telling a story through multiple media platforms with each platform telling a different aspect of the same story. In his book, Jenkins focused on the *Matrix* movie in describing the concept, but throughout the years, many Hollywood entertainment franchises appeared and used transmedia storytelling.

The present paper examines how different media influence the way in which content is presented. In order to do so, we decided to focus on how motivational speakers transmit their message through difference channels such as their website, social media channels, blog, CDs, DVDs or seminars, trainings and conferences. It could be seen that the concept of transmedia narratives is often used by marketing companies in order to create a brand around a story and engage audiences in new ways.

Tenderich (2013) argued that brands that use transmedia storytelling directly encourage audience to participate and interact with the brand and not bombard them with unwanted messages. In order to create a successful campaign, several elements are required such as narratives, participation and brands (Tenderich 2013).

Jenkins (2006) argued that “there is strong interest in integrating entertainment and marketing, to create strong emotional attachments and use them to make additional sales.” Numerous scholars and media professionals approached the concept of transmedia storytelling from different perspectives and angles.

## **2. Purpose**

The aim of the present paper is to outline examples of how motivational speakers promote their ideas and self-help topics through various channels and how they affect their final message.

## **3. Literature Review**

### ***3.1 Short introduction into the self-help industry***

The concept of finding the self and searching for personal well-being has expanded over the years in almost every area of our life: relationships, career, addiction, wealth or happiness. In 2012, the US self-development market was worth \$9.84 billion including motivational programs such as books, CDs, audio books, motivational-speakers, seminars, workshops, infomercials, personal coaching, online education, training organizations and more (MarketData Enterprise 2012). The only study that marks the importance of self improvement in US showed a 9.1% decline in numbers since 2007, when the self-help industry counted \$10.82 billion. The British self-market is small in comparison, but is growing fast as in 2011, the self-help industry was worth the publishers \$92.3 million (Wilson 2011).

Coping with our inner self and discover our real emotions that make us be are the major themes encountered in many motivational programs. The concept of “fixing the self” convey people the idea that something must be done in order to become happier, healthier and

most importantly, acceptable for ourselves and for others. In their programs, trainers, counsellors and authors promise that relationship problems, career shortcomings or diseases can be resolved easily by understanding our deepest emotions and their origins.

Despite its long history, the genre received little attention for years, and it was not until 19<sup>th</sup> century that people began to realize the enormous effects of self-development. The self-help movement was launched by Samuel Smiles with his first successful self-help 1859 book called *Self-Help*. A political reformer, Dr. Smiles believed that people must rely on their own efforts in order to achieve their goals. As the American society was already embracing the individualistic concepts of Jefferson, the book became the first of its type that spread the concept even further into the Americans' minds. By trying to present the lives of successful persons, the author succeeded in creating the idea that everything is possible only by trying (Butler-Bowdon 2003, p. 2).

The book became an instant phenomenon and was sold in millions of copies, outselling *On the Origins of Species* by Charles Darwin (Reprobate 2013). Dr. Smiles also wrote *Happy Homes and the Hearts that Make Them* where he gave advice on helping one's self, how to live happily and the influence of the character. The author created a work that inspired the present writers. Not only he defined the importance of self-help, but he also created a link between self-identity and life success.

Most of the concepts of self-help had been described from many years, but the full birth of the modern movement appeared only in the early 1900s with the publications of Dale Carnegie's *How to Win Friends and Influence People* (1936), Napoleon Hill's *Think and Grow Rich* (1937) and Norman Vincent Peale's blockbuster *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952).

Carnegie's book has remained one of the most successful self-help books ever published with over 5 million copies sold by 2008. The book currently occupies the fourth position on Amazon, and many theoreticians from the field argue that its principles can be applied today (Reprobate 2013). In his book, Dale Carnegie presents several principles that can help the reader improve his communication skills. Techniques such as a) Don't criticize, condemn or complain; b) Fulfil

others' desire to feel important; c) Give honest and sincere appreciation are themes that make people believe that change is visible and possible by applying simple rules (Carnegie 1936).

The idea that changes are essential for humans became a theme embraced by many authors who at that time presented themselves more like "mere conduits of information, not experts in their own right" (Salerno 2006). Such books became a real success because they promised rapid changes, were rapidly available and contained ideas that one could not hear from a professor. Terms like *self-help*, *new age*, *popular psychology* or *positive thinking* wanted to re-establish the American values.

In 1967, the publication of the psychiatrist Thomas Harris *I'm OK-You're OK* transformed the way in which people perceived the movement. Salerno (2006) presented three aspects that Harris's book reshaped during that time. The book positioned the self-help publishing as an ongoing genre, it focused on the importance of relationships in the pursuit of happiness and most importantly, the author created the idea that people were *not* OK and the source of this unhappiness developed early in childhood.

Harris addressed his book "to people who are looking for hard facts in answer to their questions about how the mind operates, why do we do what we do, and how we can stop doing what we do if we wish". By applying the Transactional Analysis theory, proposed by Dr. Eric Berne, the author tried to describe how people are formed psychologically and how their personality is conveyed in their behaviour. The Transactional Analysis is the method by which a person affects another in different manners, either consciously or unconsciously, and the effects of the interaction are visible thorough paying attention to language. Harris (1995) saw the method as a key for the "mysteries of why people do as they do". Thomas Harris not only successfully accomplished his purpose with his book, but he also managed to position the psychiatrists on a favourable, new level.

Other popular self-help titles from the '90s are *Women Who Love too Much: When You Keep Wishing and Hoping He'll Change*, by Robin Norman (1985), *Co-dependent No More: How to Stop Controlling Others and Start*

*Caring For Yourself*, by Melody Beattie (1987/1992) and *Men are from Mars, Women are From Venus: A Practical guide for improving communication and getting what you want in your relationships*, by John Gray (1992).

The nature-nurture debate is presented by authors as trying to describe how several events from childhood constantly appear in our daily lives. Self-developmental books try to present the importance of understanding these issues and give solutions in order to create better relationships with others, but mostly, with ourselves. The idea that "life is difficult" resonates with the Americans who need solutions for their problems. Thus, the self-help books play a central role in managing people's self-difficulties.

### *3.2 Motivational speakers*

Eric Thomas, Les Brown, Tony Robbins, Nick Vujicic, Zig Ziglar or Arnold Schwarzenegger are some of the most successful motivational speakers who are known for their powerful messages transmitted to millions of people worldwide. According to the Market data Enterprise (2010) study "The U.S Market for Self-Improvement Products and Services", there are approximately 13.750 active coaches solely in the US, and more than 5000 speakers.

Contrary to traditional types of advertising such as books, audio books, CDs and DVDs, motivational speakers, trainers or counsellors develop self-help programs such as seminars, conferences, trainings, web seminars or workshops in order to promote themselves. The sales of the top 10 speakers were estimated to be \$296 million in 2009. All 5,000 US speakers gained more than \$1 billion per year (Marketdata Enterprise 2010).

Most of speakers promote themselves as motivational speakers, coaches or personal development trainers and attend major events targeted to people interested in self-development such as TEDx. Coaches also play a distinctive role in the self-help industry. According to International Coach Federation, there are more than 22,000 members "focused on

advancing the coaching profession.” In order to promote themselves, the motivational speakers and coaches found a new way to transmit their messages to large audiences by turning to television. Not only they appear in several TV shows, but they also started to host their own.

### *3.3 Transmedia storytelling*

*Transmedia narratives* or *transmedia storytelling* are forms of communication that rapidly spread during recent years in domains such as entertainment, education, marketing, advertising, organizational change and activism. The term *transmedia* refers to an idea that is presented on multiple media platforms and that leads to the creation of different aspects of the same idea. This often occurs because each platform includes new perspectives and approaches towards the same idea (Moloney and Adrienne 2011).

The term *transmedia* was first coined by professor Marsha Kinder in her 1991 book where she referred to *transmedia intertextuality* when analysing how narratives for children change depending on the medium presented. Kinder (1991) found “a fairly consistent form of transmedia intertextuality, which position young spectators (1) to recognize, distinguish, and combine different popular genres and their respective iconography that cut across movies, television, comic books, commercials, video games, and toys; (2) to observe the formal differences between television and its prior discourse of cinema, which it absorbs, parodies, and ultimately replaces as the dominant mode of image production.” Kinder’s findings were of greater importance because it posited for the first time the idea of transmedia, and the role that multiple media have on the same product. Intertextuality is often related to transmedia because it proposes that “one text is necessarily read in relationship to others and that a range of textual knowledge is brought to bear upon it.” (Fiske 2009).

Therefore, a text not only can be presented on multiple media platforms, but its core messages are always linked by intertextuality. Nevertheless, the concept of transmedia storytelling (TS), also referred



to as transmedia narratives was put forward by Henry Jenkins in 2003 in an article entitled *Technology Review* (Jenkins 2003) where he argued that media industries should focus much more on presenting content “across the media” in order to “motivate more consumption.” The concept of TS was further developed three years later in the book *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* where Jenkins (2006) described the term as “stories that unfold across multiple media platforms, with each text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to our understanding of the world.”

Based on the concept proposed by Jenkins, Benchmann Peterson (2006) described TS as *cross media* seen as “the communication of an overall story, production, or event, using a coordinated combination of platforms.” In his study, he also showed that Internet has an essential role in how content is presented to both media organizations and its users and should be seen not as a network, but as a platform.

Scolari (2009) argued that transmedia storytelling refers not only to the expansion of media platforms, but also to language (iconic, indexical, verbal, textual etc.). He also presented the idea that each media must present a separate idea so that “the story that the comics tell is not the same as that told on television or in cinema; the different media and languages participate and contribute to the construction of the transmedia narrative world.”

Numerous authors (Gambarato 2013; Boumans 2004; Petersen 2006; Scolari 2009) argued that the concept of transmedia storytelling generated numerous terms that can either be synonyms or refer to other aspects of transmedia. Boumans (2004) tried to make a difference between *cross-media* and other terms such as *multimedia*, *interactive media*, *multiple media*, *multi-platform*, *integrated media*, *convergent media* and *hybrid media*. He defined *multimedia* as digital information with text, image or sound that can be transferred on cable, telephone or CD-ROM/DVDs, while *interactive media* refers to “digital media asking for action from the user.” *Multiple media* is described as “the use of more than one medium”, *multi-platform* as “the use of more technical platforms to levy a message across more devices”, *integrated media* as “media that

are integrated in one system for distribution to various platforms” and *convergent media* as “media which are based on the same technical protocol.” The author also presented the concept of *hybrid media* described as “the distribution of the same content using a combination of analogue and digital media.”

Scolari (2009) points out other “concepts such as “cross media” (Bechmann Petersen, 2006), “multiple platforms” (Jeffery-Poulter, 2003), “hybrid media” (Boumans, 2004), “intertextual commodity” (Marshall, 2004), “transmedia worlds” (Klastrup and Tosca, 2004), “transmedia interactions” (Bardzell, Wu, and Bardzell Quagliara, 2007), multimodality (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001), or “intermedia” (Higgins, 1966)” that can be found related to the transmedia storytelling.

It is important to note that the concept of transmedia storytelling is not new but it is rooted in the Middle Ages when Jesus presented the Christian stories to numerous illiterate people (Jenkins 2006). Pincus-Roth (2009) traced its history more appropriate to the present time and referred to the work of Charles Dickens in the 1800s. Nowadays, numerous Hollywood franchises appeared that use the concept of transmedia and include movies, books, games, albums and other media platforms that each constructs a different approach to the same story. Nowadays, transmedia narratives can be found in comedies (*High School Musical*), thrillers (*24*), fantasy movies (*The Lord of the Rings*, *Harry Potter*) or reality shows (*Big Brother*).

One of the most successful transmedia campaigns was launched in 1999 with the ‘mockumentary’ feature film *The Blair Witch Project* based on a story where three student filmmakers disappeared in a forest near Burkittsville while making a documentary on ‘The Blair Witch.’ The campaign was based on a webpage where audience could depict documentary footage that were included in the movie and people could investigate the disappearance of the students. Not only this, but they also had the possibility to read files, document on missing persons and on the witches that supposedly appeared in the last century. The movie managed to become a blockbuster for the period gaining \$248,300,000, even though it was launched only one year later after the

marketing campaign. Because of its huge success, five comic books, three PC games, a novel, and a sequel to the film appeared by 2000. Moreover, during 2000-2001 a series of eight novels also appeared. (Velikovsky 2013).

In the late 1970, blockbuster franchises such as *Star Wars*, *Superman* and *Star Trek: The Motion Picture* appeared and drew attention to the role of transmedia storytelling. Because of the success of the phenomenon, media organizations grouped together to create new media franchises. For instance, Walt Disney Company owns the ABC television network, ESPN cable network, the Disney Channel, SOAPnet, A%E and Lifetime, 277 radio stations, music and book-publishing companies, Disney mobile, film-production companies (Miramax, Touchstone, Walt Disney Pictures) and Pixar Animation Studios. It can be seen, that the company includes different platforms, and notably, different audiences in order to both create and promote a story (Free Press 2013). Derek Johnson argued in his book *Learning to Share – The Relational Logics of Media Franchising* that “media franchise shapes how analysts, executives, creators, and popular audience each imagine the media industries in the contemporary moment.” (Pereira 2011).

For Jenkins (2006), one good example of transmedia storytelling is the brand around *The Matrix* which is an “entertainment for the age of media convergence, integrating multiple texts to create a narrative so large that it cannot be contained within a single medium.” TS affects not only texts, but includes new ways of perceiving the product and consuming it as people have the possibility to develop new skills depending on different media platforms.

### 3.4 Characteristics of the TS

Scolari (2009) emphasized in his work that transmedia narratives have two major characteristics: the story is told by using multiple media platforms and the existence of prosumers that collaborate to the narrative world. In this context, Scolari defined prosumers as the consumers who also become producers of the narrative content.

von Stackelberg (2011) argued in his thesis that transmedia narratives require its users to both view the content of text, images and other forms of information presented and process the informational clues needed to navigate through the narrative. Despite these characteristics, Jenkins (2009) identified 10 core principles of transmedia:

- Spreadability – refers to the fact that user have the capacity to further spread the media content with the use of social networks.
- Drillability – refers to the idea that users can go deeper within a narrative in order to understand its complexity.
- Continuity – refers to the result that is similar and continuous across multiple media platform.
- Multiplicity – allows fans to experience characters and events in different circumstances that may be contradictory.
- Immersion – presents the idea that consumers can immerse themselves in a fictional world and forgetting about the real one.
- Extractability- refers to the ability of users to take aspects from the fictional world and include them in their real world.
- World building – the ability of creating one world based on individual stories that exists on multiple media systems
- Seriality – the ability of separating one story into many stories that can be experienced on different media platforms
- Subjectivity – refers to numerous perspectives of the same story that can focus on different perspectives.
- Performance – refers to user who can provide user-generated contents that can be part of the transmedia narrative.

Jenkins also argued in his book that transmedia narratives should allow new character background, new plot development, the introduction of new characters, avoids contradictions and and creates a unique experience across all media.

The Producers Guild of America expanded in 2010 these codes and added the role of the transmedia producers who is “the person responsible for a significant portion of a project’s long-term planning, development, production and/or maintenance of narrative continuity across multiple platforms, and creation of original storylines for new platforms (Gambarato 2013).

Abbott (2005) argued that there are many similarities of transmedia content that help consumers better engage in the stories such as: characterization, motivation, links between cause and effects, and the appearance of micro- and macro- plots.

### *3.5 Transmedia Branding*

After the World War II, consumers have been bombarded with numerous advertising messages that had the purpose to manipulate the user in buying the product. During recent years, however, consumers started to associate the advertising industry with a bad behaviour as people can become aggressive when faced with new ads (Tenderich 2013). Transmedia branding was seen as a new approach in engaging people with the brand, in a way that consumers can create, modify or select the content they choose and a greater responsibility is put on the consumer (Tenderich 2013).

Some brands managed to create fictional characters with the use of ads, video games, social network profiles or web videos. P&G's Old Spice campaign managed to become a real success with over 20 million Youtube views in three days. The videos were largely spread by the consumers who even created parodies that were posted on Youtube (Tenderich 2013). Coca Cola created a fictional world called the *Happiness Factory* in order to associate the brand with the concept of happiness (Makhija 2013).

TV shows and movies also use transmedia marketing strategies. *Doctor Who* TV show produced by the BBC created mini-episodes called TARDISodes that could be accessed by fans only via mobile phones or Internet download (Perryman 2008). The ABC television series *Alias* also expanded its story with the creation of two alternative reality video games (Örnebring 2007). *Ghost Whisperer* television series produced by CBS created a transmedia campaign based on online games, books and web series that present the perspective of the ghosts that appear in the TV show (Pincus-Roth 2009).

Jenkins (2006) argued that “there is strong interest in integrating entertainment and marketing, to create strong emotional attachments and use them to make additional sales.” Buckner and Rutledge (2011) stated that there are three main reasons to use transmedia storytelling for marketing and branding: persuasion, audience construction and financial impact. They argue that TS “allows you to: 1) deliver a clear and memorable message that engages the brain at all levels; 2) use the distinct properties of different media distribution channels to reach and engage different audience segments with different points of entry; and 3) creating mutually-reinforcing channels as you tap into the power of audience participation.”

Buckner and Rutledge (2011) theory is based on the link between marketing and story. They believe that storytelling is an ancient art and people have the natural ability to tell stories. Based on these ideas, they cite numerous study in the domain which state that people better remember the messages included in a story structure. Stories also activates our sensory brain, thus people’s senses.

Michael Margolis, President of *Get Storied* also emphasize the importance of having a story behind a brand “It’s fundamentally about the story and how you can package the story in a way that other people can identify with.” In his 2010 interview, Margolis continued to say that “If people can locate themselves inside your story, then the need to persuade or convince or sell people on anything disappears.” (Fahle 2011).

### *3.6 Elements of Transmedia Branding*

Tenderich (2013) argued that successful transmedia campaigns share common design elements such as: narratives, participation and brands. Narratives is based on the idea that stories must engage people and bits of stories must be presented on multiple media platforms. Moreover, narratives is linked with the media in the sense that “a narrative cannot exist outside a medium.”

The author refers to participation as a key element of transmedia branding in the sense that a successful transmedia campaign must make people want to get involved in the story. When referring to brands, the idea is that in the end, people buy the brand, not the product.

#### **4. Research Questions**

The following research questions have been put forward:

1. What media channels are used by motivational speakers to promote their messages to the target audience?
2. What types of messages are used by motivational speakers in promoting themselves on several media channels?

#### **5. Methodology**

In order to reach the aim of the paper, we decided to use a qualitative research method: the content analysis which combines both qualitative and quantitative techniques. Anderson (2004) argues that analysis is “a process of thought” that helps finding the “relationships between different variables in the situation” (p. 169). In doing so, we created a grid analysis that helped us decide between several options, but it also helped us in taking into account different factors important for the analysis. The grid analysis contained codes which Miles and Huberman described as “tags or labels for assigning units of meaning” (Anderson 2004, p. 173).

The grid analysis included categories such as Speaker, Presentation, Title, Topics, Website, Social Media, Transmedia promotion. The last category included media channels such as websites, CDs, DVDs, audio books, mobile applications, magazines, digital downloads, ebooks, podcasts, videos, online courses, radio/TV shows, movies, cosmetics, accessories, medication, calendars and others.

It is important to mention that the research is part of a larger ongoing analysis, therefore the major conclusions cannot be drawn. However, we first created a list of motivational speakers from US and Europe and identified how they promote themselves through the use of transmedia. If they used several channels of promotion such as books, seminars, through an online website, social media accounts, TV talk-show or magazine, we further analyzed the messages and how they were promoted on each of their channels.

## **6. Data Analysis**

The present research paper analyzed 20 motivational gurus by taking into account their message and how they distribute the message media channels. The grid analyses showed that motivational speakers use transmedia in order to address their main message which differ depending on their branding strategy. The 20 motivational gurus analysed within the present paper are: Allan and Barbara Pease, Tony Robbins, John Gray, Eric Thomas, Les Brown, James Arthur Ray, Jay McGraw, Eckhart Tolle, Zig Ziglar, Jack Canfield, Laura Catherine Schlessinger, Paul McKenna, Deepak Chopra, Nick Vujicic, Arnold Schwarzenegger, Wayne Dyer, Jim Rohn, Robin Sharma, Brian Tracy, Dave Ramsay

### ***6.1 Main presentation***

The 20 motivational speakers/authors/trainers use branding in order to define and differentiate themselves from other personal development gurus. In presenting themselves they use titles that are focused on their main message such as:

- Body language expert
- Mr. Body Language
- World's best known communication authors



- Life coach
- Expert in leadership psychology
- Philanthropist
- World's leading motivational speaker
- Best-selling author
- Evangelist
- Internationally renowned author and speaker
- Entrepreneur
- Professional speaker
- Success Expert
- Relationship expert
- Speaker and author etc. (Pease International 2016), (TonyRobbins.com 2013), (Marsvenus.com 2016), (Les Brown 2016).

## 6.2 *Main Topics*

By defining their role within the industry, most self-help gurus focus on addressing at least two main topics such as: leadership, sales and negotiation, communication, body language, relationships, health and fitness, business and workplace and career, motivation, public speaking, book writing, lifestyle advice, time management, spirituality, personality, positive thinking, stress management or fashion.

Depending on their experience in the domain, they try to focus on as many fields as possible in order to address to more people such as Brian Tracy and Tony Robbins who use transmedia in order to focus on at least 7 self-help topics. The most used topics by the self-help gurus are related to health and business and career, followed by motivation, personality and positive thinking.

## 6.3 *Transmedia usage*

The most used media channels by the authors and speakers in order to promote their message are: **website, books, CDs, DVDs, online articles, audio books, videos, online courses, TV shows, and**

**motivational seminars** There is a high tendency towards other online media products such as podcasts, digital downloads and mobile applications which are used especially on websites that address multiple self-help topics.

It is important to mention even though self-help authors or/and speakers focus on one product such as books or events, all authors use websites in order to promote and sell their products. All websites have eCommerce platforms for selling products to a worldwide audience, however, the website is not designed solely for selling merchandise.

For better outlining their purpose, motivational gurus include online articles in the Blog section such as *6 Tremendous techniques for making a positive impression, Have you made someone feel important today?* or *5 Winning Body Language Strategies That Give You the Edge*. (Pease International 2016).

Videos are mostly included in the self-help websites and they portray the speaker/author and his main message towards the online audience. Videos are short and focus on promotional messages regarding what the audience can find within the website, the main topic of the website or the purpose of the website. Even though video and audio streaming services have become more popular, they still sell physical copies such as CDs and DVDs. However, a tendency towards digitalization can be seen through the creation of ebooks, mobile applications and digital downloads.

#### ***6.4 Social media and the self-help industry***

Within the marketing strategy, motivational authors and speakers include communication through newsletters, social media accounts such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn Pinterest or RSS feed, but also e-commerce techniques in order for their products to be purchased online.

## 7. Conclusions

The analysis showed that all motivational speakers analysed use transmedia in order to present the same self-development messages. In the digitalized era, having a website that includes information regarding the speaker/author and his products is essential, but it cannot be the only medium of communication with the target audience. By applying transmedia branding techniques such as narrative, participation and brand, motivational speakers and authors create a successful promotion.

Each speaker and author has his own story behind his approach. Whether he is an inspirational guru such as Les Brown or Eric Thomas, or a relationship expert such as John Gray, all of them include storytelling into their transmedia message. By emphasizing their knowledge in the domain and their personal experience, the well-known speakers and authors understood that success can be achieved if they manage to address the same topic through various channels such as: websites, social media channels, books, seminars, CDs and DVDs.

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## COMMUNICATION BETWEEN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND CITIZENS THROUGH NATIONAL WEBSITE

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**ABSTRACT.** Participatory practices and on-line communication in Public Administration institutions are expected to enhance citizens' participation in public affairs and develop a more functional and democratic work style. This paper presents some major criteria of classifying the types, forms, and characteristics of communication between Public Administration and citizens. A short review and meta-analysis of the form, nature, language, and style of some select individual complaints and replies posted on the Romanian Local Governments National Website is presented. Letters from claimers are generally formal, polite, mild tempered, and include few emotional elements. Authorities' reply style and wording is also formal, 'cold', impersonal, and homogenous across departments, while messages are short, precise, and lawfully relevant. In terms of on-line direct informational exchange with the citizens, the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca (Romania) is ranked among the first 12 local Public Administration authorities in the country that replied to 90% ... 100% of the on-line addressed complaints. During the 9-year period since the implementation of the website, the Mayor's Office of Cluj-Napoca is the absolute leader of the on-line communication with the citizens, with a response rate of 92% replies to more than 25,000 intimacies.

**Keywords:** *public administration, local government, citizens, information technology, online communication, style*

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## 1. Communication and the 'New Public Management'

The Public Administration institutions rely, by their nature, on communication. This can be formally defined as a process of sending an information from a *transmitter* to a *receiver* while using a communicational *channel*, with the aim to produce a certain *effect* upon the receiver, in a *context*, and from an *interactive perspective*, more than 120 definitions of communication being also available (see Mihai, 2000, p. 8). As with other systems, the management of the communicational streams in the public administration institutions is vital for attaining their aims. When implementing national and local government policy tasks, they depend on and usually proceed to a rich exchange of information. This facilitates goal-oriented command and control actions, assembled in balanced activities performed in the citizens' interest. The exchanges happen between the *staff members*, between the *internal departments* of the institutions, or with the *environment* they are intended to adjust and interact with. Various criteria can be used when trying to describe and classify these exchanges.

Historically, the traditional 'European inspired' administrative institutions were subjected to various pressures targeted to modify their working manner. In this respect, *role diversification*, *budgetary*, *citizen*, *technological*, and *globalization pressures* are worth to be mentioned. In the democratic countries, all these pressures, along with an increased awareness about the citizens' rights, led to quick and profound changes aiming to *efficiency*, *responsibility*, *decentralization*, *transparency*, *long-term strategies*, *quality* etc. (Hințea, 2007, p. 76).

Nevertheless, this kind of modern government policies emerged since the 1980s and is known as 'New public management' (NPM), a term already conceptualized by C. Hood (1991, pp. 3-19). Gradually, the public sector management became more market oriented, leading to better cost-efficiency for governments, without harming other objectives and considerations.

Nowadays, due to the increasing complexity of the modern administrative management in a less stable social-economic environment, the Public Administration is expected to develop *a much more participative and democratic work style*, with improved self-regulating properties.

Governments are socially required to lower costs, to fight bureaucracy, to constantly interact with the taxpaying citizens who benefit from the provided public services and goods. A large amount of *feedback* is needed from these beneficiaries, who are also expected to serve as *creativity tanks*, coming up with their own suggestions, proposals, and priorities.

Within this framework, *communication and PR policies*, based especially on modern information and communications technologies (ICT or 'e-communication', as WWW, email, and global point-to-point audio-video transmissions) are expected to contribute to a greater citizen participation in public affairs. They can also make administration bureaucracy more transparent and accountable to citizens and enhance (or restore) citizens' trust in government (Ahn, 2007, p. 4).

The electronic or digital interaction contributed up to the subsequent elaboration of concepts such as 'e-government', 'e-democracy' a.s.o. (Hughes, 2012, p. 273). However, within innovative participatory practices and opportunities for networking and collaboration in *open government*, only the added value should be considered. The public value of open government needs to be studied applying the public value research approach (Maier-Rabler and Huber, 2011, pp. 190-191). It would indeed "*be a tragedy were 'digital democracy' merely to create virtual parallels of obsolescent political processes and structures*" (Coleman, 2007, p. 377)

## 2. Aim of the Paper

Two observations will clear up some options of the present paper:

a. messages transmitted through various channels available to the Public Administration institutions are mostly in *written form* – neither iconic, paraverbal, non-verbal, nor subliminal one. The mainstream messages are of *conceptual nature*, essentially based on language as a conventional 'institution'.



Therefore, and also due to our previous background and limited time resources, the discussion and the case study will use a sociologic-linguistic approach, focused mainly on the 'virtual' written communication through ICT, as a boosting novelty in our administrative field;

**b.** because the *local administration* is the most tangible governing level and the most frequently accessed by the great majority of citizens during their daily life, we devoted the case study exclusively to the web-based dialogue between concerned individuals and the local Public Administration Services. Considering all the above mentioned facts, with the view to enhance the understanding and awareness of the communicational issues involved by the functioning of the contemporary public administration institutions, the aim of the present paper is twofold.

First, to briefly synthesize the major aspects of the symbiotic types and forms of the communication within our Public Administration environment, particularly between Public Administration and citizens, leaving apart any references about their particular content.

Secondly, to elaborate a short description and meta-analysis of the form, nature, language, and style of some select individual complaints/intimacies posted on the Romanian Local Governments National Website, which was intended as a web portal (or on-line channel of communication) between citizens and the mayor's offices all over the country. This will include comments on the attracted response rate, with a particular view to the on-line presence of the municipal City Hall of Cluj-Napoca during the 9-year period of time since the implementation of the website.

### **3. Types and Forms of Communication in Public Administration**

The criteria used when reviewing and classifying various types/models of communication in public administration institutions enjoy a large diversity. The resulted knowledge becomes particularly useful when administrative decision-makers elaborate the *messages*, choose the *channels*, *transmitters*, or *recipients* to be addressed, according to the needs, requirements, intended effects, local institutional culture, or other characteristics.

The types (or forms) of communication proper to the general picture of the administrative communication processes are needed to be exposed first, in order to address and characterize the specificity of the communication *between public administration and citizens*.

Here is a brief synthesis of several criteria used in describing and classifying these types, as they are commonly and largely listed in literature (see Deac, 2010, pp. 49-53, Zémor, 2003, pp. 25-45 et al.):

1. the 'orientation approach' defines the intra-organizational and extra-organizational type of communication (which aims to enhance and consolidate the image of the institution, to create a climate of trust and sympathy); each have distinct aims, their own direction and scope of action;

2. the material support and channel of the communication decides its verbal (oral), non-verbal or written nature; varieties can be identified, based on the more detailed nature of the *transmission channel* (direct contact, TV, audio-video, phone, paperwork, booklets, posters, fliers, www, email etc.);

3. the set of goals, rules, and channels define the dichotomy between formal (official) and informal communication (conversations, private talks or messages, gossips);

4. when considering the direction or sense of information, one can discern between descendant (orders, requirements, guide lines, briefings etc.), ascendant (reports, analyses, feed-backs), or horizontal communication (between peers or departments at similar level);

5. one-way (unilateral) communication differs from the two-way (bilateral) one, when a response, feed-back, confirmation, or reply is expected, in one or more cycles (real exchange of information); communicational networks (or multiple-way communication) should be added, as either directly or mediated *work groups* or *group debates* are built up (everyone can talk to everyone, but eventually selective links evolve for each individual, outlining particular patterns of communication, of 'centrality' or 'marginality' etc.);

6. when accounting for the number and nature of the communicating 'actors', one can distinguish between intrapersonal

(self-addressed), interpersonal, group, public (larger groups), and mass communication; each variety has several specific features in terms of *nature and structure of message, communication channel, and accessibility*;

7. the frequency criterion is involved when considering the permanent, periodic, or aperiodic communication; and

8. hybrid categories emerged along with the implementation of new information and communications technologies – ICT (mainly the online communication and other wire or wireless based technologies); however, there is little ground to define some of them as ‘new’, as they look identical or are combinations or varieties of the above ones, only using a different channel.

Nevertheless, contemporary electronic communications have a couple of advantages (see Rădulescu, 2009, p. 244) that supersede their ‘virtual’, ‘elusive’ character, or the need for the average citizen to be a computer ‘literate’ in order to access this web-based information. Speed of access, low costs, efficiency, convenience, quick updating possibilities, automation of document processing, distant access to data bases and networks of people, administrative or business structures, international organizations etc., and last but not least, interactivity are the main assets of the web-based communication. Both staff and citizens, professionals and laypersons can get the needed information in minutes, register papers, arrange appointments, ask questions and get replies in real time. Point-to-point transmission of formatted texts, pictures, audio and video recordings with an unprecedented speed, *from and to any site (or workstation) in the world*, is a revolutionary tool able to promote transparency and democratic innovations in any public institutions, to fine-tune their decisions and increase citizens’ involvement in government.

In conclusion, any particular act of communication can belong simultaneously to several categories and enjoy their respective features. Therefore, in many circumstances, there is no precise boundary between types of communication as described above. Many modern public administration services are prepared to adopt an increasing range of diversified means and types of communication, with the view to better respond to the social needs and political demands.

Considering the above classifications, now it is easy to characterize and identify the specificity of the particular field of the communication between public administration and citizens. This is a well-defined category of informational exchange, involving types of communication that can be described and characterized as follows:

- a. the communication with citizens is an extra-organizational one;
- b. is set in verbal and/or written forms;
- c. is usually deliberate, always formal (i.e. non-conversational) and organized;
- d. is bilateral (with unique or multiple cycled exchange of messages);
- e. it is diverse in terms of covering range, from individual contacts to mass communication;
- f. it is usually aperiodic, but also permanent in some respects; and
- g. uses as many different means of communication as possible: personal or on-line contact, written forms (letters, fliers, boards, posters), public meetings including discourses or lectures, printed matters or audio-visual transmissions, mass-media.

#### **4. Case Study: Language and Style on the Romanian Local Governments National Website <domnuleprimar.ro>**

In the act of communication, the language has an essential role, being a system of signs referring to specific significations that will be 'deciphered' by the receiver. The great efficiency of language in the oral or written communication act consists in the fact that it allows to act upon us by 'words' (Slama-Cazacu, 2000, p. 33). The adjustment and coordination of the activities through language was extensively studied by psychologists and sociologists who discussed such concepts as *social influence*, *persuasion*, and *manipulation*, obtained by direct or technically mediated speech.

*Speech* can be perceived as being a linguistic system, more or less specialised in rendering a content of ideas that are specific to some occupational fields or socio-cultural groups. These fields, professions, or groups have their own organizing rules in the linguistic field, which can generate a substantial reduction of the polysemy of certain words.

An interesting case study of on-line communication with a certain specificity was suggested by the website <domnuleprimar.ro>, which offers various examples of *written communication between public administration and citizens* using an administrative-style language.

#### 4.1. At a National Level

Through the instrumentality of the website <domnuleprimar.ro>, citizens from all over the country can communicate freely and directly with the mayor or the administrative officials in their town or city. They can forward requests or complaints without leaving their place/home, avoiding the congestion and bureaucracy in the city halls. The electronic forms of communication are much less formal, feel more familiar and comfortable to most computer literates when exposing their problems. Everything is more 'humanized', as this tool was created in order to facilitate a better communication between citizens and the holders of the administrative power. The mayor or other representatives must answer the complaints in 30 days, in conformity with the Romanian law.

<Domnuleprimar.ro> is a Romanian platform that acts as a direct two-way link between City Hall and its electorate. The mayor's offices have the opportunity to post news and updates and inform member of the community of a certain event or action, while people can send in complaints or suggestions directly to the mayor of their community. The site is quite informative, rich and well organized, with tabs that direct the reader to various chapters and sections: *index of counties and mayor's offices, legislative issues, analyses, interviews, news, weekly updated ranking lists, useful links, blogs, search and retrieval engines, and letters of complaint.*

In the sections where local governments bring an input, the style is often cold, written in a detached style and a monotonous tone. Otherwise, they resemble more to small activity reports than to news articles, meant to keep the 'electoral pool' updated on the activities of the elected mayor and local council.

Specifically, when approaching the complaints, many of the aforementioned intimations are replied by providing the petitioner with information on whom to contact, what to do, the offices responsible for the issues, step by step guides on how to contact them and so on. Most of the complaints, requests, or notifications require formal documentation when being submitted to the relevant public entities. When this is not the case, the mayor's offices use to directly handle the problems and check the alleged facts by themselves.

At first glance, the website <*domnuleprimar.ro*> looks like a huge archive of complaint letters supplied by desperate people with 'impossible' problems. Some of them do not even realize that they are requiring measures that are not that simple to be taken, even when sufficient funds are provided. Most complaints are written in a request-letter language, with form of pronouns and verbs in the second person, plural, without Romanian diacritics and, in some cases, even with a severely deficient, informal, web-like punctuation. The given answers are impersonal, short and essentially use terms that make them look like automated responses. Apart from these remarks, we noticed that even though the citizens are in a complaining position, most of them are polite and seem like being mild-tempered in their messages. Their language is mostly formal and 'diplomatic' rather than vulgar or aggressive, the overall style being textbook formal. It is interesting how these claimants maintain a quite formal style when addressing the mayor of their city. The courtesy protocol is basic but, anyway, some emotional elements such as exclamations, rhetorical questions and, sometimes, words that denote a violent temper are also present.

#### **4.2. At a Local Level (the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca)**

Cluj-Napoca is the historic centre of Transylvania and has a multi-cultural population of various ages in excess of 314.000 stable residents, inhabiting now an area of 180 sq. kilometres. The city accommodates a large number of commercial societies, educational,

medical, cultural, and administrative institutions, while *its contribution to the aggregate national budget* is one of the most significant in the country. On the other side, its combined modern and traditional architecture continuously generates a conflict between the increasing needs of the population and the limited capabilities offered by the partially outdated infrastructure.

Consequently, the City Hall is permanently challenged by a multitude of administrative tasks that are currently addressed within the limits of the local budget and the capabilities of the enrolled staff.

Implementing information and communications technologies, restructuring its internal offices, and modernizing its services has been a priority for many years, attaining now a satisfactory, above-the-average level of effectiveness and involvement of citizens. Nevertheless, problems continue to arise and the communication processes hosted by the [domnuleprimar.ro](http://domnuleprimar.ro) website offer now plenty of evidence in this respect.

When analysing the on-line informational exchange with the citizens, a few statistics derived from the website can comparatively describe the activity of each qualified City Hall in the country. They show that the Mayor's Office of Cluj-Napoca is the absolute leader among a total of 228 enrolled, qualified major city halls (i.e. receiving at least one on-line notification), with 25,003 letters of complaint recorded during the 9-year period since the implementation of the website (December 2005 - October 2014).

This number means 54.4 complaints/week and exceeds almost *six times* the number of notifications received by the next classified, the Piatra Neamt City Hall (Neamt County), which collected only 4,271 complaints. Only 42 City Halls were addressed with more than 100 on-line intimations in 9 years, leaving the other 82% of the local governments with less than one web-based complaint per month. Anyway, these numbers are not demonstrative enough, as they do not necessarily reflect the urgency or the real amount of unsolved problems in the field. The various sizes of the communities involved, the level of populational web access, the use of other traditional channels of communication, variations in local culture in addressing the authorities

etc. must also be considered. At least, the above statistics show *the leading on-line addressability of the Cluj-Napoca local government and the citizens' trust, participation, and readiness to use the modern electronic means when communicating with the authorities.*

On the other hand, the rate of response to the intimations addressed by the citizens is more significant. The observed figures place the Cluj-Napoca City Hall (and particularly the mayor), among the first 12 local Public Administration authorities with 90% ...100% on-line replies addressed to the claimants. Specifically, a ratio of 22,996 replies to 25,003 letters means a response rate of 92%. Out of these 12 authorities, *eight* are located in Transylvania and, particularly, *three* represent major towns located in Cluj county. Nevertheless, a contrasting proportion of 68% of the City Halls (which received between 1 and 1207 on-line complaints, including Bucharest Mayor's Office) never replied on-line to any letter, to their disgraceful shame.

Impressively enough, it came out that the City Hall of Cluj-Napoca is one of the most active local governments in the country when it comes to the on-line activity, while the present mayor, Mr. Emil Boc, is one of the most prompt representatives in replying to peoples' complaints. Therefore, we decided to take a particular look on Cluj-Napoca division of the website (*complaint letters and notifications* section), in order to evaluate the formal characteristics of both-way messages, their linguistic style, some hot topics of complaint etc.

As expected, the local people use the same formal style as the one practiced all over the country, being a bit more 'acid' because of obvious reasons. The posted complaints commonly observe the same stylistic pattern, following the official formulary that you can get from the City Hall office, as everyone is expected to write in a formal way on this local government website.

In a more specific perspective, we found a quite funny example in which a gentleman was bothered by the fact that the street construction is making the traffic difficult and he ended his complaint with a rather childish formula: *'With less respect'*.

(<http://www.domnuleprimar.ro/79344-Domnule-primar-aduc-cunostinta-lucrarile-modernizare-trame.html>).



The people's requests are usually diverse; they go from environmental problems to vandalism, noisy buses, and changing the urban landscape of the city.

For example, the *environment problem* is to be detected in the following addressing:

<http://www.domnuleprimar.ro/79279-Buna-ziua-Doresc-atrag-attention-asupra-unui-lucru-minor-dar-deranjant.html>.

The *vandalism problem* is approached in the following example:

<http://www.domnuleprimar.ro/79353-scriu-numele-copiilor-parintilor-care-isi-duc-copiii-joaca.html>.

The *landscape problems* are considered to be important for the Cluj-Napoca citizens:

<http://www.domnuleprimar.ro/79373-Domnule-Primar-Legat-sesizare-http-www-domnuleprimar-79337-Domnul.html>.

On the top of all things, it could be emphasized that on this website people are following an official pattern. Messages of gratitude for the mayor's cooperation are also present:

<http://www.domnuleprimar.ro/79381-Dorim-multumim-public-pentru-interventia-rapida-care-avut.html>.

Still, there are some posts that used an aggressive language or proved a violent attitude:

<http://www.domnuleprimar.ro/79361-Domnule-primar-pana-cand-mai-bateti-joc-noi-locuitorii-strada-ste.html>.

All these recently accessed messages (2-10 September, 2014) were posted during a short period of time. This suggests that people are generally feeling responsible to address the deficient issues and to quickly report community's problems. It is not only a matter of a formal style but also of a responsible feeling they have when writing to the <domnuleprimar.ro> website.

The most relevant characteristics regarding the style of the reply letters as related to their public nature were: *the impersonal style, the formal, respectful tone, the homogenous wording across all answers and departments and the short and hands-on approach.*

All the answers were completely impersonal, as the letters were being answered by a public institution, not a specific individual. First person plurals were used throughout. This shows people that the issue raised is important to the city itself, and is being handled by 'The City', which gives them a feeling of assurance, without allowing them to get too close. It also prevents them from becoming unnecessarily angry at a certain person (if their issue remains unsolved), as may happen when a member of the public engages in a face-to-face confrontation with the city employees.

The formal, respectful tone can be clearly noticed in the way the officials begin and end their responses, as well as the wording throughout. The answers always begin with '*Dear [...]'* and end with '*Sincerely,*', consistent with the norm for all formal letters. The askers are also addressed in a formal manner. Quite frequently, the letters end with '*Thank you for the message*' or '*Thank you for your understanding*', which add an extra, seemingly caring touch.

All the responses, be they from the department of health or the local police, have the similar wording and style. This homogenous formulation goes a long way in reassuring the public that the entire city public system works together as a 'well-oiled' machine, and that they all know their duties whilst being aware of what the others are doing and how to handle their tasks as a team.

While all the aforementioned qualities are very important, the very brief and concise nature of the answers can be noted. Citizens often complain about bureaucracy, about the many needed forms and offices to visit. The site provides short, logical answers, with clear instructions on the exact paperwork that needs to be filled out and where it should be submitted (if that is the case and the issue cannot be handled directly). Vague responses are avoided and laws and exact terms for any and all activities are stated. This goes a long way in effectively minimizing modern-day bureaucracy.

The only thing that was actually bothersome was the rarely misused punctuation and the lack of diacritical signs (which should be non-issues, easy to overcome in a public office).

*As a conclusion*, the writing style being used in the complaints is a mixture between the administrative-official style and the language common with virtual social networks (Facebook, Blogs, E-mail, etc.). Nowadays, electronic social media became part of our lives because they represent an easy way to create contacts, to keep in touch, to mass communicate – and this capability was quickly valued by the authorities. All the Public Administration institutions have now a Facebook page where they post significant messages, pictures, or videos in a friendly, accessible manner. The fact that Facebook, Blogs, as well as <*domnuleprimar.ro*> website involve a written, self-paced communication in the privacy of a workstation is also a significant advantage for many people. When properly used, the online environment contributes to innovative participatory practices, offering opportunities for a free networking and collaboration in an *open government*.

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## (UN)ETHICALLY REPORTING THE CASE OF ARRESTED PUBLIC OFFICIALS. A CASE-STUDY

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**ABSTRACT.** The current research reflects upon one of the most well-known and ethically and legally challenging for the media case in Romanian politics: former minister Elena Udrea's arrest. The authors intend to verify the two dimensions (ethical and legal), in order to confirm or infirm the main research hypothesis that the monitored Romanian media outlets violated the ethical and legal the right to privacy of politicians, as well as their right to dignity and public image.

*Keywords:* public interest, intrusion into privacy, fairness and accuracy of reporting

### 1. Romanian Ethical Standards on Reporting About Politicians and Persons Accused of Committing Offences

The Romanian Journalist's Ethical Code was initially adopted in 2004, during the Media Organizations Convention. The provisions of the code were consented to by journalists, members of the professional, patronage and trade union organizations signatory to "The Journalist's Statute". The code was revised in 2009.

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For the purpose of the current research, we will initially direct our attention to both versions of the Code, in order to identify the ethical standards on reporting about politicians, public officials and persons accused of committing offences, and then we will focus on the provisions of the 2009 version of the Code, more relevant for this particular case's time-frame. The reason for which we chose not to exclude completely the provisions of the 2004 version of the Code of Ethics is that this version included a series of definitions and clarifications that are relevant for the chosen case-study, but are absent from the 2009 version of the Code, like, for example, the notion of public interest and its limits.

The preamble of the 2004 Code defines the "public interest" as "any matter affecting the existence of the community"<sup>3</sup> and clarifies that it is not limited to the political aspects but may also include any other circumstance which could be of any interest to the community. The preamble includes examples of what is considered "of major public interest": the manner in which the government, the authorities, the public institutions and any entities that use public funds act and function as well critique brought against a particular administration, considering the contribution of the authorities to the proper administration of power and of public services. Following the same principle, the preamble stipulates that "All words spoken, actions, omissions or gestures made by the dignitaries, politicians and other public officials with relation to the fulfilling of their duties are of major public interest."<sup>4</sup>

However, within the same preamble, two hard limits of the "public interest" are clearly drawn. One regarding the extent of the acceptable intrusion into privacy and its motivation, namely a politicians' private life can be considered of major public interest only when they are relevant to the fulfilling of their duties"<sup>5</sup>, and another one considering the protection of other fundamental rights, that stipulated that "when

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<sup>3</sup> Code of Press Ethics, established by the member organizations of the Media Organizations Convention and adopted in 2004, <http://www.mediawise.org.uk/romania-2/>, accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2016

<sup>4</sup> Ibidem

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem

there is no clear public interest at stake, freedom of speech can only be limited by the interest of protecting another fundamental right.”<sup>6</sup>.

We find the definition and the subsequent clarifications essential, and we regret the fact that they haven’t found their way, even if only as application guidelines, into the newest version of the Ethical Code. The clarifications regarding the necessity of a clear link between the exercise of the public function and a politician’s private life are extremely important due to the precision with which they set the reasonable limits for intrusion into privacy of public figures. Since usually the journalist or the editor have to put into balance the interest of the public to know and the right to access relevant information regarding public officials, with these persons right to dignity, honour, public image and private life, as well as the right to image and private life of the persons with whom they associate that don’t hold any public office, the advice to actually take into account other (for example, the above-mentioned) particular set of fundamental rights, as it is stipulated in the last paragraph, is compelling.

Whilst bearing in mind the definition, clarifications and limits provided by the 2004 version of the Ethical Code, we focused our attention on the provisions enshrined in the 2009 version of the Code that might prove to be relevant with regards to reporting the arrest, detention period and release of a political figure. We have identified primarily the articles five, six, eight and nine of the 2009 Ethical Code as potentially being the most relevant for the research case.

Article five, titled “Fairness”, defines, in its paragraph, as “professional transgressions of maximum gravity”, attempts to “deliberately distort a piece of information, make ill-grounded accusations, or plagiarizing, use photographs or audio-video recordings without copyright or committing slander”<sup>7</sup> and advises the journalist to “quote in an accurate manner.

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<sup>6</sup> Code of Press Ethics, established by the member organizations of the Media Organizations Convention and adopted in 2004,  
<http://www.mediawise.org.uk/romania-2/>, accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2016

<sup>7</sup> 2009 Code of Press Ethics,  
<http://www.mediasind.ro/comunicate-1/coddeontologicunic>, accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2016



Quoting must be precise, and in the case of partial quoting, the journalist takes it upon himself to preserve the message of the quoted person.”<sup>8</sup>

The condition of intent, expressed throughout the provision with the aid of words like “deliberately” and “ill-grounded” for an “incorrect” reporting to take place, is an extremely delicate one. Subjective reporting is almost inherent, and choice of vocabulary will contribute to distortion sometimes regardless of the intent of the journalist who is reporting. However, leaving room for subjective interpretation of the ethical norm will prove challenging for our research as well, because it will be difficult to create an indicator to assess independently whether there was an intent to distort the information from the journalists’ part. Since we are fully aware of this limitation arising directly from the way the ethical norm is formulated, we will choose to monitor, during the research, beyond explicitly defamatory content, only if the intent to distort correlates with a second indicator (the photographs accompanying the article and/or the general tone of the reporting). Therefore, we will observe indicators independently (for example, by choice of words and choice of subject) but give them “value” only if they correlate. An example being a correlation between inaccurate quotes, or partial quotes that disregarded the presumption of innocence and the photographs associated to the article that would include Elena Udrea wearing handcuffs.

Article six, stipulating the necessity to properly verify the information, states that “The journalist shall pursue reasonable courses of action in order to verify the accuracy of the information before publishing it.” and advises to withhold from publishing “false information or pieces of information thought to be false based on sound reasoning”<sup>9</sup>. Once again, the Ethical Code leaves room for interpretation, since the reasonableness of a specific course of action depends on several factors difficult to verify and quantify, including journalists’ access to basic resources (time, documents, relevant secondary sources etc.). We intend to monitor, under this provision, the articles published regarding intimate relationships, family and private life as well as information regarding personal hygiene and health, because

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<sup>8</sup> Ibidem

<sup>9</sup> 2009 Code of Press Ethics,

<http://www.mediasind.ro/comunicate-1/coddeontologicunic>, accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2016

information regarding these aspects cannot be objectively verified, unless the person in cause or specialists directly involved with the case are interviewed.

Article eight, complementing article six, advises the journalist to “act in good faith when reporting facts and opinions” therefore endeavouring to separate facts from opinions and to express opinions that have a factual basis. We notice the same standard of “intent” that creates subsequent difficulties in the creation of objective indicators that could be monitored. “Good-faith” is hard to quantify, just as the notion of “endeavours” raises automatically questions regarding the sufficiency of the attempts, in order to be qualified as “endeavours” made in “good-faith”.

According to the ninth article of the Ethical Code, the journalist “must respect the right to privacy and persons’ dignity (including any family, address and email information). Revealing aspects of one’s private life is only allowed when public interest prevails over protecting one’s image. In said cases, the journalist is allowed to make public facts and information related to it.”<sup>10</sup> In this particular case of the ninth article of the Ethical Code, clearly, the 2009 version of the Code would benefit tremendously from the clarification regarding public interest, and the public’s right to know, balanced against the right to privacy and dignity of public officials. We intend to analyse the respect afforded to this standard by observing the written articles, as well as the attached photographs.

For example, considering the case we intend to study, while details of Elena Udrea’s private life appeared in previous articles, as a former minister she has always maintained an impeccable look, building up the reputation of being an elegant woman who pays attention to her appearance, especially in public. When studying the photographs associated with the articles, we will consider an intrusion into her privacy and her right to image any photographs that would focus on signs of detention, including wrinkly clothing, lack of make-up or different way of arranging her hair than usual.

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<sup>10</sup> 2009 Code of Press Ethics,

<http://www.mediasind.ro/comunicate-1/coddeontologicunic>, accessed on 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 2016

## 2. The Researched Case: Elena Udrea's Arrest

Research has concluded that "When the voters form a final conclusion regarding a politician, one can say that the person gains a definitive branding image. After that, it is very difficult for a political personality to modify its image fixed in the collective consciousness."<sup>11</sup> Since it is known that it is easier to relate and reason within known parameters, it comes with no surprise that the political scene is populated, sometimes artificially, by the media, with familiar stereotypes.

We chose to focus our research on Elena Udrea's arrest due to the fact that we assumed to encounter the sum of the stereotypes associated with female politicians correlated with the stereotypes associating with corrupt public officials and the manner in which they approach the imprisonment. Like any other politician, Elena Udrea's image can be characterized by a series of features that define it in the eyes of the public and that place her into a certain typology. Throughout her political career, Elena Udrea was particularly appreciated for her projects as Tourism Minister (2008-2012), but also for her public appearances: always dressed in expensive clothes, makeup and impeccable hairstyle. Her brand-image has been built around these elements to highlight the characteristics of the successful woman on a male-dominated political scene. Her most successful moment in Romanian politics, so far, has been placing fourth out of fourteen candidates on the 2014 presidential elections. She has proved to be a strong and vocal candidate, which has strengthened her image of a strong woman in Romanian politics.

Elena Udrea's sudden change of image came with her arrest in the "Microsoft" folder on February 10, 2015. From that day on, the successful woman in politics began to be reflected in the Romanian press in a manner that differed fundamentally to the previous one. An Elena Udrea handcuffed, wearing no makeup and with occasionally uncombed hair, wearing the same clothes, more and more wrinkly was photographed and the "new" image was ultra-mediatized. Photography

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<sup>11</sup> Parlagi, A. P. (2008). *Lideri și organizații politice*. București: Editura Economică, p. 39.

merely accompanied articles that, especially in the tabloid press, revealed intimate aspects of the period she was spending in jail, from the inside of her cell, to the closet facilities available, just to name a few of these.

### **3. Research Design**

#### ***3.1 Research Questions***

The current research intends to reflect upon one of the most well-known and ethically and legally challenging for the media case in Romanian politics: Elena Udrea's arrest. We intend to verify the two dimensions (ethical and legal), in order to confirm or infirm the main research hypothesis that the monitored Romanian media outlets violated the ethical and legal the right to privacy of politicians, as well as their right to dignity and public image. Deconstructing these dimensions on two research axes, the study will firstly investigate the respect afforded to the ethical provisions, and secondly the observance of the legal norms.

From the ethical standpoint, we will verify if the monitored media intruded into the privacy of the politician, by publishing details regarding personal hygiene, emotional relationships, intimate /sexual relationships, health status or other similar details, and whether information that was of no public interest was published, and thus, the public image of the person has been damaged.

With regards to the legal standpoint, that we will present and develop in a separate article, we intend to structure the analysis based on the chosen form of expression, and to analyse written articles as well as accompanying photographs or attached photo-galleries, in order to verify if, through their editorial decisions, the monitored media outlets disregarded the legal provisions regarding intrusion into privacy and the legal norms protecting a person's right to dignity, honour and reputation.

### 3.2 *The Research Method*

The chosen research method that was used was the content analysis, performed on three online publications *libertatea.ro*, *gsp.ro* and *mediafax.ro*, representative for three types of online media: tabloid, niche and mainstream. The monitoring period starts on 25<sup>th</sup> February 2015, the date of Elena Udrea's arrest and ends on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2015, the date when she was released from custody. During this period, the politician was investigated in three separate cases.

The research will focus strictly on the written and photographic content regarding Elena Udrea's situation that was published by the three monitored publications in the same days, within the above-mentioned monitored period.

After an initial assessment of the three online publications, we've reached the conclusion that the number of articles published surpasses several hundreds, with some media outlets choosing to publish as many as 20 articles per day. Observing repetitive content, we chose the selection criteria of concomitance as a logical one, assuming either all publications reported the same event, or at least covered a similar situation, in a competitive online environment.

The final sample-size, determined based on the criteria previously explained, comprised 78 articles and their accompanying photo-galleries. We've decided that the research methods that served best our research goals were a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods, namely content-analysis and observation.

In order to perform the content analysis, we have transformed the relevant articles of the 2009 Ethical Code into indicators, indexed in the table below.

**Table 1.** Indicators based on the provisions of articles 5, 6, 8 and 9 of the 2009 Ethical Code

Article 5	Article 6	Article 8	Article 9
-accusations are not based on facts,	-absence of accuracy in the presentation of the information	- facts must be proved to be true, therefore statements must present clear	- the journalist published content obtained through intruding into

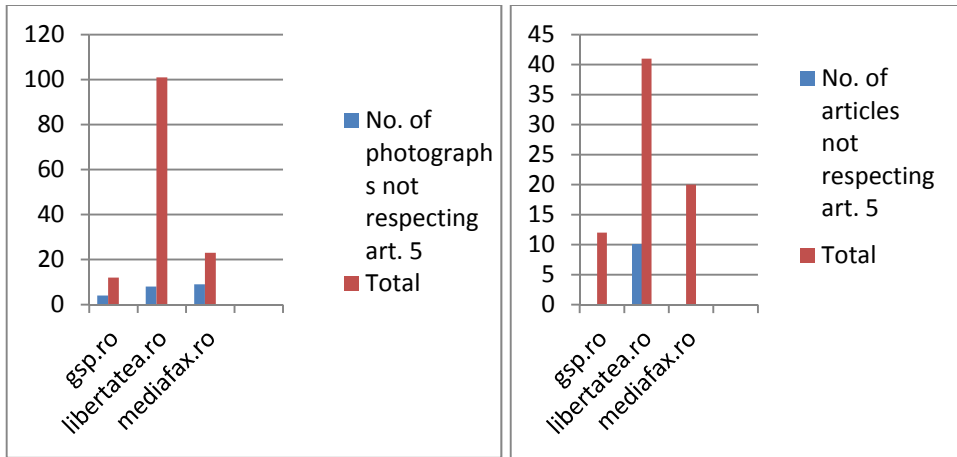
Article 5	Article 6	Article 8	Article 9
-photographs or text are used without copyright  -photographs or text is used to commit slander  -the journalist misquotes or doesn't designate clearly the source of the quoted person.	-lack of real, original sources  -unclear, false information  -impossible to verify the accuracy of the information  -lack of details  -lack of evidence	evidence and must come from original sources.  -opinions: must rely on the facts.	privacy, and the content is of no public interest

#### 4. The Results of the Research

The determination process of the sample-size revealed a total of 73 published texts: 12 by the website *gsp.ro*, 41 by the website *libertatea.ro* and 20 by *mediafax.ro*. The 78 initial articles included 136 pictures, some of them grouped in photo-galleries. 101 photographs were published by the website *libertatea.ro*, 12 by *gsp.ro* and 13 by *mediafax.ro*. The analysis of the photographs and texts, based on the above-mentioned indicators, revealed the following, per article.

##### 4.1 *Article Five of the Ethical Code Regarding Fairness*

	<i>gsp.ro</i>	<i>libertatea.ro</i>	<i>mediafax.ro</i>
<b>No. of photographs disregarding the ethical standards</b>	4	8	9
<b>No of articles disregarding the ethical standards</b>	-	10	-



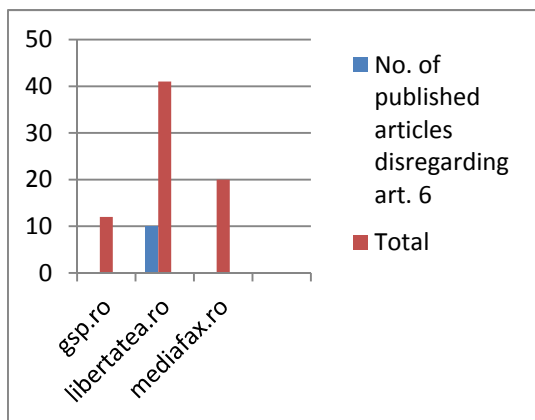
The table and diagrams above facilitate a clear assessment of the respect afforded by the investigated media outlets to fair representation. Unexpectedly, Mediafax surprised with the highest number of unethical photographs published when reported to the total number. The results obtained by the analysis of the articles published by the tabloid Libertatea.ro came as no surprise, since its usage of vocabulary tends to be consistent throughout the publication. The usual manner of composing titles and general content of Libertatea, with rhetorical questions intending to shock the audience and polarize the public's perception of reality to the extreme makes the online newspaper prone to ethical transgressions.

#### ***4.2 Article Six of the Ethical Code Regarding Accuracy and Verification of Information***

The presence of absence of the indicators was verified strictly against the texts published, since our determination of the photographs sample-size did not reveal any photographs that might have been manipulated or altered to misrepresent the reality. Below, the table reveals, once again, the tabloid libertatea.ro disregarding the provisions of the Ethical Code.

	<b>gsp.ro</b>	<b>libertatea.ro</b>	<b>mediafax.ro</b>
<b>No. of photographs disregarding the ethical standards</b>			
<b>No of articles disregarding the ethical standards</b>	-	10	-

The chart showed a percentage of published articles that disregarded the sixth provision of the Ethical Code similar with the percentage of articles that disregarded the fifth provision of the Ethical Code.



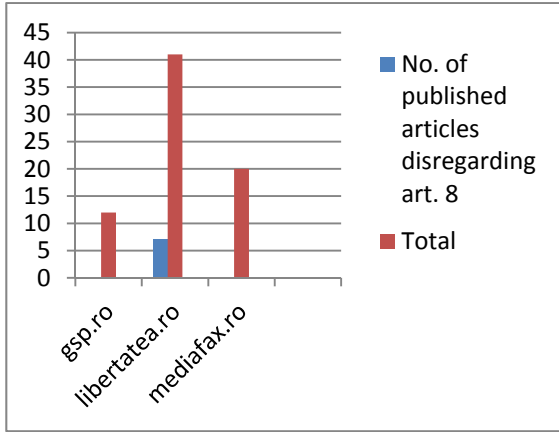
As initially predicted, a correlation between indicators is present. The result came with no surprises, due to the fact that

it is hard to imagine, and in our particular case proved non-existent, a situation in which journalists would report fairly without trying to verify the information and vice versa.

### *4.3 Article Eight of the Ethical Code Regarding the Separation Between Facts and Opinions*

	<b>gsp.ro</b>	<b>libertatea.ro</b>	<b>mediafax.ro</b>
<b>No. of photographs disregarding the ethical standards</b>			
<b>No. of articles disregarding the ethical standards</b>	-	7	-

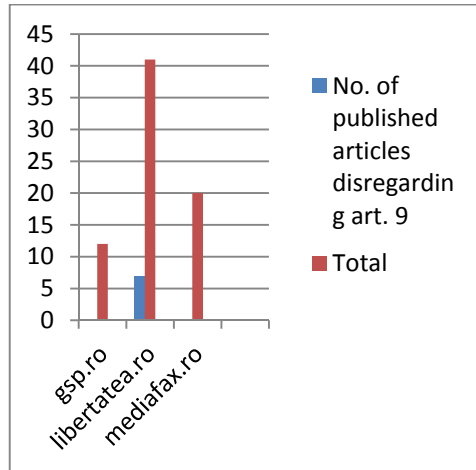
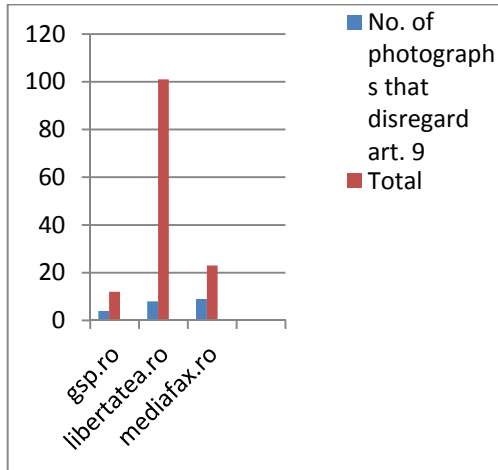




Our research found that the online media outlet Libertatea.ro disregarded the provisions of the Ethical Code regarding the necessary separation between opinions and facts in 7 published articles out of the total of 41, representing a percentage of around 17% of the total of articles published.

#### 4.4 Article Nine of the Ethical Code Regarding Private Life

	gsp.ro	libertatea.ro	mediafax.ro
No. of photographs disregarding the ethical standards	4	8	9
No. of articles disregarding the ethical standards	-	9	-



Article nine regarding intrusion into private life was disregarded by all media outlets in various degrees, as our research showed. The tabloid *Libertatea* leads, once again, the top of unethical articles published and surprisingly, when analysing the accompanying visuals, we have discovered that almost 70% of the total number of photographs published by Mediafax violate the Ethical Code.

## **5. General Conclusions of the Performed Research and Recommendations**

We have performed an over-all evaluation of ethical breaches, for all the publications monitored, in order to assess, within the limitations that our initial research design brought, what is the degree in which ethical standards are respected or disregarded.

Although, due to the relatively “tight-score”, a “definitive” top of the most frequently disregarded articles from the Ethical Code would be hard to compile, we note that, with an equal percentage of 14%, these are the provisions regarding fairness and accuracy of reporting, followed closely (on 12%) by the provisions regarding intrusion into private life. In the case of photography, article five regarding fairness and article nine regarding intrusion into private life are equally disrespected by the journalists in as high as 16% of the total of the observed sample.

We conclude by recommending relevant parties that, when the occasion of revising the Ethical Code will arise, they would consider reintroducing and clarifying the notion of “public interest” from the perspective of media ethics. As our research has shown, this notion, if explicitly included within the ethical provisions, can shape the interpretation given to the articles, thus having the potential to heavily impact the practice of ethical journalism.

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