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***REMAKING THE SOCIAL. NEW RISKS AND SOLIDARITIES***

*Special issue occasioned by the First International Conference of the Society of Sociologists from Romania, hosted by the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Babeș-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, 2-4 December, 2010*

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## **EDITORS' FOREWORD TO THE ISSUE REMAKING THE SOCIAL. NEW RISKS AND SOLIDARITIES**

The current issue of *Studia Sociologia* was occasioned by the First International Conference of the Society of Sociologists from Romania, hosted by the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, between 2-4 December, 2010: *Remaking the Social. New Risks and Solidarities*. The conference brought together scholars from various domains of sociology, sharing an interest in the changes of the Romanian social context. The articles of this issue reflect the broad range of research topics and methodological approaches present at the conference, and illustrate the ways in which sociologists may conceptualize current social concerns and inform responsible knowledge.

In the *Opening Speech* of the conference, Dan Chiribucă analyses the challenges of contemporary Romanian sociology, calling into question the roles and stakes of sociology as science, professional practice, and formative agency for a field of institutionalised knowledge. Dumitru Sandu's article investigates a key-factor that reshaped contemporary societies: transnationalism and labour migration, with their manifold implications on the structuring of social ties, interweaving complex economic and political relations between what are defined as "abroad" and "home". In a comparative analysis of demographic trends in Europe, Traian Rotariu points out that the macro-level dynamics of nonmarital births in Romania have been primarily shaped by the persistence of pre-modern lifestyles, particularly in rural areas with a deficit of economic modernization. Unlike in Western Europe, the spreading of postmodern values held only a secondary role, as the evolutions of the proportions and rates of nonmarital birth indicate. Moving away from issues related to contemporary families, such as sending remittances for family members (Sandu) or forming families out of wedlock (Rotariu), Alina Petrovici guides the reader in the field of the sociology of work, scrutinizing the neoliberal managerial styles in postsocialist Romania. In a context marked by the ethos of economic efficiency and self-made entrepreneurial success, the author reveals the forms of subjectivation and compliance embedded in neoliberal discourses, enhanced by the recalling of the imprint of communist inefficiency. Laura Nistor addresses the social dimensions of environmental concerns, comparatively exploring the evolution and individual determinants of pro-environment attitudes in Romania and the neighbouring Bulgaria. Based on the statistical analysis of value-surveys carried out between 1999-2008, she argues that while in Bulgaria axiological orientation is the most stable predictor of increased willingness to pay for the prevention of pollution, in Romania respondents' educational level holds the strongest effect. In both countries, concern

## EDITORS' FOREWORD

for environmental risks is higher than in other European countries, but engagement in environment-friendly behaviour is rather scarce. However, propensity for “green citizenship” strengthened between 2005 and 2008. Csaba Jelinek investigates the social consequences of policies to change the urban landscape, focusing on the phenomena of displacement and relocation during the process of gentrification in Budapest. The author challenges the prevalent assumption of the protagonists of gentrification that displacement is just a marginal phenomenon that ultimately improves the living standards of displaced families, and brings ethnographic insights into the perverse effects of community disintegration and deepening inequalities. Transcending from face-to-face interactions to on-line encounters and communities, Alexandra Zontea’s study reveals forms of artistic legitimization in virtual galleries of photography. On-line exhibitions blur the difference between “real life” professionals and amateurs, yet provide new means for establishing reciprocity, critique and recognition within what functions as a virtual community of artists. The interviews and on-line ethnography performed by the author might well serve in the future as objects of qualitative data archives, whose importance is advocated in the last article of the conference paper series. Ozana Cucu-Oancea provides a state-of-art text for the field of the re-use of qualitative data and research-data archives in social sciences, looking at the availability of such archives in Romania as compared to other European countries, at a moment when the scholarly community widely agrees on the salience of studying the historical dimension of any social phenomenon.

Though in diverse articulations, all papers enclose the idea that new forms of solidarity entwine the fabric of contemporary societies: in transnational migration (Sandu) or non-standard families (Rotariu), in neoliberal entrepreneurial sites (Petrovici) or the restructured urban residential spaces (Jelinek), in pro-environment movements and “green citizenship” (Nistor), in virtual communities of artists (Zontea) or digital data archives available for social researchers on-line (Cucu-Oancea). They suggest that making sociology might ultimately be a form of social solidarity, an engagement in the quest for responsible knowledge on the manifold, fluid and entrancing remakings of the social.

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## REMAKING THE SOCIAL. THE CHALLENGES OF SOCIOLOGY BETWEEN RISKS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

**Opening Speech at the First International Conference of the Society of Sociologists from Romania, hosted by the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, Babeş-Bolyai University Cluj-Napoca, 2-4 December 2010**

**DAN CHIRIBUCĂ\***

**ABSTRACT.** The challenges of sociology are anchored in the changes and transformations of the social environment, into taking responsibility for new strategies to investigate the social, in opening to public debate of topics essential to the configuration of scientific and professional field such as the legitimacy and validity of knowledge modalities, of the findings and social consequences generated by research. Conceptual fluidity, paradigmatic multiplicity, and methodological flexibility along with defining new roles and responsibilities represent not only challenges but also opportunities for sociology to be promoted as a discipline that contributes to identifying solutions and solving major issues of contemporary society. Such an approach is a challenge in itself because it calls into question the role and stakes of sociology as science, professional practice, and formative agency of field professionals, namely sociologists.

**Keywords:** Romanian sociology, the challenges of social research, the public role of sociology and sociologists

The world we are living in, as object of study of sociology, has never been so fluid, dynamic, yet stable, on the one hand centralized, standardized, rational and safe in terms of predictability, and on the other specific, local, fragmented and uncertain or unpredictable. This affirmation is in itself a challenge because the premise of a unitary reality, homogenous in its diversity and heterogeneity may veil the existence of a multiple reality. Its epistemological consequence is considering the appropriate modalities of knowledge in the case of societies whose relevance is no longer defined with regard to territorial delimitations but to features related to the content and shape of social interactions. Do the pace of the changes and the intensity of societal and social transformations justify the use – not in terms of discourse but of substance – of the multitude

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of phrases and labels assigned to present day society/societies? I shall mention only three of many possible options because their referents interfere manifestly with the challenges sociology is supposed to answer to: information society, risk society, and knowledge society. According to Castells, information society represents the attribute of a specific form of social organisation in which 'information generating, processing and transmission become fundamental sources of productivity and power' due to the latest technological developments (Castells, 1996:21). The knowledge society label is justified by the generalised dissemination of specialised (scientific) knowledge in all areas of social life (Stehr, 2002). As far as the risk society is concerned, Beck (1992) and Giddens (1991) define it as a society where individuals are aware of the risks generated by their own activities and are interested in the manner in which related dangers can be prevented, minimised, dramatised or channeled (Beck, 1992:19).

An important issue resulting from the diversity of these definitions is the extent to which they actually reflect transformations, changes, divides that justify positing substance discontinuities of the social spaces and validate the realization of typologies revolving around the opposition old versus new societies. I firmly believe that for sociology such a question is interesting but is of little consequence and leads the investigation on a secondary and sterile course. The stake and major challenge are not so much related to our object of study being unitary or multiple (society versus societies) but rather to investigating the manner in which substantial transformations of features defining the studied reality (individuals and phenomena, cases and variables) compel us to rethink and redefine the modalities of knowledge practiced in the field of our discipline.

The current terms used by sociology (sociologists) to define the generic object of their analysis (the society or societies/new societies) have various roots and aims: some are descriptive, others are deliberately critical, often reflecting not so much features of the reality studied but positions of the researchers in relation to this reality. These positionings are frequently normative. For example, it is easy to notice that the already mentioned phrase that is frequently used to characterise contemporary society, namely the knowledge society, reflects (beyond a series of specific descriptors) a theoretical option that can be used to criticise the manner in which technology, empiricism and the new intellectualist approaches are applied to comprehend the multiple paths of global development (Webster, 2002).

Currently, many of the categories traditionally used to describe, analyse and explain the social fail to validly cover the features of the reality under scrutiny. A relevant example is the concept of society, with its instrumental meaning referring to the nation-state. Metaphorically, the nation state is the equivalent of a box containing the social processes and setting their limits. It is a container-concept that uses the physical space as a major criterion of ranging

social phenomena. In fact, to date numerous phenomena and categories essential to social knowledge (among others labour, the family and the household, decision making, voting) are rooted and result from cross border interconnections (Boyne and Beck, 2001). Globalisation does not only erode and blur space but questions the validity and relevance of traditional delimitations. Thus, the transnational character of social phenomena requires reconceptualisations that are theoretical and methodological challenges for social sciences. Some of these are due to the fact that the global (be it institution, process, discursive practice) simultaneously transcends national settings and resides in national territories and institutions (Sassen, 2007). Others originate in the fact that physical and social spaces multiply and combine in a blend that compels sociology (sociologists) to new conceptual definings and redefinings because of a reality that, instead of being factual and firm, is kaleidoscopic and delineated by fluid and dynamic polarities: virtual-real, local-global, private-public, center-periphery, national-transnational, economic profit-social solidarity. The emergence, development and quasi-generalisation of social corporate responsibility are examples of a phenomenon transcending traditional conceptual boundaries. The economic and social dimensions intermingle in new, completely original ways with economic profit not being determined any longer by economic performance but by investment and the development of complementary activities that are essentially non-economic. The mentioned phenomenon is interesting and relevant in at least two ways: firstly, it signals the institutionalisation of a new type of social solidarity, which is trans-individual and non-statal and, secondly, redefines the complementarity relationship between the economic and the social by the fact that economic performance is conditioned by the manifest acceptance of social responsibility. Instrumentally, the relation is paradoxical because, in order to maximise its profit, the economic actor has to renounce voluntarily a significant part of it.

For sociology, these transformations create the responsibility to identify new categories, variables, indicators, to highlight the significance and implications of these new phenomena and experiences, not necessarily in an ontological sense, but in terms of frameworks and contexts in which they unfold.

In terms of the methodology and theoretical and practical consequences of sociological research, despatialisation of categories and concept fluidity require rethinking the place and role of research methods commonly used in sociology. One of the traditional assets and strengths of sociology in the field of social sciences, which contributed greatly to the social visibility of sociological knowledge, has been and remains the quantitative methodology, frequently taking the form of the survey. The major feature and advantage of the survey in comparison to qualitative methods is that it uses clearly defined categories, which allows the unequivocal and unambiguous description and measurement of a well delineated reality. The quantitative methodology has been long considered a reliable strategy



of investigating social reality: the figures are strong, certain, factual, and true in a Platonic sense. By their reliability and certainty, they offer guarantees in relation to the appropriateness and effectiveness of the decisions based on them. However, it is common knowledge that the situation is more nuanced and more often than not figures do not differ from narratives in terms of their truth status. They may be more convincing from a rational or rationalising perspective but not necessarily more true. Even though, in principle, numbers measure and narratives convince, it is not seldom that its use and measurement reflects convictions, not realities. Moreover, despite being analysed by means of complex and sophisticated methods, survey data remain closed, which, paradoxically, makes them lose their general-universal validity to a contextual one, with particular and local (localised) relevance of their results. Through a mirroring mechanism, qualitative methodologies earn extra validity and relevance in the proper description and understanding of phenomena that transcend the individual casuistry and refer to macro-social contexts and frames.

In addition to the role transfer between the two major paradigmatic options that make up the methodologic arsenal of sociology, another important feature is that both data collection and the analysis and interpretation of findings may be placed in various conceptual architectures. What has been considered for a long time a weakness of sociology is becoming, in the context of a very dynamic and fluid social reality, a major advantage in the competition for instrumental knowledge in which sociology participates, voluntarily or not, alongside the other social sciences (economics, political science, psychology, anthropology). Even seemingly a weakness, the multitude of paradigms accompanied by a very broad methodological arsenal represent practically a trait ensuring great flexibility and additional relevance of the discipline in relation to the investigated themes and the identified solutions.

The second major challenge concerns the purpose of sociological knowledge, respectively, in operational terms, of the sociological research. The subject of neutrality and unbiased objectivity versus the obligation to take responsibility for social intervention based on a type of expertise that legitimise the sociologists' intervention at least to an equal extent with that of the other social scientists (for example, the economists) is a topic as old as the discipline and I will not refer to it in this context.

*A committed sociology is a sociology willing and capable to take risk (risks) as constitutive element of its activity.* I do not refer to risk as a conceptual category, which is more or less successfully utilizable in describing and interpreting social reality, but to a type of endeavor that underlies the specialised knowledge of the social and defines a special manner of taking hold of its finality and consequences.

To the extent to which sociology's role is not only to describe and explain but also to warn (Luhmann: 1993:5), risk is a legitimate sociological theme. The concept of risk and that of risk society have become central to sociology

alongside with emphasis shifting to reflexivity as a major social knowledge modality. Risk is an inherent normal dimension of contemporary societies differentiating them from previous societies not because reality is riskier today than in the pre-industrial period but because never before has institutional decision-making been so frequently based on risk assessment. Rationality and predictability, the basic tenets of modernity, have created the conditions for risk to become central in present day society. In economics, risk is a positive concept. Risk maximises profit, allows new markets to emerge and new products to appear. In sociology, the concept is neutral and its becoming a positive concept and subsequent valorisation (in terms similar to economics) depend on the manner we define the role of sociology, with special emphasis on the actional purpose of sociological knowledge, respectively on the positions sociologists take in relation to the valorisation of this knowledge. Essentially, it is all about considering benefits and costs not as explanatory variables related to social behaviours, but as the instrumental orientation of sociological research, which is manifestly preoccupied with the consequences of produced knowledge.

To sum up, beyond the normative nature of such an approach, challenges are related to the validity (relevance) of the diagnosis and the legitimacy of engagement. A first issue concerns the fact that risk-oriented research and subsequently set actional strategies (objectivised in decisions and interventions) represent a risk accepted by and often mostly by experts. In other words, *identifying risks may not be without consequences for the person who does that.*

Sociology may adopt at least two strategies, one of them being riskproof: the analytical description, claimed to be an objective and factual description of reality, is without risks. The analysis can often include the identification of causes and effects but risk-taking is minimised by making cut-outs, taking into account the description and explanation of phenomena and processes that have already occurred while systematically ignoring predictions on the subsequent development of the studied phenomena. Some relevant examples include defining unemployment as a 'threatening social risk because of the low level income provided by protection plans, which places the unemployed in the category of the poor' or assigning a disproportionately high poverty risk to Roma persons (Panduru et al, 2009:34). It is easily noticeable that an analytic description of unemployment identifies causes and attributes without taking the risk of a type of knowledge that would transcend immediate evidence and simple conceptualisation.

There are at least two paradoxes of sociological knowledge aiming to minimise the risk of error, intent on avoiding controversies and questioning from outside the sociological field. The first concerns the manner in which problem identification (risk always is bound to a problematic issue) is equivalent to its objectivation. It is a mechanism resembling magic in the sense that assigning a label, namely identifying a phenomenon as risk, makes it real, by its objectivation

into the material world. There is no doubt as to statute of truth of the assertion that unemployment is a major risk during economic crisis. Even more so when experts claim it since the knowledge they generate is consistent and in tune with common knowledge. But before starting to look for solutions, it is worth taking into consideration the fact that a defining characteristic of postmodernity is that, in order to give meaning to reality elements, we must place them in particular contexts. Meaning, though, cannot be universal. From the perspective of traditionally used categories, unemployment is a risk for state economy. By changing the reference frame and including new contexts, unemployment may become a saving solution for a company that uses dismissals to avoid going bankrupt, or opportunity for the unemployed migrating abroad. In the same vein, it is worth remembering that there was no unemployment during the communist period but a large part of economy had budget allocations for expenses higher than the planned benefits.

The second paradox consists of using certainty for filtering out risks. A factual statement such as “most of the Roma people are poor” is translated and presented as risk under the form “Roma have excessively high poverty risks”. Statistics becomes shield and guarantee of the validity of sociological knowledge. Statistical certainty legitimates and reconfirms the infallibility of the sociologist and of sociology. Knowledge is factual and neutral. However, the social utility of such knowledge remains minimal; at the same time, operating with this type of certainties means giving up the benefits (and costs) associated with the risk of asserting truths inaccessible (or at least non-evident) to common knowledge. The social importance of such sociology will remain peripheral.

The second strategic option is to value sociology’s special conceptual and methodological capital to identify problems in their incipient stage and propose solutions. Such an option means an open commitment to the responsibility of assessing benefits, costs, consequences and directions of social actions. In spite of being a debatable and questionable option, I consider it necessary for a science of sociology mature enough and prepared to take on a more extended role than that of theoretical science, respectively to manifestly and programmatically accept a practical dimension. An immediate predictable consequence would be an increased influence of sociology in defining and implementing public policies. One of the problems of Romanian sociology is not the absence of the relevant quality research, but the fact that results are ignored by political class, respectively by decision factors in general. If it is correct to assert a failure of sociological research, this is not related to the research activity, but to the lack of ability to transfer results into defining and implementing efficient policies. Between specialised expertise and political decision there is currently a gap, which is also favoured by sociologists being stuck in predominantly descriptive approaches that open the way for participation in decision making, but limit the sociologists’ role to

an advisory one. The manifest and open orientation of research towards the assessment of benefits, costs, and consequences of social actions redefines the position of the field and of the experts in the power relation with the decision making bodies at least as a result of emphasizing of the marginal costs associated to the neglect of this expertise.

A third challenge is related to the status of knowledge in contemporary societies and the manner in which specialised knowledge, produced by experts, traditionally addressed exclusively to communities of practice and power factors, is opening to the public and is being negotiated with and by non-specialists. It is not only a challenge for the general scientific knowledge but for sociological knowledge in particular due to the fact that the latter might be directly and immediately used for decision making in resource allocation.

In present-day society, two major sources contribute to the opening towards a non-specialised public not in order to disseminate results but to convince as regards the legitimacy and validity of sociological knowledge. The first is an emergent ideology promoting the necessity of democratisation of scientific knowledge. The second is a process of democratisation of access to specialised information, which occurs separately from the previously mentioned ideology and is mostly correlated with new social practices generated by the development of new communication technologies, particularly the Internet.

As far as the ideology is concerned, it affirms the application of democratic practice in the field of science and technology, respectively the necessary involvement of citizens in expert debates on topics related to science and technology (Lovbrand et al., 2010). The major consequence of this fact is that the findings of sociological research are validated not only within/by the exclusive and informed community of experts but also become part of a process of external acknowledgement and legitimisation in which the evaluator is a public whose traditional roles used to be only as beneficiaries or research subjects. In this process, the fundamental modalities used in sociological knowledge such as critical judgement, abstract thinking, generalisation of particular experiences, logical thinking and rationality no longer suffice, because they compete with emotional convictions, with trust and lack of trust in the experts' practice and findings. The validity of the data and findings has to be backed up now by plausibility and persuasiveness in their presentations. Specialised knowledge generated within the field of sociology is and will continue to be an essential resource for decision making but currently experts are frequently in the position to persuade larger publics (no longer only the exclusive decision making group) on the one hand as part of the process of legitimisation of the scientific domain and (re)gaining confidence and, on the other, to ensure the resources necessary to research or to make possible the transfer of knowledge into planned social action.

As far as the new communication technologies (the Internet) are concerned, they contribute critically to the redefinition of the relationship between the public as consumer-evaluator of specialised knowledge and the experts in charge of knowledge production. I shall refer here to the process of increasingly individualised consumption and the decreasing dependence on institutional intermediation carried out by specialised agents. Individualisation is a result of at least three factors: increased accessibility of scientific knowledge in non-specialised environments, increased autonomy of the public in relation with the traditional factors responsible for the production and dissemination of content -, passive consumption is being replaced by search, consultation and interaction. The autonomy of the public in relation with institutional intermediations is relevant in at least two ways: part of the attributes traditionally associated by the general public with expert knowledge, such as reputation and prestige, do no longer depend on specialised agents; technologically mediated communication dissolves not only the physical space but also a part of social distances while the de-territorialisation of information consumption is accompanied by an increasing public influence on decisions related to the production of specialist knowledge. All together these elements transform the relation of power between the expert and the consumer (the public) by balancing it and increasing the level of control that the public exerts over the experts.

Beyond problematizations that remain distinctive and inherent to each of the mentioned challenges, seen from a different perspective, the themes discussed here hold a special relevance through the way they reflect the interdependency between sociology's object of study (the social reality), the scientific field of the discipline, the professional practice taken on by sociologists and the public control over these practices, respectively over the application of the results. The critical reflexivity over our own discipline is an obligation, not a whim related to theoretical fashions that are more or less temporary, which has clarifying stakes for the definition of sociology as a science and a profession.

To conclude, the configuration of challenges defined by the rapid transformation of the social environment, the conceptual and methodological fluidity, the dynamic relationship between sociology, decision makers, and the public and, last but not least, the new type of responsibility in terms of the finality of sociological research require us to use sociology in order to re-think the place and the role of the discipline in present day society. It is a theme to reflect upon and debate which has no answers free of new challenges.

Personally, I believe in a committed sociology, respectively in a science whose vocation is to solve problems. This option is in itself a challenge and a risk because problems can neither be identified nor solved without a normative framework. Finally, the major challenge is the answer to the question: how "can we do that" without transforming sociology into an ideology and the sociologist into a demagogue activist?

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# HOME ORIENTATION IN TRANSNATIONAL SPACES OF ROMANIAN MIGRATION

DUMITRU SANDU\*

**ABSTRACT.** This study<sup>1</sup> focuses on the behavioural dimension of migrant transnationalism by constructing an index of migrant “home orientation”. The data used to this end concern the sending of remittances, communication with home and the expression of an intention to return to one’s country. The index varies significantly, depending on status characteristics and migration experience of immigrants. At least one component of transnationalism, the sending of remittances, appears to be an arrival wave effect rather than an immigration duration effect. The research hypotheses are also tested by comparing the various categories of immigrants in Spain (those from Romania, other European countries, Latin America and Africa).

**Keywords:** transnationalism, index of home orientation, remittances, Romania

## Introduction

That an increasing number of immigrants keep in touch with those back home in their country of origin is, without doubt, a result of globalisation. This phenomenon is not new (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller, 2003; Pries, 2008: 13), but the scale of the process is. The volume of migrant remittances sent to developing countries doubled in the 1990s (Faist, 2008: 62). In Romania, the reference country in this study, inflows of remittances increased sharply from USD 96-132 million/year in the period 1999-2004 to more than USD 8.5 billion/year in the period 2007-2008<sup>2</sup>. Annual values of remittances for 2009 and 2010 are about 50% lower compared to 2010. On a macro level, remittances also reflect the integration of an emerging economy, like that of Romania, into the global economy in terms of the workforce flows associated with commercial and financial flows (Mitra et al., 2010).

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<sup>1</sup> The paper was written with the support of the *Development of Community Capital in Romania* project (2068/2009-2011, CNCISIS). The current version develops, by theory and new empirical analysis, a former version in Romanian (Sandu 2010a:141-176). The author expresses his gratitude to one of the reviewers that gave very useful comments on the methodological site of the study.

<sup>2</sup> Source: [http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1110315015165/RemittancesData\\_Nov09\(Public\).xls](http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTPROSPECTS/Resources/334934-1110315015165/RemittancesData_Nov09(Public).xls)



The new index of home orientation of immigrants (IHORI) is a synthetic behavioural measure of the degree migrants are transnational, that is to say, oriented to connected to their origin place. An immigrant that is low oriented home by remittances, communication and return home plans could be very well integrated into the host society but he/she is not transnational.

Testing the validity of this index could contribute to the expansion of the tools of transnational research, from their initial qualitative-anthropological uses (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc, 1994) to quantitative-comparative applications. The complexity of the phenomenon necessitates the use of multi-item measures of transnationalism. Secondly, the enlargement of comparability is achieved by proposing a typology of transnational behaviour involving immigrants and emigrants and the focus of their behaviours, either on the place of origin or destination.

The first part of the study covers the methodology and describes the role of home orientation index and associated typologies in the field of migration transnationalism, research hypotheses and data sets. The second part contains the results of the data analysis performed on the variation of home orientation index by key immigrants groups in Spain and predictors of remittance behaviours for Romanian immigrants in the Madrid area. The focus on immigrants to Spain and Romanian immigrants in Madrid area is related to the fact that the two data sets that we used (Enquesta Nacional de Inmigrantes – Reher and Requena 2009 and Romanian Communities in Spain – Sandu, 2009) are complementary and include the necessary variables to test the hypotheses we formulate. The conclusions look at the relationship between the findings and hypotheses and their theoretical relevance.

### **Home orientation in the space of migration transnationalism**

I will adopt in what follows the “home orientation” perspective as a key dimension of transnationalism with a view to gaining a better understanding of recent Romanian immigration. The measurement indicators used for home orientation index will be remittances, plans to return to to the origin country and the frequency of communication with home, as different facets of the same home orientation.

As opposed to a global, non-differentiated transnationalism, we have distinguished as many specific types as particular conditionings or trans-societal spaces that we were able to identify for the home orientation of immigrants. In addition, the data used support the idea that transnationalism does not consist merely of sending remittances, as can be concluded from some approaches (Guarnizo, Portes, and Haller, 2003:1212), but in fact refers to migrant home orientation as expressed simultaneously by, at the least, remittances, communication and life plans.

Some immigrants wish to remain abroad after having worked there for some time; others wish to return to home to their country of origin. Immigrants' intentions to return involve more or less structured plans and a sooner or later return date. At the other end of the migratory spectrum are those who worked abroad and then returned to their home country. Some of these, even if changed by their failure, prefer not to remember the difficult experience of working abroad. Others, on the contrary, try to build houses and enjoy the same lifestyles they enjoyed in the places where they lived as immigrants. For the Romanian migrants in the present study, the style of living chosen can be described as being "like in Madrid" or "like in Rome", in a Spanish or Italian style, all these "as forms of cultural diffusion" (Levitt, 1998).

Qualitative, one-dimensional and non-comparative treatments predominate in these approaches. Nevertheless, transnationalism is first and foremost an attitude that encourages behaviours and actions over or beyond borders, with strong contagion and inter-influence effects. It has been correctly noted that transnational activities are "cumulative in character" (Vertovec, 2009: 9). From this perspective, there seems to me to be a strong need for a correlated treatment of the dimensions of transnationalism, and this is what I will try to achieve using the survey data<sup>3</sup> at the place of immigration (Spain), and by comparing Romanian immigrants with those from other ethnic/societal groups.

There also exists a transnationalism of the return migrants. It is documented in national surveys that Romanians who have worked abroad are far more likely than non-migrants towards setting up a new business, borrowing money from a bank, building a house and returning to work abroad (Sandu, 2007: 71). Some of these plans retain the influence of a transnational way of life in terms of entrepreneurship and circular migration.

These international practices are specific to the various spheres of life and seem to act as connecting "bridges" over borders for various types of social and economic units. The descriptions of the Romanian-Italian migration space for transnational families or churches provide a good example of this (see the case of Marginea village in the county of Suceava in Cinlogani's 2009 description). Similar bridges, in respect of Romanian-Spanish migration, also appear in Elrick and Ciobanu (2009) with a reference to the villages of Luncavița, in the county of Tulcea, and Feldru, in Bistrița-Năsăud or in the movement between Borșa town and Milan (Anghel, 2009). Such "bridges" serve as transnational spaces.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The survey databases I work with allow me to a large extent to avoid the risk of formulating conclusions that are distorted by dependence variable-based sampling (Guarnizo, Portes, Haller, 2003:1212-1213): immigrant groups are very diverse by ethnicity, social status and periods of arrival and they are not selected in any way as to be homogeneous on a certain dimension related to transnationalism (remittances, communication, return plans etc.).

<sup>4</sup> The *transnational field* metaphor (Levitt, Schiller, 2004: 1009) suggests a higher degree of structuring than the *transnational space* metaphor (Pries, 2003:8). In the absence of specific measurement tools, I use the two concepts synonymously.

Also, initially, migration transnationalism was primarily identified at the level of the immigrants' relationships with those "back home" in the country of origin (Basch, Schiller, Blanc, 1994), while it was later extended on a conceptual level to include new aspects, such as the return migrants' way of life, their hybrid culture based on the values of their societies of origin and of those of temporary emigration (Vertovec, 2009:18). Migrant transnational communities begin to be defined not only in reference to immigrants from the host societies, but also from various perspectives of the communities of origin (Massey, Goldring, Durand, 1994: 598).

Similarly, villages with a high prevalence of migration in Romania in the 2000s are deemed to be "probable transnational communities" (Sandu, 2005:572). Although, at the time of measurement, they represented about one fifth of the country's total of 12500 villages, more than three quarters of the total flow of Romanian villagers migrating abroad came from there (Sandu, 2005: 566). For this segment of villages, the transnationalism hypothesis was fully plausible. People from the respective communities were most likely either former migrants, temporarily abroad or non-migrants who were in contact with former or current migrants. This reasoning provides solid ground on which to talk about probable social fields of transnational migration. Qualitative studies in eight rural communities of high migration prevalence indicate that the transnational lifestyle predicted by the community census of migration is well structured in villages of high foreign migration experience (Ciobanu 2004; Ciobanu 2005). Such communities are not only probable, but also currently existing transnational communities with cross-border entrepreneurship ties and inflows of social remittances.

Migration transnationalism involves phenomenological and structural aspects, agency and structure (Depleteau 2008). Observation of the social fields of transnational migration focuses mainly on the societies of origin (emigration or return communities), destination communities (groups of immigrants) or, with a similar relative emphasis, twin communities of origin and destination of the transnational migration flows. With a view to a better classification of this research, we can also add to this typology, defined by the category of actors subject to observation, the typology that draws a distinction between home orientation and orientation towards the host society (Figure 1).

<b>Viewpoint of ...</b>	<b>Strongly positive relation to origin/home</b>	<b>Strongly positive relation to "home" and host society</b>	<b>Strongly positive relation to the society of immigration</b>
<b>Immigrants</b>	Immigration transnationalism ("home" orientation)	Ambivalent transnationalism of immigrants	Integration / adaptation / assimilation in relation to the host society
<b>Return migrants / non migrants from origin</b>	Nationalism / localism	Ambivalent transnationalism of return migrants	Return transnationalism (of return migrants)

**Figure 1. Types of transnationalism and local integration of immigrants**

The transnationalism of immigrants can be of two types: either that characterised only by “home orientation” or the ambivalent form, as among those who see themselves as being strongly integrated into the host society while also remaining very attached to their society of origin (the case of Romanian IT migrants to Canada as analysed by Nedelcu 2008).

The transnationalism of migrants who returned to Romania is expressed by a strong cultural or relational adhesion to the worlds they took part in as migrants abroad (Șerban 2009, Anghel 2009, Sandu 2010b). As in the case of immigrants, this can be either ambivalent or focused only on giving value to their former societies of immigration. Saxon returned migrants to Romania practice an entrepreneurship that illustrate very well that ambivalent transnationalism of returned migrants (Michalon, 2009). Temporary returned migrants in the region of Maramureș during the summer vacations play the role of cultural brokers by mediating between foreign tourists and the local places they know (Nagy 2009: 237). This is also a case of ambivalent transnationalism of returned migrants.

The residual category for the typology mentioned above is made up of those who, either as immigrants, return migrants or non migrants, refuse both the values of the society of origin as well as those of the society of (potential) immigration.

### **Data and method**

The comparative microdata comes from the *Enquesta Nacional de Inmigrantes (ENI)*, a survey conducted among over 15,000 immigrants (15465) in Spain by the National Statistics Institute (INE) in Spain based on a project of The Working Group for the Study of Population and Society (GEPS) in the period November 2006-February 2007 (Reher, Requena 2009). A three-stage probabilistic survey was used and the data obtained weighted using a sample correction variable (constructed by the INE) according to the age, gender, country of origin and region of residence in Spain.<sup>5</sup>

The second source of microdata was the “Romanian Communities in Spain” (RCS) survey conducted in September 2008 among 832 immigrants in the Autonomous Region of Madrid. The selection was made using the respondent driven sampling (RDS) method (Heckathorn, 2002). The available data to validate RCS sample indicate a good fit between the regional sample and that taken among the total number of Romanians in Spain in the *Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes* (Grigoraș, 2009, Sandu 2009a).

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<sup>5</sup> The microdata file for the entire ENI survey is available at [http://www.ine.es/en/prodyser/microdatos\\_en.htm](http://www.ine.es/en/prodyser/microdatos_en.htm). I obtained the file variant containing constructed and weighted variables courtesy of Prof. David Reher from the Complutense University in Madrid.

In terms of methodology, I began with the *one-dimensional* hypothesis (H1) of three types of behaviours related to the sending of remittances to the country of origin, the intensity of communication with home and the intensity of the intention to return to the home country. Using a factor score and with the aid of the three indicators above, I constructed an index of home orientation for immigrants (IHORI). I have assumed that the intention to return to the country of origin was ambivalent. If recorded in an unspecified way it indicates a positive relationship towards the country of origin, but not a plan of actual return. On the other hand, a clearly specified intention to return in the short term primarily indicates a negative evaluation of the situation of migration in the host country and a better structured plan of return. Of course, there are also immigrants who want to return to their country due to a positive perception of changes back home and the prospects of doing business there (Sandu, 2009:54).

The index of home orientation for immigrants (IHORI), developed with a view to performing a comparative analysis, used the data from the survey conducted by the National Statistics Institute of Spain in 2006-2007. IHORI is constructed from the ENI 2007 data basis (15465 cases, weighted data) as a factor score of communication intensity (a counting index, with values between 0 and 3, of communication with home at least twice a week by telephone, regular post or email), intention to return home (3 yes, 2 undecided, 1 no) and the volume of remittances sent home in the previous year (ln transformation)<sup>6</sup>.

As expected, all three constituent indicators strongly and positively correlate with each other. The volume of remittances sent home is of maximum relevance to attitudes towards the place of origin, while the intention to return displays the weakest connection. The aggregation of the three indicators by the standard factor score technique provides proof of their relevance to a single dimension of home orientation attitude. That said, intention to return home is not behaviour but a planned behaviour and a proven predictor of movement behaviour (De Jong et al., 1986).

The construction of the index follows the transnational approach as opposed to the “methodological nationalism” that limits the understanding of people’s behaviours to the container of nation-state society (Wimmer and Schiller, 2002; Pries 2003; Pries, 2008). The IHORI allows for comparisons of immigrants from different states of origin and for an understanding of their relationships with the home and host societies. This approach involves the use of multilevel and multisite data collection and explanations involving cross-borders views, units and factors (Khagram and Levitt 2008: 22). Obviously, the nation

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<sup>6</sup> The factor scores associated with the three measurement variables are 0.55 for remittances, 0.52 for communication and 0.48 for intention to return. The KMO index is 0.55. Values were also calculated for Romanian Communities in the Madrid data set (2008), but their use in the study is limited and mentioned where this is the case (Table 4).

state does not stop being a significant point of reference when analysing social phenomena, and it complements the transnational social spaces or fields. The perspective of transnationalism focuses on the strong relationships/interactions the non-state agents establish beyond political, social and cultural borders in order to achieve their life/work plans (Basch, Schiller, and Blanc, 1994: 8; Portes, Haller, and Guarnizo, 2002: 279; Levitt and Schiller, 2004; Vertovec, 2009: 3).

IHORI is a quantitative measure but its meaning is similar to that of "sense of home" the immigrants shows up in host societies. In-depth interviews of New Zealand immigrants to London (Wiles, 2008) indicate that home has symbolic, family and objects dimensions for immigrants. Imagined home is built in immigration environment by going to specific pubs, practicing particular sports, using certain web sites, interacting with the family and bringing or referring to some familiar objects. The available survey data does not allow for reaching directly such aspects but behaviours like return plans, remittances and media communication at home could be considered as proxies for the sense of home.

Remittances is, at least in empirical terms for that study, the most important component of home orientation. This is why a special analysis was done on three of its facets – volume, frequency of sending home and their ratio to the immigration income.

The basic, substantive hypothesis (H2) maintains that the home orientation of immigrants depends on the *immigration wave* rather than the national or ethnic origins of the immigrants. The idea involved in this formulation is that immigrants who arrive in the same period are socialized in a similar way and face similar problems that influence their decisions and behaviours in a similar way.

Each of the key dependent variables – IHORI, remittances, communication intensity and intention to return home – are treated in this paper by specific multiple regression models. IHORI model is built on the basis of the large survey on different categories of immigrants in Spain (Enquesta Nacional de Inmigrantes). Regression is run, in that case, in STATA, a soft appropriate to handle weighting of the data in multivariate models. It allows for identification of ethnicity, wave and duration of stay effects, controlling for other status characteristics. Remittances regression is run on Romanian Communities in Spain due to the fact that the dependent variable in that case is measured in three ways – as volume, frequency and share of remittances in the income of immigrants.

## Analysis and results

***Explanation of the home orientation of immigrants.*** The home orientation of immigrants falls systematically as the period of stay in Spain increases (Table 1). It reaches a maximum according to the data from the Encuesta Nacional de Inmigrantes, among immigrants from the final wave of 2002-2007 and a minimum level among those arriving before 1989.

**Table 1.**

**Index of home orientation for immigrants in Spain  
by the country of origin and the period of arrival**

	Before 1989	1990-1997	1998-2001	2002-2007	Total
Ecuadorians	46	53	57	56	56
Columbiens	47	53	56	56	56
Romanians	46	50	52	54	54
Other Latin Amer.	37	49	52	60	53
NMS10	42	48	48	55	51
Bulgarians	40	53	51	50	50
Argentiniens	39	45	52	53	49
Morrocans	36	50	51	50	47
British	40	47	48	50	47
Other EU15	36	43	47	51	41
Others	39	47	52	55	51
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>50</b>

**Data source:** ENI, 2007, own computations. The index of home orientation of immigrants (IHORI) is a factor score transformed as to have the mean equal to 50 and standard deviation of 14 (Hull score).

For the entire sample of immigrants in Spain, the IHORI tends to be higher for immigrants with relatively high incomes (compared with other immigrants) but who do not own private property in Spain. Those whose orientation is strongly directed towards their place of origin are well integrated into Spanish society from a socio-cultural point of view (e.g. they participate in some Spanish NGOs).

These findings show how discussions in terms of “integrated/not integrated” vis-a-vis immigrants from the host society oversimplify the reality. The socio-cultural features of immigrants’ relationships towards the host society (incorporation, integration, adaptation etc.) appear to have different dynamics than the economic aspects. How they relate to transnationalism, their orientation towards their society of origin, is different. Immigrants’ socio-cultural integration appears to enhance their positive relationship towards their society of origin, whereas economic integration tends to have the opposite effect of decreasing the probability of expressing behaviours of “connection” with the country of origin.

The relationship between knowledge of Spanish and immigrants' orientation towards the society of origin varies according to region:<sup>7</sup> a good command of the host country's language also boosts home orientation behaviours for all immigrants and in particular for Moroccans, Latin-Americans and those from the older EU member states. However, for immigrants from Romania and the other EU member states part of the post-2004 wave of European integration, the situation is reversed: those with a good command of Spanish tend to reduce their interaction with their country of origin. Of course, for Columbians, Ecuadorians and a significant proportion of Moroccans, Spanish is already their native language. Immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe, including Romania, face a different situation. Learning Spanish is a time-consuming process.

The primary observation in Table 1 is further supported by the complex data (Table 2): the last wave of immigrants (2002-2007) has a high value for the index of home orientation (IHORI), while the pre-1990 waves feature low values. From a theoretical point of view, the fact that the wave effect on home orientation continues, even when controlling for the number of years as an immigrant, is extremely important. In other words, there is a factor, such as the climate of opinion (Noelle-Neumann, 1993), associated with the immigration period that influences home orientation behaviours independently of all the other factors mentioned above. Moreover, the wave or mood (satisfaction and optimism) effect specific to the immigration in a certain period can be said to be stronger than the effect of the duration of stay in Spain.<sup>8</sup> People arriving during the same period are self-selected in a similar ways (according to greater or lesser risk aversion, for example) and are confronted with similar migration constraints and opportunities. The period effect appears to be significant even if one controls for the individual one of individual duration of stay in the host society. (Footnote at table 2 indicates that these relations are not affected by colinerity effects.) The finding is supported also for each of the separate components of IHORI – remittances, communication intensity and return plans. Three regression models (not shown in the paper) for each of these three components have been run with the same predictors as those included in Table 2. Coefficients are positive and significant for predicting

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<sup>7</sup> The formulations in this paragraph are based on the application of the regression model in Table 2 at a regional level – i.e. immigrants from Morocco, Romania, Latin American countries, the older EU member states, other immigrants from the newer EU member states. The relationships between IHORI, on one hand, and the civic participation and the involvement in investment activities in Spain, on the other hand, are a matter of common sense, regardless of the immigrants' ethnic membership.

<sup>8</sup> The regression coefficients for periods of arrival are significant. This is not the case for the number of years lived in Spain as an immigrant. These predictors are correlated with each other but are not collinear. The correlation coefficients between duration of immigration, on the one hand, and each of the dummies for period of arrival in Spain, on the other hand, are rather weak, with a module value between 0.02 and 0.13.



remittances, communication and return plans by the wave effect of the period 2002-2007. Similarly, these three variables are negatively related to duration of stay in Spain.

The ethnicity or the society of origin matters in a different way to the variation of the index in that: immigrants from the old European Union (EU15) and from Morocco have the tendency to leave their country of origin behind; Ecuadorians and the Columbians have a strong orientation in the opposite direction, i.e. active contact with those back home; the Romanians who immigrated to Spain have an average attitude towards contact with home, with no special propensity for maintaining weak or strong ties with those back home.

The last two paragraphs include information that supports the main substantive hypothesis of the chapter concerning the “wave” effect on home orientation, expressed in a specific way and different from the ethnic/state membership effect. Moreover, this effect of period of arrival in Spain continues even if we control for the effect of period of stay in the relevant country. Based on this finding (Table 2), we can conclude that it is mainly the mood, the expectations specific to groups of immigrants depending on period of arrival, which matter, and not the individual period of immigration. Generally speaking, the IHORI tends to have higher values for the more recent periods. In fact, period/wave versus stay duration in immigration is similar to intracohort/cohort effects (Firebaugh, 1989).

Home orientation tends to be stronger as the period of individual stay in Spain increases among Moroccans, Latin-Americans as well as immigrants from the older EU member states. The relationship is different in case of immigrants from the newer EU member states, including Romania. In this case, a longer period of immigration leads to a lower propensity to adopt positive home orientation behaviours, with fewer remittances sent home, lower levels communication with home and delay of plans of return.<sup>9</sup>

Family situations in Spain also have a significant impact on home orientation: immigrants who came either together with their spouses, or already had relatives living in Spain upon their arrival, are tempted to communicate less with home and also to send less money or have fewer plans of return to their community of origin.

The “typical” Romanian immigrant in Spain tends to show similar behaviour as other citizens from Central or Eastern Europe. However, unlike the behaviour of other immigrants in Spain, their home orientation (expressed through communication with home, remittances or intention to return) tends to be stronger if they have a poor command of Spanish and arrived comparatively recently in Spain.

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<sup>9</sup> The formulations in this paragraph are based on the application of the regression model in Table 2 at a regional/country level.

Table 2.

## Predictors of home orientation for Spain immigrants

Predictors:	Regression coefficient b (slope)	BETA (standardized slope)	Significance level (p)
<b>Constant</b>	<b>50.370</b>		0.000
Man	-0.592	-0.021	0.047
Age	0.004	0.020	0.012
Primary education*	-1.697	-0.046	0.000
Tertiary education*	2.122	0.061	0.000
Unskilled worker*	2.046	0.058	0.000
Qualified worker*	1.087	0.029	0.030
Construction worker*	0.179	0.004	0.730
Income (in transformation)	0.232	0.057	0.000
Owner of a house in Spain	-1.163	-0.039	0.003
Relatives in Spain at arrival	-1.711	-0.061	0.000
Together with spouse in Spain*	-0.493	-0.018	0.078
Together with children in Spain*	2.217	0.077	0.000
Active in Spanish NGOs	0.686	0.038	0.000
Speaks Spanish well*	0.751	0.025	0.019
Did investments in Spain*	-0.330	-0.018	0.177
Romanian immigrant*	-0.611	-0.013	0.270
Ecuadorian/Columbian*	3.934	0.100	0.000
Morocco Immigrant*	-0.927	-0.021	0.040
Immigrant from EU-15*	-3.368	-0.096	0.000
Arrival period 2002-2007*	3.157	0.111	0.000
Arrival period 1998-2001*	1.536	0.049	0.001
Arrival before 1990*	-5.287	-0.146	0.000
Years spent as an immigrant in Spain	-0.207	-0.184	0.000
<b>R-Square</b>	<b>0.263</b>		
<b>N</b>	<b>15252</b>		

**Data source:** ENI, 2007. OLS regression with IHORI as dependent variable, weighted data, using STATA for the analysis (option *pweight*).

\* Dummy variables, 1=presence of the attribute, 0=absence. Secondary education is the reference for education. Construction worker has as reference employment in agriculture, industry and services. Skilled and unskilled workers has as reference all other occupational categories from ISCO-88(com). The reference for arrival period is 1990-1997. The model is not affected by collinearity errors, as the largest VIF is 4.44, much lower than the threshold of 10 and the average VIF for predictors is 1.79, rather close to 1 (STATA 8: 378). The model, as a secondary analysis, has the limitations of the datasets used. A better specification of the model would involve some other predictors, for example perceived consequences of own migration of the family or cultural factors associated with religious orientation or practice.

The regression analysis (not shown in this paper) performed on the data for Romanian communities in the Madrid area confirms and complements the findings presented above on the ENI data set. The wave effect hypothesis is confirmed by the fact that the IHORI is higher for immigrants that came to the area in 2007-2008, but it does not depend significantly on the number of years a person has been residing in Spain. What it adds to this relates to the estimated consequences of one's own migration on family. The detailed data from the survey indicate that network capital at home is more important than human capital (education, quality of Spanish) in terms of its influence on home orientation. It is only for the first type of capital that the regression coefficients are positive and significant. Comparisons between the four survey communities also suggest the existence of a community effect: home orientation is significantly lower, when controlling for all other predictors, in communities with a lower concentration of Romanian immigrants (Alcala de Henares and Torrejon). It appears that more concentrated and organised communities of immigrants, like those of Coslada and Arganda del Rey, develop a higher degree of home orientation.

Home orientation differs not only in terms of degree, but also type. In different periods and for different groups of immigrants, the combinations between remittances, communication with home and plans of remigration may be of a qualitative rather than linear type. The previous hypothesis is also supported by the finding that for different ethnic/societal groups the component indicators of the IHORI index have different degrees of significance:<sup>10</sup> for Colombians, Ecuadorians and Romanians, who are immigrants of the last or penultimate wave, what matters in particular in their relationships with their communities of origin are remittances; for the EU15 immigrants, remittances come second in terms of home orientation; in case of the British immigrants, the situation is even more special, in that the intention to return to their home country is very poorly related to the other two component indicators of the index.

*Explanation of remittances.* Focusing on the remittances can go a long way towards explaining how immigrants' home orientation behaviours are structured.

The data used in the detailed description were predominantly taken from the September 2008 survey conducted among a sample of 830 Romanian immigrants in the Autonomous Region of Madrid. The previous year's average remittances at the level of this community amounted to approx. EUR 3600/immigrant (approx. EUR 300/month/immigrant).

Construction, household work, family care and trade are the main fields of employment for the Romanian immigrants in the region of Madrid. The largest amounts of money were sent home by construction workers, with trade workers sending the least (Table 3).

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<sup>10</sup> This is eloquently demonstrated by the coefficients of the factor scores for IHORI, assuming that they are calculated by country of origin of the immigrants or groups of countries:

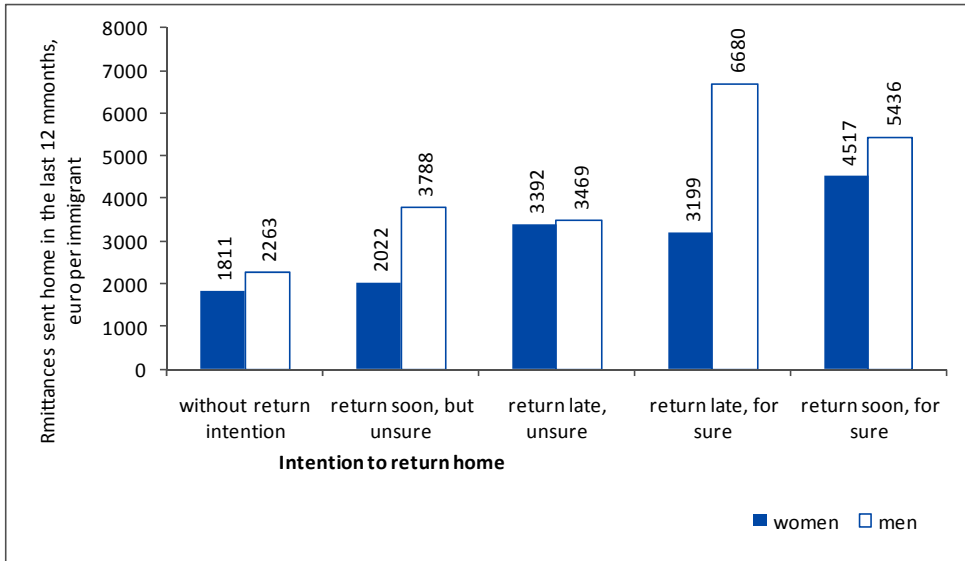
**Table 3.**

**Remittances sent home by Romanian immigrants in Spain in the last 12 months (October 2007- September 2008), by employment area and return intention (average per immigrant, Euro)**

<b>Intention to return to Romania</b>	<b>Trade</b>	<b>House-keeping</b>	<b>Constructions</b>	<b>Nontrade services</b>	<b>Others</b>
No such intention	1173	2331	1920	2482	2402
Return soon**, but unsure	2124	2842	4226	*	2855
Return later, but unsure	2788	3252	4174	*	3569
Return later, for sure	2583	2775	8731	*	2050
Return soon, for sure	5161	4399	5469	4810	5010
Average of remittances					
total	2774	3335	4501	4540	3493
women	2428	3337	*	4673	3415
men	3680	*	4482	4429	3527
% immigrants by employment categorie	23	23	26	6	22

The amount of money sent home depends heavily on the migrant's remigration plans and gender. Those with no plans to return to home, either sooner or later, send the least money back to their home country. At the other end of the scale are those determined to return to their home country, and even for this category the gender-based differences are significant: female immigrants send the most money home, certain they will return soon, within the next five years; in the case of male immigrants, the amount of remittances sent home is also related to the certainty of return but over a longer period of time, of more than five years. (Figure 2). The return plan seems to be structured to a larger extent over the long term for men, as opposed to the short term for women.

The data fully support the idea that remigration plans are strongly associated with the sending of remittances. Once the decision to return is made, the behaviours associated with the sending of remittances will be adopted sooner or later. The higher the subjective probability of return, the higher the level of remittances tends to be. Of course, this finding needs to be tested in a multivariate analysis context, while controlling for other significant variables, such as level of income, field of employment, family status, etc. This is what I will do next.



**Figure 2. Average remittances sent home in the last 12 months per Romanian immigrant in Madrid area, by gender and return intention (Euro)**

**Data source:** Survey Romanian Communities in Spain (RCS), 2008.

**Reading example:** Romanian women immigrants in Madrid area, decided to come home in a short term, sent home, in the last 12 months 4517 euro/person.

The complex analysis in the annex takes into consideration not only the volume of remittances, but also the intervals at which they are sent. Before looking at the details of this analysis, it is helpful to note that the larger amounts of money, in terms of annual totals, are sent home at frequent intervals, i.e. at least once a month:

**Table 4.**

**The frequency of sending remittances at home**

In the past 12 months, how often did you send money back to Romania ?	In the past 12 months, how often did you send money back to Romania ?					Total
	More than once a month	Every month	Every X months	Occasionally	Never	
Average amount per person of remittances sent (including money taken home directly home during visits) sent during the year (EUR)	7750	5516	3854	2939	516*	3670
percentage of those sending remittances at the given intervals	5	31	21	22	21*	100

**Data source:** RCS survey, 2008. \* People who did not send remittances but brought money during visits

The analysis model in the annex shows that one of the most important predictors for both the volume of and intervals at which remittances are sent home is given by the ratio between the number of the household members in one's home country and the number in Spain. The higher this ratio, the larger the volume of remittances sent home tends to be.

Another important factor in determining the volume of remittances seems (according to the hierarchy of beta coefficients) to be the structuring level in respect of plans to return to the home country. The higher the subjective probability of remigration or return, the larger the amount of money sent home. This relationship, discovered using a simple, bivariate analysis (Figure 3), also holds true after controlling for several variables. The volume of remittances increases even when a person has several definite plans to purchase goods or make investments in the home country.

The previous findings allow us to formulate some more general interpretations in which remittances act in support of the achievement of individual family plans. The plan of remigration itself is but a kind of synthetic formula for a cumulation of life plans.

It is obvious that the money earned from the migration abroad, destined to be sent home, does not depend only on plans, projects and family solidarity. Naturally, it is also the outcome of certain restrictions and opportunities:

- The higher the personal income obtained in Spain, the more consistent the remittances.
- A period or wave effect can be observed, especially in terms of the intervals at which money is sent home: the more recent the period of arrival in Spain, the higher the probability of shorter intervals at which money is sent back to relatives who remained in the home country.

Among the status characteristics relevant to the propensity to send money home, age and marital status count the most. Very young and single immigrants tend to send back less money to relatives in their country of origin. Gender as such is not important a conditioning factor for behaviours related to the sending of remittances. Religious traditionalism, characterised by frequent attendance of religious services, is a factor that encourages the support of the family through remittances.

Finally, perception of the societal context still influences behaviours related to the sending of money back to the family in the home country: immigrants with a positive perception of future job prospects (or maybe well-paid jobs in Romania) tend to send larger volumes of remittances. Of course, the relationship can be more complicated than this, as with mood contagion: people who for personal/family reasons want to return to their home country may justify their decision on the basis of overoptimistic forecasts vis-a-vis the future economic environment in their country. What's certain is that this effect of moods also leads to behaviours related to the sending of larger amounts of remittances.

Despite the positive correlation between the volumes and the intervals at which remittances are sent have different causal patterns in spite of their positive correlation:

- The volume of remittances increases with age, a traditionalist-type orientation and the number of plans for investment in Romania; on the other hand, the intervals at which money is sent home are no longer significantly affected by these factors.
- Protestant or Neo-Protestant religious membership has a positive impact only on the regularity of sending money home, not the volume of remittances. This kind of membership increases family solidarity.

Nevertheless, remittances need not be considered only in terms of their absolute value or the intervals at which they are sent, as analysed above. From a sociological perspective, it makes sense to view the act of sending money home in relative terms, as a ratio between the volume of remittances and income. This relative expression of money sent home can give a better indication of the intensity of motivation to achieve family solidarity. Cumulating the non-responses for income with those for the volume of remittances increases the number of cases for which I did not have an estimation of the dependent variable.

In the new estimation, gender appears to gain in relevance, while age seems to lose importance. In comparison with men, women appear more motivated to convert more of their income into remittances (the ratio which I use in support of this hypothesis is only significant at the level of 0.057). This interpretation is consistent with the assumption that family solidarity seems to be stronger for women than men: about one fifth of the Romanian immigrants interviewed in Madrid area have children whom they have left behind in their home country and, of these, 60% are women; this group is more concerned (43%) than men (39%) about the negative consequences of their stay in Spain on their children at home. Women with parents at home are also more concerned than men about the effects of their emigration on them. These data are consistent with the hypothesis of higher family solidarity for women than for men, albeit gender differentiation from this point of view is not statistically significant. Other factors are, perhaps, also involved in explaining gender differences in the relative volume of remittances. One such factor could be the perception of working conditions in Spain. Women declare to a higher degree than men that they return tired from work and even have to work even during weekends and evenings. Hard working conditions could boost the intention to return in the long term (in the short term, with structured plans there is no significant gender differentiation in terms of return plans).

The act of converting income into remittances does not seem to depend on age group. Here the primary socialization and cultural factors, which were barely estimated in the research, seem to gain in importance. The proportion

of family members who remained in the home country and the probability of return are important for this aspect of remittances, too. The higher the value of the latter two factors, the higher the probability of transforming a large amount income into remittances.

The findings from the Madrid area survey in terms of the ratio between remittances and income are entirely supported by the much larger *Enquesta Nacional de Inmigrantes 2007* data set. A series of four multiple regression models (not shown in the text)<sup>11</sup> shows how it is specific to Romanian and Latin American women, as compared with men, to send home larger volumes of remittances relative to income. The pattern is reversed among Moroccans, where it is men, as opposed to women, who send home larger volumes of remittances relative to their wages. These differences arise from the fact that the role of the husband is much more important in Moroccan families. On the other hand, gender does not have the same affect on remittance behaviours among immigrants from the old European Union of 15. The causal pattern is only partially similar to that for Romanians and Latin Americans. Among the former category of immigrants, married women are the most active when it comes to sending higher remittances relative to wages. For Latin American immigrants, women send home more remittances relative to wages, irrespective of whether they are married or not. This indicates a possible greater value accorded to children in Romanian as compared to Latin American families.

## Conclusions

The “home orientation of immigrants” is a key component of transnationalism. Adopting this new concept allows us to define differences of type and degree within transnationalism. In this research “home orientation” was measured by means of an index (IHORI) that represents a factor score aggregation of the different behaviours related to the sending of remittances, communication with home and the degree of structuring of plans of return (testing the H1 hypothesis).

The phenomenon of home orientation exists and this measurement type leads to empirically consistent results. Is this approach subsumed into the transnationalism of immigrants (Schiller, Basch, Blanc, 1995; Portes, 2003)? The results of analysis indicate that the problem can no longer be analysed as a dichotomy, i.e. whether or not the migrant is transmigrant, but in gradual terms. It is possible for the migrant in question to more or less oriented towards home.

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<sup>11</sup> OLS regressions using weighting specific to the ENI data base, in STATA.



Viewed through the lens of this index, Romanians do not show significantly higher or lower levels of home orientation when compared to other major categories of immigrants living in Spain in the period 2006-2008. It is only for Ecuadorian and Columbian immigrants that home orientation transnationalism shows higher values.

On a more general level, we can support the idea that the home orientation transnationalism of migrants is more dependent on wave than ethnic factors. The probability of being transnational in terms of remittances, communication and return intentions is higher for the last wave of immigrants than for any specific ethnic category. Romanians display relatively high IHORI values, not as an ethnic/societal group, but as last wave migrants. Ecuadorians and Columbians registered high values of the index of home orientation not so much as last-wavers but more in relation to the economic and cultural characteristics associated with their countries of origin.

The implication of all this is that transnationalism is to a large extent a stage phenomenon (hypothesis H2). This seems to be especially characteristic of the last wave of immigration in the host society. The more time that has elapsed between the immigration wave and the current moment, the smaller the probability of there being a strong home orientation. More detailed information could provide a more nuanced picture and show, perhaps, that what changes is not the intensity of the transnational ties by migration wave but the forms or content of these links.

The study of remittance behaviours as a key component of transnational orientation placed a special focus on Romanian immigrants. The propensity to send remittances is not only a simple extension of the intention to return. There are several other factors favouring it, i.e. higher income, having more family members at home than in the host society, a more traditional orientation etc. Going beyond the purely economic measure of the amount of money transferred as remittances revealed gender patterns that are significant for solidarity within families.

## Annex.

Table A1.

**Prediction of remittances sent home by Romanian immigrants from Madrid  
area in the period October 2007-September 2008**

	Model 1: Prediction for volume of remittances (ln transform.)			Model 2: Prediction for the frequency of sending remittances			Model 3: Prediction for the ratio of remittances to income		
	Regression coefficient b (slope)	BETA (standard- ized slope)	Significance level (p)	Regression coefficient b (slope)	BETA (standardized slope)	Significance level (p)	Regression coefficient b (slope)	BETA (standardized slope)	Significance level (p)
<b>Constant</b>	<b>2.07</b>		<b>.01</b>	<b>.03</b>		<b>.98</b>	<b>.065</b>		<b>.599</b>
age	.04	.12	.00	.05	.07	.06	.001	.020	.644
man*	-.04	-.01	.86	.27	.02	.50	-.068	-.070	.058
unmarried*	-.79	-.11	.00	-1.22	-.10	.01	-.102	-.098	.018
ratio of no. of family members in Romania vs those in Spain	2.47	.19	.00	6.20	.28	.00	.164	.091	.017
personal income in July 2008 (ln transformation)	.11	.07	.05	.23	.08	.01			
index of household durable goods in Romania	.25	.11	.00	.51	.13	.00	.023	.073	.056
protestant*	.04	.01	.78	.52	.07	.05	.041	.070	.096
frequency of attending religious services	.16	.09	.02	-.09	-.03	.45	.025	-.099	.018
arrived in Spain 2002-2006*	.98	.14	.00	.62	.05	.25	.094	.096	.067
arrived in Spain 2007-2008*	1.13	.16	.00	1.30	.11	.02	.136	.137	.010
subjective probability of returning to Romania	.37	.14	.00	.48	.10	.00	.051	.134	.000
no. of personal projects involving investments in Romania (for business, land, home)	.23	.07	.04	.17	.03	.38	.020	.041	.278
positive perception of jobs in Romania, in the future	.45	.06	.05	.56	.05	.15	.037	.038	.305
<b>R-Square</b>	<b>0.18</b>			<b>0.220</b>			<b>0.09</b>		
<b>N</b>	<b>828</b>			<b>816</b>			<b>743</b>		

**Data source:** Survey Romanian Communities in Spain (RCS), 2008. Three OLS regression models. Model 1 was run also in a full version, adding as predictor the number of years the immigrant lived in Spain. The new predictor does not have a significant effect on the dependent variable. All the predictors in the restrained model remain significant, excepting the one referring to projects involving investments in Romania. \* Dummy variables coding 1 for presence of the attribute and 0 for its absence.

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## NONMARITAL BIRTHS IN ROMANIA VERSUS OTHER EUROPEAN COUNTRIES - A FEW CONSIDERATIONS

TRAIAN ROTARIU\*

**ABSTRACT.** This study continues the author's previous attempts to analyse and understand the significance of the phenomenon of nonmarital births in European societies today. Rather than performing mostly on Romanian data as in previous research, this time an attempt is being made to obtain a broader picture of the phenomenon by processing information about European Union countries. The aim is to create a typology of these populations in relation to the phenomenon of nonmarital births by taking into account three key dimensions: the intensity, the tempo and the dynamics of the phenomenon, with special emphasis on Romania's place within these countries. The study innovates on the analysis of the phenomenon in that, in addition to the frequently used *proportion of nonmarital births*, a relative indicator, it introduces a *rate of nonmarital births*, which is an absolute indicator, calculated as a part of the total fertility rate (TFR), allotted to births outside marriage.

**Keywords:** population, fertility, nonmarital births, Romania, the European Union

### Introduction

The problem of nonmarital births has been addressed in my work both separately (Rotariu, 2009a) and in the context of discussions on demographic behaviour change in the second half of last century, with emphasis on the way they have been explained by a culturalist paradigm circulated under the improper label of the "second demographic transition" (Rotariu, 2006a, 2006b, 2009b). These analyses were based on available demographic information on Romania, the situation of other countries being raised only in general terms without providing detailed information on what was happening beyond our borders. This approach, however, has the disadvantage that it eventually leads to a sort of singularisation of the analysed country's situation, which is seen as different (even opposite) from that of other countries (of the Western civilisation, in this case) rather than as one that falls within a range of situations, showing similarities and differences with other nations.

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Essentially, our studies showed that the most frequently cited culturalist model,<sup>1</sup> which contains the idea of the profound change of major aspects in the demographic behaviour pattern illustrated particularly by northern and north-western European countries, only applies to a very small scale to Romania's population, meaning that only some of its elements are fully reflected while the others are represented to a lesser degree. Thus, from the six most important demographic changes highlighted in the 1960s:

- i. reduced fertility,
- ii. high percentage of nonmarital births,
- iii. high mean age of mothers at birth,
- iv. low nuptiality,
- v. high proportion of cohabiting couples,
- vi. increased divortiality,

only the first element is fully developed in Romania. The others are either developing or, as in the case of divortiality, have not undergone any significant changes since the 1980s. This lead me to the assumption<sup>2</sup> that actually *these tendencies can manifest independently and do not necessarily derive from a unique cause, namely the adoption of a postmodern value system.*

On the whole, I have focussed mainly on the (very low) fertility level, which is the most important element, I would say essential or, in any event, the starting point of most of the explanatory attempts that would include gradually the other issues mentioned above. My research shows that Romania is a pioneer in the field, being since the mid-1960s in the world top ranking lowest fertility countries. As only the interventions of the dictatorial regime kept the indicator value above the replacement level of generations, there were obvious expectations that our country quickly catch up with the other European countries, which had kept evolving in the absence of such a totalitarian regime. As it is known, only a few years passed after the fall of the totalitarian regime and this happened without researchers being able to acknowledge a dramatic change in the Romanians' value system, which would explain such behavior modification.

In short, my central idea is that the *decrease of fertility levels to 1.2 - 1.4 children per woman is a fact that can be explained without invoking the postmodern value system, supposedly its generator.* In fact, as early as the 1950s, the great French demographer Alfred Sauvy predicted such a possibility during the burgeoning baby boom period, seeing it as probable on condition a cheap and easy to use contraceptive appears. It is no accident that the generalised use of the contraceptive pill in the mid-1960s coincided with the beginning of massive changes in the level and tempo of fertility in Western countries.

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, regarding the contents and the birth of the theory of the second demographic transition, Van de Kaa (2002) and Surkin and Lesthaeghe (2003).

<sup>2</sup> My position is summarised in the *Introduction* to the recent volume of demographic texts, published by Polirom Publishing House (Rotariu, 2010: 13).

On the other hand, some aspects, such as the proportion of nonmarital births, have evolved in Romania on a trend that seemed to bring us closer to the Western states. Yet, as I have always said at least with respect to this phenomenon, the people contributing to its development after 1990 are not those that appear to be carriers of postmodern values, as such births are largely unwanted and products of very young women with a low level of education, located mostly in the countryside, in poor areas, of Roma ethnicity etc. Moreover, the trend was broken at one time and the process seems to have stopped after a maximum of 29.4% of total live births, achieved in 2004. Indeed, in subsequent years the following percentages were recorded: 2005 - 28.5%, 2006 - 29.0%, 2007 - 26.7%, 2008 - 27.4%, with a quasi-stationary level at around 28%. This was happening while, as we shall see, in many EU countries the phenomenon is experiencing a rapid growth in the last decade.

My interpretation was and remains that *most of the growth after 1989 is due to persons characterised by a pre-modern system of values*, knowing that in our area cultural modernisation was incomplete and there always have been a significant number of nonmarital births ("love children") that counted as an almost acceptable behaviour (at least in some communities) and not as a shameful one, as the behaviour was deemed in Western countries. Obviously, the lack of clear regulations after the fall of the old regime favoured the expansion of this behaviour mostly in cultural areas in which it had always occurred. Yet, such an extension can not go so far as the adoption of the other model and it is natural that at some point it should stop. On the other hand, this does not mean that in Romania there are no behaviours based on postmodern values (such as active women giving birth without wanting to get married or by children born to couples living in postmodern forms of cohabitation similar to those in the West, and not in the traditional common-law marriage), but, as seen in my previous analyses, this process is still in an early stage and its contribution to nonmarital births is modest.

### **The present inquiry: data and interpretation**

In the present study, which is mostly descriptive, I intend to place Romania among the EU member countries in terms of out-of-wedlock births. This will help us discover a certain number of Romanian features that can be found in neighbouring countries and, even more importantly, that each country has its own specificities, thus being difficult to highlight a general trend towards a form given by a few representatives of the above mentioned "pure" theoretical model. Furthermore, the data will show that the issue of children born outside marriage, everywhere in Europe should take into account the contribution of the most deprived groups who often live a pre-modern lifestyle. This finding is



supported by results of other research. Thus, in a slightly outdated document (INED, 2000) it is said that despite the spread of nonmarital births in all walks of life (in parallel with widespread cohabitation), they remain more frequent "in popular milieus." In an article dating roughly from the same period (Masuy-Stroobant, 2002), the author emphasises several differences between those born within and outside the institution of marriage in Belgium, finding clear inequalities in relation with the latter, which obviously arise from social inequalities in which children are born and live.

An ample documentation would no doubt be necessary to describe in detail the situation of each country, which is beyond my capabilities of individual researcher. Therefore, I will limit my study to the processing and analysis of statistical data on EU countries<sup>3</sup>, available on the EUROSTAT site. In spite of some lacunary information, the European institution offers for the recent period the evolution of the intensity of nonmarital births and the change in their tempo in comparison with what used to be called "legitimate" births. An informed reading of these figures can highlight various types of situations related to statistics and structure and also to data dynamics/ trend.

Firstly, Table 1 shows some basic data<sup>4</sup> that represent a starting point for an overall view of the intensity of nonmarital fertility within the general fertility context of the analysed countries. As can be seen, there is information on the *current fertility rates*, both for all births and separately for births outside the marriage<sup>5</sup>, aiming to become a most reliable intensity measure instrument. The use of these rates represents a methodological innovation because we chose not to limit our approach to the share of nonmarital births out of the total number of births (as do most studies). Indeed, it is easy to understand that the share of these births is only a *relative indicator*, as it depends on the intensity of all births whereas the nonmarital fertility rate is an *absolute indicator* because it measures only the intensity of births outside the marriage, regardless of fertility within marriage.

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<sup>3</sup> I shall present comparative data only for 24 out of the 27 EU countries because the figures I would have to use in various detailed analyses are too small for the other three (Cyprus, Luxembourg, and Malta); in a similar vein, I am going to use only data for "metropolitan France" and not those for its "overseas territories."

<sup>4</sup> Concerning data in Table 1, mention should be made that at the moment of this analysis, the latest data on EUROSTAT site were from 2008, but not all countries had updated so actually I used the most recent figures for each country.

<sup>5</sup> The fertility rate of nonmarital births is calculated similarly to the total fertility rate, by taking into consideration only the children born outside the marriage. Thus, the number of nonmarital births by women with age x in a given year is divided by the total number of women aged x. This way we obtain rates of the second kind for each age ranging between 15 and 49. The mentioned indicator is the sum of these rates. Evidently, the rate of births within marriage is represented by the difference between the TFR and the nonmarital fertility rate; in other words, the TFR can be subdivided into two components, corresponding to the two types of births.

**Table 1.****Synthetic table of general fertility and the intensity of nonmarital births for 24 EU countries in 2008**

Country	Total fertility rate (TFR)	Nonmarital fertility rate (NMFR)	Share of NMFR in TFR (%)	Share of nonmarital births in total births (%)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)=[(3)/(2)]x100	(5)
Austria	1.41	0.55	39.2	38.8
Belgium*	1.82/1.76	0.70	39.7	39.4
Bulgaria	1.48	0.76	52.0	51.1
Czech Republic	1.50	0.57	37.8	36.3
Denmark	1.89	0.89	47.2	46.2
Estonia	1.66	0.97	58.6	59.0
Finland	1.85	0.75	40.7	40.7
France	2.00	1.03	51.7	51.6
Germany	1.38	0.44	32.3	32.1
Greece	1.51	0.10	6.6	5.9
Hungary	1.35	0.55	41.1	39.5
Ireland**	2.10/1.93	0.62	32.4	32.7
Italy***	1.41/1.37	0.25	18.6	17.7
Latvia	1.45	0.61	42.6	43.1
Lithuania	1.47	0.41	27.9	28.5
Netherlands	1.77	0.73	41.4	41.2
Poland	1.39	0.28	20.1	19.9
Portugal	1.37	0.51	37.5	36.2
Romania	1.35	0.38	28.1	27.4
Slovakia	1.32	0.41	30.9	30.1
Slovenia	1.53	0.81	53.1	52.8
Spain	1.46	0.49	33.8	31.7
Sweden	1.91	1.05	55.0	55.7
United Kingdom**	1.94/1.85	0.81	44.1	43.7

**Note:** \*) 2005; \*\*) 2006; \*\*\*) 2007 are years for which the figures in columns 3-5 and the second figure on the second column are valid, the latter being used to calculate the share in column 4 for the respective countries.

In order to see more clearly the difference between the two indicators, namely between the proportion of nonmarital births and their rate, the 24 countries can be ranged according to their values. Two distributions are obtained, which obviously will not be very different, but not identical either. Here are the two hierarchies, as shown in Table 2, indicating in ascending order of values, the rank of each country based first on the nonmarital rate and then on the percentage of nonmarital births.

**Table 2.****The ascending ranking of countries according to the rate (1)  
and the percentage (2) of nonmarital births**

<b>Ascending ranking of countries</b>	<b>Nonmarital birth rate</b>	<b>Percentage of nonmarital birth</b>
	(1)	(2)
Greece	1	1
Italy	2	2
Poland	3	3
Romania	4	4
Slovakia	5	6
Lithuania	6	5
Germany	7	8
Spain	8	7
Portugal	9	10
Hungary	10	14
Austria	11	12
Czech Rep.	12	11
Latvia	13	17
Ireland	14	9
Belgium	15	13
Netherlands	16	16
Finland	17	15
Bulgaria	18	20
Slovenia	19	22
United Kingdom	20	18
Denmark	21	19
Estonia	22	24
France	23	21
Sweden	24	23

It can be noticed that only the first four countries and then the Netherlands maintain their position in the two rankings. There are also several pairs of countries that retain their neighbouring positions in both hierarchies but switch their places. Finally, there are others that move at least two positions from one ranking to the other. The latter situations seem to me the most attention-grabbing and it should be interesting to see which countries have a lower rank according to the first indicator (lower intensity of nonmarital fertility) and a higher one according to the second (higher percentage of nonmarital births) and vice versa. In the first category, with a lower rate, we can notice Hungary, Latvia, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Estonia whereas in the second, Ireland, Belgium, Finland, United Kingdom, Denmark and France. The explanation is simple: the

first have a lower overall fertility than the latter, and therefore, *ceteris paribus*, will have fewer births out of wedlock reported to a woman at the same percentage of nonmarital births or, conversely, will have a higher percentage of nonmarital births, for the same average number of children born out of wedlock by one woman. The most glaring inconsistency of positions according to the two criteria are manifested in the case of Ireland, a country which ranks a modest place 9 according to the percentage of nonmarital births while it reaches a much higher synthetic indicator: the 14<sup>th</sup> position.

The effects of this kind help us understand that, even if not very broad, the range of the general fertility in Europe in recent years shows a certain diversity and the differences highlighted in Table 1 can count significantly in some situations like the one contemplated here, not to mention its application to other more important aspects such as reproduction. Let us note that, in terms of fertility levels, our country ranks low among the 24 European countries analysed, namely position 23, with Slovakia on the last position. It is true that, unlike western and northern countries, with a fertility much closer to 2 children per woman, other countries such as Germany, Hungary, Poland and Portugal follow Romania closely, with a very low fertility level, below 1.4 children per woman whereas just above are the other countries in Eastern, Central and Southern Europe. What is still to be noted is that in recent years European countries have shown a slight increase in fertility, both in the case of those with very low levels (in 1999, the Czech Republic had 1.13, Spain 1.20, Italy 1.23, Latvia 1.18, Slovenia, 1.21) and in the case of those with over 1.5 children (in the table, the figures for the latter climb from 1.75 for France in 1997, 1.90 for Ireland in 2000, 1.72 for Finland and Denmark in 2002, etc.). This trend - which may be a fleeting episode occurred after ending a period of deferment of marriage, when the deferred recovered, but which, equally well, can mean the beginning of a longer upward trajectory - is not visible in Romania, because for more than 15 years annual fertility has maintained around 1.3 children per woman.

Let us return to the main aspect of the present study, namely the intensity of nonmarital births. If in the case of fertility, differences between European countries are still relatively small (compared with what still happens in other parts of the world), the intensity of births outside marriage profoundly distinguishes European societies. Indeed, the latest available data show a change in the proportion of nonmarital births from 5.9% in Greece to 59.0% in Estonia and a variation rate of these births from 0.10 children per woman in Greece to 1.05 in Sweden, so that no matter how we measure intensity, it varies on a scale from 1 to 10.

The value of 0.38 children per woman and a share of 27.4% undoubtedly situates Romania within the group - quite varied in itself - of the countries with a low intensity of births outside marriage, this phenomenon being more

spread in Romania than in Greece, Italy, and Poland and a little less than in some other countries such as Lithuania, Slovakia etc. More clearly, leaving aside Greece, with a very exceptional situation among the countries analysed, then Italy and Poland, also with lower values, Romania is part of a group of countries where nonmarital fertility is approaching 0.4 and is not higher than 0.5 children per woman while the proportion of births outside marriage is around 30%, namely Germany, Ireland, Lithuania, Slovakia, and Spain. In contrast, the situation is more complicated if we consider the two parameters simultaneously because, as shown above, they may generate different rankings, especially in this area. Indeed, Estonia, Sweden, Slovenia, France and Bulgaria have a higher than 50% share of out-of-wedlock births, whereas Sweden, France, Estonia, Denmark and the United Kingdom have the five largest values of the fertility rate, the sequence being in descending order in both cases. Obviously, it is hard to find a factor to account for these rankings, since neither geographical location on a west-east or a north-south axis nor the religious dimension or the membership/non-membership in the former communist bloc explains these differences. Most likely we are dealing with an interaction of numerous factors, which ultimately gives each country its specific profile.

Finally, mention should be made that in Table 1, we pointed out in the fourth column, the share (in percentage) of the nonmarital rate in relation to the total fertility rate. This indicator is theoretically better than the one in the last column, namely the share of nonmarital births but, because their values are close, I will not comment on their variations and I will not introduce it in other analyses, taking also into account the fact that the percentage of births outside marriage is a better known and more frequently used indicator.

Beside the intensity with which nonmarital births occur in populations at a given time, a second dimension of the phenomenon requires careful study, which is the timing of births, i.e. how births are distributed in relation to the ages of those involved (particularly women). Some of the tempo indicators are highlighted in Table 3. We shall take a brief look at them and then visualize distributions for certain countries by graphs and charts.

Concerning nonmarital births, Table 3 shows a few significant indicators: mean<sup>6</sup> age, median age and proportion of births for women under 20 years old and those for women aged 25 upwards. It should be understood that the interpretation of these data is not very simple because we need to keep in mind that there are (still) large differences between European countries in relation to birth tempo as a whole, differences which shall be reflected in the timing of nonmarital births. In other words, it would be interesting to compare countries using only differences of tempo of nonmarital births, which *do not originate*

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<sup>6</sup> Mention should be made that all mean ages at childbirth are the rough figures and not the standard. The differences between these types of values are minor and the use of one or another does not influence the results of our analysis.

*from a general pattern of births.* Such a thing is technically difficult to achieve and I shall use only a cursory analysis, which is possible by comparing the mean age for nonmarital births either with that calculated for all births, or with that performed for marital births. These latter two values appear in columns 2-3 while the 5<sup>th</sup> column highlights differences between the mean maternal age within and outside marriage.

**Table 3.****Synthetic table of the timing of nonmarital births for EU countries in 2008**

Country	Mean age of mother at birth of child				Median age for extra-marital births	% of nonmarital births of mothers aged under 20	% of nonmarital births of mothers aged 25 and above
	Total	Marital births	Extra-marital births	Difference between marital and non-marital births			
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
Austria	29.9	30.6	28.7	1.9	28.4	6.8	71.6
Belgium*	29.6	30.2	28.7	1.5	28.5	5.4	73.9
Bulgaria	26.9	28.6	25.3	3.3	24.7	22.0	48.1
Czech Republic	29.7	30.5	28.2	2.3	28.4	7.4	69.9
Denmark	30.9	32.0	29.6	2.4	29.4	3.1	79.3
Estonia	28.6	30.0	27.6	2.4	27.2	9.4	64.3
Finland	30.1	31.1	28.6	2.5	28.2	4.9	70.7
France	30.1	31.1	29.1	2.0	28.8	4.3	75.4
Germany	30.4	31.3	28.3	3.0	27.9	8.4	67.3
Greece	30.7	30.9	27.2	3.7	26.4	20.0	56.2
Hungary	29.3	30.5	27.5	3.0	27.6	13.3	63.1
Ireland**	31.1	33.0	27.2	5.8	26.4	10.1	59.4
Italy***	31.9	32.1	30.6	1.5	31.0	5.9	79.0
Latvia	27.8	29.0	26.3	2.7	25.3	14.6	51.8
Lithuania	28.0	28.5	26.7	1.8	25.9	14.6	54.9
Netherlands	31.1	31.5	30.4	1.1	30.5	2.9	82.7
Poland	28.2	28.8	25.9	2.9	25.0	16.6	49.8
Portugal	30.2	31.2	28.3	2.9	28.3	10.3	66.9
Romania	27.1	28.2	24.5	3.7	23.0	29.5	40.2
Slovakia	28.3	29.3	26.0	3.3	25.3	18.4	51.8
Slovenia	30.1	30.9	29.3	1.6	29.2	2.0	81.8
Spain	31.4	32.3	29.6	2.7	29.9	7.1	74.6
Sweden	30.8	31.7	30.1	1.6	30.0	2.6	81.1
United Kingdom**	29.5	31.4	26.9	4.5	25.9	14.5	55.1

**Note:** \*) 2005; \*\*) 2006; \*\*\*) 2007 are the years for which country figures in columns 2-8 are valid.

The similarity between the two models of births (within and outside marriage) is immediately visible, in the sense that there is a consistent variation between the mean age at birth of married and unmarried mothers, which is confirmed by a 0.76 correlation coefficient (Pearson) for the 24 countries. However, in spite of its being rather high, the coefficient indicates that the nonmarital births model explains only about 50% of the variance of the mean age values for the group.

Even if it does not solve the problem suggested above, calculating the difference between the mean ages of married and unmarried mothers helps us advance towards a better understanding of the issue. All differences are positive, pointing to the fact that unmarried new mothers from one country are younger than their married counterparts in the same country. It is interesting that these differences are significant, ranging from 1.1 years in the Netherlands to 5.8 years in Ireland. An important implication attributable to this difference could be that the small variation may mean that nonmarital births follow a related logic with the marital births (i.e. they are produced by cohabiting women or, in the case of single women, they have planned it similarly to the married ones). This reasoning is supported by the fact that, besides the Netherlands, among countries with the smallest differences are countries such as Sweden, France, Belgium, Austria, and Slovenia, where such a lifepattern is assumed to be widespread. Moreover, it is apparent that there is a very close negative correlation of the difference size with the mean age of married mothers (-0.61), which means that the differences decrease with the increase of maternal age, a phenomenon that also characterises countries of the kind mentioned above.

Interestingly, however, there are important exceptions to this pattern. For example, island countries such Ireland and Britain, show the largest differences, although both have a pattern of late childbearing. Yet, this is the only similarity because, when considering the intensity of nonmarital births, then the United Kingdom "is ahead" by about ten points in terms of their percentage and by 0.2 children, according to their rate. On the other hand, Italy is an interesting case, which is similar to Ireland regarding the childbearing age of married women but shows a very small difference, approaching that of the Netherlands, from which it is different in terms of the share of nonmarital births.

Table 4 shows our attempt to group countries according to the mean age at birth (all births) and to the difference between mean ages for the two types of births; I obtained this classification by compressing the values of each variable into three classes, with the limits highlighted in the table. The tendency mentioned above is evident along with the diversity of situations, respectively the deviations from the norm, which leaves no box empty, with at least a case for each.

Taking into consideration Romania's situation, we notice that the age difference between the two categories of mothers places our country among the countries with high values of the indicator, which is another sign of its being far from the postmodern model because a significant difference in age means that

married women have different patterns of births, as a result of their different social status, an idea which I clearly pointed out in my previous studies. Generally, in Romania births occur earlier than in most European countries, which gives us a typical position, along with Bulgaria, in the lower left box in Table 4. The difference to our neighbors south of the Danube is that the intensity of the phenomenon is much higher (double, in terms of rate) in Bulgaria.

**Table 4.**

**EU countries grouped according to the mean age of mothers at childbearing  
and the difference between the mean ages of women giving birth  
within and outside of marriage**

<b>Age difference: marital - nonmarital births</b>	<b>Mean age of mothers at childbearing (years)</b>		
	<b>Low(&lt;29.5)</b>	<b>Medium (29.5-30.5)</b>	<b>High (over 30.5)</b>
<b>Low (&lt; 2 years)</b>	Lithuania	Belgium Austria Slovenia	Sweden Netherlands Italy
<b>Medium (2.0-2.9 years)</b>	Latvia Poland Estonia	Czech Republic Finland France Portugal	Denmark Spain
<b>High (3 years and above)</b>	Bulgaria Romania Slovakia Hungary	United Kingdom Germany	Greece Ireland

On the other hand, it should be noted that Romania's and Bulgaria's place within the rubric of large differences situates us not only among countries with overall low mean age at birth. As exemplified above - and as can be seen clearly from the table - this category also includes countries with average middle-aged new mothers (Great Britain, Germany) and even with high mean age (Greece and Ireland), which means that adopting the model of late childbearing can be accomplished even in the cases where a component of out-of-wedlock births subsists distinctly (as model) from marital births.

The data on the mean values used for the classification in Table 4 can be supplemented with those on the median age and the percentages for age thresholds listed in Table 3. The median value shows up to what age half of the nonmarital births occur while the other columns show the percentage of unwed mothers below 20 years of age and from 25 upwards. Here, of course, differences between countries appear to be very spectacular: the median ranges from 23 in Romania to 31 in Italy; the percentage of nonmarital births by mothers under 20 years rises from 2.0% in Slovenia to 29.5% in Romania and those with mothers of at least 25 years, from 40.2% in Romania to 82.7% in the Netherlands.



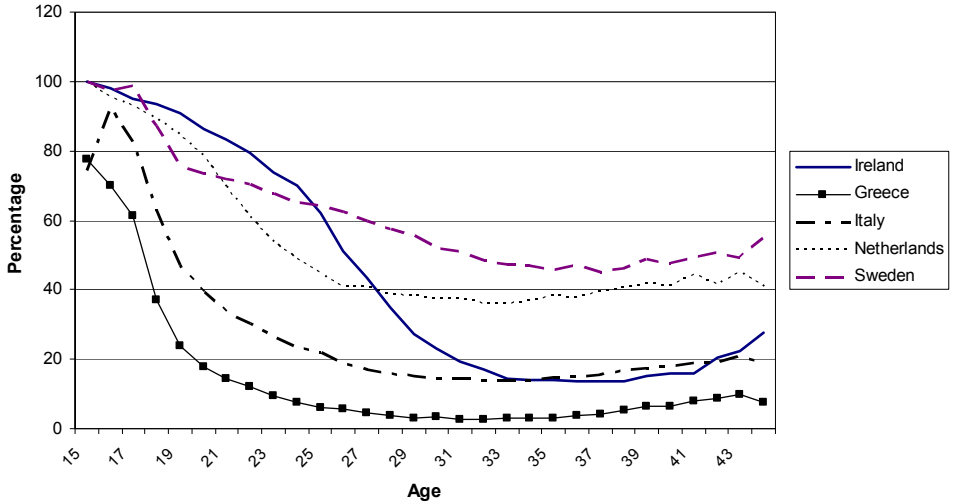
These figures highlight the special situation of Romania concerning the tempo of nonmarital births. In the case of our country, we can notice the lowest mean age (24.5 years) of women who give birth outside marriage, the lowest median, the highest percentage of such births by women below 20 years and, correlated with it, the lowest percentage of women above 25 years. Thus, whereas in terms of intensity we come close to several EU countries, in terms of the age at which these births occur, we are by far champions of early births. This simply means that the Romanian pattern of nonmarital births is, of all countries surveyed, the farthest from the ideal model that says these births should occur as a behavior generated by the adoption of postmodern values.

A series of suggestive information derive from the comparison of distributions of nonmarital births represented in three graphs. The first shows *the share of nonmarital births for each childbearing age*, the second shows *the distribution of out-of-wedlock births by maternal age* at birth, with frequencies being expressed as a percentage of all births, in order to make comparisons between countries. The third and perhaps the most expressive shows *the value of nonmarital fertility rate at each age*. Interestingly, the first distribution shows that in all cases the curve starts at 15 years from high values (close to 100%) and decreases faster or slower; then, around 30 years, it starts to slightly rise again and ends in a plateau. For some countries, this shape of inverted J is sharper, whereas for others it is less pointed. Yet, all countries begin to manifest the highest frequencies of out-of-wedlock births at ages below 20, confirming the previous assumption that there are everywhere women subgroups for which this behavior has completely different reasons than those stated by the theory of postmodern values.

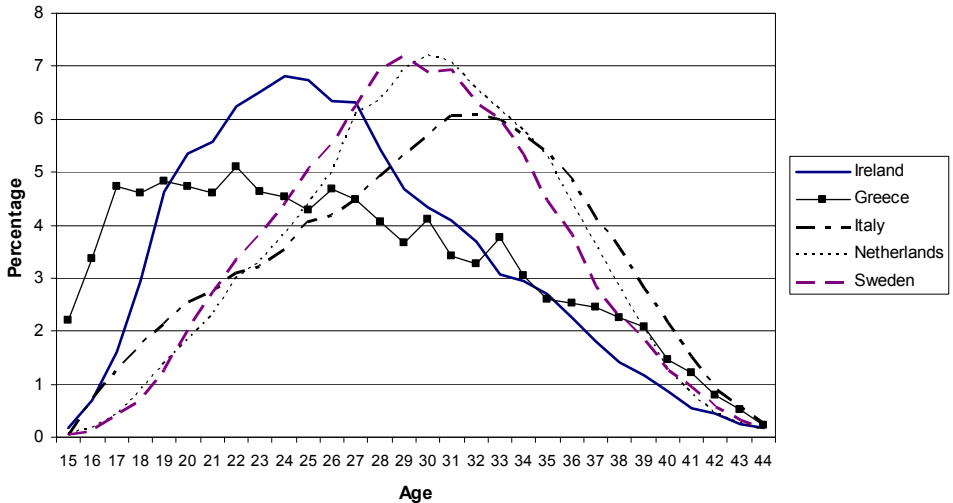
To sum up, the intensity of nonmarital births at each age is illustrated in Figures 1a, 2a and 3a, while their distribution by maternal age is illustrated in pair figures 1b, 2b and 3b. Figures 1c, 2c and 3c show the curves of nonmarital fertility rates. We chose to illustrate in graphic form only a few cases from those suggested in Table 3.

Firstly, Figures 1 present five out of the seven countries with late general births: three have small differences between the mean age of the two types of birth (the Netherlands, Sweden and Italy) and two have large differences (Greece and Ireland). The graphs in Figure 1a are very different from each other, drawing specific profiles for each country, which could hardly have been anticipated only by global indicators. However, the graph makes it clear that neither the five countries nor the two groups in Table 3 share common aspects. In contrast, the common aspect for each sub-category is visible in Figure 1b, which is built solely on tempo dates. Indeed, here the curves for Greece and Ireland have the maximum net more to the left than Sweden, the Netherlands and Italy. The situation is somewhat similar in Figure 1c, except that intensity places the curves at very different heights, with Greece and Italy very low, Ireland in the middle and the Netherlands and Sweden reaching very high rate values for certain ages. Therefore,

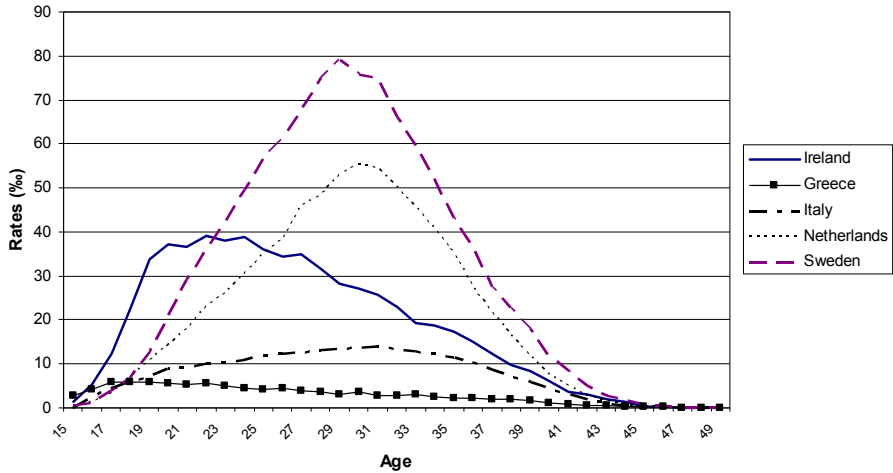
it means that in the first two countries, even though they share late births with the others, the category of women who give birth outside marriage will be more clearly differentiated from that of those giving birth within it, by a well-defined unequal age, which may hide differences in social status.



**Figure 1a. The share of nonmarital births (%), by childbearing age, for five European countries with high mean age at birth**

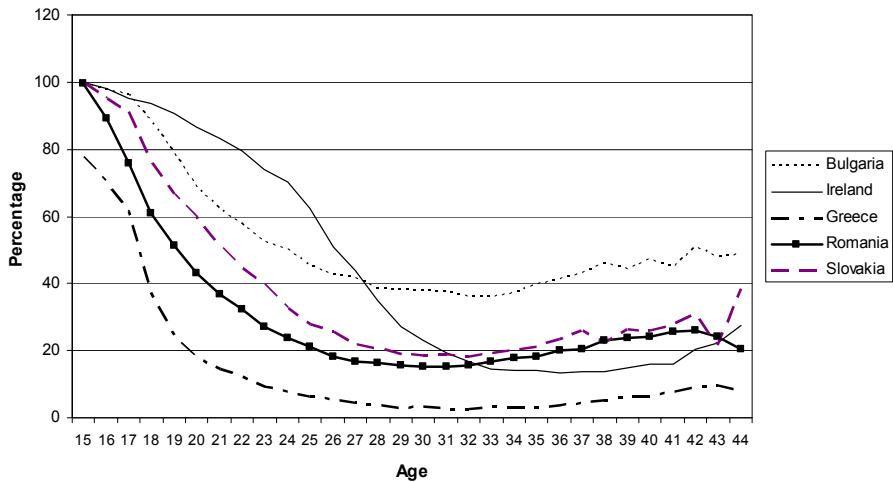


**Figure 1b. Distribution by maternal age of nonmarital births (%) in five European countries with high mean age at birth**



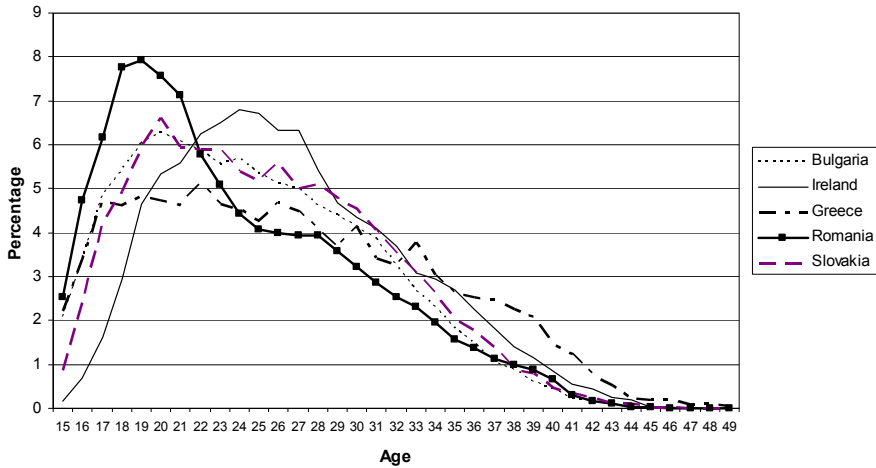
**Figure 1c. Fertility rates by age (‰) in five European countries with high mean age at birth**

Figures 2 show five countries that are placed on the last row of Table 4, namely with large differences between ages for marital and nonmarital births. Two of them, namely Greece and Ireland, were also represented in the previous graph in contrast to countries with low difference. This time, they are compared with three countries (Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia) with overall low age at birth. In Figure 2a, the differences of the curves are more related to their height

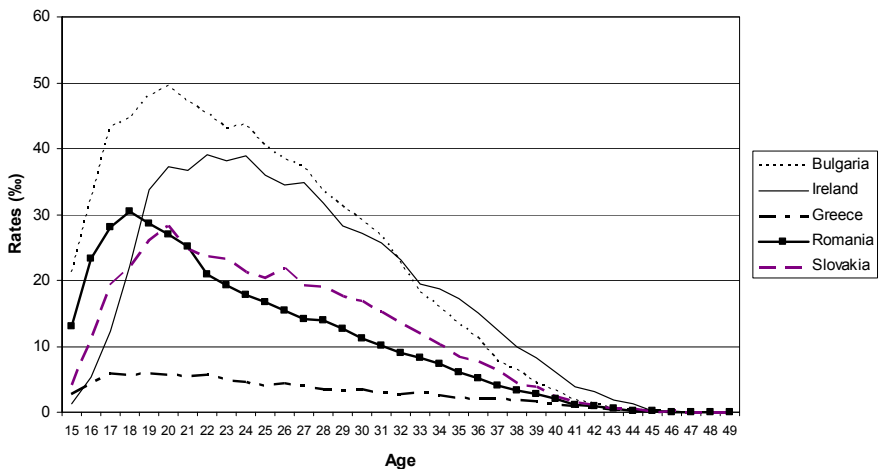


**Figure 2a. The share of nonmarital births (%) for each childbearing age, for five EU countries with large difference between mean age at marital and nonmarital births**

(showing the intensity of nonmarital births for each age) except Ireland that, similar with the previous case, has a slightly dissimilar shape. Next, in Figure 2b the differences in the curve shapes are less visible than in the precedent similar case, namely 1b. Again, Ireland slightly differs in that it has the frequency peak somewhat to the right. However, all five curves are strongly asymmetric, pointing to the left, Romania being the most obvious case of this kind. This finding is also reflected in Figure 2c, only now, as in the previous case, the height of the curves also marks the intensity of the phenomenon itself.

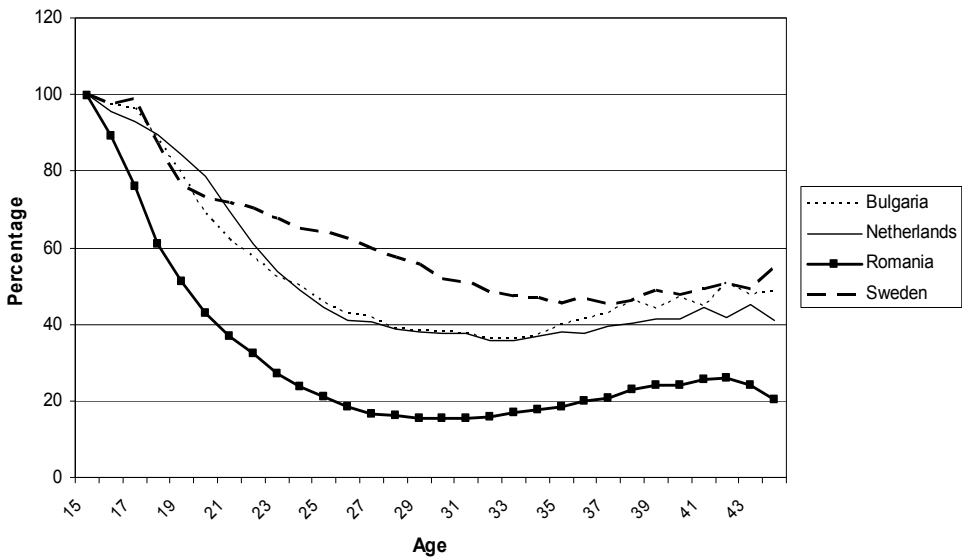


**Figure 2b. Distribution by maternal age of children born outside marriage (%) for each childbearing age, for five EU countries with large difference in the mean age for marital and nonmarital births**

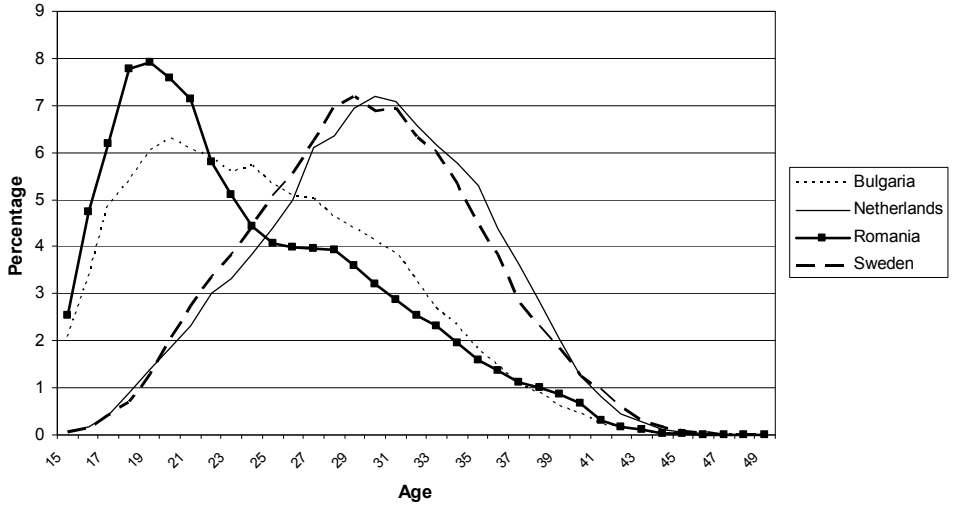


**Figure 2c. Fertility rates by age (‰) in five EU countries with large difference between mean age for marital and nonmarital births**

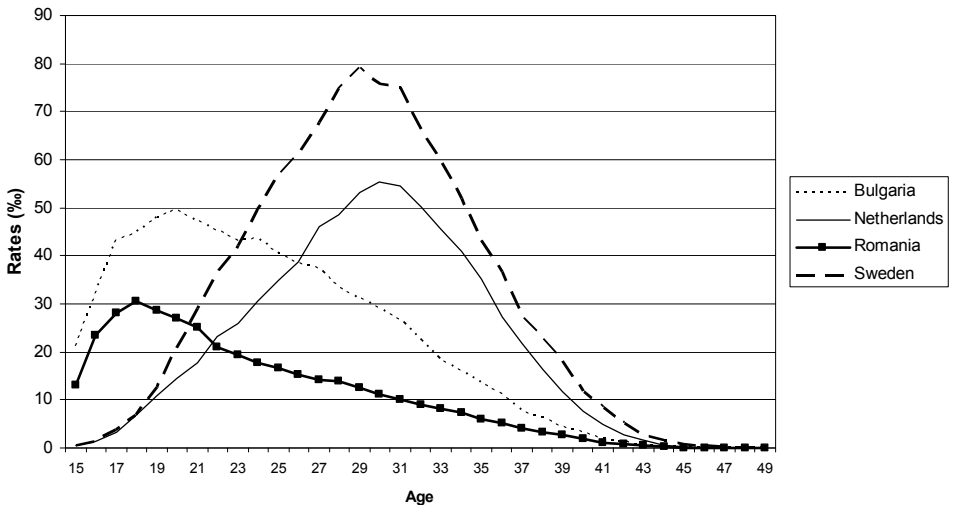
In Figures 3 we have highlighted two contrasting situations, by choosing from Table 4 two countries in the bottom left corner (Bulgaria and Romania) and two in the upper right corner (the Netherlands and Sweden). Again the situation in terms of relative intensity create the basic features of Figure 3a, where Romania is clearly placed below the other three countries that have, as previously seen, a higher level of nonmarital births. On the other hand, in Figures 3b and 3c, the timing similarities approach Romania to Bulgaria (with early birth ages) and the Netherlands to Sweden (both with late birth ages). It should be noted, in this last figure, that there are shape and height distinctions between Bulgaria and Sweden, marking profound dissimilarities between these two countries that, seen exclusively from the perspective of the proportion of nonmarital births, share the same category, having similar high values (51% in the first case and 55.7% in the second).



**Figure 3a. The share of nonmarital births (%), for each childbearing age, for four EU countries in contrasting situations in terms of the mean maternal age and of age differences of women giving birth within and outside marriage**

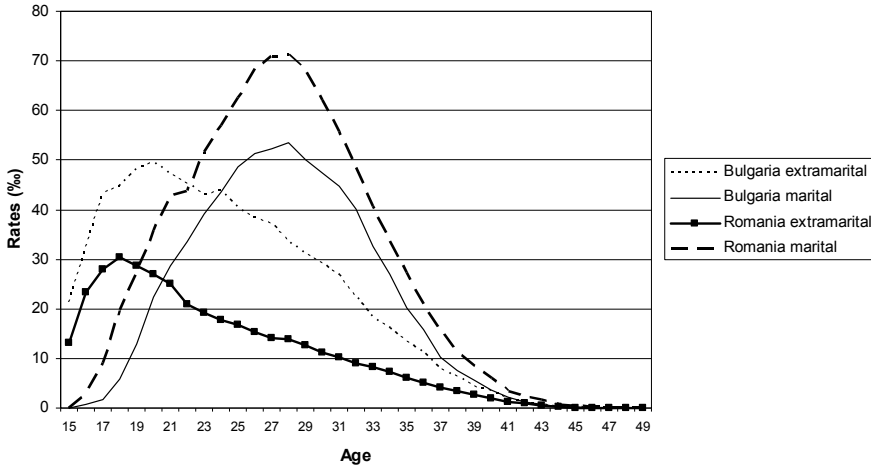


**Figure 3b. Distribution of nonmarital births by maternal age (%) for each childbearing age, for four EU countries in contrasting situations in terms of the mean maternal age and of age differences of women giving birth within and outside marriage**

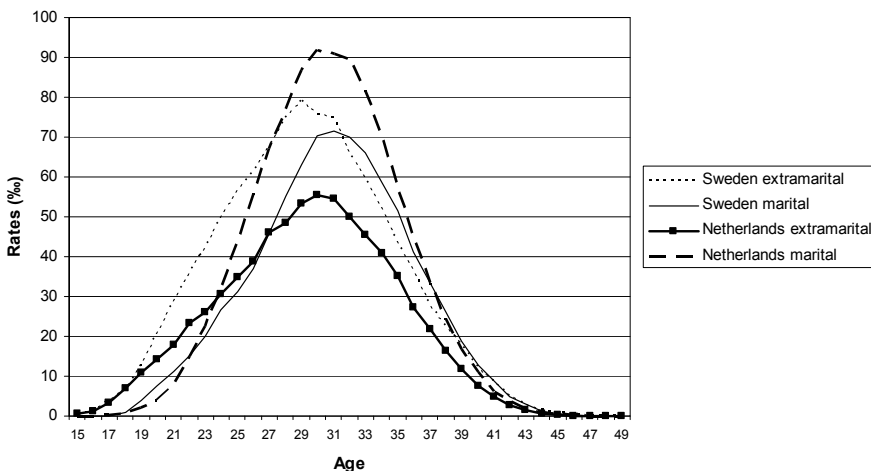


**Figure 3c. Fertility rates by age (‰) for four EU countries in contrasting situations in terms of the mean maternal age and of age differences of women giving birth within and outside marriage**

It is highly tempting to use other types of graphs to draw attention to differences among European countries in terms of birth intensity and timing as this way of illustration can suggestively highlight many otherwise unnoticeable nuances. I shall add only one type of graph based on fertility rated by age in order to make visible the difference between the intensity of marital and nonmarital fertility at each age between 15 and 50 years. For comparisons, Romania and Bulgaria are presented in Figure 4a and Sweden and the Netherlands in Figure 4b.



**Figure 4a. Marital and nonmarital fertility rates by age in Romania and Bulgaria (‰)**



**Figure 4b. Marital and nonmarital fertility rates by age in Sweden and the Netherlands (‰)**

Similarities and differences are very obvious. Mainly, it is noticeable that for the pair Romania-Bulgaria there is a definite difference in terms of value distribution for the two types of births, with the nonmarital being much earlier than the marital. In contrast, Figure 4b shows similar curve shapes in both cases. Secondly, the differences between the countries on the same graph are more pronounced in terms of curve heights, namely in relation to the intensity of the phenomenon they represent. In Bulgaria, the intensity of nonmarital births is higher than in Romania while the marital intensity is lower. Similarly, Swedish nonmarital births are more frequent at almost all ages than in the Netherlands whereas, in contrast, the marital births curve in the Netherlands is higher.

Finally, by introducing the third aspect mentioned above, namely the dynamics of nonmarital births during the recent period, new similarities and differences between European countries will be visible right away. To avoid complicating the analysis, I will limit my approach to a single indicator, namely the share of nonmarital births of the total births for a year for which recently published information on the respective countries is available. In Table 5, based on a time interval of ten years, I shall attempt to highlight the increase by pointing out both to the absolute growth (the difference in percentage between the two ends of the time interval) and to the relative growth (the difference in percentage as compared with the initial figure, which is obtained as shown in the last column of Table 5).

**Table 5.**

**The relative and absolute growth of percentages of nonmarital births during the latest decade, using available data**

Country	Period	Initial value (%)	Final value (%)	Absolute growth (percentage points)	Relative growth (%)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)=(4)-(3)	(6)=[(4)/(3)-1]x100
Austria	1998-2008	29.5	38.8	9.3	31.5
Belgium	1995-2005	17.3	39.4	22.1	127.7
Bulgaria	1998-2008	31.5	51.1	19.6	62.2
Czech Republic	1998-2008	19.0	36.3	17.3	91.1
Denmark	1998-2008	44.8	46.2	1.4	3.1
Estonia	1998-2008	52.5	59.0	6.5	12.4
Finland	1998-2008	37.2	40.7	3.5	9.4
France	1998-2008	40.7	51.6	10.9	26.8
Germany	1998-2008	20.0	32.1	12.1	60.5
Greece	1998-2008	3.8	5.9	2.1	55.3
Hungary	1998-2008	26.6	39.5	12.9	48.5
Ireland	1996-2006	25.3	32.7	7.4	29.2
Italy	1997-2007	7.0	17.7	10.7	152.9



Country	Period	Initial value (%)	Final value (%)	Absolute growth (percentual points)	Relative growth (%)
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)=(4)-(3)	(6)=[(4)/(3)-1]x100
Latvia	1998-2008	37.1	43.1	6.0	16.2
Lithuania	1998-2008	18.0	28.5	10.5	58.3
Netherlands	1998-2008	20.8	41.2	20.4	98.1
Poland	1998-2008	11.6	19.9	8.3	71.6
Portugal	1998-2008	20.1	36.2	16.1	80.1
Romania	1998-2008	23.0	27.4	4.4	19.1
Slovakia	1998-2008	15.3	30.1	14.8	96.7
Slovenia	1998-2008	33.6	52.8	19.2	57.1
Spain	1998-2008	14.5	31.7	17.2	118.6
Sweden	1998-2008	54.7	54.7	0	0
United Kingdom	1996-2006	35.5	43.7	8.2	32.1

Even if not all figures are exactly comparable because of different years at the ends of the decennial time range, the data in the last two columns of Table 5 are relevant for the various speeds with which the phenomenon occurred in recent years. We have, in relative figures, a variety of situations ranging from zero growth, in Sweden, to 150% (that is two and a half times) increase of the number of out-of-wedlock births, for Italy. Nearly double figures can be noticed for Belgium, the Netherlands, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. There is also an important growth, namely from 50% to 80%, in the case of Bulgaria, Germany, Greece, Lithuania, Poland and Slovenia. As shown in Table 4, which presents the two reference figures, most of them had low or very low starting points (Greece, Italy, and Poland), which explains why differences in percentual points (column 5) are not very big. There are some cases in which the high relative growth is doubled by a similarly high absolute growth: the Netherlands, Slovenia, Belgium, Bulgaria, and the Czech Republic, with the latter having undergone the most significant changes during the last decade. The countries with highest initial figures (over 35%), namely Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, the United Kingdom, and Sweden have undergone the most moderate relative growth, as expected (generally below 20%), with similarly non-spectacular absolute growth rates (up to 10 percentual points).

In terms of dynamics, our country has evolved in a very slow pace during the analysed decade. Even if during the period after 1989 it seemed to attain proportions comparable to western countries, the growth process practically came to a halt between 2004 and 2008. With an increase of the share of only 4.4 percentage points and a relative increase of only 19% over the last ten years, Romania is approximately in the situation of countries like Denmark, Finland,

Estonia, Latvia, Sweden that, in contrast, slowed down the growth after they attained a much higher level. My explanation is that a strong dynamics of this phenomenon can only occur if it includes a large number of women from all social categories and at all childbearing ages, which implies a significant number of unmarried women (a considerable proportion living in cohabitation), who are either single or divorced. In Romania's case, the phenomenon of nonmarital births is located especially at very young ages (in the figures above, the intensity curve plummets after the age of 20) occurring at women with low level of education, etc, thus having different origin than, for example, in Sweden or the Netherlands. This fact would allow for a massive expansion only when the situation that generates it undergoes a change, in other words when other categories of women give birth on a massive scale without being married.

In order to obtain a more detailed picture of the situation of the 24 European countries, I regrouped them by using four of the above mentioned criteria: the nonmarital fertility rate, the maternal mean age for nonmarital births, the age difference between women with marital and nonmarital births and, finally, the growth rate of nonmarital births in total births. All variables were dichotomised at a round cut-off point close to the median of the values at national level. The result is shown in Table 6, where the cut-off points are mentioned.

**Table 6.**

**The classification of countries according to the four criteria**

Difference between mean ages (marital births - nonmarital births)	Relative growth of the share of nonmarital births	Nonmarital fertility rate (children/woman)			
		Low (<0.60)		High (≥0.60)	
		Mean age, nonmarital births		Mean age, nonmarital births	
		Low (<28 years)	High (≥28 years)	Low (<28 years)	High (≥28 years)
Low (≤2,5 years)	Low (<50%)	Austria		Estonia	Denmark Finland France Sweden
	High (≥50%)	Lithuania	Czech Republic Italia	Belgium Netherlands Slovenia	
High (>2,5 years)	Low (<50%)	Romania Hungary		Ireland Latvia United K.	
	High (≥50%)	Greece Poland Slovakia	Germany Portugal Spain	Bulgaria	

Noticeably, the situation is very diverse again and only 5 out of the 16 theoretical possibilities are missing altogether. In other four boxes there is only one country. Even where there are several countries, some of them barely meet that criterion, thus being closer to countries situated in a neighbouring box. In other words, the group located in a square is not very homogenous because of the large variation of the values. Moreover, because they have been divided only into two categories, countries with very different values share the same category. However, we shall attempt to find the logic of their location in the table. On the far right, in the last column, there are seven countries with high proportion of nonmarital births and high maternal age, which seems to best illustrate the above mentioned theoretical model. Out of the seven, four already have a low growth pace (even zero for Sweden) and the other three (Belgium, the Netherlands, and Slovenia) got into that group due to their steady increase during the last decade. All six show a small difference between the mean age of women with marital first birth and respectively nonmarital, a fact which strengthens their position within the model.

At the other end of the diagonal, in the lower left, there are five countries with low share of nonmarital births, low age of women involved in this phenomenon and with a large age difference between the two categories of births. Three of these countries (Greece, Poland, and Slovakia) registered a higher growth rate of the proportion of nonmarital births in comparison with a lower one registered in the other two (Romania and Hungary). Clearly, another pattern is at work even if this group is, in my opinion, less homogenous. Indeed, leaving aside the growth rate, we could rather group Hungary and Greece, by the mean age, which is over 27 years in both cases; in contrast Romanian, Slovakian and Polish women give birth outside marriage at a much lower age (an important sign of another type of behaviour). On the other hand, with an EFR of 0.55, Hungary is closer to the countries grouped in the third column (such as Ireland or Latvia) rather than to Romania. Finally, this column also includes Lithuania, a singular and somewhat “peculiar” case (with low nonmarital fertility, low age at nonmarital births and also with a small difference between the two mean ages). By ignoring this latter aspect, we could attach this country to the group of the last three or of the five in the first column in an attempt to simplify by eliminating the singular cases.

In the second column, there are six countries with a high mean age at nonmarital births. As five of them have high growth rates, it is clear that all incline towards the pattern of those in the last column (Austria, the Czech Republic and Portugal have not attained a similar proportion of nonmarital births but are heading there quickly, being very close to the threshold of 0.60 children/woman, used for classification with only Italy being a little farther behind because of joining this process at a later date).

Finally, the five countries in the last but one column have a situation that is more difficult to characterise, except maybe the case of Estonia that, having a mean age of 27.6 years, is closer to the cut-off point (28 years) and can occupy a position in a box from its right with countries forming the first category mentioned above. It would be very difficult to locate the other four in other vicinities. Due to the low mean age, especially in Bulgaria, these countries seem closer to the bottom left, even if they have attained a high proportion of nonmarital births.

### **Conclusions**

To sum up, this classification according to four criteria does not lead to very homogenous groups, which can be explained by the fact that the diversity of European countries concerning nonmarital births increases when we take a closer look, namely when the analysis goes beyond the unique and insufficiently expressive criterion of the proportion of nonmarital births used worldwide.

This could be the general and somehow negative conclusion of this study in the sense that our initial implicit hypothesis stating that the situation of the European countries could be represented in a linear fashion with set country categories (some that have attained the criteria stated by the theory of the “second demographic transition”, others that are closer or farther from this model but tend to attain it, and a third category that is still very far from this goal, with Romania supposedly being a part of it) has been confirmed only to a low extent. The introduction of some fine tuning elements such as the absolute intensity indicator, also called the nonmarital birth rate, and of some elements related to birth timing, made clear that the high proportion of nonmarital births is not enough evidence to conclude that a transition to behaviour generated by adoption of postmodern values has occurred. Thus, the situation in countries with similar percentages of nonmarital births such as the pairs Romania-Ireland or Bulgaria-Sweden, is very different in terms of other elements of analysis, with Ireland having another model than Romania and Sweden a totally different one than Bulgaria. Briefly, a multidimensional analysis makes it easier to see the positions and trajectories unique for each country. Still, even if all European countries show increasing intensity growth, increasing maternal age at nonmarital births (as well), and diminishing age differences between marital and nonmarital births, it is not yet very clear how far this natural convergence will go.

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## NEOLIBERAL MANAGERIAL STYLES IN A POSTSOCIALIST ENVIRONMENT

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**ABSTRACT.** Based on a three years' ethnographic investigation in a sizeable Romanian owned company, offering construction services to multinationals, I follow the organizational discourses and practices used to sustain an active employee enrolment and the subsequent role assigned to leaders. Using insights from the managerial literature, which described the self-developing, inspiring neoliberal managers that should develop the right 'virtues' within themselves and also among their subordinates, I counter the assertion that capitalist enterprise needs positive justifications sustained by a new mobilizing generation of managers meant to ensure productive enrolment. Instead, I found that duress can still offer compliance, anti-socialist pervasive discourse can still offer a basis to normalize pressure for extra-hours, and managers translate neoliberal discourse into local adaptations to force submission. Compliance is obtained through informal sanctioning, repressing resistance or stifling discontent. A neoliberal interpretation of freedom, i.e. to move to another firm if discontent, contributes to a perpetuation of a threatening work environment. Coupled with a powerful imprint of socialist inefficiencies, it helps produce conformity for managers, as well as employees. Therefore, the model of manager resulting from this mixture is an authoritarian, self-made person, while autonomy impaired and readily relaying superior's imperatives.

**Keywords:** postsocialist organizations, neoliberal, managers, control, submission

### Introduction

The neoliberal model of leader, result of the '90s reorganization of the capitalist firm, led to a thriving business literature on the manager's new role in successful organizations. The new leaders are able to foster 'proactive mindsets', 'entrepreneurship', 'self-development'. However, if the 90's manager had to be skillful, creative, imaginative and inspiring (Du Gay, Salaman, & Rees, 1996; Iles, 2007; Parry & Bryman, 2006), Alvesson (2009) points to the fact that we are currently witnessing a further deepening of the requirements for soft personal and interpersonal management skills. The current managers have to develop the right 'virtues' within themselves and also among their subordinates. The

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leader is portrayed as entitled to a stronger managerial role, more autonomous and self-reliant, additionally empowering staff and helping their development and improvement. Moreover, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a, 2005b) argue that constraints are insufficient on their own to produce engagement. Thereby organizations are in need of justification in order to sustain an active enrolment, both in terms of individual justifications 'wherein a person finds grounds for engaging in capitalist enterprise' and general justifications "whereby engagement in capitalist enterprise serves the common good" (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a: 10). Organizations necessitate tools of conviction like socialization and ideology, so as to offer the needed personal reasons to be a part of the enterprise. The new generations of organizational leaders are part of this game, in which they not only have to sustain the organization through professionalism and technical know-how, but they also have to offer reasons for engagement both to themselves and to their subordinates. They have to develop and imprint shared visions in organizations and bound them to daily routines.

Contrary to this literature, I consider that duress - even though not ensuring positive engagement - can attain submission, especially if the neoliberal discourse is reinforced by a strong anti-socialist stand. In this paper I show that, in the case of the Romanian postsocialist context and its particular discursive constellation, the neoliberal parlance in the emerging local firms opposes capitalist virtues to socialist downfalls and produces a language of differentiation: there are the employees adapted to the new conditions and those less so. Managers providentially use the pervasive negative imprint of socialist experience to demand acceptance. Only the tough authoritarian method of leadership is deemed to have successful outcomes due to a supposed need to deal with employees still marked by socialist inefficient and laggard mindsets. I have found it important to look at this particular locale, because the firm that I researched transposes global neoliberal discourses of the self-reliant and flexible manager and the specificity of this discourse represents its capacity to sustain itself by making older forms of leadership obsolete. While in core-capitalist countries the neoliberal managers oppose the previous professionally competent, though autonomy-impaired managers, in the socialist periphery the neoliberal managers oppose the old socialist managers, highly competent but without the power resources to control the workers.

The undertaken case study derives from my perspective as an insider in a growing company, offering services to important multinationals, a company with a strong commitment to work and the neoliberal ideals of human resources development and self-determination, valuing loyalty and dedication, often described in connection to time availability. The most valued traits of an employee - leading to managerial positions in this neoliberal environment - proved to be extra-hours availability, authoritativeness, determination and sociability skills. I was especially interested in the logic of power relations and the ways they created and recreated new managerial forms and a tightly controlled space.

## Method and site

This article is based on an ethnographic exploration of the lived experiences of employees from a large Romanian company operating in construction of infrastructure sites. I used pseudonyms for the company (*Construct Energy*) and, also, for all the people involved, to prevent identification of the firm and to protect the privacy of those concerned.

Ethnography allowed me the investigation of how both common employees and managerial staff interpret their work environment and relations; hence, as a researcher, I could grow an understanding of what is central, distinctive and enduring about the organization (Albert & Whetten, 1985). The co-participant observation covered a period of three years and it began in 2007 as an employee in the human resources department; it presupposed working mostly with middle and top management staff for both recruiting projects and yearly evaluations of work performance. I gathered field material and assembled a “thick description” (Geertz, 1973) to allow the first step in my interpretation of the corporate culture. During the three years’ period I was able to write brief field notes during and outside office hours, which I organized and classified outside the office. Field notes provided the necessary tool to commit discourse and action to memory (Hawkins, 2008). After leaving the company, I interviewed twenty of my former colleagues; I used a semistructured interview format asking about changes in hierarchical structures, in performed tasks and time requirements, about interactions with colleagues and superiors. The interviews helped refine previously examined managerial issues and allowed the possibility to inquire about new developments occurring in the firm.

I used the fact that I was an employee of the studied site/company, departing from more traditional ethnographic studies, so that I could develop a more grounded, in-site account, without having to worry about the distance and social desirability effects which an ‘outside researcher’ automatically and unwillingly triggers. Interview and document data come to add to a rich field of events captured as they unfolded; the supplementary information gathered by techniques other than co-participant observation helped fill the gaps because I also noted, like others (Zoller & Fairhurst, 2007: 1355), the difficulty of always being in the “right place at the right time”. Also, I consider that the representation of the complex environment relations and discourse is inevitably ‘partial’ because “one cannot tell all” (Clifford, 1986: 7).

The researched site is a large and lucrative company that has three hierarchy levels: the owners, the chief executive and the general manager, are the supervisors of the next layer, the five members of top management (Romanian: *‘directori’*). The last hierarchy level is composed of middle managers, eighteen of them in 2007, and down to fourteen at the end of 2009, after the crisis-induced restructurings. In the entire management, half of the members are Technical University graduates, including the chief executive. Two core departments identify



with the main activity of the firm: a production department of more than one hundred low and semi skilled workers and a large technical department of male engineers. In addition, there are a few exclusively female departments, an assemblage of accountants, auction consultants, public relations secretaries, legal employees, human resources specialists.

My ethnographic work makes no claims of empirical generality. Romanian-owned firms having the same 'objective' structure, dimension or financial parameters may have different styles of managerial control, informal time demands or promotion systems. Nevertheless, I argue that my study aims for conceptual generalizability, as the purpose of the paper is to inform a better understanding of power relations' reinterpretations and adjustments.

### **From motivating cadres to motivating managers**

The researched company is pervaded at discursive level by the neoliberal model of the sensitive, inspiring and flexible manager; still, the way the implied soft skills are actually practiced is far from those prescribed. I distinguish between the desired qualities and abilities required of a good manager and the personal characteristics actually displayed and valued in the work environment. Neoliberal discourse does not translate into the actual neoliberal practice at the firm level, as the neoliberal terminology is abundantly penetrated by a remnant of socialist practices and adaptive neoliberal ideological changes from the part of managers themselves. The owners of *Construct Energy* consider managers, at least in discourse, as essential for running the firm and generating increasing profit. Some of them benefit from the mark of time, being with the firm from the beginning and growing with it; others are considered promising, possessing the desirable abilities and personal traits. The owners' expectations can be summarized by the need to perform, bring tangible results and fully commit to the firm with their time, abilities, experience, creativity and will to develop and better themselves. These requirements are normative and taken for granted prerequisites. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) showed that such capitalist demands come with very convincing promises. They showed that cadres, especially the young ones, need personal motivation to get involved in capitalist firms, in the form of stimulating activities which contain possibilities for self-realization and freedom of action. The ideology provides such a tool; the authors define ideology as a set of shared beliefs that are inscribed in institutions and bound up with actions. They named the ideology that justifies engagement in capitalism 'spirit of capitalism'. The spirit of capitalism is expressed "in a certainty imparted to cadres about the right actions to be performed to make a profit, *and* the legitimacy of these actions." (Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005a: 16)

Following an impressive prescriptive management literature from the 60's and the 90's, Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) draw a compelling picture of the different spirits of capitalism. In the '60s cadres were not happy with their assigned roles of technical experts (mainly engineers) or that of relays,

transmitting orders from above and noting problems from below. Those who really controlled the organization only added levels to the hierarchy but did not want to cede power, especially in small and middle sized firms. To the problems of lack of decision making power, lack of autonomy, little understanding of higher level decisions, the '60s solution was decentralizing, meritocracy and management by objectives. The latter was meant to eliminate the subjective way of evaluating employees, especially in small firms, where employers were accused of abusing their property rights and confusing the firm's interests with those of their family. The '90s experience significantly change in the spirit of capitalism, as Boltanski and Chiapello notes. Instead of the bureaucratic, multileveled hierarchical firm we now have a re-engineered lean organization that is flexible, innovative and proficient, working in networks, on team based projects, concentrated on customer satisfaction and mobilizing workers by their leaders' vision. Highly esteemed in the '60s, the 'cadres' become obsolete in the 90's, when the term itself is replaced by the English term 'manager'. Managers are supposed to have more autonomy, not waiting for decisions from above to impose on others; they are thought of as creative and become "team-leaders, catalysts, visionaries, coaches, sources of inspiration" (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005a: 65). The authority they enjoy is bound up with personal qualities, the trust they gained from their subordinates only confirms their communication and listening skills.

A similar picture unfolds following the stories of the entrepreneurial ethos of major financial players in London (Massey, 2007; McDowell, 1997), the high-tech elite from the Oxbridge complex (Henry & Massey, 1995; Massey, 1995), or even service guards firms (Allen & Pryke, 1994). The new cohort of managers that entered the market in the 90s defined themselves around a different set of competitive values and practices, as opposed to the dominant managerial group from the 70s and the 80s. What partially distinguished one cohort from the other may indeed be traced to the neo-liberal set of values, but more likely both cohorts drew much of their cultural identity from contrasting versions of entrepreneurial masculinities (Allen, Massey, & Cochrane, 1998). While older managers drew their identity around the values of paternalism and the consensual approach, the young managers observed a more aggressive and assertive style that had to inspire colleagues and teams, which had to gather followers (McDowell, 1997). Nevertheless, the aggressive and macho style, which was an important part of the '90s ethos (McDowell & Court, 1994), gradually receded and soft-skill and soft-power became more desirable traits to complement the self-reliant manager (Parry & Bryman, 2006). Similar processes have also been described in Eastern Europe. Yurchak (2003) speaks of the spirit of the new careerism in the Russian corporations, where the manager is required to be strong-willed and at the same time to convince, to persuade, to propose a vision. Yet, as opposed to core-capitalism's story, Yurchak's peripheral capitalist company is not supported by an elaborate justification discourse with promises of autonomy and security to everyone, but to a selected few.

My study points in a similar direction, motivating workforce is only used for key employees. And this fact is due to an overarching belief that commitment is not something that capitalism should gain or should work for, because the recourse to an antinomy, to socialist work passivity, suffices to motivate workforce, especially the educated part of it. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a) observed that the high levels of commitment demanded of cadres/managers cannot be obtained purely through duress, as they are the offspring of the bourgeoisie and less subject to immediate necessity compared to blue-collar workers. Also, there is a danger of defection by discontent managers heading for occupations less integrated in the capitalist mechanism (arts and sciences, public service, liberal professions). The assumption that managers cannot be motivated through duress alone stands. But, also, I observe the lack of sophistication regarding motivators deployed to ensure commitment, hard work and long hours.

The owners of *Construct Energy* defined themselves, as well as the business they run, as completely different from the previous socialist managerial style, still lingering in the first postsocialist decade. Nevertheless, one could hardly characterize the former socialist manager as lacking the necessary skills to adjust to a capitalist market. As eager practitioners of negotiations for different resources and informal adjustments in the shortage economy (see: Verdery, 1991), they were actually more than prepared for the disorganized, 'free' postsocialist market. The '90s represented a specific political and cultural context in which this powerful social group, with strong political connections (Pasti, 2006a, 2006b), was gradually defined as obsolete. As a matter of fact, the definition came from an emergent young group of capitalists in their 30s, who sprang in the new opportunity structure opened by the liberalizing market. I argue that given conditions of this generational contraposition and incipient capitalist growth out of a socialist environment presuppose new ways of relating to workforce in general and to top and middle managers in particular. This constitutes the ground from which tasks of motivating key employees are a lot easier. Specifically, a new discourse was created, associating socialist laziness with diminished life opportunities and capitalist work dedication with capitalist abundance and prosperity. Nowadays, the justifications of capitalism addressed to managers and engineers are not using the socialist counterpoint extensively, as the managers themselves developed ways of adapting to company needs and capital necessities, either constrained by sheer financial pressures – housing credits and an inflexible labor market – or finding inner justifications and drive to reflect the precise expectancies asked of them. In the next section, I consider the expectations the owners of *Construct Energy* have from their managers, (a) the specific methods of sanctioning and producing conformity, (b) the methods employed to motivate and win managers over, (c) as well as the external pressures from the labor market used by the owners to retain the managers. Then, I will analyze the particular, varied types of responses the managers give to these sophisticated

ways of being acted upon. And before summarizing the main arguments of the paper, I will use the 'communicational problem' vignette to show how the authoritarian manager gets normalized.

### **Conforming to the chief executive's anti-socialist way**

Leadership courses in *Construct Energy* are fruitless because the competent professionals are promoted regardless of their 'people skills', which is a relatively new, post-socialist human resources concept. During socialism 'people management' was not particularly needed because middle managers and engineers did not have authority over workers, as the whole system became ultimately dependent on the collaboration and flexibility of direct producers (Burawoy & Krotov, 1992; Kornai, 1992). In socialism, management was part of a system where workers had more power than nowadays. That was because they could collectively impede production (Petrovici, 2010). Nowadays, the owner is still very cautious when it comes to blue-collar workers. He often mentions that the real producers in the firm are the workers and any reward system or strategy that does not include them is unrealistic and doomed to fail; also, the idea of an employee union in *Construct Energy* is opposed because negotiating could waste management's time.

The ideal type of manager in this particular company is a result of the chief executive's views on proficiency and authority. Being a self made man himself, he admires individuals who are determined and ambitious. In addition, a good manager is considered somebody who can look confident, authoritative and even aggressive with subordinates representing a possible hindrance. But important features sought in a manager are also the professional qualities. The socialist system provided a ground for such a preference by supporting meritocracy through university acknowledgement. As one of the best in his Technical University generation, the Chief executive has learnt to appreciate knowledge and proficiency. Hence he promoted to a top management position a very knowledgeable and experienced engineer and former lecturer at the Technical University, who afterwards proved to be extremely unsuited for the position. This particularly good specialist, benefiting from work experience in multinational corporations, was slow when it came to almost any decision, did not inspire people, seemed weak to subordinates and perplexed by his job. Therefore, after a couple of years, the chief executive ascertained the fact that a good professional does not immediately make a good manager. The definition of the ideal manager suffered some changes in the process, in view of this new understanding. Accordingly, the ideal type manager retained only the characteristics related to force. The fact that one manager was calm, slow, undemanding and ultimately, inefficient, triggered the aspiration that all future managers be excited, imposing, authoritative, demanding. This invisible constraint became the norm in promoting and attributing managerial traits to employees. Some personality

types could have been more easily imagined in managerial positions because there were clear expectations about how managers behave and what sort of motivating discourses they use. Employees themselves instinctively know the people who could occupy positions of authority in the firm because they have understood the habitual promotion prone personal characteristics. Somebody like Monica (26 years old, working in accounting) used to make jokes all the time about others in the firm who are talking loudly and imperatively: "I think she really is boss material, she gave me such a look and she pushed me around" (laughing). The methods used to assert authority are usually indicative of the managerial capacity of those chosen to lead.

The chief executive's own evaluation of the different middle and top managers results into a simplistic division between the successful ones and the less successful ones. The successful ones are highly appreciated by higher management because they can impose themselves, they are tough, iron-fists, they determine the employees to work longer hours for same revenue. These traits are perceived as highly efficient in establishing hierarchy, communicating must do's and leaving nothing to negotiation. Leaders who communicate and negotiate are considered to be weak and probably prone to manipulation by subordinates. Authority is conceived as a natural personality trait and some are not fitted for a position of power because they lack the ability to lead in the desirable authoritative way. The words used by the chief executive to describe some of the less competitive leaders on the team were: 'feeble', 'idealist', 'unrealistic' or 'unfit manager, but we do not have another for the position'. It is particularly interesting how these various attributes are the main characterization for managers who have good work relations with subordinates; in stark contrast to the tough managers, who rarely have humane relations with their employees.

The way the chief executive imagines those seen as less successful influences their behavior towards colleagues and subordinates. The economic director, even if seen as a good professional, is considered to be one of the 'feeble managers' (*director slab*) who, despite changing a lot with time to fit the company's expectations of a true leader, is still not seen as authoritative enough. Five years ago, when only a departmental chief, she was regarded by her subordinates as a friendly, more experienced co-worker. Nowadays though, she is thought to be polite and pleasant in every-day interactions with subordinates, which employees are extremely grateful for, but more distant and even aggressive when she notices any slips. She likes to make clear that there is a hierarchical distance between her and the rest of the girls working in accounting and that she is to be obeyed without questioning. All of the managers have been taught that a commanding, resolute manager achieves better results. Some of the managers translated commanding as imperious and resolute as inflexible, and they treat people accordingly. The accounting female manager moved from warm and close to her employees to polite and tough when she sees fit. In difficult situations she puts on the impersonation of an ideal-type leader.

They all intuitively know that the true measure of a leader is given by the way he/she reacts in situations when the status-quo is questioned. They already are the guardians of the established norms of behavior and the enforcers of rules and regulations. When such a critical moment of contestation appears the managers are expected to nip it in the bud. The female economic director met such a situation when a person in accounting considered herself ill-treated by a middle manager in the department and she sent an e-mail to show her discontent about the fact that she was expected to stay after 17.30, when she could not find a bus to take her home at another hour. The e-mail was sent to her direct supervisor, the middle manager who expected her to stay longer hours at work and also to the director, expecting understanding from her part. Instead, she received from the director an answer by e-mail, who reprimanded her, making it clear that people are supposed to finish their work and not find faults and complain. The manner of writing was that of justified scold, but it made clear that the employee could not find any allies, that she should comply or leave the company.

Most of the hired managers were former acquaintances of the company's owner. Others have been with the firm from almost the beginning; relations have been built during around ten years. For example, the oldest manager brought in the firm by the chief executive, as his former college colleague, is considered weak, inadequate, even if boisterous. The environment created in the technical department led by Corin is natural and permissive compared to the other departments. His subordinates treat the occasional outbursts of irritation from Corin's part as nothing important, knowing that he also needs to seem commanding, to fit in. But he is yet another 'feeble manager'. As the chief executive's former university colleague and roommate, Corin also worked in an important state run company after '89, gaining a comfortable position of middle management there. He nowadays regrets the decision to change the state company environment, at the persistent requests of his former colleague who was running a growing firm. He confesses in resignation 'I was so stupid, I had a great salary there for those times, but I got to think I needed something more active, I was bored there and [name of the chief executive] said "you are not the one to sit around doing nothing" ...'

The so-called 'unrealistic' manager has very high expectations from people or from the business. Eugen, one of the top managers, a typical case of this category, works with an idea of western efficiency and competence that does not entirely fit company environment. His subordinates confront expectations that are demanded politely, but usually inadequately, without consideration to environment pressures and opportunities. These ideas and hopes sometimes make him seem impractical and he is not considered by the owner one of the good managers, but he is still appreciated for his connections and his lifestyle. He belongs to an upper-middle class, with urban, professional great-grandparents, artists and lawyers, while the owners of the company have rural parents, being

the first urban generation of their family. He shares leisure practices with the owners, enjoying each others' company in spare time activities, where the named 'unrealistic' director has his own domain of expertise.

Nevertheless, the chief executive not only disparages and imposes; he also tries to motivate, to win over, using different means for different categories of managers, either young or senior. An important mechanism for creating loyal managers is to promote young managers aware of the fact that promotion is a favor, given their age. He believes that youth implies a willingness to prove oneself and, with that particular goal in mind, a readiness to spend a lot of time working. To take an example, the financial director, named Rada, is a 28 year old high achiever. The fact that somebody who is 28 has already been a manager for a year, only points to the preference of top management for young cadres. Being young, ambitious and authoritative is deemed suitable for a managerial position. Young managers when nominated are being signaled that they are invested with the mark of tremendous potential, as opposed to common employees. Working relations and subordination suffer deeply from this constructed unbalance. The owners' desire to delineate very clearly between ranks creates insurmountable gaps, leading to employee-manager tensions.

In the marketing department, as another case in point, the newly appointed middle manager, 28 years old Mona, changed behavior once she was told about the future promotion. Her subordinate, Maria, is an appreciated employee who would have been more suitable for the head of department position as other coworkers use to say: 'she practically carries the department herself'. Mona was chosen for the power position because she seemed more impatient, ambitious and determined, while Maria is calm and collected, which is usually interpreted as a lack of ambition. Maria recollects something about her present supervisor Mona:

Everybody decided a while back that we should try to stick to the program, to leave work not much after 5.30. We all agreed about this after being tricked into staying long hours. They said we would be rewarded accordingly. In fact, nothing happened, we got nothing and then a colleague, Sorina, was very upset, she seemed resolute to end the working day at 5.30. But then, I don't know why, she changed again, she stayed late again... It was the same with Mona. When she heard that it was a possibility she would be named head of department because the other was to get maternity leave she suddenly stayed as much as they wanted. Before that, we all talked to leave together, but then she suddenly changed completely and behaved differently; she wasn't upset about the program anymore. Oh, well, of course she wasn't! (fragment from the interview with Maria, female aged 32, economist).

Mona is from the category of middle management who easily gets lured into the system with the promise of a position of power, a stroke of luck, improving status considerably. She is not admired by her three subordinates, who regard her as being disorganized, excessively scrupulous about unimportant details, lacking perspective and being tense and pressured unnecessarily all the time. Even her superior, the development manager, acknowledged the flaw of

fixating on irrelevant details, but also thinks of Mona as obedient, submissive, hard working, with the plus of being feisty and dominating, despite her thinness and feeble look. Therefore, higher management assigned her, as a much suitable choice for an authority position than all the other girls in the department. Mona's transformation confirms the fact that once employees are probable to become supervisors they rush to conform to the owners' view of a 'veritable manager'.

With the senior top managers, the chief executive has insisted on developing closer relations by getting to know them personally, visiting each other at times or occasionally having short week-end trips together. The firm also decisively contributed by paying a percent of the market value for the acquisition of large apartment flats for its top managers, in a good neighborhood, very close to the location of the firm itself. One excerpt from an interview with a former two-month middle manager revealed the owners' precise persuasive move.

They [top management] have their apartments with money from one part, another part to come, also some shares in the firm, some are godparents to others. You see why they can't risk anything; it's constraining... (fragment from the interview with Marta, female aged 33, PR manager in other firms for 5 years at the moment when she was brought to *Construct Energy*)

Gifts of this nature are a token of appreciation for many years spent working hard to erect a successful company, but also a persuasive way of ensuring similar commitment in the future. Aware of the fact that age brings about new priorities and duties even for the most dedicated and loyal of employees, the owners attempt to recapture the devotion and striving of those with the greatest potential.

The incentives at this stage in the top management's careers become completely different due to this awareness. If until this moment it had sufficed to be rewarded with a 'position', incurring high responsibility and work load but also a relatively good salary, from a certain number of years on other incentives would more appropriately be used. A position of authority over employees and twice the employee's salary are believed to be lacking the motivating capacity for individuals of a certain age and experience in the firm. If the motivator of being a 'boss' and enjoying a relatively large income arrests middle management's ambition for some good years, even if the relation with their employer is far from ideal, it is not the same with upper management. The chief executive considered necessary that they be stimulated otherwise. Therefore, he wanted something to tighten the bond that had been formed between them. So far as the working relations cannot be changed into a positive experience, unveiling intrinsic motivators, the head of the company offered the things thought to be the most powerful motivators: money and luxury goods.

However, putting aside the various strategies to construe or buy loyal managers, there are external pressures to stick to one's position. The labor market in Cluj is not providing a lot of chances to move from a position of middle or top



management easily. Therefore, managers in the firm are particularly careful to keep their positions, especially because they are under constant scrutiny. The company, represented by its owners, considers top and middle management, together with the most dedicated engineers and some other specialists from support departments, to be important for the progress of the firm. Nevertheless, most of them are thought not to be irreplaceable and there is always an implied acknowledgment of this fact from their part, as they are constantly battling to maintain a good image of proficiency and dedication to maintain their position. Coming to a managerial position in a relatively big company from Cluj is a mark of success and the managers in *Construct Energy* are well aware of that fact. The labor market is not particularly flexible, there are not too many options for a technical head of department to reorient on the market and find some other large Romanian company or multinationals offering the same position of power. Some multinationals have even made agreements with the owners of *Construct Energy* not to pursue each other's technical employees, therefore restricting mobility for a large part of their workforce.

Given the few options of finding same technical profile firms in Cluj and the restrictions imposed by some of them when it comes to recruitment, engineers and technical managers in *Construct Energy* are cautious, in view of securing their job. Limited options of finding similar positions are also the case for the PR middle manager, whose work market is even more reduced to a couple of large firms; for the Commercial middle managers, whose work is very specific to the company and cannot constitute a serious asset on the market, given that on the market people in Commercial departments are not so narrowly specialized. The HR and Accounting departments are the most likely to find other jobs on the market, even at the managerial levels, as these departments are part of many different profile companies, as support departments. Accordingly, the turnover in these departments is significantly larger than in the rest of the company. Turnover in the company has always been very high, around 20 percent, remaining at relatively high levels even during the 2009-2010 crisis. Even though the crisis affected the labor market in an unprecedented manner, the company still lost employees, and not only those it made redundant, but also many who reached their frustration limits and could not continue to be subjects to the managerial methods of organizing and disciplining.

### **The threatening milieu: treating discontent and repressing resistance**

The time that is wasted is not the person's but the employer's because the employer is paying for it, argued F.W. Taylor (1911) a century ago. The chief executive's previous work experience, as an middle-level technical position in a state firm, turn him to condemn the tricks of the shop floor, such as 'soldiering', a term defining the practice of workers agreeing on a common work pace, resembling soldiers on parade. The new meta-routines of scientific management brought the

efficient use of the human body. The human body was completely disciplined by Taylorists, also helped by the appearance of the Fordist assembly line. A docile and cooperative body emerged. Taylor routinized power. Management intervention, in terms of an explicit exercise of power, was formulated to handle situations where routines were not working. Management knowledge was designed to order and control what was known, protecting and insuring it against the uncertainty of the unknown, as much as possible (Brown & Duguid, 2000). Later, the managerial work was supposed to also foster and gather the best in employees for the benefit of efficiency and productivity.

Nevertheless, the usual methods of convincing employees to put in the hours or to finish certain difficult tasks are not particularly innovative or motivating. Most of them are implied threats of being made redundant. But there are almost never straight-forward indications about decisions regarding sanctions. Generally, managers in *Construct Energy* refrain from making any decisive move as regards any employee, as they are not especially certain on their decision making powers. They usually try to conform to the established norms. And the norms regarding sanctions have always been thoroughly discussed in managerial meetings. Therefore, there had been created a relatively good knowledge about what was expected of the departmental leaders. The expectation was that employees be punished when necessary by applying 'warnings', a legal tool that prepares the way and gives evidence for an eventual demotion or dismissal of surplus employees. These warnings were meant to 'scare' employees into becoming more serious and hard-working. Devised as a threatening instrument, it was used especially during the 2009-2010 financial crisis period, when management needed to form a 'pool' of unwanted, from which they could have eventually be made redundant when times required saving costs. These warnings were not entirely legal because it also required further research into the employee's previous behavior at work and showing all evidence to support the need for a legal warning. But all management actually needed was to get employees to think about probable negative consequences of their insubordination, mistakes or lack of efficiency. Therefore spreading a circumspection and fearful conscientiousness all across the company. The end result was not necessarily sought for in this particular form. It is more likely that the intent was to discipline and correct those employees considered indolent dawdlers during work. Nevertheless, during the crisis period the prevalent feeling in the firm was one of apprehensiveness, as if they could have been made redundant at any moment at any slip, in a period of crisis when there were not many firms hiring.

When discussing problems impeding efficient work, managers usually transformed the discussion by trying to find responsible employees, guilty subordinates. It always proved to be a more manageable problem that way because they can coerce the respective 'guilty' employee to perform better or longer hours so that the problem could be solved. And that is the case for problems trickling down from management's lack of autonomy, poor decision making or

simply because they relate to 'being a manager' in a new way. Middle management tried during this crisis period to gain support for different urgent projects by appealing to their subordinates' sense of duty and moral obligation to help the firm in its time of need, insinuating that the firm would also help them when times improve. Unfortunately, the climate of fear and disappointment created in the firm did not ensure commitment out of these cunning strategies of guaranteeing adhesion. Moreover, some employees noticed that their hard work could not possibly be rewarded in this company, as they experienced deceit before. One of the accountants, Ramona, disaffectedly pointed to some problems:

What could they give us, a few million lei as a yearly bonus and we were here till' late evening I don't know how many times! And that one [the financial female director] is always on our back making our lives hell! (fragment from the interview with Ramona, female aged 32, who has been employed by the firm since 2003, with a 3 year break for maternity leave, thus having experienced more stages in the company's development)

One of the major problems raised by this extract is that of subordinates in the economic department not being able to finish work in time and overworking themselves until late in the evening, on a regular basis. Yet, when facing critique about company managers from its own HR departmental head, the chief executive chooses to avoid the issue, only allowing surface discussions. He utters explanatory statements about presented inefficient or abusive behavior, by feeding his own view on the matter, which usually underplays the problem or defines it in other novel ways. When the viewpoint of company's HR professionals was 'poor decision making capacity for some managers' the chief executive's switch response came promptly: 'maybe you should consider their way of approaching matters as flexibility and not indecisiveness'. Therefore he astutely offered a perspective that not only absolved management, but also ascribed a positive dimension to their reckless diverging decisions, justifying this style of decision making by the need for the neoliberal 'flexible' in a rapidly changing environment. Actually, the discussion between the HR department and the chief executive left very little room for debate.

Opinions that diverge from those of the managers are only markers of potential problem makers. Openly discontent behavior from an employee negates one's professional qualities and all members of management are very careful not to nominate that person for bonuses or promotions. Persons like that are thought to be possible 'union makers', a phrase used derogatory for employees requesting that their rights be respected. Even young middle management uses the term in a derogative way. It is conceived to be linked to the previous socialist period, when unions were powerful tools in the hands of workers. Nowadays, company's management sees unionizing as a perilous socialist remnant through which employees can impede development itself. Moreover, even if there is a legal obligation to initiate negotiations of the collective work contract at

the firm level, it has not been done so far. Managers prefer taking up employees' problems one at a time, being easier that way to control the interaction. Unionizing would also mean that information would be available to everybody, thus disrupting the management's secretive *modus operandi* resumed by the technical director's cynical observation:

The less they know the less we have to explain and thus they are not gossiping uselessly, wasting time and inciting others. Remember when we had less work and they had time to talk and analyze... you only heard disgruntled bickering. Now that we have a lot of work and they are busy, you don't hear that anymore (fragment from the interview with Titus, male aged 33, technical director, ending this argument in laughter).

Employees are generally controlled very closely, given a multitude of tasks to have them work uninterrupted. It is a method of disciplining subordinates and determining them to dedicate all working time to firm related matters, without the need to co-opt them or to generate enthusiasm for work. Also, the constant distribution of minor tasks is used in discourse intended to prove proficiency as full-fledged managers, who by 'delegating' involve subordinates even more. Unfortunately, management does not make the difference between delegating tasks/responsibility and distributing continuously tasks to occupy time and extra-time.

Some of the middle managers' resistance to this particular perverse effect is noticeable when discussing items of evaluation in the annual questionnaires. Codrut (30 years old, middle manager of one of the technical departments) very convincingly said: "I have never forced them to stay long hours, after 5.30; I don't want them to stay. When there was a lot of work they stayed, there were no problems." Generally, middle management appreciates employees who do not verbally or otherwise resist. It is easier for their managing role to have employees who govern themselves in such a way that they accept the situations as they are and not reproach their managers. Because when it comes to justifying top managements' decisions middle management, less convinced themselves, cannot put forward viable arguments, which is frustrating, makes them feel weak and the whole situation ends with 'forceful' arguments: "I am nonetheless the one in charge and that is when you're doing it!" (the same Codrut when facing annoyed remarks from employees about time constraints) The same arguments are used by Vasile, technical middle manager also: "it's all about finishing a task, when they are done with it they go home. Of course I try to calculate distances to where I send them, to see if they can make it there, have the job done and make it back in good time". This implies 'resisting' enormous pressure from higher management to keep employees working as much of the day as possible. However, resistance is only 'local'. Those in middle management are acting so as to maintain a good relation and not to alienate subordinates, as they understand the mutual need involved. As opposed to top management members, who consider people to be

more disposable. Resistance is local in this case because it does not oppose the two conflicting views on employee disposability and the need for excessive time demands. Codrut and Vasile alike, as other departmental heads in the firm, try to keep conflicts regarding the time issue, as well as many others that may arise, within department confines, because many times solving problems means they make compromises, they strike deals with the employees, which is seen by their bosses as a sign of weakness. Therefore, they hide 'local' solutions and embellish the truth. And it is a reasonable method because, otherwise, their managerial skills would be seriously questioned.

As opposed to the middle management's softer approach when it comes to exerting authority and demanding longer hours, the top manager's style tells a different story. Top managers with authority have the ability to overwork employees in a natural manner, without seeming to put a lot of effort into it; people conform to longer hours because they are afraid of adverse reactions from them. These leaders are very authoritative, imposing and inflexible. Body language betrays confidence but also forced restraint. Some can easily become infuriated and the tone of voice changes abruptly, with an impossibility to delineate the border between politeness and rudeness or between employees and slaves. The power relations are sometimes so visibly unbalanced that employees are given a choice between two solutions equally unsatisfactory. If they were to refrain from choosing they know they would have to face castigation from an unchanging ill-tempered boss. "Girls, we have a lot of work we have fallen behind with. You have to choose: you either stay at the office late each evening or you come on Saturday, too. That's that!" Winning the employees on their side and motivating them to work is not the strong feature of nominated top managers. They prefer coercion and veiled threats to make a request more persuasive. Probably an illustrative vignette of the expected managerial styles in the company is that of 'communicational issues'.

### **Communicational issues and the discourse of flexibility**

Most of the managerial team under scrutiny here is considered by staff members as extremely poor communicators, who like to prescribe behavior and throw rules and tasks at the employees without asking for feedback.

We have such a communication problem here that we didn't even know about my promotion and Florin about his demotion. We only found out about it from the e-mail containing the new organizational diagram! (fragment from the interview with Ionela, female, support engineer).

This excerpt aims at Ionela's talking in frustration about the fact that nobody bothered to speak to them about important changes in their professional life; the new decisions were communicated by company e-mail and they found out about the news along with every other employee. 'Communicational problems' is

a phrase commonly heard in the company when pinpointing the source of major disfunctionalities. Although the problem can rarely be confined to communication per se, it is still described in these terms, which considerably minimizes the real problems' work deterrent effect.

The ability to lead people is thought to involve a thorough knowledge of how they generally think, how they are most likely to act in given situations, what their best and worst features are or the things they consider important and valuable. The engineer-type of manager is not particularly proficient in understanding his/her subordinates. Also, communication is hindered by managers' preference to avoid conflict or by their unwillingness to accept contradiction. Some of the middle managers are better at communicating with their staff than others, their social skills being adequate, but, in general, they are not good observers. At top management level the situation is more consistently unfavorable to a good communication with employees considering also the variable of excessive managerial confidence. A positive, assured personal style, combined with an active ambition, can be the factors for a promotion into a position of power. Power, once acquired, boosts one's confidence and fosters an image of competence above the average, a notion of superiority that would further hinder relations with others and diminish chances to motivate and inspire.

Communicational issues are convenient discursive tricks, very fashionable in the neoliberal jargon, which stand for the need for organizational soft-skills. However, in *Construct Energy* 'communication' only veils the strong hierarchical and authoritarian type of management that translates into a lack of sufficient soft-skills training, poor organizing capacities, lack of sufficient information given to subordinates and systematic higher management pressure to perform at unbearable deadlines. Nevertheless, the 'communication problem' is restricted to a mere insufficient transmission of all relevant information. As a habit, when things misfire there is almost always a 'communicational problem'. It is almost a magic phrase which absolves the management from any guilt and gives the possibility to evade solving the problem in the future. That is because communication implies more than one individual actually possessing the 'un-communicational' trait, being therefore difficult to manage 'the problem'. As if the communicative difficulty would be innate and immutable. When referring to the financial director Rada, one of the most abusive and contrary to textbook's inspiring manager, the chief executive admits she has 'some communicational problems'. This way of cloaking the real problems makes the issue less important and easily manageable. She was asked to be more polite, to greet subordinates when entering the office and then the problem was considered solved; the employees were in turn demanded to 'try to adapt to her positively rigorous style'. Unfortunately, problems translated as 'communicational' were actually at the margin of mental balance, with daily episodes of yelling at her subordinates and demanding to 'finish everything until tomorrow', scolding them up to half an hour about any minor detail, with alternations of episodes of speaking in a friendly, girlish tone of voice.

The company tried to invest in neo-liberal type of managerial abilities by providing a range of soft-skills trainings for top and middle management. This interest in courses came from a desire to behave like a large firm, following the example of multinationals which train all the employees, even more so with the managerial positions. Trainings at *Construct Energy* were supposed to expand a manager's abilities and better himself / herself. Even though a clear understanding of what these trainings actually provided eluded the owners, who so eagerly paid for them. Also, the same happened to the matter of the purpose to which they were implemented, as it concerned people relations. These courses included Communication in corporate environment, Leadership, Negotiation skills, Assertive communication, Time management, Marketing and sales.

The head of the HR department admits in annoyance that manager participation in numerous expensive and highly acclaimed soft-skills trainings proved to be an utter waste of money: "they went to all those communication and leadership courses and what did they learn?!" This irritated exclamation of the HR head of department came after one of the female managers, Mariana (33, development director), dismissed an engineer without a warning, telling him to evacuate as of the next day. This came after a few words' question from Mariana addressed to HR demanding to know the legal procedure for firing someone, without offering any details and without having anybody in the department who scored low at the annual evaluations. Actually, the firm imitates the multinationals. However, the meaning given to the practice of training managers in soft-skills was completely subverted, organizational isomorphism here played the role of offering the right signals to the market and competing firms, a mere PR scheme. The firm behaves as its multinational counterparts in '*planning training and supporting growth paths*', but reinterpreting received information. Important managerial personality traits such as decisiveness, ability to delegate, to motivate or to inspire, emotional intelligence criteria, initiative and self-discipline are common communicational devices learned during these trainings, yet disregarded in the daily organizational practice in the company. Despite trainings, personalities that are strong willed, tough, demanding and overbearing become most likely to be nominated for a position to lead, supervise and coordinate others.

## Conclusion

*Construct Energy's* case counters the assertion that capitalist enterprise needs positive justifications, sustained by a new mobilizing generation of managers, meant to ensure productive enrolment. It confronts the model of an inspiring and self-developing neoliberal manager, who understands the importance of gaining employees' trust and enthusiasm for work. Instead, I found that duress can still offer submission; anti-socialist pervasive discourse can still offer a basis to normalize pressure and impose long working hours. Submissive behavior is obtained through informal sanctioning, repressing resistance or stifling discontent.

Multinationals provide an excellent point of reference for the owners of the firm, which are striving to imitate a success model, also influenced by their own personal preferences, their socialist past and by a pervasive neoliberal idiom. A neoliberal interpretation of freedom, such as liberty to move to another firm if discontent, contributes to a perpetuation of a threatening work environment. Coupled with a powerful imprint of socialist inefficiencies it helps produce conformity for managers as well as employees. Managers translate neoliberal discourse into local adaptations to force submission. The model of manager resulting from this mixture is an authoritarian, self-made person, lacking real autonomy and readily relaying owners' imperatives. The novel ways of reinventing western capitalism in the '90s have provoked interesting perverse effects in a successful enterprise trying to follow the neoliberal ethos.

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# THE CASE OF THE EAST-CENTRAL EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENTAL CITIZENSHIP IN TERMS OF WILLINGNESS TO PAY FOR POLLUTION PREVENTION. SOME ASPECTS REGARDING BULGARIA AND ROMANIA

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**ABSTRACT.** The present study constitutes an analysis of environmental citizenship in relation with the willingness to give part of the income for pollution prevention in three years of the last decade in Bulgaria and Romania. Results are based on the European Values Survey's 1999, the World Values Survey's 2005 and the European Values Survey's 2008 wave. Besides describing the evolution of the willingness to pay throughout the last decade, the analysis reveals the individual level determinants of the willingness to pay. Results show that nevertheless there is a considerable discrepancy between the two countries in terms of the percentage of those respondents who expressed agreement to give part of their income for pollution prevention, the longitudinal trends are the same: in both countries the percent of those willing to sacrifice diminishes in 2005 compared to 1999, respectively raises considerably between 2005 and 2008. Logit models indicate that in terms of the individual level determinates of the willingness to pay there is considerable within-country and between-country variation longitudinally: while in Bulgaria axiological orientation is the most stable factor in raising the willingness to pay, in Romania the educational level of the respondents is more decisive. Meanwhile (and at least based on the 2005 WVS) in both countries the willingness to pay seems to be a matter of perceived environmental problems and subjective values.

**Keywords:** environmental concern, contingent valuation, European Values Survey, World Values Survey, ordinal logistic regression

## Introduction

Growing environmental problems like industrial pollution, climate change, accumulation of waste, scarcity of natural resources, etc. are viewed as essential components of the risk society (Beck, 1992). The mitigation of these new and global risks have determined not only a range of political responses from the

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part of the states and its institutions (e.g. the Kyoto Protocol, the Millennium Development Goals), but also brought forth many research paradigms aiming at theorizing about the ways society should reconsider its position towards the environment. Ecological modernization (Spaargaren and Mol, 1992; Mol and Spaargaren, 1993), environmental governance (Lipschutz, 1997), environmental citizenship (Dobson, 2003; Dobson and Bell, 2005) are only a few examples in this regard.

The preliminary focus of these paradigms is different, however for a better comprehension both sides of the coin should be considered. Ecological modernization – predominantly understood as a technological innovation towards cleaner and more efficient ways of production – emphasizes the role of the industry (i.e. production) in creating the more sustainable society. It is however rather evident to seek that the success of the ecological modernization depends on both the producers and consumers who ultimately pay the costs of the innovation. Environmental governance deals with the complex linkage between political, economical institutions and civil society in achieving sustainability. Apparently, the framework is institutional, however through the inclusion of the civil society in the government sphere, the approach implies also the participation of the citizens in environmental decision-making. In addition, environmental citizenship focuses particularly on citizens' responsibilities to contribute to environmental preservation and thus moves the accent from the environment as a free provider of goods towards citizens' duties. In order to become manifest, environmental citizenship needs institutional responses as well: institutions should be more inclusive, environmental information should be made available, etc.

Environmental concern literature, albeit frequently differentiates between more or less environmentally concerned societies, takes citizens as units of analysis and considers their attitudes, dispositions and behaviours (i.e. the degree of the concern) towards the environment. Thus, environmental concern can be understood as an indicator of the environmental citizenship: more an individual is concerned about the environment better environmental citizen is he/she. Environmental concern research deals also with the specification of those (whether societal or individual) factors which enhance/inhibit the manifestation of the pro-environmental attitudes and conducts.

The present analysis is positioned at the edge of the above approaches: based on deductions from the environmental concern literature it explores a specific puzzle of the environmental citizenship, that is citizens' willingness to engage in financial contributions for pollution prevention. In a wider sense – and in the light of the aforementioned refinements – the study reveals the comparative evolution of citizens' dispositions to take part in the process of environmental clean-up in three moments of the last decade (1999, 2005 and 2008) in Bulgaria and Romania.

The empirical analysis is based on the European Values Survey and World Values Survey and the approach is directed towards the micro-level. The specific aims of the study are 1.) to elucidate if those individual level variables – which in the environmental sociology literature are considered to be the main determinants of the willingness to pay for the environment – can substantially shape the profile of environmentally concerned citizens in these two post-communist Eastern European countries and 2.) to assess the over-time stability/variability of these profiles within and between the two countries.

### **Theoretical and practical considerations. Hypotheses**

As mentioned in the Introduction, the present study employs an analysis in relation with the willingness to give part of the income for pollution prevention in three moments of the last decade in Bulgaria and Romania, based on the European Values Survey's 1999, the World Values Survey's 2005 and the European Values Survey's 2008 wave<sup>1</sup>. These surveys constantly asked respondents if they were willing to make financial sacrifices for pollution prevention, however through different items: while the WVS/EVS 1990, 1999, and the WVS 2005 studied this disposition through three items<sup>2</sup>, the EVS 2008 used only a single item, that is respondents willingness to give part of their income for pollution prevention.

In each of the only the willingness to give part of the income for pollution prevention, studied survey waves I consider as a dependent variable measured in form of a four-step Likert scale and with the original code values changed so that stronger the agreement is, higher its code is (i.e. strongly agree=4 – strongly disagree=1).

The variable fulfills only partially the requirements of the contingent valuation method<sup>3</sup> (Mitchell and Carson, 1989; Munro and Hanley, 1999) as far as the item does not specify the exact amount of the income respondents are willing to sacrifice (instead of these the ranks of the agreement are considered), and the type of pollution is not specified either. As a consequence, the variable has

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<sup>1</sup> Data bases were downloaded from the website of GESIS Zacat (<http://zacat.gesis.org/webview/index.jsp>).

<sup>2</sup> The original item was the following: *I am going to read out some statements about the environment. For each one, can you tell me, whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree? 1. I would give part of my income if I were certain that the money would be used to prevent environmental pollution. 2. I would agree to an increase in taxes if the extra money is used to prevent environmental pollution', respectively 3. The Government should reduce environmental pollution, but it should not cost me any money.*

<sup>3</sup> Contingent valuation refers to a way of assessing the value and/or importance of public goods. In practice means to formulate a question in such a way to outline a hypothetical market in which the considered good should be bought and then to ask respondents to indicate the amount they are willing to pay for this good, respectively for the changes in the good's quality. Contingent valuation is more precise if it describes in a very specific and understandable way the good, the changes envisaged in the quality of the good and the amounts of the extra-payments (Munro and Hanley, 1999).

a very broad meaning, is affected by the bias of social desirability, by the 'warm glow effect' (Kahneman and Knetsch, 1992)<sup>4</sup> and thus should be considered much more an attitude towards a value (i.e. clean environment) than a good indicator for actual payments. In spite of all these shortcomings, the item remains important: as part of the WVS/EVS it allows longitudinal and cross-cultural comparisons and opens a space for analyzing an interesting part of the environmental citizenship, namely the (monetary) value of the clean environment. The latter issue is particularly interesting in the case of the formerly communist countries which during the transition period frequently experienced conflicts between economic and environmental concerns (Bostrom et al., 2006).

Bulgaria and Romania are two neighborhood countries from the Eastern, respectively South-Eastern European region considered in many aspects similar to each other. Both countries shared the communist past and stepped on the road of transition in 1990, a process during which both experienced deep recessions: the post-1989 recession was followed in both countries by a weak recovery and towards the end of the '90s both went through a new decline in terms of their GDP, employment rate, respectively noticed growing inflation and poverty (EBRD, 2001). After these periods, both Bulgaria and Romania started to register economical growth and entered the European Union (EU) in 2007<sup>5</sup>. The three waves of the

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<sup>4</sup> The warm glow effect refers to the fact that by declaring in the favour of paying, people actually buy a good mood, a moral satisfaction.

<sup>5</sup> The severe economical setbacks of these countries are usually explained through their low performance in industrial restructuring, privatization, corruption eradication, etc. Thus, the EBRD (2001) report described them as "slow reformers" (compared to other ex-communist countries, for instance the Czech Republic, Poland or Hungary) in their attempt of institutional and economical reconstruction and this fact is further assessed by other organizations. The slower economical, political and institutional development of these two countries is well reflected in the 'two-wave' approach developed by the European Commission in relation to the post-communist European countries' EU accession: based on their progress alongside the transition period these countries were split into first and second wave countries, the latter group being composed of, among others, Bulgaria and Romania (Jones, 2001). This grouping meant different starts for the accession negotiations and – as a consequence – different moments of accession. The fact that Bulgaria and Romania succeeded in joining the EU together, in 2007, three years after the accession of other ex-communist countries, accentuated more the similarities between the two countries. Besides similarities (e.g. the severe recession during the 1990s, respectively the economical stabilization after the year 2000, the traditional value-orientation reflected among others by the high share of people with materialist value orientations, low rates of civic participation, etc.) there are very many differences between the two countries, both in terms of their socialist past (e.g., Bulgaria had stronger relationship with the Soviet Union than Romania, however the communist regime was less strict in Bulgaria compared to Romania, etc.) and their post-communist experience: albeit both affected by a severe recession during the 1990s, setbacks occurred in slightly different periods, between 1996-1997 in Bulgaria and 1997-1999 in Romania; after the recession both countries recovered and their GDP reached the level of the 1989's, however in different moments: in 2004 in Romania, respectively in 2006 in Bulgaria. During the transition period there were inter-country differences in terms of income inequality which was greater in Romania (e.g., Gini=26.4 in Romania and 28.2 in Bulgaria in 1999 – UNDP, 2002), unemployment rate which was higher in Bulgaria (e.g. 12.2% in Bulgaria and 10.3 in Romania in 1999 – EBRD, 1999), the share of those living in severe poverty which was greater in Romania etc. (see Mărginean, 2006).

EVS/WVS thus allow us to study the (monetary) value of the environment in periods of recessions (1999), recent economic growth (2005), respectively in the context of a relatively stable economy and post-EU accession climate (2008).

The frequently assessed similarity of the two countries stands also for a number of environmental attitudes and behaviors. Eurobarometers and the European Quality of Life surveys signal that both Bulgarians and Romanians are significantly more worried about environmental pollution than other European citizens and seem to experience much more the effects of environmental problems in their daily life than other Europeans (Mărginean, 2006; European Commission, 2007). Meanwhile Bulgarians and Romanians are less likely than the average European citizen to have taken environmentally friendly behaviours (European Commission, 2007).

These findings illustrate the so called how serious / how important paradox of environmental concern described by Dieckmann and Franzen (1999), according to which citizens of less wealthy countries (i.e. countries with low levels of GDP) appear as leaders in environmental concern in the case of those items which refer to the seriousness of environmental problems, but it is also them who are laggards in the case of those items which require a choice between preserving the environment and other types of goals (e.g. paying for the environmental quality), so that the economical dimension of life is more important than quality of the environment (cf. the subjective values – objective problems explanation of environmental concern – Inglehart, 1995).

### **Hypotheses regarding the micro-level determinants of the willingness to pay for the environment**

The literature on environmental concern has rich evidence on individual variables involved in the shaping of the willingness to pay for the environment. Much of the findings – as recently summarized by Liebe et al. (2010, online first) – indicate that socio-demographical, axiological and attitudinal variables all can have a decisive role in this direction.

#### *Socio-demographical variables*

Among the socio-demographic variables, income is considered to be especially important. According to Meyer and Liebe (2010) many economic studies place the emphasis fundamentally on income as the main explanatory variable of the willingness to pay for the environment; these studies assume that environmental quality is a good for those who are better off and can afford it. Multivariate analyses on willingness to pay for the environment – including those based on the WVS/EVS or International Social Survey Program (ISSP) – usually found a positive, significant, albeit weak income effect (e.g., Kimmelmeier et al., 2002; Ivanova and Tranter, 2004; Gelissen, 2007). The latter studies found that education is a much more crucial resource in determining the willingness to pay. For instance, Lee and Norris (2000) on the basis of WVS data demonstrated

that in the East-Central European region, education is the strongest predictor of the environmental concern understood in terms of financial sacrifice for pollution prevention and similar evidence is presented by other scholars, on the basis of cross-national (e.g. Torgler et al., 2008; Franzen and Meyer, 2010) or national (e.g., Meyer and Liebe, 2010) studies. The positive linkage between education and financial sacrifice for environmental reasons becomes explainable through the so called enlightenment hypothesis (Gelissen, 2007) according to which more educated people had more chance in socializing with environmental values and environmental knowledge, which may determine a greater commitment to protecting environmental quality.

The linkage between age and the dispositions towards financial contribution for the environment reveals negative association (e.g. Gelissen, 2007; Torgler et al., 2008). As a consequence, younger age can be considered a further resource in determining the willingness to pay for the environment.

Regarding the influence of the gender variable on the willingness to pay for the environment, previous studies revealed contradictory findings. In the light of those empirical evidence which assess that women – on the basis of their gender-socialization towards the ethic of care – hold stronger pro-environmental values than man (e.g. the review of Zelezny et al., 2000), I assume here the probability that women will value more the clean environment and thus will appear more willing to pay for it.

The influence of the size of locality on the willingness to pay for the environment was less investigated in the literature, while in the case of other types of environmental attitudes, the effect of the size of the locality signalled contradictory findings. Arcury and Christianson (1990) stated that not necessarily the size of the locality is decisive in shaping people's environmental attitudes, but possibly the implicit environmental problems and their perception. However, on the basis of the enlightenment hypothesis, it can be assumed that the urban environment offers more opportunities for information and thus might be expected that people from urban settings are more environmentally concerned and more willing to pay. This gains further accents in the Romanian and Bulgarian contexts in which rural people have less economical resources, are lower educated and thus might be less willing to sacrifice than urban residents.

### *Values*

Among the axiological variables, in the present analysis I consider the role of the post-materialist values in shaping the financial sacrifice for the environment<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup> Altruism is another axiological variable involved in the shaping of the willingness to pay for the environment. Models of altruistic behaviour assume that the concern for others' well-being can lead towards obligation to contribute to the preservation of the environment. Equally important to note, that people may in the same time derive utility from their altruistic behaviour – a phenomenon known as the *warm glow of giving* (see note 4). In the present analysis I do not include measures of altruistic values per se in the analysis, however tacitly assume the above bias.

According to the hypothesis of post-materialism (Inglehart, 1990, 1995, 1997), individuals who emphasize post-materialist values are more environmentally concerned, respectively are more willing to pay for the environment. The underlining explanation of the post-materialist thesis on the one hand assumes that post-materialism is linked to affluence, i.e. economical prosperity constitutes a premise for sheering away materialistic concerns and to appreciate higher order values like quality of life and of the environment, aesthetics, self-fulfilment, etc.; on the other hand, the approximation of the socialization hypothesis emphasized that post-materialist values are linked to childhood socialization. Whichever is the underlining condition for the emergence of the post-materialist values, huge empirical evidence confirmed the influence of these values on willingness to pay for the environment, whether on societal or individual levels (e.g., Kemmelmeier et al., 2002; Ivanova and Tranter, 2004; Gelissen, 2007; Franzen and Meyer, 2010)<sup>7</sup>.

#### *Environmental attitudes and worldviews*

The attitude-behaviour paradigm applied to willingness to pay (Ajzen et al., 1996) and theoretical models on the environmental concern, for instance the value-basis theory (Stern and Dietz, 1994), the value-belief-norm theory (Stern et al., 1999) or the schematic causal model of environmental concern (Stern et al., 1995), all sustain that specific environmental attitudes, respectively at the end, behavioural intentions and behaviours, are preceded by a set of other environmental values and attitudes. The basic assumption is that more specific an environmental value and or attitude in reference to the dependent variable in question, stronger the linkage is. However, there are also numerous empirical evidence which demonstrate significant effects of very general environmental attitudes on specific dispositions and behaviours, including the willingness to pay for the environment (e.g. more recently, Meyer and Liebe, 2010; Liebe et al., 2010, online first).

Based on these considerations I tried to select in the case of every three surveys some environmental variables about which I presupposed to positively influence respondents' willingness to pay for pollution prevention. The WVS/EVS 1999 is very poor in this regard and thus no such variables were included. On the basis of the WVS 2005 survey two variables were developed which measure respondents' attitudes towards the seriousness of some local and global environmental problems. These variables allow a study of the role of the objective environmental problems in shaping willingness to pay, respectively to examine the

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<sup>7</sup> In each of the three survey waves respondents were asked to indicate that among *1. maintaining order in the nation, 2. giving people more say in important government decisions, 3. fighting rising prices and 4. protecting freedom of speech* which they consider is the most important, respectively the second most important aim of their country. Options 1 and 2 tap materialist value orientation and were gave the code 0, while options 2 and 4 tap post-materialist value orientation and have the code value 1. Based on these choices a computed index was created along which individuals were rated as materialist (0 score), mixed (1 score) or post-materialist (2 score) in their value orientations.



other part of Inglehart's (1995) approach which considers, besides post-materialism, the role of objective environmental problems in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviours. Moreover, this item opens an opportunity to study the how serious/how important paradox mentioned some sections above (Dieckmann and Franzen, 1999)<sup>8</sup>.

In the EVS 2008 questionnaire the shortened and adapted version of the New Ecological Paradigm (NEP) Scale (Dunlap et al., 2000) was used. The NEP is considered to measure attitudes towards very general topics of human-nature relationship, that is a general worldview in favour of nature (NEP), respectively human's dominance over nature (i.e. human exemptionalism, HEP). The use of the NEP Scale offers the opportunity to study if specific behavioural dispositions are rooted in a very general pro-environmental worldview as described in several models (e.g., the schematic causal model of environmental behaviour), and demonstrated in several empirical studies having among others willingness to pay as dependent variable (e.g., Kotchen and Reiling, 2000). Based on this scale's items two variables were created as a result of the factor analysis: one measuring the NEP, the other one the HEP view<sup>9</sup>.

Grounded in the above deductions, I hypothesize that both in Bulgaria and Romania an ideal explanatory model of the willingness to pay for pollution prevention would result that in terms of socio-demographics younger, well educated, female respondents from urban, wealthy households will be more willing to pay. Moreover, respondents with post-materialist value orientations, those who perceive environmental problems as serious and those who adhere towards the NEP view will be more willing to engage in this financial sacrifice.

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<sup>8</sup> There are two specific questions through which respondents are asked to rate on a 4-step Likert scale, ranging from very serious to not serious at all, the seriousness of three local (*poor water quality, poor air quality, poor sewage and sanitation*) and three global (*global warming or the greenhouse effect, loss of plant and animal species or the biodiversity, pollution of rivers, lakes and ocean*) environmental problems. In the present analysis answer options were coded so that more serious is the problem, higher is the code value of the answer (1=not at all serious – 4=very serious). In both the Bulgarian and the Romanian sample The factor analysis resulted in two factors, one for global problems and one for local problems (see Table 2A and 3A in the Appendix).

<sup>9</sup> Respondents were asked to indicate if they strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with the following six items: 1. *We are approaching the limit of the number of people the earth will support* 2. *When humans interfere with nature, it often produces disastrous consequences* 3. *Human ingenuity will ensure that the earth remains fit to live in* 4. *The balance of nature is strong enough to cope with the impacts of modern industrial nations* 5. *Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature* 6. *If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe*. From the wording of the items is obvious that in the case of items number 1, 2 and 6 higher is the agreement higher is the respondents' general environmental concern, while in the case of the items number 3, 4 and 5 higher agreements indicate less environmentally concerned positions (i.e. human exemptionalism, HEP view). As a result, response variants were coded so that in the case of the 1, 2 and 6 items higher is the agreement, higher is the code value (e.g. 1=strongly disagree – 4=strongly agree), while in the case of items 3, 4 and 5, higher is the disagreement higher is the code value (1=strongly agree – 4=strongly disagree). Factor analysis lead in the case of both samples towards two factors: one measuring the so called NEP view (see Table 4A and 5A in the Appendix).

## Analyses

In the followings, I intend to catch both the conflict between the need for environmental protection and the willingness to make personal economic sacrifice for this purpose and both the similarities/differences between these two countries in this regard. First, I describe in terms of frequencies and mean scores the evolution of the attitudes towards the dependent variable in Bulgaria and Romania, and afterwards I aim to establish those individual level determinants which significantly influence the willingness to pay in the two countries. The three waves of the EVS/WVS allow to analyze the over-time-stability of these predictors and thus to assess whether the profiles vary between countries and in situations of social and economic change. Given the ordinal nature of the dependent variable the technique of ordinal logistic regression is used for this purpose. In order to better reveal the causalities structural equation modeling was also used as a complementary technique (see Appendix).

### *The evolution of the willingness to pay for pollution prevention in Bulgaria and Romania*

Table 1 presents some descriptive statistics regarding the willingness to pay item in the two countries based on the three survey waves. In each of the waves, Bulgarian respondents were significantly more willing to sacrifice part of their income for pollution prevention than the Romanian respondents. At first sight these results suggest that the commonly assessed similarity of the two countries does not stand for the societal-level willingness to sacrifice for pollution prevention.

**Table 1.**

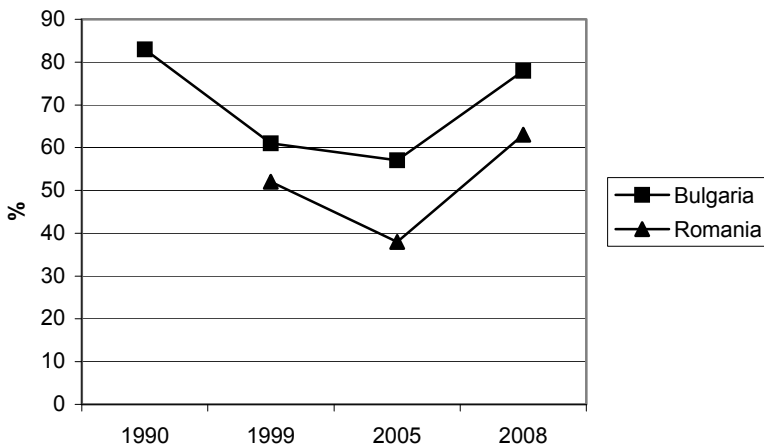
#### **Willingness to give part of the income for pollution prevention in Bulgaria and Romania. Descriptive statistics**

	EVS 1999		WVS 2005		EVS 2008	
	Bulgaria	Romania	Bulgaria	Romania	Bulgaria	Romania
Strongly disagree (%)	14	16	16	27	6	13
Disagree (%)	25	32	27	35	16	25
Agree (%)	42	36	41	27	56	40
Strongly agree (%)	19	16	16	11	22	22
Scale mean	2.65	2.52	2.58	2.23	2.94	2.72
	(SD=0.94)	(SD=0.94)	(SD=0.93)	(SD=0.97)	(SD=0.78)	(SD=0.95)
T-test	t=3,143; p<0.01		t=8,683; p<0.001		t=6,416; p<0.001	

We must take into account another facet as well, that is the longitudinal evolution of the willingness to pay. Graph 1 visualizes that. Albeit there is a considerable discrepancy between the two countries in terms of the percentage of those respondents who expressed agreement to give part of their income for

pollution prevention, the longitudinal trends are very much alike: in both countries the percent of those willing to sacrifice diminishes in 2005 compared to 1999. However the trend is reversed later on, as far as in 2008 the percent of those willing to sacrifice raises considerably beyond the 1999 level, in Bulgaria nearly equalizes the situation occurred in 1990 (which is possibly explainable as the euphoria of the regime change; unfortunately for Romania we do not have data concerning this item in 1990).

As a consequence, it is legitimate to say that, however significantly different in certain years, on the longitudinal (tendencies) the two countries behave in the same manner, at least regarding the agreement to give part of the income for the environment.



**Graph 1. The cumulative percent of the respondents expressing strong agreement and agreement with giving part of their income for pollution prevention**

**Source of data: EVS 1990, 1999; WVS 2005; EVS 2008**

This last aspect gains further accents when we compare the ten post-communist, Central and Eastern European countries, respectively the Baltic countries, all now member states of the EU. Comparative findings indicate that the path which describes Bulgaria and Romania is not universal inside the region: besides Bulgaria and Romania, only Estonia and Lithuania are those countries in which willingness to give part of the income for pollution prevention rose between 1999 and 2008<sup>10</sup>; in five countries (the Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Slovakia) there was a decrease in the willingness to sacrifice between

<sup>10</sup> The cumulative percents of those strongly agree and agree are the following: Estonia (1999: 48%; 2008:56%), Lithuania (1999: 30%; 2008: 63%).

1999 and 2008<sup>11</sup>, while in Slovenia we have a steady state with the huge majority of the population agreeing to monetary sacrifice for pollution prevention throughout the period<sup>12</sup>.

It is difficult to explain why Bulgarians overrun Romanians in their national level agreement to sacrifice for pollution prevention (at least part of the situation can be explained through response biases), but in both countries there seems to be a clear link between the macro-level economical evolutions and the adherence to the item. The early period of economical stabilization (1999-2005) is not reflected in citizens' willingness to sacrifice for the environment. This finding appears to demonstrate the assumption of Kimmelmeier et al. (2002) that in periods of recent economic growth citizens might be reluctant towards environmental sacrifice, as far as they are more willing to direct the newly experienced economic growth towards the improvement of their personal economic situation. As far as the economy further stabilized itself (2005-2008) it seems that concern with personal material resources became less salient, respectively the environment more valued. From this societal level point of view, both Bulgaria and Romania reflect the impact of early and stable economical growth on the willingness to sacrifice.

### ***Individual level determinants of the willingness to pay for the environment in Bulgaria and Romania***

Table 2 and 3 present, in turn, the estimates of the ordered logistic regression analysis for the two countries, where the dependent variable is in each survey year the ordinal variable of the willingness to give part of the income for pollution prevention. For both countries and for each survey wave independent variables were grouped into socio-demographical, axiological, and environmental variables (except the 1999 wave, (where no environmental variables were used) and were treated as block-entries. Thus, the first model, which contains the socio-demographical variables, constitutes the basic model, and further models show the improvements in the model performance, if any (as measured by the R-squared statistics). R<sup>2</sup> values indicate that even extended models do not perform very well, i.e. through the employed variables we can explain only a limited amount of variation in the willingness to give part of the income for the environment. Estimates' values and their significance, if any, suggest that there is considerable within-country and between-country variation, and in certain years, different variables emerge as significant predictors (in both countries the analysis based on the WVS 2005 could be considered an exception, with results revealing more inter-country similarities).

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<sup>11</sup> The cumulative percents of those strongly agree and agree are the following: Czech Republic (1999: 77%; 2008: 55%), Hungary (1999:53; 2008:49%), Latvia (1999:70%; 2008:43%), Poland (1999: 61%; 2005:53% 2008:45%), Slovakia (1999: 57%; 2008:53%).

<sup>12</sup> The cumulative percents of those strongly agree and agree are the following for Slovenia (1999: 82%; 2005: 71%; 2008:79%).

**Table 2.**

**Ordered logit estimates of the willingness to give part of the income for pollution prevention. Results for Bulgaria based on the EVS 1999, WVS 2005 and EVS 2008 samples**

	1999		2005			2008		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age (>=71)								
18 - 30	0.665**	0.535 +	-0.201	-0.355	-0.273	0.390+	0.401+	0.435
31 - 40	0.714**	0.620 *	-0.405	-0.489	-0.382	0.341	0.182	0.567+
41 - 50	0.669**	0.436	-0.338	-0.585	-0.447	0.486	0.502*	0.674*
51 - 60	0.480*	0.340	-0.050	-0.237	-0.247	0.316	0.347+	0.457
61 - 70	0.194	0.142	-0.271	-0.418	-0.477	0.372	0.344+	0.399
Female	0.080	0.106	0.189	0.175	0.111	-0.226+	-0.227	-0.053
Education (upper)								
Lower	-0.995***	-0.881***	-0.753**	-0.648**	-0.348	-1.060***	-0.999***	-0.597
Medium	-0.337*	-0.293+	-0.273+	-0.223	-0.163	-0.474**	-0.463**	-0.353
Income (upper)								
Lower	-0.656***	-0.645***	-1.109***	-0.996**	-0.810*	-0.419*	-0.470*	-0.071
Middle	-0.241	-0.257	-0.428	-0.392	-0.312	-0.155	0.212	0.154
Size of locality (>=100,000)								
<= 5,000	-0.459**	-0.408*	0.095	0.102	0.127	-0.054	-0.092	0.297
5,001-20,000	-0.126	-0.084	-0.072	-0.157	-0.078	0.447**	0.444*	0.417*
21,000-100,000	-0.380	-0.282	-0.097	-0.062	-0.065	-0.155	-0.190	-0.288
Values (postmaterialist)								
Materialist		-1.290**		-0.634	-0.932*		-1.189**	-1.397*
Mixed		-0.634		-0.293	-0.598		-0.817*	-1.170*
Environmental attitudes								
Local problems					0.147*			0.721***
Global problems					0.241***			-0.184*
NEP								
HEP								
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.160	0.187	0.074	0.076	0.075	0.055	0.072	0.175
Model Chi <sup>2</sup>	140.21***	153.51***	59.19***	58.73***	49.95***	62.83***	81.29***	110.19***
N	1,000		1,001			1,500		

Reference categories in parentheses. See Table 1A in Appendix for variables' description  
 \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01; \*p<0.05; +p<0.1

**Table 3.**

**Ordered logit estimates of the willingness to give part of the income for pollution prevention. Results for Romania based on the EVS 1999, WVS 2005 and EVS 2008 samples**

	1999		2005			2008		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Age (>=71)								
18 - 30	0.930***	0.899**	0.013	-0.166	-0.313	0.267	0.247	0.122
31 - 40	0.349	0.336	-0.042	-0.131	-0.184	0.102	0.071	0.180
41 - 50	0.445	0.411	0.087	-0.055	-0.089	0.172	0.038	-0.120
51 - 60	0.112	0.061	0.291	0.161	0.050	0.047	-0.027	0.023
61 - 70	0.231	0.195	-0.020	-0.072	-0.080	0.075	-0.051	-0.402
Female	0.070	0.052	-0.197*	-0.124	-0.075	-0.070	-0.072	-0.096
Education (upper)								
Lower	-0.940***	-0.947***	-0.913***	-0.834***	-0.636***	-0.931***	-0.833***	-0.708*
Medium	-0.559**	-0.556**	-0.503***	-0.449**	-0.428	-0.475**	-0.365*	-0.505*
Income (upper)								
Lower	-0.156	-0.177	-0.783***	-0.648***	-0.586***	0.092	-0.051	0.125
Middle	-0.068	-0.104	-0.169	-0.122	-0.169	0.134	0.061	0.054
Size of locality (>=100,000)								
<= 5,000	0.003	0.112	-0.138	-0.121	0.161	-0.532***	-0.569***	-0.819**
5,001-20,000	0.307+	0.369*	-0.087	0.083	0.442+	-0.385*	-0.431**	-0.452*
21,000-100,000	-0.137	-0.090	-0.210	-0.200	0.159	-0.831***	-0.874***	-1.003***
Values (postmaterialist)								
Materialist		0.054		-0.783**	-0.669**		-0.052	0.299
Mixed		0.209		-0.548*	-0.370+		-0.041	0.312
Environmental attitudes								
Local problems					0.324***			
Global problems					0.199**			
NEP								0.580***
HEP								-0.268***
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0.077	0.078	0.111	0.105	0.105	0.053	0.056	0.175
Model Chi <sup>2</sup>	66.56***	64.48***	157.17***	139.4***	115.34***	69.15***	67.41***	143.21***
N	1,146		1,776			1,489		

Reference categories in parentheses. See Table 1A in Appendix for variables' description  
 \*\*\*p<0.001, \*\*p<0.01; \*p<0.05; +p<0.1

## Discussions and conclusions

The results of the empirical estimates show that in Bulgaria the most stable variable which determines the willingness to pay for pollution prevention is the axiological variable. Compared with those respondents who hold post-materialist values, respondents with materialist value orientations are in each waves of the surveys significantly less willing to make financial sacrifices for pollution prevention. This effect stands even after controlling for variables measuring environmental attitudes (WVS 2005), respectively worldviews (EVS 2008). This is further evidence regarding the role of the subjective values in determining pro-environmental disposition, in accordance with the thesis of Inglehart (1995). Interesting however to observe, that in 2005, environmental attitudes towards the seriousness of some local and global environmental problems are also significant in shaping the paying disposition and respondents who view environmental problems as more serious are significantly more in favour of paying. Altogether these two findings constitute a very important evidence towards the reconciliation of the subjective values and objective problems hypothesis of Inglehart (1995), respectively for the dissolution of the how serious/how important paradox (Dieckmann and Franzen, 1999). This outcome emerges also in the case of Romania, based on the WVS 2005 and thus can be concluded, that at least then (and for Bulgaria also in 2008), holding the other variables constant, the monetary value of the environment was in both countries a matter of values and concerns.

In Bulgaria education and income are both important factors in shaping the willingness to pay for pollution prevention. Lower (and even middle-level) educated respondents, respectively those from lower income households are significantly less willing to pay compared to the upper educated or to those respondents who are from upper income level households. However, it should be noticed that the impact of these two socio-demographical variables is especially recognizable in the case of the basic models (and to a lesser degree in the case of the second models as well), while in the extended models which control the environmental attitudes and worldviews, these two variables (albeit maintain the direction of their influence) are not significant determinants anymore. The 2005 wave is nevertheless an exception (in both countries): in this survey wave income is nearly as important as the value orientations and the environmental attitudes in determining greater willingness to pay, and practically it further accentuates the subjective value facet of the Inglehartian thesis, in the sense that income constitutes a prerequisite for post-materialist values which then influence the willingness to pay (for causalities see the results of the SEM for 2005 and for both countries in the Appendix).

Regarding the role of the other socio-demographical variables the results are ambiguous and inconclusive for both Bulgaria and Romania. In both countries, age was a substantially important variable in determining stronger willingness to pay only in the case of the 1999 samples, with younger age groups being significantly more willing to pay compared to the oldest reference group. In

the 2005 sample, age is not only indecisive, but also changes the direction of its influence. The indecisive role of the age is very much the case of the 2008 samples as well, with the amendment that in both countries younger age groups now seem to show in favour of the willingness to pay<sup>13</sup>.

Gender is in ambiguous relation with the willingness to pay for pollution prevention and in general can be stated that these background variables are not decisive in shaping the willingness to pay for the environment either in Bulgaria or Romania. This inconclusive age effect practically cancels the expectation that women are significantly more in favour of payments and enriches the stock of the findings revealing ambiguous and non-significant age effects on willingness to pay (e.g. Kemmelmeier et al., 2002; Gelissen, 2007; Ivanova and Trantner, 2008).

The size of the locality is rather indecisive in both countries, albeit there is a curious juncture in 2008 in the case of Romania, when respondents from large cities appear as considerably more in favour of paying. All in all, this is a weak support towards the expectation that urban culture is a determining factor of the willingness to pay.

Regarding the less smashing influence of gender, age, type of locality, and even income, the two countries share a number of similarities. However there are important discrepancies as well. Compared to Bulgaria, where materialist value orientation is one of the most stable sources of the non-willingness to pay, in Romania axiological orientation becomes a significant factor only in the 2005 sample. Neither before, nor after this survey wave are axiological variables significant determinants of the willingness to pay. This finding may signal that in Romania, throughout the transition period, disposition to pay for pollution prevention is less rooted in the post-materialist value orientation, but might also be explained through the fact that there are only a few percent of post-materialists and thus the dependent variable could vary a lot amongst the more numerous materialists (However, Bulgaria has even lower percents of post-materialists – so Romania's situation is very curious in this regard).

Compared to Bulgaria, in Romania throughout the three survey waves, education constitutes the most stable factor which determinates the willingness to pay for pollution prevention, with lower and even middle-level educated people being significantly less willing to pay, compared to those with upper-level educational attainments. This holds true also after checking for values and environmental variables and is in consonance with those findings which assess that in Romania, environmental concern is the most linked to education

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<sup>13</sup> In the case of Bulgaria seems that in 2008 those who are significantly more in favour of paying, even in the extended model, are those aged between 31-40 and 41-50, that is the previously (1999) younger age cohorts (18-30 and 31-40) who declared in turn in favour of paying. This finding needs further refinements in analysis accounting for age-time-cohort effects. Such an analysis could better reveal if the potential impact of the age on the dependent variable can be explained on the basis of life-course or cohort. Moreover, such an analysis is welcome for elucidate if generations born and/or socialized after the regime change are more environmentally concerned.



(Stănculescu and Marin, 2008). Our evidence further accentuates the role of the enlightenment hypothesis (Gelissen, 2007), that is formal education sensitises people towards the importance of the environment and its quality. When referring to the importance of the enlightenment, the other part of the coin should also be considered, namely that more educated respondents are also those who are the most aware of the importance of the environment and thus might be the most concerned to give socially and environmentally desirable responses. As a result, education is both a resource and a factor of distortion.

Overall results suggest that those factors which in the literature are described as significant determinants of the willingness to pay for the environment, in the case of these two societies were possible to reveal only very partially. In these two neighboring societies, usually considered as the environmental laggards of the EU in terms of behaviours, significantly different – but compared to other post-communist countries relatively high – levels of willingness to pay are less grounded in socio-demographics, and in any case do not have similar roots.

Based on our results, Bulgaria and Romania are similar in terms of the societal level, longitudinal tendency of the willingness to pay, and to a lesser degree in terms of the profile of the supporters. Both compared to each other, and both alongside the three survey years it is difficult to establish a stable profile of those supporting willingness to pay. On the longitudinal it seems that in Bulgaria the most decisive was the axiological orientation, while in Romania the enlightenment, i.e. educational level. Besides these variables the willingness to pay has a rather fuzzy and changing origin. This can be seen also from the low  $R^2$  of the models, respectively from the causal models based on the SEM technique (see the Appendix).

Interesting to see that in both countries environmental attitudes, whether towards more concrete or very general attitudinal objects, can have a decisive role in determining willingness to pay. This is a good sign both towards the role of the objective environmental problems in determining environmental behaviours and dispositions, and both towards the existence of an environmental belief system. In this belief system specific environmental dispositions towards willingness to pay for pollution prevention are linked to environmental worldviews (NEP) and attitudes, even if this belief system is less grounded in socio-demographical variables and at certain occasions difficult to switch into action.

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## APPENDIX

Table 1A.

**Descriptives of the factors used in the ordered logit analysis  
(relative frequencies in %)**

		Bulgaria			Romania		
		EVS 1999	WVS 2005	EVS 2008	EVS 1999	WVS 2005	EVS 2008
		(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Age	18-30	17	20	18	23	20	10
	31-40	17	19	14	17	17	16
	41-50	19	17	17	21	17	17
	51-60	15	17	19	13	18	21
	61-70	18	19	18	16	15	15
	>=71	13	8	14	10	13	11
Gender	Male	43	46	42	51	46	44
	Female	57	54	58	49	54	56
Education	Lower	27	19	6	36	36	16
	Medium	46	59	75	46	45	73
	Upper	27	22	19	18	20	11
Income	Lower	35	44	37	31	30	36
	Middle	29	51	50	28	30	43
	Upper	36	5	13	40	40	21
Locality	<=5,000	31	38	33	28	45	33
	5,001-20,000	14	7	15	24	6	23
	20,001-100,000	25	22	20	15	16	13
	>=100,001	30	32	31	32	32	30
Values	Materialist	46	56	42	45	48	40
	Mixed	51	42	55	48	47	57
	Post-materialist	3	2	2	7	5	4

**Note:** In the original sample age was continuous variable. Original categories for educational attainment were (in EVS 1999 and WVS 2005): 1. inadequately completed elementary education; 2. completed (compulsory) elementary education; 3. (compulsory) elementary education and basic vocational qualification; 4. secondary, intermediate vocational qualification; 5. secondary, intermediate general qualification; 6. full secondary, maturity level certificate; 7. higher education – lower level tertiary certificate; 8. higher education – upper-level tertiary certificate. Categories were collapsed: 1-3=lower; 4-6=medium; 7-8=upper. In the EVS 2008 sample the six original educational categories (ISCED one code digits: 0=pre-primary education/no education; 1=primary education; 2=lower secondary; 3=upper secondary; 4=post-secondary, non-tertiary; 5=first stage tertiary; 6=second stage tertiary) were collapsed: 0-1=lower; 2-4=medium; 5-6=upper. Income categories measure households monthly income in deciles (EVS 1999 and WVS 2005). Original deciles were collapsed: Bulgaria, both 1999 and 2005: 1-2=low; 3-6=medium; 7-10=upper; Romania, both 1999 and 2005: 1-3=low, 4-6=medium; 7-10=upper. In the EVS 2008 survey the original monthly household income measured in 12 categories was collapsed, in both countries 1-3=low; 4-9=medium; 10-12=upper. Size of locality: collapsed from the original eight categorical variable (1=lower than 2,000; 2=2,000-5,000; 3=5,000-10,000; 4=10,000-20,000; 5=20,000-50,000; 6=50,000-100,000; 7=100,000-500,000; 8=more than 500,000); 1=lower than 5,000; 2=5,001-20,000; 3=20,001-100,000; 4=more than 100,001). Post-materialism: computed index based on the Inglehartian item.

**Table 2A.****Factor solutions for the environmental attitude variables in the WVS 2005 for Bulgaria**

	<b>Component 1 (Local problems)</b>	<b>Component 2 (Global problems)</b>
Water pollution in community	0.901	
Air pollution in community	0.880	
Sewage in community	0.788	
Global warming		0.828
Loss of biodiversity		0.854
Pollution of rivers and oceans		0.839
% of variance explained	39%	38%
KMO=0.789; Bartlett's test: $\text{Chi}^2=2316$ ; $p<0.001$		

**Note:** Rotated component matrix with Varimax rotation. Mean factor scores used in the ordered logit analysis

**Table 3A.****Factor solutions for the environmental attitude variables in the WVS 2005 for Romania**

	<b>Component 1 (Global problems)</b>	<b>Component 2 (Local problems)</b>
Water pollution in community		0.895
Air pollution in community		0.873
Sewage in community		0.805
Global warming	0.876	
Loss of biodiversity	0.900	
Pollution of rivers and oceans	0.889	
% of variance explained		
KMO=0.777; Bartlett's test: $\text{Chi}^2=4204$ ; $p<0.001$		

**Note:** Rotated component matrix with Varimax rotation. Mean factor scores used in the ordered logit analysis

**Table 4A.****Factor solutions for the NEP Scale in the EVS 2008 for Bulgaria**

	<b>Component 1 (HEP)</b>	<b>Component 2 (NEP)</b>
NEP1		0.628
NEP2		0.815
NEP3	0.768	
NEP4	0.793	
NEP5	0.737	
NEP6		0.735
% of variance explained	31%	28%
KMO=0.649; Bartlett's test: $\text{Chi}^2=680$ ; $p<0.001$		

**Note:** Rotated component matrix with Varimax rotation. Mean factor scores used in the ordered logit analysis

**Table 5A.**

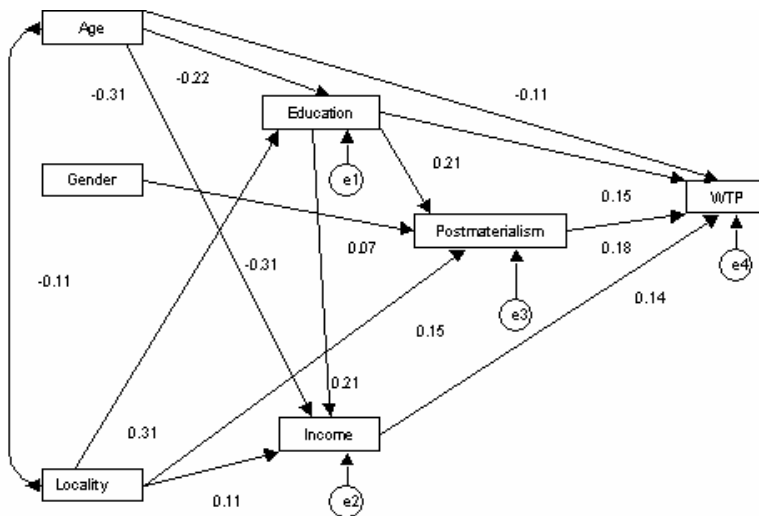
**Factor solutions for the NEP Scale in the EVS 2008 for Romania**

	Component 1 (HEP)	Component 2 (NEP)
NEP1		0.714
NEP2		0.777
NEP3	0.786	
NEP4	0.822	
NEP5	0.802	
NEP6		0.767
% of variance explained		
KMO=0.650; Bartlett's test: Chi <sup>2</sup> =879; p<0.001		

**Note:** Rotated component matrix with Varimax rotation. Mean factor scores used in the ordered logit analysis

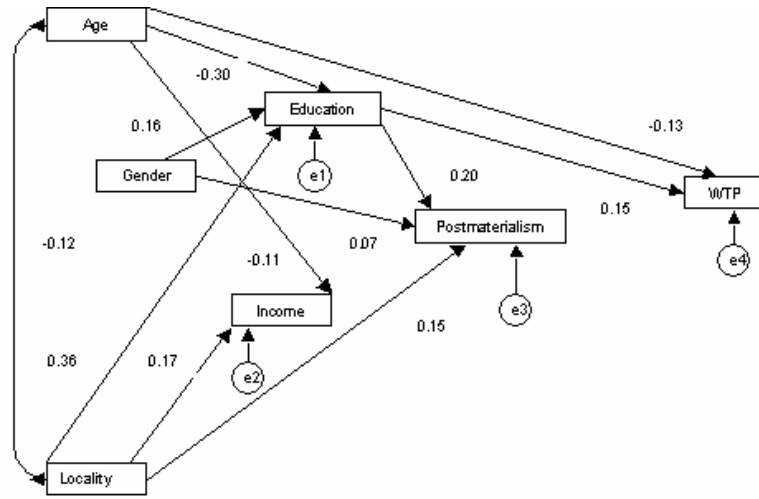
**Explanatory models (based on SEM) of the willingness to give income for pollution prevention**

(All coefficients are standardized Beta. Standardized Beta parameters with p<0.05 have been omitted from the visualization. Variables here are measured as ordinal, with the exception of the attitudes towards local and global problems, and HEP, NEP; gender is dichotomous, 1=male, 0=female)



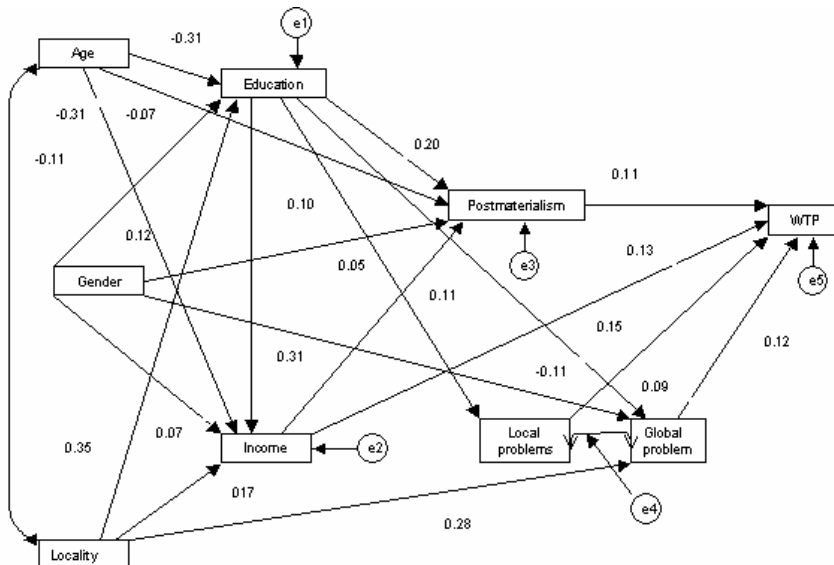
Bulgaria EVS 1999  
RMSEA=0.04; CFI=0.94, pclose>0.5

**Fig. 1A. Explanatory model of the willingness to give income for pollution prevention – Bulgaria EVS 1999**



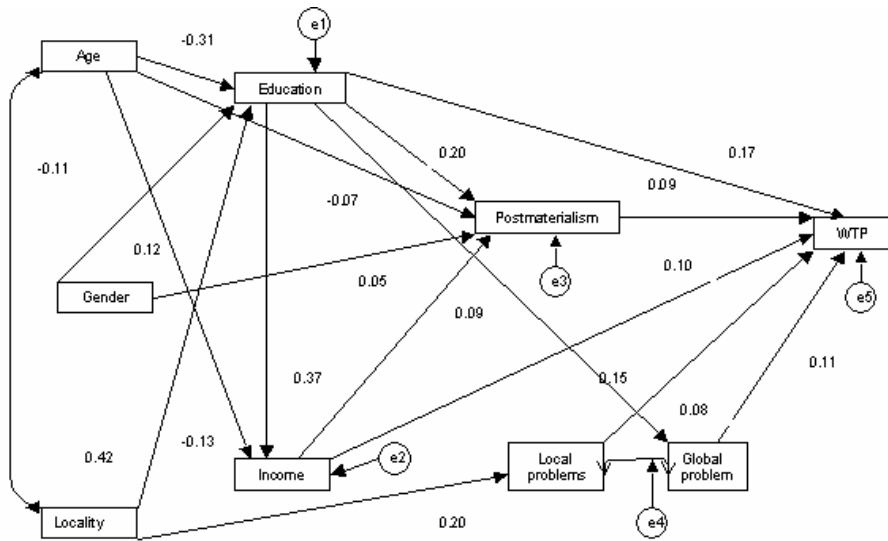
Romania EVS 1999  
 RMSEA=0.06; CFI=0.87; pclose>0.5

**Fig. 2A. Explanatory model of the willingness to give income for pollution prevention – Romania EVS 1999**



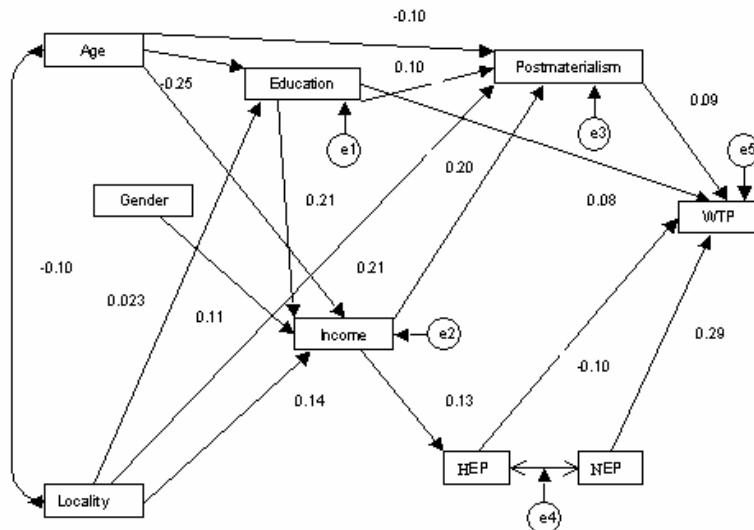
Bulgaria WVS 2005  
 RMSEA=0.03; CFI=0.91; pclose>0.5

**Fig. 3A. Explanatory model of the willingness to give income for pollution prevention – Bulgaria WVS 2005**



Romania WVS 2005  
 RMSEA=0.03; CFI=0.95; pclose>0.5

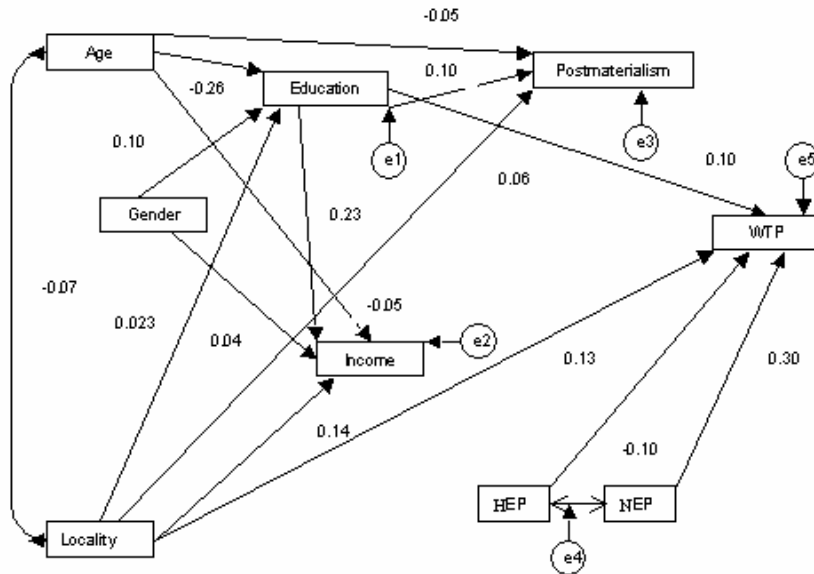
**Fig. 4A. Explanatory model of the willingness to give income for pollution prevention – Romania WVS 2005**



Bulgaria EVS 2008  
 RMSEA=0.04; CFI=0.87; pclose>0.5

**Fig. 5A. Explanatory model of the willingness to give income for pollution prevention – Bulgaria EVS 2008**





Romania EVS 2008  
 RMSEA=0.05; CFI=0.85; pclose>0.5

**Fig. 6A. Explanatory model of the willingness to give income for pollution prevention – Romania EVS 2008**

# THE PHENOMENA OF DISPLACEMENT AND RELOCATION DURING THE PROCESS OF GENTRIFICATION IN BUDAPEST

CSABA JELINEK\*

**ABSTRACT.** The concept of gentrification was coined in the 1960s referring to the formerly working class neighborhoods invaded by higher status social groups in London, while today it can be seen as a global phenomenon appearing in most of the cities all around the world. Budapest is not an exception either: since the transition, several neighborhoods started to be gentrified, especially the inner parts of the Pest side. In the recent years, overcoming the former theoretical debates about the explanation of gentrification, gentrification research has been centered on the observation of the effects of the process. A crucial phenomenon taken into consideration when analyzing the effects of gentrification is the question of displacement, or in other words the involuntary move of a household. While the protagonists of gentrification – both in the international and in the Hungarian literature – state that displacement is either a marginal phenomenon or a process through which the living conditions of the displaced families are improved, the critical gentrification researchers argue that displacement destroys communities and social networks; causes invaluable psychological harms and usually results that the originally less affluent people have to live in a neighbourhood outside the inner areas, where they have even less chance for a better life. In their view this leads to spatial segregation and the shaping of socially homogenous areas, which undermines the stability of the society and increases inequalities. My aim is to bring empirical evidences about the process of displacement by following-up families facing a situation in which they are forced to leave their former homes, in order to contribute to the more precise evaluation and analysis of the phenomenon of gentrification. For this reason I focus on Ferencváros (the 9<sup>th</sup> District of Budapest), where a slow municipality-led gentrification process has been going on since the early 1990s.

**Keywords:** gentrification, displacement, relocation, Budapest

## Introduction

Gentrification, “the transformation of a working-class or vacant area of a city into middle-class residential and/or commercial use” (Slater, 2009: 294), is a highly debated and widely discussed process. While in the 1960s gentrification was described only in “command cities” like London and New York, in the last

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decade it has become a global phenomenon, seen as desirable by the leaders of various cities all around the world (Smith, 2002). In recent years, overcoming the former theoretical debates about the explanation of gentrification, a new direction has been strengthened in gentrification research centered on the observation and theorization of the social effects of the process. The reason why the object of gentrification research has shifted – at least among those who consider themselves as “critical” gentrification researchers – was clearly described in the so called “gentrification debate” in the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (see for example Slater 2008, Wacquant 2008, Smith 2008). As gentrification has become the globally acknowledged remedy of urban decay and as the connotations of the term itself has changed from a “dirty word” (Smith, 1996) to a favorable policy tool for the “revitalization” of the city, the critical scholars have begun to look beyond the discursive practices of local governments and real-estate developers and shed light on the usually negative – and thus hidden – social consequences of the process.

In order to bring back the critical edge of the discourse around gentrification, Tom Slater proposed highlighting the importance of displacement (Slater, 2006, 2008, 2009) as the phenomenon through which the unjust side of gentrification unfolds. Displacement, the involuntary move of a household (see Marcuse, 1985) is also a crucial factor on the negative side in Rowland Atkinson’s systematic review of 114 studies on the neighborhood effects of gentrification in British and North American cities (Atkinson, 2004). In spite of the recognized importance of displacement, there are only a few researches focusing on it, usually in Western European and North American urban contexts (see for example Curran, 2007, Newman and Wyly, 2006, Van Criekingen, 2008).

Since the transition the capital of Hungary, Budapest has been also among the cities where the phenomenon of gentrification can be observed. As early as 1996 Neil Smith described how the privatization of the social housing stock and the inflow of foreign capital resulted in reshaping the cityscape and in the gentrification of certain neighborhoods (Smith, 1996). During my field research I have tried to observe through qualitative methods whether it is possible to describe displacement resulting from gentrification in Budapest. These methods have enabled me to show the consequences of displacement both on the micro (family) and on the macro (structural) level. The object of my study has been the “emptying” of one particular house in Middle-Ferencváros. My research has aimed both to observe the process itself, which started in 2010, and to follow-up the dwellers in their new homes after relocations have been carried out. The research is for my thesis and will be finished only by June 2011; therefore, at the moment, my findings are still fragmentary – as the relocation process is still in progress – but some specificities of the mechanism can be drawn already from these observations. I conducted interviews in different departments and

bureaus of the local council in order to discover the institutional mechanisms and the key actors who manage the relocation. I observed three “office hour sessions” when the bureaucrats were negotiating with the dwellers. I also made interviews of the dwellers of the building to explore how they perceived the whole process and how their lives have been affected.

At the moment it seems that in Ferencváros displacement happens in a peculiar form. It is the local government which “relocates” the dwellers of social housing units during its “urban rehabilitation project”, which results in growing social inequalities and in personal traumas approximately in 50% of the affected families (circa 20-25 families). Relocation and its negative consequences are not treated by the local government either as a complex social or as an important “personal” problem: the “bureaucratic” and “rationalistic” logic and a double transparency problem facilitated by the local governmental system of Budapest is clearly at odds with the “human” logic of the dwellers. While the inhabitants see their house and flats as their homes and focus mainly on its use value, the local politicians and bureaucrats treat the same physical entities according to their range of duties as a manageable problem and focus on its exchange value (for a summary of this problem see Harvey, 1978). The cost-benefit calculation to economize the rehabilitation process opposes the everyday tactics of the usually vulnerable social groups originally living in Middle-Ferencváros.

### **Gentrification in Budapest**

The post-transitional transformation of Budapest is very similar to the transformation of advanced capitalist cities in the neoliberal era in many dimensions. For example, the gentrification of the Inner City<sup>1</sup> of Budapest is a good local example for the globally spreading phenomenon of gentrification. However, it is clear from the beginning that it is impossible to describe a post-socialist, or even a Budapest type of gentrification, as the mechanisms of the process are varying from neighborhood to neighborhood. The 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> districts are good examples both for the classic, unregulated, spontaneous form of gentrification led by “pioneers” (Tomay, 2007) and for how corruption can saturate privatization (Somlyódy, 2009); the 8<sup>th</sup> district is the place where the largest PPP rehabilitation project – called Corvin Promenade – is being done and where the first long-term “social urban rehabilitation” program has been started in 2005 (Alföldi, 2008); and the 9<sup>th</sup> district chose a gradual way of regulated, state-led rehabilitation with the cooperation of private developers

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<sup>1</sup> In the following I restrict my analysis to the so called Inner-Pest districts, meaning the 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> district. These areas suffered most severely from the disinvestment in the socialist period; thus they started to deteriorate. In the early 1990s these were the most „problematic” parts of Budapest both in a physical and in a social sense, so the first gentrified neighborhoods after 1989 were in these districts.

(Locsmáncsi, 2008; Tomay, 2007)<sup>2</sup>. The explanation of the differences is rooted in the specificity of the administrative system of Budapest redesigned in the early 1990s.

Each change in the political system during the transition had a symbolic importance: after 40 years of political centralization the new “democratic elite” was convinced that the more the local governmental system decentralized, the better and freer it would be (Ladányi, 2008). In Budapest, it resulted in a two-level system, in which the level of Budapest has very limited authority, while the local governments on the district level have much more autonomy. Though the districts became responsible for providing many social services including the maintenance of the social housing units, the financial means to fulfill this duty were not sufficient (Csanádi et al., 2007). To ease this financial tension, the districts chose different policies to increase their revenues or to decrease their expenditures, though all of them implemented some kind of “urban rehabilitation” policies to attract private capital by “beautifying” their districts and to decrease their social expenditure by changing the inhabitants’ social composition (Ladányi, 2008). Though different in their realizations, the “urban rehabilitation projects” have had similar social effects: the formerly low-income dwellers with an overrepresented population of old and Roma population have been replaced by more affluent, middle-class social groups while the profit realized from this replacement has remained mainly in the hands of the private investors (Csanádi, 2007). Similarly to the Western European and North American cases, the city and district leaders have been able to frame the urban rehabilitation projects and their social consequences as the only remedies against social and physical decay. This rhetoric strategy has ensured the legitimacy of these projects for the general public.

The most coherent “urban rehabilitation” strategy was implemented by the local council of the 9<sup>th</sup> District, Ferencváros. In the early 1990s they followed more or less an already existing plan of their socialist ancestors. The peculiarity of the case of Ferencváros – which differentiates it both from the advanced capitalist cities and from the other Inner-Pest districts – is that the majority of the housing stock in the rehabilitation area remained in the local council’s hand and therefore it became much easier for the district leaders to manage the process. As a consequence, the former low-income dwellers have not only been displaced by the market forces – increasing rents and redesigned public spaces – but relocated by the local council itself. Whether it is the “quiet elimination of the poor” and their forcing into the “inclusions of post-industrial spatial texture” (Ladányi, 2008) or the amelioration of the living conditions of the former dwellers (Aczél, 2007) is still a question not yet empirically observed.

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<sup>2</sup> For the map of Budapest and the districts within it see Appendix 1.

### **“Urban rehabilitation” in Middle-Ferencváros**

Because of the scale and the coherence of the rehabilitation strategy, the example of Ferencváros has become known as a nationally and internationally recognized rehabilitation project (Gegesy, 2010). One of the district leaders' main objectives was to eliminate the comfortless (meaning without toilet and/or bathroom), small, dilapidated “one-room-one-kitchen” flats. However, they started to neglect the socially more conscious ambitions of the previous plans created by the former socialist leaders of the district in the 1980s (Locsmáncsi, 2008). Thus between 1990 and 2010 936 flats were renovated in 51 deteriorated houses by the local council, while 168 buildings with 1,490 social housing units were demolished at the same time<sup>3</sup>. On vacant lands and on the ruins of the demolished houses 6,860 new private flats were built in 152 buildings, while only 52 flats in two houses were built for social housing purposes by the local government (Gegesy, 2010). These numbers indicate that approximately 1,490 + 1,107 families were “relocated” by the local government<sup>4</sup> and numerous others were displaced – either directly or indirectly – because of the rising rents and real estate prices. The scale and the mechanism of the market caused displacement have not been researched yet, but it can be estimated that due to the ownership structure of the buildings in the area it was less intense than the relocation managed by the local government.

In the local governmental jargon “relocation” means that the dwellers of the “rehabilitation area” may live in houses which are either demolished – and then replaced by a privately built house on the privatized land – or renovated by the local government; thus the inhabitants of these buildings have to leave these flats and for this reason they can choose to be compensated by the local government either with cash or with another social housing unit in exchange. The amount of cash a dweller can receive depends on the size of the flat, thus usually a tenant of a relatively small flat can only buy either a flat from the lowest segment of the housing market in Budapest or a property outside Budapest, where the quality of services and the chance to get a job is lower than in Middle-Ferencváros. The whole relocation process is orchestrated by a special department of the local council: the Bureau for Property Management (BPM). This means that only 4 bureaucrats from the Bureau negotiate with all the dwellers and they are the ones who can allocate the flats in exchange between the dwellers.

This protocol of the rehabilitation and relocation is very different from those examples of gentrification and displacement that the gentrification researchers described in North America and Great Britain (see for example

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<sup>3</sup> Initially 1,107 flats were emptied and started to be renovated, but because of some structural changes after the renovations only 936 flats remained.

<sup>4</sup> According to the municipal statistics 2052 families were relocated between 1996 and 2010, but I could not get the exact statistics for the period prior to 1996.

Marcuse, 1985). The main difference is that the process is mainly state-led: though there is certainly a change in the renters on the private market during the rehabilitation, since the proportion of the privately rented flats in Middle-Ferencváros is low, it is not as significant as the relocation carried out by the BPM. Several questions arise: Can we call this relocation process displacement? Is it an involuntary move of the households? How does relocation reorganize the “problematic inhabitants” in space? And how do people perceive the whole process?

### **A house being emptied<sup>5</sup>**

The house I have studied is a three-storey building built in 1896. Like similar houses in Inner-Pest, it suffered from severe disinvestment during the socialist period. There are 50 flats in it, 14 with more than one room; the other 35 are mostly typical working class homes with “one-room-one-kitchen” on approximately 25-30 m<sup>2</sup> and initially without toilet and shower. However, many dwellers (my estimation is around 50%) have renovated their flats from their own financial resources and built in toilets, showers and/or porticos.

One of the objectives of the rehabilitation is to eliminate these small, deteriorated flats and replace them with more convenient ones. However, this means that the dwellers of the flats are dispersed in space, and not always according to their will. Gábor Aczél (2007), the former leader of a mixed enterprise with a majority ownership of the local government called SEM IX, which was actively involved in the rehabilitation, states in his study that all the social groups affected by the rehabilitation – those former dwellers who can stay in the rehabilitation area, those dwellers who cannot and those who are the new incomers – will benefit from the process. During my study I saw it in a different way: in my view relocation has very similar effects to the classic cases of displacement for a considerable number of the dwellers.

To show the possible effects of relocation I separated the dwellers into three typical categories. The first group consists of approximately 10 or 15 dwellers. Effectively they do not live their everyday lives in the house. They were able to move elsewhere – for example to their spouse’s flat – but officially they are still renters of the flat: they pay the subsidized rent and the public utility costs. The reason why they did not give up their contract is because they are waiting for the relocation process through which they are entitled to choose from the two compensation options.<sup>6</sup> The fact that they were socially and physically mobile enough to leave the house means that they are usually

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<sup>5</sup> As the relocation procedure is still in progress and the interviewees are potentially recognizable, I intentionally do not write down the address of the house.

<sup>6</sup> According to the local regulation, habitual residence was not a necessary condition to lease a social housing unit until 2006.

less vulnerable than the others, therefore the compensation – either cash or a flat in exchange, which they can privatize in a few years under very generous conditions – for them is rather a “generous gift from the nation”, as it was for those who privatized their state-owned flat right after the transition (Dániel, 1996). Relocation, from their point of view, is thus “privatization prolonged”.

In the second group there are those who live in bigger flats. As both the amount of cash and the characteristics of the flat in exchange depend on the size of the flat – usually the bigger the flat the more affluent the inhabitants are and the more compensation they get – they are in a relatively comfortable position. From those who live in flats bigger than 35 m<sup>2</sup> – 19 out of the 50 households – very few were really badly affected by the compensation. They were the first who signed the contract and left the house, usually satisfied with the compensation.

The members of the third group, which is approximately the half of the house (approximately 25 households), are in a much more controversial situation: they are the ones who usually live in “one-room-one-kitchen” flats with less than 35 m<sup>2</sup> living space. Their problems have mainly two roots: one is a practical, management problem; the other is a more abstract one. The practical problem is that the BPM has to allocate the vacant social housing units between the dwellers who choose to get a flat in exchange in a way to fit with the local regulation, which says that the flat in exchange cannot be bigger than the size of the former flat plus 10 m<sup>2</sup>. The problem is that there are two types of vacant flats. There are those which have been formerly renovated during the earlier phases of renovation, which are usually bigger flats than the former “one-room-one-kitchen” ones, so it is almost impossible for someone with a 25-30 m<sup>2</sup> flat to move into a renovated one. There are also non-renovated small flats inside or outside the district bought for precisely the purpose to relocate dwellers, which are either in a similarly stigmatized area, or far from the city centre and from the neighborhood that the people are used to live in. Thus the relocated dwellers with little flats usually complain about the location of their new ones.

In the case I observed the problem was not only this: during the “emptying of the house” there was a lack of appropriate small flats, so the majority of this third group did not get any flat in exchange offered so far, only a promise that they will get one in the future. With a deadline set in the middle of November 2010 to finalize their decision whether they choose a flat or cash, it is clearly a very frustrating situation for them. The result is that many dwellers feel they are being forced to choose the cash option – and thus to leave the neighborhood, since the amount of cash is not enough to buy a similar one in their gentrifying neighborhood – instead of their original plan to stay in the neighborhood and to choose the flat in exchange.



This leads to the more abstract problem, which is the opposing “bureaucratic” logic of the local council and the “human” logic of the dwellers. It is not simply the problem of the families with small flats, but a more general one. While the inhabitants suffer from the logistical problem of BPM, they feel that the bureaucrats do not recognize the extent to which relocation changes their life, and the Bureau does not inform them sufficiently. The lack of transparency for the dwellers is reinforced with another kind of transparency problem: other departments of the local council, for example the Family Service designed precisely for the purpose to help families with their everyday problems, are not informed as well, neither about the beginning of the emptying, nor about the management problems arising during the relocation and the allocation of the flats in exchange. Sometimes it happened that I had more knowledge about the advancements and problems with the relocation than either the Family Service or the dwellers themselves.

Apart from this double transparency problem the opposing “bureaucratic” and “human” logics unfold in another domain: the BPM tends to neglect the fact that most of the dwellers have personalized their flats to a great degree. As mentioned above, some of them built porticos to increase the effective living space of the tiny flats, or built in toilets and showers – unofficially, without permission and from their own financial sources – to increase the degree of comfort. If someone sees only the statistics of the flats before and after relocation, it can be misleading: therefore Aczél’s argument (2007) that those moving into flats officially (statistically) with similar or slightly bigger living space and higher degree of comfort can be considered as benefiting from rehabilitation is debatable. An official improvement could mean that effectively the quality of a flat is not improved or even decreased, while the location of a flat has clearly worsened.

Hence the relocation process does not seem to be benefiting each social group. Two concrete cases show how relocation had explicitly negative consequences. The first is a 52 year old woman living with her 26 years old son in a 25 m<sup>2</sup> flat. They moved into Ferencváros in 1997; before that they had lived in Miskolc in the Avas housing estate, a segregated community well-known for its various problems in Hungary. Their moving was an attempt of upward social mobility: the mother got a job as a cleaning woman and her son was also able to start to work after finishing school at around the age of 16. Their position was more or less stable until 2009, when due to the health problems of the mother they could not pay their rent for a few months. As a result, their lease was modified from an indefinite period to a definite, one year period. As they also had problems with paying the public utility costs, the contract was renewed once more but only for a 6 months period. That was the point when the “emptying” of the building started. Initially they asked for a flat in exchange as they wanted to stay in Ferencváros to be close to their relatives and to the working place of the son. However, because they had recent problems with paying the rent and the public utilities and as a result they were categorized as “problematic”, the bureaucrats of the BPM decided to offer them two flats in

the outer, industrial part of Ferencváros that were in a similarly, or even more deteriorated house, than their present one. Disappointed with these options they decided to choose the cash as their last option, but it will not be enough to buy a suitable flat in Budapest in which both of them can live. This means that the mother has to move back to Avas, while the son has to rent a flat in the private market. The family is going to split up and will lose the opportunity to pay only a publicly subsidized rent, so it is questionable whether the son will be able to find an affordable place to live close to the place where he works. They perceive this result of their relocation as “their forcing out from the district”, while they were told by the local politicians that the rehabilitation will help them and improve their living conditions.

The second case was a pensioner man’s living with his grandson on 37 m<sup>2</sup>. They have been living in the house since 1988: the man had sold sunflower seeds at local football matches for many years, while the 14 year old grandson goes to school in the neighborhood. The problem here was that although the father of the grandson, who is the son of the grandfather, left the family years ago because of his drug related problems, the lease was both on his and his father’s name. When the son was informed about the relocation, he announced that he wanted the cash option, while his father wanted a flat in exchange as he was working in the neighborhood. This family problem worsened by the pressure of having to move became a huge, seemingly unsolvable problem, in which the BPM could not become involved. Unfortunately other departments of the local council did not take part in the relocation process as mediating or helping agents, and as the grandfather could not stand the pressure of leaving their flat, he committed suicide. After that the grandson was moved to relatives, while it is not clear whether his drug addict father will take all the cash and disappear or give a portion of it to his son.

Digging down into the micro level of the households it becomes clear that urban rehabilitation and the concomitant process of gentrification in Ferencváros is not a clear success story. Though I would not deny that for the third or half of the house relocation and compensation – either in the form of cash or in the form of a new flat – is a “generous gift” from the local council, I think knowing these case stories even Aczél would admit that gentrification and relocation has considerable negative effects: in the case of this house for half of the 50 households at least.

## **Conclusion**

These two sad examples are not typical of the whole house, but are paradigmatic in the sense that they signify those shortcomings of the rehabilitation and the relocation, which are usually not present in the public discourses on the project. First and foremost there is the tension omnipresent during the relocations between the “bureaucratic” logic of the local council trying to impose its rehabilitation strategy on Middle-Ferencváros aiming to redesign

space and the logic of the dwellers through which they try to ensure that their “tactics” of everyday lives are not jeopardized by the “compensation” they get. Relocation for the less affluent dwellers living in the small flats has been an uneasy experience of being vulnerable and defenseless against the local council.<sup>7</sup> This tension resembles the opposition of the “concept of the city” and the everyday practices described by Michel de Certeau (1988). While the district leaders aim to make a “European” or “normal” neighborhood, the most vulnerable group of dwellers feel that this “new place” is not created for them.

I would argue that while for the other half of the house – for those whose habitual residence is not in the house anymore and for those who own larger flats – relocation is rather a “generous gift from the nation”, in the case of the small flat owners relocation has similar effects on their lives to the classic cases of displacement. They perceive relocation as a frustrating pressure to move out from the rehabilitated area and as not being able to benefit from the whole procedure. The result is that they either have to enter the housing market in less favorable locations compared to the “revitalized” Ferencváros, or they have to accept to move to a similar or even worse social housing unit than in which they have lived before. In my view it is clearly their dispossession on the micro level, and the increase of the social inequalities on the macro level, through which spatial segregation and social polarization is further increased as well.

Thus the local version of the global phenomenon of gentrification in Ferencváros is very similar in its effects to the other examples all around the world. Naturally, there are considerable differences and specificities; for example the crucial role of the state, as the actor of relocation, is a rare phenomenon. Maybe this peculiarity could be used as an advantage in making the process more just and less polarizing. I would argue that there could be some steps toward the fight against inhuman gentrification and displacement. First, the redesign of the two-level local governmental system in a more centralized way could help to decrease the pressure on the districts to compete with each other for the scarce public and private resources and it would allow an administrative framework to respond to the issues of urban poverty in a more complex and more efficient way. Second, the complex treatment of social and urban problems could be facilitated in the district level as well. Increasing transparency both in the direction of the dwellers and in the direction of other departments of the local council could lead to the involvement of various bureaus into the process, which could provide a more “personalized” institutional response to the “personal” problems arising during relocation. Would it be the case, urban rehabilitation in Middle-Ferencváros could be “humanized” and made more just in order to be a real remedy for urban and social problems.

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<sup>7</sup> This issue was brought up in many interviews. the dwellers said they felt like „a duck losing balance on ice” or „like a puppet”. Some of them had „fears that I will become homeless” or felt „being treated like an animal”.

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## APPENDIX



**Figure 1.**The location of Ferencváros in Budapest

# ONLINE PHOTOGRAPHY AND THE NEW GENERATION OF ARTISTS: A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF VIRTUAL ART GALLERIES

ALEXANDRA ZONTEA\*

**ABSTRACT.** The purpose of this study is to highlight the emergence of new forms of artistic legitimation on the Internet, through the online galleries. This takes place together with the process of digitalization of the social interaction, for instance, the appearance of online communities, and also with the new status of photography, which is communicating identities. In my analysis, I used Bourdieu's conceptual framework of "artistic field", "social and symbolic capital", "mediation", "legitimation" to understand how the online gallery functions and how it generates these mechanisms of recognition, such as the online comments, the number of views, adding works to the "favorites" category or having a constant public of viewers. The online feedback (comments, opinions about photographs) plays a crucial role in shaping the online identity, but also in legitimating it through users who are defined as "instances of legitimacy". Promoting artworks in virtual galleries becomes an opportunity for amateurs to know other artists and to become known, to share the same interests and to become a part of the greater community, but the final stake is to be recognized as an artist by others. So, the online galleries become sources of social capital and are empowered to legitimize its members as artists through specific mechanisms that I identified through my research.

**Keywords:** artistic field, virtual gallery, legitimacy, digital photography, identity place

## A Theoretical introduction

Mike Featherstone (1993) claims that in postmodernism there is a permanent challenge for the work of art, a will to dismantle its sacred "aura" and a challenge addressed to its respectable location in museum or academy;

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<sup>2</sup> 21% of the persons, being 16 years old, mention that they used the Internet in the last six months. The level of Internet usage is higher in the urban environment (34%) and lower in the rural (7%). At the level of the whole researched population, it results a number of 3.962.986 persons of 16 years old and over, who used the Internet in the last six months. Concerning the level of penetration of the Internet access services in households, 14% of the respondents affirmed that in their household exists at least one connection to the Internet, in other words, approximately 1.052.000 households in Romania are connected to the Internet (Qualitative Study regarding the market of access services to Internet, The Gallup Organization, October - December 2006).

moreover, he argues that art can be anywhere and anything, in other words, also on the Internet. In this way, Margot Lovejoy brings into discussion the artworks that use Internet as a medium, considering them:

Interactive dynamic forms which are incomplete without some form of participation by others. Such works change the role of the artist to one who creates a conceptual structure which evolves and generates itself overtime, one in which participants may submit contributions which can be reviewed and commented on by others as forms of agency for a wide public (Lovejoy, 2004: 229).

Here, she refers to art that produces communities and social critique, the art hosted in a virtual space, for instance, in virtual art galleries. As well as physical galleries, virtual art galleries become a “vehicle of publicity” on the Internet. But in this study I will take into consideration the new meanings acquired by the virtual art gallery as a consequence of its online existence. My main purpose is to find out if the gallery becomes a vehicle of advertising identities, through which individuals can perceive themselves as artists.

Considering the impact of the Internet among all the social spheres, in today Romania<sup>2</sup>, I believe that is very important to aim at the artistic phenomenon from the opportunities’ point of view: it appears that on the Internet, the artists can exhibit and can make public more works of art, they can make themselves seen and heard more rapidly than in a physical gallery.

One of the ideas on which is based this research refers to post-modernity as generating changes, along with the virtualization phenomenon of social life. These changes are translated through the processes<sup>3</sup> of re-timing and re-spacing, that is to say, space and time co-ordinates become immobile, but only the physical movement is abolished because the geographical and social spaces are opened, and society is confronting with an „intoxication of time and space” (Nowotny, H., 1994). This means an increase in speed, mediated and rashed by technology.

In this context, the postmodern self confronts with a crisis which is defined by an eager need of inclusion: the individual aspires to obtain from others the recognition of his/her value, to be accepted in a reference group, but based on a quality which distinguishes him/her from others, which helps making himself/herself conspicuous. The anxiety of being recognized as a free, autonomous and responsible person, determines individuals to find online new forms of acceptance and recognition, for instance, in photography, the experience of a pseudo-artist, who is waiting the confirmation of self-value. The virtual art galleries come to facilitate this approval through developing certain mechanisms of artistic recognition, such as the online comments, the number of views, a constant public of viewers, as the personal gallery of photographs becomes personal, an identity place. But what does identity mean in this context?

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<sup>3</sup> David Harvey in *The Condition of Postmodernity* (1990) refers to a process of „time-space compression”, in other words, if the modernity has solidified time, in postmodernity, space is re-temporalized.

Firstly, the Internet is considered a product of postmodernism (Agger, 2004; Hutcheon, 2002; Kellner, 1995; Poster, 2001), where the self becomes an object, a topic, as Agger (2004) argued, where people become results for their own production and their own marketing. If the modern self has a ground of values, a personality and an identity, the postmodern one abandons this ground and becomes produced and commercialized. As the self is being perceived as lacking of identity<sup>4</sup>, individuals tend to live with the uncertainty of the right choice: they do not know anymore if they chose their true identity or if they constructed an identity in the end (Kellner, 1995). In addition, Frederic Jameson sees in postmodernism a period of self-fragmentation, in this way the self becomes multiple, decentred and what remains is the anxiety of an identity (Jameson cited in Turkle, 1995: 49). From Turkle's perspective "the Internet has become a significant social laboratory to experiment the construction and re-construction of our postmodern self that is why in virtual reality we create and fashion our self" (Turkle, 1995: 180). Secondly, the cyberspace becomes reflexive, oriented to self-conscience, where "you are what pretend that you are", so Turkle perceives this online self as being multiple, transitory and in a continuous development. This is what Kenneth Gergen (1991) describes by "multiphrenia", an experience through which our identities are defined and shaped by many possibilities of expressing our self. As a result, Turkle (1995) considers that in computer-mediated communication, the individual self is fluid and multiple, is the subject of multiphrenia and not a static and singular one<sup>5</sup>. Another point of view belongs to Mark Poster (2001) who understands the identity as being constructed online and not a pre-determined essence which we bring along when we enter on the Internet. So, as Turkle would argue, when we enter online we are given the chance to experience different roles and we tend to engage in role play games as we experiment an identity which we can not portray in physical life. A benefit of this experience would be that individuals gain a new perspective of the world and of their place in it.

So, "identity" defines a reflexive place where the self multiplies and permits the creation of an online identity through computer mediated communication, the place where an identity is formed and sustained through an online facework, in the Goffmanian sense<sup>6</sup>, developed through the interactions inside the gallery: giving and receiving feedback, following other's galleries, participating in contests, acquiring a membership in different online groups. In other words, an identity place is a virtual environment, in this case the online gallery, that "allow individuals to dramatically alter their self-representation" (Yee et al. 2009: 285)

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<sup>4</sup> "Postmodernity is based on a self-conscience alienation, which becomes a consideration and a manipulation" (Agger, 2004: 115).

<sup>5</sup> "In computer-mediated worlds, the self is multiple, fluid and constituted in interaction with machine connections; it is made and transformed by language" (Turkle, 1995:15).

<sup>6</sup> Goffman (2007) sees the self as an interaction process in which there are created many selves depending on every performance.



## Doing research in cyberspace

My research is based on 23 intensive interviews, semi-structured, with amateurs and professionals, males and females between 18 and 58 years old, which were taken during December 2008 and May 2009; and also on the content analysis of the received online feedback, which refers to the analysis of comments on their photographs in personal galleries (from Caedes.net, DeviantArt.com or personal websites). In addition, I used my membership on a website, Caedes.net, specialized mostly on photography, and I have realized participating observations for 7 months inside, defined by photographs uploads, giving and receiving comments from users.

In my research I tried to distinguish between a professional photographer and an amateur on the base of some criterions<sup>7</sup>: the first one would be the academic studies or a degree in photography, like a Bachelor, Master or a PhD; secondly, I took in consideration the experience: projects, workshops, awards, prizes, collaborations, varnishing or public exhibitions. The third criterion would be the technical means: a professional camera, gadgets and other professional devices. In the fourth place, I chose the sales of photographs or the existence of a demand from clients, which would emphasize a note of professionalism and a place on the cultural market. Some of these characteristics appear also in Finney (1993) research, like: art education, jury acceptance and sales, but I considered only four criterions notably to take into account, in my research, for the distinction between professional and amateur. I have mention this aspect because I believe that this distinction between amateurs and professionals is significant when I try to understand how these people perceive the virtual exhibitions and how they discovered in the Internet a mean to promote their photographs.

Out of 23 respondents, only 4 were professionals and the rest, 19, amateurs. The number of amateurs is so high because at first I was very interested in how the amateurs perceived this online environment in terms of a future recognition or a public visibility. That is why the thesis refers to individuals who need online recognition (the received feedback and the way in which they perceive themselves in others comments) mostly in the amatory stage and it functions as an approval of their becoming status, represented by the "online artist". So, I claimed that the received opinions work as a legitimacy source which helps their self-perception as artists. Therefore, I was interested in why these persons choose to exhibit it

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<sup>7</sup> Finney (1993: 404) identifies several key characteristics which determine the general artist reputation or art world standing: „The most important were formal art education (for instance, a master degree), jury and gallery acceptance (for example, one person exhibitions), "circle" centrality (centrality is a mediating process, partly a consequence of previous recognition, partly a means of future recognition), sales, artistic style and professionalism". He argues that these six factors were the most influential in defining an artist's location in one of the five artist strata in the local scene of his research, and they are the main focus of analysis to follow: naives, hobbyists, serious amateurs, pre-professionals, and professionals.

on the Internet, what are the motivations and how they relate to the online community. Moreover, I wanted to see how strongly connected they are to these online exhibitions and how much they mean for their public online identity. Taking into account that the professionals have access to physical exhibitions more than an amateur, they have experience and they are part of a great network of mediators from the photographic domain, meanwhile the amateurs choose the cheapest alternative of going public, the Internet and the photography websites. This is why my interview guide has a structured part of questions related to the dichotomy and the comparison between offline/online galleries, offline/online feedback, how they conceptualize them and how they relate to this dichotomy. It was clear for me that most of the amateurs dreamt about having a physical varnishing but also they consider the online existence to be important for becoming an artist and they give great importance to it; meanwhile the professionals do not consider the physical exhibitions still so important but they tend to give a lot of credit to the online existence. Doing research in the online field appeared at the beginning to pose many methodological problems because of the many limits that the cyberspace imposes. For instance, the anonymity and the pseudonymity complicate the identity issue, as Jacobson (1999) agrees, the name, gender, and other characteristics of a participant's digital persona may be completely unrelated to the individual's offline identity.

Out of 23 interviews, 9 were face-to-face discussions and 14 were online, this means 11 via instant messenger and 3 via email. In what concerns the sampling, I used the "snowball" method: my first respondents were acquaintances and then they suggested me some other acquaintances<sup>8</sup>. One of the main reasons for choosing this way of communicating was the distance because all of them were from other towns. What I observed was an outstanding difference in answers between those received in emails and those from Messenger. If via Yahoo Messenger I had a little control over the discussion, I could emphasize a theme more than others by introducing phrases like "could you describe me a little more", "why do you think so", via email the lack of interaction was obvious because I had many short responses and I could not obtain many details in my themes of interest, so this was a major limit for my research. But I had only three interviews via email, so my work was not too compromised because of the poor answers.

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<sup>8</sup> For instance, from those 9 with whom I had face-to-face discussions, only 5 were my acquaintances. Meanwhile, from those 14, only one was an acquaintance because most of those with whom I have communicated online were randomly chosen from Caedes.net and Deviant Art from the Friends Section of my acquaintances (in their personal gallery) or were "suggested respondents" that I did not know. To the random ones I sent a message about my research and some of them, who were interested in the subject, replayed me and agreed to communicate mostly via instant messaging. To the „email respondents" I was recommended by one of my acquaintances, meanwhile the „instant messaging respondents" were willing to discuss without knowing me or without being recommended by someone. The only thing that we had in common was the interest in photography and the fact that I had also a virtual gallery on Caedes.net.

During the interview I tried to conceptualize the significance of photography in offline reality, and then, I asked them to tell me more about their virtual gallery: why they chose to exhibit on the Internet, if they are fond of the entire community that exhibit in the same space<sup>9</sup> and I also asked them to describe their personal gallery, how they put them in order, how they choose what it is to be posted and what do their photographs and their gallery represent for them as online users.

### **The new imagery: online photography becoming “identity”?**

In my research, I focused on the problem of art in the digital era and its exposure on the Internet, through virtual art galleries, but I took into consideration only the field of photography. One of the main purposes for this “cutting up” is related to the legitimacy of this artistic domain, always contested as being part of the highbrow arts because, at first, the camera was a vehicle of mimicking rather than creating art.

In addition, Pierre Bourdieu (1990: 95-98) considered photography a “middle-brow art”, and placed it, near jazz, cinema and chanson, in the “sphere of the legitimizable”, where the authorities of legitimacy compete over and claim legitimacy. The fact that this form of art was accessible to a large number of untrained people was a significant reason for critics to position photography between the lowbrow arts. That is why, in that time, photography remained at the status of popular art, because individuals did not need a rigorous training or a university degree, but they were able to experience it as simple consumers. But if we rethink this legitimacy principle today, the major change is referring to the institutionalization of photography as art, in universities or museums for example, but in the same time it can be experienced as a hobby by amateurs. For instance, in spite of the existing institutions “to teach them methodically and systematically as constituent parts of legitimate culture” (Bourdieu, 1990: 96), everyone who buys a photo camera can experience photography as hobby or art, without an “institutional training”. Moreover, is able to expose it to a large number of people, on the Internet, which brings an interesting phenomenon: an online community shaped by a diversity of photographers, from amateurs to professionals, who share opinions and give advice in the improving of skills and techniques in photography. I consider that this distinction between highbrow and lowbrow is important when I take into account the photography exhibited on the Internet.

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<sup>9</sup> I have to make clear that when I talk about the virtual gallery I refer in the first place to the personal page that an user has on a website, it represent his place at a certain online address; taking for example Deviant Art, it is a space on the Internet which hosts millions of personal galleries, so when I talk about community I mean all these personal pages united and all the members/users that interact through their daily activity.

Many photographs in these galleries are submitted by amateurs and at first impression it would appear that these works are mass-produced and they lack of originality. But the status of these works has to be judged through their new function of expressing photographic qualities (uncommon themes, attractive ideas, and beautiful angles) and bringing appreciative critiques; moreover, the function of expressing an online artistic identity which is maintained by these works from the virtual gallery. At this point I have to clarify further this idea through explaining my second reason of choosing photography as a research field on the Internet.

Another purpose of focusing on the sphere of photography is related to the transformations and the new functions that photography is acquiring in the digital age together with the development of technologies of art. Nevertheless, the Internet has facilitated the development of new and various forms of virtual collectivity and spaces dedicated to responsive forms, as forums, blogs, virtual communities, virtual galleries, which have opened new directions in articulating the time and space.

One of these forms of collective social conscience is the online art gallery. An online gallery of photographic art is a virtual space that offers the artist a place, his „there“ inside the gallery and consists of an URL address, a „homepage“. Through this personal homepage, the artist can create his own gallery, is capable of having a constant public and a group of friends who visit his works, comment on them, without a busy net of mediators which can make difficult the public exhibition of his works. The gallery also offers him the possibility of creating an “avatar”, namely a profile of user, giving him the liberty to “privacy” in his space. That is to say, his gallery becomes an identity place, private and public, at the same time private, because the photographs depict some of his personality or his real identity, and public, because of the Internet’s main feature, the global character. One of the Internet’s attractions is that the individual can reveal, on his homepage, his real identity and the contact data, or he is free to remain anonymous, through shaping a virtual identity (maybe, under a pseudonym, pretending to be someone else). In this sense, Silver (1997) argues that personal Web sites serve no other purpose than communication with known and unknown others. Moreover, the participants of digital environments may create multiple identities through digital appropriation and manipulation of text, images, icons, and hyperlinks to other Web sites (Silver, 1997).

Daniel Chandler has carried out a study on the problem of homepages, “Personal home pages and the construction of identities on the web”, and he discovered that the online homepages, which people construct, are not perceived as simply personal websites, but these reflect the construction of their own identities. On these pages there is a section, with contact details and an email address, or one where visitors can leave comments and their impressions. Digital identity

construction makes possible to express latent and nested identities or to more fully disclose aspects of the self that are difficult to represent physically (cited in Silver, 1997).

Taking into consideration the postmodern self-crisis, with that need of inclusion and recognition and also the multiple engaging features of the Internet, it appears to me that photography becomes a practice with resources in this sense (“this practice of photography represents a great potential of power: the power of conserving someone’s condition, of creating alternative representations and arguments for producing more than images of consumption” - Bentkowska-Kafel, 2005:160). Before explaining why photography, especially the one “virtualized” on the Internet, becomes a source of recognition and acceptance, the manner of visualizing in virtual era should be discussed first, as well as how the status of image changes with its exposure on the Internet.

In the digital era, the images are not a simple reflection of the world anymore but they define an interaction between viewers and creators. That is to say, images do not represent only information: they encourage the imagination of the viewer, who interprets and understands from his subjective perspective. But what happens in the researched virtual galleries? As Burnett (2004) shows that the western culture has changed its conception regarding images as representations to images as domination, visualization and control. Exhibiting a photograph means transmitting a message, so in the case of representation the sense of communication is singular from photographer to watcher, meanwhile the process of visualization impose a two-way relation: the watcher is receiving the message and also he is interpreting it, in other words, the feedback makes a difference. As long as the creative production is no more sustained only by representation but also by visualization, the photographer intends to receive a feedback through the process of visualization, which refers to the relation between images and human creativity and interpretation (Burnett, 2004). Photographs not only represent more than information, but they become an instrument of persuasion, such as photographs in advertising. I have to make clear that this is not about domination, this persuasion is understood through the fact that they construct an identity of an online artist and they submit their best photographs in order to have visitors recognize and support this new identity created online. This new identity is in fact a facework, constructed through their pseudonym, comments on photos and their gallery.

Moreover, virtual galleries imply a “visual rhetoric” (Scott, 1994) but what is specific in this case is the advertised “product”, namely the identity of the online photographer. In this sense, photographers choose to post in their gallery their most appreciated works that would make their gallery the most attractive to be visualized by a numerous number of users; for instance, on DeviantArt, they are awarded with a popularity title for the most visited gallery of the month and this

“distinction” means fame, more friends, more comments. But, the gallery represents his online identity, so appreciating his photographs also mean recognition of his qualities as a photographer.

Barthes argues that photography has contributed to developing a self-identity constituted in a continuous and repetitive des-internalization of subjectivity and a simultaneous affirmation of new forms of intimacy, affection and self-representation (cited in Lury, 1998: 80). José van Dijck (2008) describes the new functions of photography in the digital era: taking photos is not anymore a primary act of memory with the social function of portraying the family moments, but it had become an instrument of forming and communicating individual identity. As far as I am concerned, I believe that the emergence of the individual anxiety related to the self-image control becomes a problem that has to be debated in the context of the digital photography. Despite serving the purpose of being an instrument of memory, the digital camera is seen today as an instrument of identity construction, with a greater power of shaping autobiographical memories.

An American study focused on teenager groups between 14 and 19 years old, brought out a disparity between what the majority valued at photography and how they behave: most of them describe photos as permanent recordings of their lives, meanwhile their behavior points out a preference for photography as a form of social communication (Schiano et al., 2002, cited in van Dijck, 2008). The individuals articulate their identity as social beings through preserving photographs with the purpose of documenting their life but also through participating at photo-exchanges (“photo-shifts”) which mark their identity as interactive producers and cultural consumers.

One of the most recent developments in technologies of art is referring to digital imagery and its application to photography, for instance, the photo-blogs or the virtual galleries, through which individuals are able to have a digital journal and, in the same time, they can visually represent these journals by posting photographs. A photo-blog is more than a photo-album because it serves to more functions: some people use it for keeping the love ones in touch with the latest news in their lives or those of others, for beginning to build their own online gallery. For instance, I observed that the virtual gallery has for many of my subjects a practical function in the sense that it offers them the possibility to organize the best works in a virtual album and to have them permanently within reach, on the Internet. This allows friends, relatives to access these photographs easily. For instance, S1 has begun to post his works in a virtual gallery because he considered it a simple and rapid way to show his newest photographs to friends, when he was traveling abroad.

Digital photography is part of the great transformation in which the self becomes the centre of a virtual universe constituted by spatial and informational waves. Some theoreticians consider that personal photographs are the equivalent of identities, “our photographs are we” (cited in van Dijck, 2008) that is to say

they reflect the artist's personality and represent the photographer's identity, as Schau and Gilly(2003) would put it, in the world of personal Web space, we are what we post. In this sense, the majority of those who were interviewed, perceive the social space from the gallery, which allows them promote their works, as being personal and intimate: "my gallery represents me" – S9; "my gallery is very important, it's a personal thing because is your space, such as photography is very intimate, is something that belongs to you" – S7.

### **The virtualization of Bourdieu's artistic field**

To understand the transformations at which art and artists are subjected to in the digital era, it is necessary to make an analysis of the artistic field from the Internet, to identify the effects of the virtualization process on the manner in which the works of art are mediated and established. Bourdieu's theories have opened important paths in analyzing the artistic field but, together with the postmodern changes in social life, like the emergence of the Internet, these theories have to be rethought in accordance with these processes. Hence, I will try to circumscribe the paradigm of Bourdieu in the digital sphere with the purpose of noticing changes in the process of art works mediation and recognition; moreover, to see if the concepts with which Bourdieu operates (social space, artistic field, agents of legitimacy, artistic legitimacy, capital) are valid beyond computer's interface.

In Bourdieu's work, the concept of structure is related to the existence of the social fields. He uses frequently the concept of „field" to describe the relations between artists as a social space dominated by contradictory forces, a space of oppositions and a space of taking positions. The social field has to be understood as a field „on paper", a region relatively autonomous of the social space which is consisted of specific relationships whose existence depends on specific interests and stakes. Consequently, each field is defined by a generic interest (obtaining the rare goods in the field), which concentrates the agents' actions and shapes their relationships<sup>10</sup>.

For Bourdieu, an object can be identified as art if it is found in a context (for example, an art museum or an art gallery), which is recognized as being artistic, if it is created by a person recognized as artist or if the ones who are authorized claim that is art. In other words, something is art or is becoming art, if is defined so by some legitimated persons. Consequently, the producer of art value is not the artist but the field of production. So, the work of art does not exist as a symbolic object with value only if it is recognized and socially instituted as

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<sup>10</sup> „From my point of view, the sociology of cultural products must take as its object the whole set of relationships (objective ones and also those effected in the form of interactions) between the artist and other artists, and beyond them, the whole set of agents engaged in the production of the work, or, at least, of the social value of the work (critics, gallery directors, patrons, etc.)" – Bourdieu (1993: 97)

work of art by the spectators, public, clients, and the agents of legitimacy from the cultural field. Therefore, art is not immanent but a social construct, a field product of the competition, whose stake is power and obtaining symbolic capital: to be recognized and legitimated by others.

If we apply the key-concepts of „social space” and „social field” to the analysis of artistic field of production on the Internet, the virtual art gallery can be delimited as a social space, with its areas (painting, sculpture, graphic arts, photography etc); inside the art gallery, the photographers, as Bourdieu would put it, are free, by their quality as a member of the gallery, to maintain a personal page or gallery with their works, hence the social field represents, for example, all the personal galleries of online photographers. On the Internet, the position of artist is more free to take because there is no identity control: you cannot tell with certainty that the virtual artist is an artist in real life, so he is recognized as an artist only for his work posted in the gallery. That is why there is a great competition for legitimacy inside the virtual field, because to recognize a work as being a work of art means, in fact, to recognize a virtual identity as being artistic. Moreover, individuals take positions and form virtual groups depending on their common tastes, interests and amount of capital. They are motivated to take different positions when they can obtain more symbolic capital, in other words, when their works can be recognized by certain instances of legitimacy. But the concept of „instance of legitimacy” gains new meanings in the online world. First, the Internet allows the construction of an identity, which may coincide with the real one or can be different. Because many of these features are invisible online, the Internet offers the possibility of controlling many aspects of our identity relating to a public. When people go online, they have a certain control over their identity: they can take different names, descriptions about their persons, so they take conscious decisions about how they want to be perceived by others.

Therefore, anonymity and pseudonymity on the Internet permit the creation of an identity of instance of legitimacy and those who assume these roles are, most of the time, users recruited by the administrator of gallery or persons recruited in an informal manner by the photographers, depending on some principles: seniority in the gallery, site activity (involvement in discussions, frequency in answers and comments, given advice, number of friends etc). So, the agents of legitimacy can obtain this role easier on the Internet than in real life, because in virtual life there is no recognized evidence of this quality. Hence, it is more difficult to prove the existence of competence, experience and activity in real life than the one offered inside online gallery.

This fact is related to online trust, in the second place, because anonymity eliminates social boundaries of age, race and gender, and for this reason it is becoming more difficult for users to develop interpersonal confidence (Blanchard & Horan, 1998; Shah et al., 2001, cited in Best and Krueger, 2006: 399). In spite



of this fact, people find satisfaction in participating in online life inside online communities. For instance, Cavanagh (2007) finds two answers at this problem: individuals participate in online life to compensate their lack of solidarity from other parts; and, in the second place, it is about reciprocity in cyberspace, translated through the returning of a favor.

Thus, individuals tend to give free help and advice for maintaining their self-presentation and to appear as experts in a certain domain (Cavanagh, 2007: 116-18). Margaret Morse (1998) claims that „it exists a human need for reciprocity and the reversibility of ‘me’ and ‘you’ in a discourse – to see and being seen, to recognize and being recognize, to speak, to listen and being listened”. Hence, in the virtual field, interpersonal trust becomes the only principle that confirms that those who legitimate a photograph as work of art are valid instances of legitimacy.

It appears that on the Internet, the artists can exhibit and can make public more works of art than in a physical gallery, as they can make themselves seen and heard more rapidly and more simply than in a real gallery. Silver (1997) invoked many virtues of being online as: while traditional exhibitions require physical visitors, „online exhibitions are aspatial and can be accessed simultaneously by a number of users or virtual visitors from various network locations across the world”<sup>11</sup>. Also, they allow visitors to interact with the exhibition, to contribute by adding a dynamic presentation. When Silver (1997) claims that „online exhibitions exist as perpetual works in progress”, he refers to the fact that they can be changed, redesigned and removed and added within minutes. They provide their users with information, experiences, and opportunities not normally available to those within the four walls of a traditional museum. Although new computer technologies continue to produce increasingly realistic representations and simulations, the result remains, in the end, virtual. Thus, the role of virtual exhibitions is not to replace traditional exhibitions, but rather to extend them, to enrich them and make them interactive and visually attractive.

In addition, Heinich (2004) notes that the work of art finds its place only through cooperation in a large net of actors: dealers, critics, experts, collectors, art historians, members of exhibitions, spectators etc. So, the work of art has to go through a large net of mediators until it becomes public. But on the Internet this net of mediators is dramatically simplified because the Web becomes a large

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<sup>11</sup> Silver (1997) defines “virtual exhibitions” through four crucial considerations: firstly, they are online and make part of a global network named Internet; they are constructed as a system based on the web, where graphic interface makes possible the inclusion of different forms of media; they are hyper-textual, namely they collect and connect various texts and can produce non-linearity and inter-textual elements; they are dynamic, placed more in a process of progress than as a static collection. When we talk about exhibitions, either physical or virtual, it is necessary not to forget a fundamental concept: mediation. This designates all that interferes between the work of art and its reception, what is called sociology of markets, cultural fields, cultural intermediates, critics and institutions.

background of mediation, and the Internet a unique instance of mediation between the public and the work of art. Through his personal gallery, the photographer can have a constant public and a group of friends, who visit his works, comment them, without a busy net of mediators which can make difficult the public exhibition of his works.

In the virtual field, the source of capital (social, symbolic, economic, cultural) is represented by the online community inside the gallery. In "The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier", Howard Rheingold (1993, cited in Wood and Smith, 2005: 123) defines virtual communities as „social aggregations that merge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feelings, to form webs of personal relationship in cyberspace”.

The social capital refers to relations which an artist maintains with others inside the gallery (social groups, groups of friends) and these relations contribute to obtaining cultural capital that is to say helps him learn new techniques or improve his knowledge of „how to do art”. The Internet offers opportunities for artist to develop personal ties with others, „a collective shared identity” (Best and Krueger, 2006). Some artists are motivated to create personal galleries for selling their work on Internet because the virtual world means a purloining from spatial materiality and temporal parameters.

A great advantage of a virtual gallery is that it becomes an easy, rapid and cheap possibility to exhibit freely the works of art, without time and space boundaries; in other words, it becomes an easy source of economic capital. This is a result of the process of „time globalization” (Shields, 1996), which is translated by the phenomenon of simultaneity, that is to say the individual can be in every place at the same time, participating at each event which takes place in different parts, so the present can be everywhere and everyone can communicate with different persons from different places (Nowotny, 1994). So, the online gallery becomes an open space on the Internet, which can be visited by many amateurs of art or collectors from all over the world; at the same time, the interested buyers have the opportunity to negotiate the prices directly with the artists because there are no mediation agents and this becomes an economic advantage for the art producer.

The Internet has given the artists the power and the free will to control the prices of their works, as they do not have to pay commissions for exhibiting online, as it is accustomed in a physical gallery. Thus, it empowers them with the ability of controlling all the aspects related to selling (Rowley, 2008). Nevertheless, few of my subjects have managed to sell through a virtual gallery. One reason would be the fact that in Romania, there are no art galleries only for photographs and this is because of what one of my subjects suggested, “people aren’t used to buy photographs” (S17).

### **The online feedback and the social construction of virtual identity**

My analysis concentrated on two wide dimensions: the differences between online and offline galleries, conceptualized in advantages/disadvantages of exhibition, quality and quantity of feedback, learning and becoming a better photographer, and the online feedback: what does it represent? Who is giving and receiving it? How is it perceived by the photographer and how does he believe the others perceive it? How much does it shape the photographer's online identity?

Analyzing the data, I have to mention that both types of galleries, physical and virtual, offer chances of selling but it is believed that in an offline one it is much easier, but also that the sums are lower; meanwhile, in a physical gallery, the artist has the freedom to negotiate the price or to establish it from the beginning, but also the chances of having buyers are much lower. One of my subjects, S5, who is a professional and makes a living from this practice, mentioned that there is a market for photographic art but it's strictly open for the "on demand photography", because "In general, people want personalized things or made especially for them as clients". Another recent phenomenon, in Romania, which offers the possibility of selling photographs, is the exhibition in public spaces, for instance, photo-cafes, tea-houses, café-galleries. S4 confessed that official physical exhibitions are "too conventional", that is why he rather prefers to expose his works in public places, for instance:

in a tea-house where people come and drink tea and cast a glance to my photographs, and I know that in one evening I have provoked at least five thoughts with my photos; they don't need to give me feedback; it makes more happier if I raised a question with my work (fragment from the interview with S4).

Among my respondents, five of them exhibited in this sort of exhibition place and they find it very attractive in terms of publicity, sales and getting known. I tried to find some particular elements of online artistic phenomenon, precisely, in accordance with the responses from interviews. I discovered how individuals perceive virtual exhibitions, how they imagine their functions in terms of mediation and what this type of gallery represents for them. I also identified the functions of a virtual gallery and I wanted to reveal what determines them to expose online. That is why I obtained the perceived differences regarding the advantages and disadvantages between physical and virtual expositions. When they were asked what they would choose between a virtual and a physical gallery, for exhibiting their photographs, all subjects, also those who had the experience of exhibiting outside the online gallery have found more advantages for exposures in a physical gallery. The majority brought up an important feature, which is missing in the online gallery: the varnishing day, perceived as a unique moment in an artist life, from many points of view.

Firstly, it is seen as a significant stage, a maturity phase, when the artist's photographs become official public. In the second place, it relates to an occasion to socialize and connect to a social network of relationships, in other words, an opportunity of gaining social capital among people with a power of artistic legitimacy, such as critics, professionals with great experience or, simply, amateurs with laudative appreciations. Thirdly, the varnishing means also an emergence on a market, because it is a moment where the first buyers can arrive on the scene; this suggests that the artist displays himself to customers, being able to sell. Among the subjects interested in selling, mostly the professional whom I have spoken to, have managed to sell only through the physical exhibitions.

More than this, they perceived the organization of a varnishing as an event that teaches notions of administration, management and organization, this implies also abilities of good communication with those who host your exhibition and abilities of building an exposition, such as get the right materials, the right light in order for it to look great visually and esthetically. Organizing this entire process signifies being the "orchestra-man" as S3 is indicating:

Having a real exhibition, I am interested in people's reactions and in educating myself, having the real force and the necessary lucidity of organizing an exposition with theme and power, to have sense for others, not only for me (...) it is an entire network, which teaches you many things for one result...to become the "orchestra-man" (fragment from the interview with S3).

Between the disadvantages of a physical gallery, S3 identifies the restrained and laudative criticism, which suggests that on the Internet, the anonymity permits a constructive advice: "I think that we receive reactions easier when we are anonymous, when there are no consequences to what we say: on the net I can say that I don't like a photo".

The advantages of a virtual gallery invoked by subjects refer to rapidity and easy way of exhibiting, so this means less time and money, no usual frames of time and space. As one of the interviewed persons was affirming, the number of views is greater in the virtual space, as one of his photos was visualized five hundred times and he doesn't have five hundred friends and even in a physical gallery does not enter five hundred people per week. That is why he considers that a virtual gallery has more visitors, from many categories and social environments, also the opinions are more diverse, objective and people are more sincere. Accordingly, it can be affirmed that the process of virtualization in the artistic field achieves new meanings compared to Bourdieu's paradigm, because we take in discussion as a main mediator the Internet and as a social space the online world. Therefore, this fact brings in some limits which draw the differences between what happens in real life and what happens online. First of all, the user-spectator has the illusion that he is in a three-dimensional space so the work of art is not tangible but defined by pixels on the computers interface.

That is why this distance given by the screen, between the spectator and the work of art, creates the idea of a false status of work of art. If we transfer this illusion to the entire field of art, then the status of the artist and of the legitimacy agent becomes doubtful; secondly, the illusion of valid legitimacy agents is maintained only by the online trust and the solidarity in participating in a virtual community.

From the perspective of Bourdieu's paradigm, the virtual gallery is established as a "cultural field"<sup>12</sup>, inside which artists occupy different positions (beginners, amateurs, professionals) being in a sort of competition for artistic acceptance. What I would like to emphasize is that this cultural field is not a "production field" as Bourdieu understands it, because the photographers inside the gallery do not post works on demand: it is true that in time a photographer can have a devoted public, which means a constant group of viewers, but this does not influence the statute of his or her works. In this sense, I want to make clear that the photographs do not become mass-produced objects. So, when I use the terms "producer" and "consumer", my intention is not to suggest that photography appears online as a low or a middle brow art. Consumption is defined by number of views and is used in terms of intensity of visualizing, while producer is used more with the sense of creator.

In terms of Bourdieu's paradigm, I suppose that these photographs have a symbolic value in the sense that they are produced from a lack of economic interest. This means that photographers do not intend to gain economic capital (to sell them) and do not create them after pre-established rules inside the gallery. But, if the specific stake inside these virtual places is not the economic capital, then what determines individuals to post further? Is there, what I might call, "an interested lack of interest"? Allain Caille brings into discussion the axiom of interest, which refers to social actors' behavior as being analyzed related to the satisfaction of an interest or, moreover, it is assumed that social actors search, effectively and in an exclusive manner, to satisfy an interest. "L'homo sociologicus" is, in this way, an interested player and susceptible in calculating and defining a strategy almost rational (cited in Robbins, 2002: 247-248). Analyzing the interviews, I noticed that out of 23 subjects, 4 of them are professionals; meanwhile, the others are in the amateur stage.

I found of great interest the problem related to those people who practice photography as hobbyists, weekend photographers or amateur artists and they resort to these online galleries to exhibit their works on the chance of recognition of their artistic value. They expect to get feedback from the audience (other users, online friends or anonymous visitors), especially positive feedback because this certain kind would give them confidence and psychological comfort

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<sup>12</sup> „The most specific feature of production, that is to say the production of value, cannot be understood unless one takes into account simultaneously the space of producers and the space of consumers”- Bourdieu, 1993

that they are on the right way and they have created a “possible” work of art. This need of feedback in the amateur phase could be explained by what Jean-Claude Chamboredon considered as “a non-intentional success at amateur photographers in the sense that art could be anywhere and they might create it without knowing it” (cited in Bourdieu, 1990: 138):

It's not enough publicity and...now, that I am a beginner, an amateur and not many people know me...ok, now I had no pretensions to become known through DeviantArt, but I need a permanent feedback related to what I do. Moreover, if it is about what I like, then I want opinions (Fragment from the interview with S2).

Exploring this problem, I find out what determines these people to post in the first place their works on the Internet: curiosity: “I post in the first place to see what general reaction I provoke” – said S3; “from a need to hear an opinion about my work... I think without an opinion it is difficult to go on, you need trust, a little help and a need of receiving critique” – said S7. This refers to the curiosity of how their photographs are perceived by others, what reaction they provoke, and, at a more specific level, how others perceive them through their personal photographs. Further, what I realized is that their personal webpages, with their online profiles and their gallery, function as signs of “distinctions”, in the sense of Bourdieu (1984), they are sources of social capital expressed by number of visitors and friends (other artists known through the gallery or friends from the offline reality) and sources of feedback which defines the charisma or how appreciated are these photographers inside the online community.

In fact, they make their gallery look attractive by posting photographs which would attract visitors, and they want to be perceived and accepted as they would like to appear and not how others think they are. In the second place, they are determined by the possibility to meet persons from this domain and learn, that is why they see in the gallery a source of social capital, but also a source of improving yourself as a photographer. The greatest challenge is finding out if the Internet reduces or promotes the offline interpersonal engagement. But, despite that, I am interested in online interpersonal trust and how it contributes to developing social capital. It is a fact that the Internet permits hiding identity, that is why most of the users experience the online interaction through a created identity (avatar). In spite of some theories that claim the incapacity of users to develop interpersonal trust on the Internet (Blanchard & Horan, 1998; Shah et al., 2001), in my research, most of the subjects recognize that getting a membership in virtual gallery was an opportunity for making friends inside. Moreover, the online gallery is identified as a way of life, in the sense that they log (enter) every day and try to remain up-to-date with each other's works, eventually comment on them or let themselves inspired by them: “it's a way of life” – S9; “The site is an extraordinary manner of spending my time, admiring others' works, which, [at least] some of them, are simply remarkable” – S11; “it's a hobby, as I have said,

and then I socialize, I spend a part of my free time sharing ideas with those who have the same hobby” – S15.

An interesting phenomenon, identified by my subjects and which is produced mostly in the amateur phase, is a dependence on posting and receiving commentaries, in the sense that the reciprocity relations turn up to impose a rhythm of exposures (daily, weekly, monthly). From the perspective of a gallery as source of learning, it seems that becoming a member influences the way of how and what they create: they were helped to try new themes, to get inspired and to experiment. As a result I concentrated on the idea that the virtual gallery becomes a “cultural field”, this means a virtual space of photography creators and consumers. For those who exhibit online, this space opens for them under the sign of curiosity and becomes a potential “free market” and a source of social capital, with all the anonymity and pseudonymity risks. This is why photographers become also consumers, in the sense that the relationships inside the gallery are defined in terms of reciprocity: you create but, at the same time, you are in touch with what others create.

The gallery becomes an important source of feedback, and from my interviews, I can tell that this becomes a crucial factor for going online and promoting your photographs. If I had to analyze more closely the nature of criticism and its role inside the art gallery, I would set apart three dimensions: the received opinions as a source of learning and self-improving; criticism as a “catalytic agent” of creation and stimulus for going further; online reactions as a source of approval and recognition.

The criticism is understood mainly by commenting on the photographs and I distinguished four types: positive feedback with constructive character (they explain why your photographs are good from a rigorous point of view, very well argued); a restrained positive feedback (laudative commentaries, for instance “nice”, “I like it”, “great/original/beautiful idea”); negative comments but with a productive character ( they tell you what is wrong or what can be improved, or how you can correct your flaws); and the negative comments with an unkind intention, because they do not appreciate your creations but they do not argue why or what is wrong.

Before examining the feedback, I have to explain more precisely who are these persons inside the gallery who play the role of “legitimacy agents”? In Bourdieu’s terms, all the notoriety persons, having a certain power, which is given, in the first place, by symbolic and social capital, become dominants and also a potential source of legitimacy. Inside the gallery, legitimacy agents are represented, in the first place, by those users who are members from the beginning, have the greatest karma (the highest number of comments and views of profile or gallery), which suggests an active member and which gives them a certain trust concerning the feedback. Having this kind of reputation, it is believed that their feedback can legitimate a photograph as being art. These users can be also moderators

or administrators, who assure discussions and commentaries of good sense. One particular feature, that I noticed, is that, despite the anonymity of these persons whose opinions are considered valid, their legitimacy is maintained accurate also through the fact that they also share a common space, they also have personal galleries with works and they can receive critical feedback. So, there is not a single sense of criticism, from master to apprentice, but also, from amateur to professional, and amateur to amateur. This happens because it is not so important if the one who criticize is a professional but the quality of a critique, even if it comes from an amateur.

This may sound as all the photographic art exposed in these virtual galleries is actually lowbrow art (Levine, 1990), in fact, this photographs do not represent necessarily a popular culture because not only the amateurs have personal galleries but also the professionals. As Susan Sontag has argued, the emerging distinction between high and low culture was based in part on an evaluation of the difference between unique and mass-produced objects (Levine, 1990:164). Taking into consideration this statement, I would argue that these personal photographs are above this dichotomy high-low art because they are not mass-produced objects but are unique through an essential feature: defining identities on the Internet and, also, transform the personal galleries in identity places.

From those four types of criticism, only two types are considered efficient and worth learning from them: the positive and the negative one with a constructive character. But still I mention the laudative one, very restrained, which has a psychological effect: although, the subjects affirm that it does not contribute to learning or improving knowledge, it encourages them and improves their self-esteem. This type of feedback has a greater effect mostly when is received from unknown people. These "strangers" with whom they share the same virtual space, inside the gallery, appear to them as legitimacy agents and what validates their opinions is the fact that they are considered totally disinterested and because the anonymity would assure the objectivity of opinions. All the subjects state that negative criticism with an unkind character is totally ignored and do not affect them as long as these critical opinions are not argued.

The feedback is perceived as a liaison element in the relationship between photographer and the online audience, precisely, users imagine their exposures of photographs as a process of communication, mediated by the gallery. So, posting a photograph it means that you want to say something, you want to be heard and also you want a response.

Many of those interviewed identify differences in the nature of criticism, when we distinguish between the online and the real exhibitions. Some consider the real criticism more valuable in the sense that on the Internet, they can rarely find advisedly persons, willing to give a constructive critique, that it why they have in real life friends from whom they can get the right opinion. Others find the online comments more accurate from different perspectives: they believe that



the anonymous persons on the Internet give objective advice or not having friends from whom to get feedback in real life, the Internet offers the possibility to get it online. Few of them do not remark any difference between real or virtual feedback, but find important the existence of it and not from where and how it comes. Therefore, the analysis of feedback inside a virtual gallery becomes crucial in explaining the process of consecration on the Internet. More than this, the online criticism, translated by comments of photographs, is understood as a public existence of the individual as artist. This is what I might call by "You are commented, then you are public; you are public, then you exist".

The virtual gallery plays an important role not only in constructing the artistic identity, but also in their recognition as being artists, and this is because of the mechanisms of artistic legitimacy which develop inside. Further, I consider that a photograph has value inside the gallery when the advisedly persons legitimate it as being art through positive critiques and commentaries. So, the producer of value is not the artist, but the gallery, inside which the feedback plays an immense role. Thus, the gallery becomes, in this way, an instance of informal legitimacy, with agents and specific mechanisms of giving distinctions and confirming the unique value of some photographs. At common sense, the individuals understand by "artistic recognition", the feedback through comments: the desirable one is the positive criticism with the constructive character; but the comments are not the only mechanism inside the gallery: for instance, another manner is adding works to "favorites", a special gallery-type on your personal page where you add others photos that you liked. Another one refers to number of views and the number of visitors, which register automatically. A strategy of making you popular and attracting a lot of visitors is to leave comments on the personal pages of the on record users. But the activity in the gallery does not resume only to giving/receiving comments, favorites, great number of views and visitors, but also participating to online contests, which can give you the opportunity to become very popular, or a moderator or, to be remarked as a potential apprentice for big companies or popular professionals. For instance, S15 considered DeviantArt a "market of talents" because he believes that this gallery offers you the opportunity to be linked with many famous companies or artists. In his case, he was contacted by someone from Japan: "there are many who are looking for talents, it helps you become known inside the community and not only...ones of my wallpapers are used as web design and were published in a magazine from Japan".

### **Conclusions and discussions**

In this paper my purpose was to draw attention to how artistic identity is constructed inside the virtual art galleries and how it is approved by agents and specific mechanisms which emerge during the online activity. During my

research, I focused on the impact of the Internet over social interactions and how it facilitates the materialization of new forms of human interactivity, for instance, the virtual gallery and the online communities of photographers.

I used the conceptual framework of Pierre Bourdieu in understanding the artistic field of online photography and how the notions, such as field, legitimacy, mediation, instance of legitimacy, capital, may change in analyzing the social interactions inside the virtual galleries. What I found inspiring is the fact that the gallery becomes a source of social capital and one of potential legitimacy, mechanisms of distinction, which confirm the unique value of some photographs. At the same time, this is a place in the virtual immensity, where the artist has the possibility of creating an artistic identity, to maintain a personal gallery with his photographs and to have a permanent public which constantly pursue his latest works.

One interesting phenomenon that I identified and which appears mostly in the amateur stage, is a dependence on posting and receiving commentaries, in the sense that the reciprocity relations turn up to impose a rhythm of exposures (daily, weekly, monthly). The gallery becomes a source of learning because every member influences the way of how and what they create: new themes, new inspirations and how to experiment. Another important aspect is the fact that the gallery opens for them under the sign of curiosity and becomes a potential “free market” and a source of social capital, with all the anonymity and pseudonymity risks. This is why photographers become also consumers, in the sense that the relationships inside the gallery are defined in terms of reciprocity: you create but, at the same time, you are in touch with what others create.

From the “gallery as a source of feedback” point of view, I have to emphasize that, in spite the four types of criticism that I identified during my research, only two are perceived as worth to consider and learn from: the positive and the negative one with a constructive character. Also, what I find interesting is how these pseudo-artists are legitimized: apparently, there are users inside the gallery, with an early membership, who have the greatest karma (the highest number of comments and views of profile or gallery), and this suggests an active member and a certain trust concerning the feedback. Having this kind of reputation, it is believed that their feedback can legitimate a photograph as being art. These users can be also moderators or administrators, who assure discussions and commentaries of good sense. The feedback is not the only mechanism of recognition; the number of views and the number of visitors (which are automatically registered) also indicate some sort of popularity in the gallery. Furthermore, having photographs added to many users’ “favorites” or participating in the online contest regarding a specific theme, provide opportunities of making oneself known and popular.

The personal gallery functions like an “identity card” in the virtual world, it is a sign of distinction and a place where individuals can construct their desired self through what they post, how they describe themselves and their photographs, how many friends they have and how active they are inside the virtual gallery. But what becomes the final stake is the recognition of this virtual identity as being representative for the real individual: they aspire that the others would accept them for whom they have become in the virtual space, and not for whom they are in real life.

A future analysis of this process of legitimating through virtual forms of interactivity, with a careful emphasis on the “moral careers” of these photographers, in a Goffmanian sense, is certainly needed. Also, it would be very interesting to find out how real or illusory is this consecration in the sense of discovering whether this online legitimacy can be transferred in the real scene, in the real social life. This article makes only one step towards a future understanding of the new meanings which the artistic phenomenon is endowed with in the era of digital technologies.

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## APPENDIX

### **The list of interviewees:**

- S1 – S.T, male, 22 years, amateur
- S2 – A.M, female, 23 years, amateur
- S3 - C.G, female, 22 years, professional
- S4 - O.B, female, 22 years, professional
- S7 - S. S, female, 21 years, amateur
- S9 - C.C, male, 22 years, amateur
- S11 - A.B, female, 58 years, amateur
- S15 - T.B, male, 25 years, amateur
- S17 - I.I, female, 19 years, amateur

## THE REUSE OF QUALITATIVE DATA IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES. ARCHIVING AND ANALYSIS

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**ABSTRACT.** With a history of over one century, the qualitative social research holds nowadays an unanimously acknowledged place (even if not yet as influent as that of the quantitative research), representing not only a specific scientific approach, used ever more courageously in studying the people's social life, but also a subject for debate and dispute, found more and more often on the spotlight of the international scientific community and, to a certain extent, of the national one as well. The qualitative data catch the interpretations that the social players assign to their own feelings, attitudes and values, as well as to the events they witnessed or not, but which influenced their lives in some way. Regardless of the dominant paradigm, the *qualitative research* will allow the use of *qualitative data* in their "tri-dimensional" form, *text-image-sound*. Thus, the qualitativist researcher in social sciences will be able to lean, in the process of constructing the social world, on a multitude of data types: from the texts of certain social, personal or public documents, to the field notes and to the interview scripts, from the static images given by photographs, drawings, sketches, maps, to the dynamic images, accompanied by sound, given by the video recordings, from the audio materials collected during the fieldwork, to the ones produced for cultural-artistic purposes. The potential of all these qualitative data, however, is not exhausted once the researches they were produced in are completed. The full valuing is achieved in time. That is why, the creation and, then, the proper operation of national social archives of qualitative data, insuring both the preservation and the management of all valuable data produced at a certain time, at the level of the autochthonous scientific community emerges as an imperious necessity. In this sense, it would probably not be hazardous to conclude that the sharing of all valuable qualitative data within the scientific community could have extremely beneficial results on the development of knowledge about social life and offer a multidisciplinary, panoramic and panhistorical perspective on the world we live in.

**Keywords:** qualitative research, qualitative data, secondary analysis, data archives.

### Coordinates of the Qualitative Research in the Social Sciences

#### *Field description*

The concern of issuing a standard, concise and all-comprehensive definition of the "quality research" term represented, in time, a challenge for many social scientists. Such attempts proved however not very successful, the

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true complexity of the term preventing the creation of a classical logical definition, consisting of *genus proximus* and *diferentia specifica* (Ilut, 1997: 42).

The difficulty of issuing a unique, “reference” definition for this field was, with good reason, founded on the fact that the qualitative research itself took highly diverse forms along its historic evolution. At the end of the chapter dedicated to defining the qualitative sociology, Dawn Snape and Liz Spencer “recognise that the search for an all-inclusive definition of qualitative research goes on and will probably continue to do so given the array of approaches and beliefs it encompasses” (Snape and Spencer, 2003: 5). Furthermore, these forms were influenced, in their turn, by the paradigmatic areas where they developed. In this sense, N. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, a prominent name of the qualitative approach in the social sciences, firmly states that “*Qualitative research* means different things in each of these moments” and, therefore, “Any definition of qualitative research must work within this complex historical field” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3).

Without claiming to be exhaustive, almost every specialist who took interest in this field launched various “initial”, “starting”, “working” or “conjectural” definitions which were either very general or, on the contrary, very well applied, highlighting certain or certain other facets of the qualitative research. The qualitative research was seen, on the one hand, in a general and philosophical manner, as “a qualitative way of thinking about human experience, i.e. the way of ‘scientific inter-subjective empathy’ in getting the meaning of individual and group experiences of the so called ‘external world’” (Konecki et al., 2005, para. 1), designating “a situated activity that locates the observer in the world” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3).

On the other hand, there were the more pragmatic definitions, which focused on the methodological and practical aspects of the scientific approach. Thus, it was considered that a qualitative research would be “a research using ‘unstructured’ forms of data collection, both interviewing and observation, and employing verbal descriptions and explanations rather than quantitative measurement and statistical analysis” (Hammersley, 2005: 1) or, in other words, simplifying the definition, “any type of research that produces findings not arrived at by statistical procedures or other means of quantification” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998: 11).

A special case is that of the French Sociologists Community who, although it has produced in time, and especially during the last four decades, a significant quantity of studies based on non-standardised research methods, mostly pronounce on avoiding using the term of “qualitative research”, considering it lacks specificity and it is prone to ambiguity (Angermüller, 2005: para. 4).

“The exception which proves the rule”, we might say, consists of the works of the reputed sociologist Alex Mucchielli (1994; 1996), considered as being some of the most original introductions, for the French-speaking readers,

in the study of theoretical qualitative, but mostly methodological, approaches specific both to the North-American and European areas (Angermüller, 2005: para. 5).

The inevitable need of limiting the study field was eventually satisfied by the qualitativists by the formulation of some highly comprehensive definitions, doubled, most of the times, by ample, systematic and space-time determined characterizations of the basic dimensions of the “qualitative” approach. Here is how Denzin and Lincoln start such a “strong”, panoramic characterization of the qualitative analysis, in the third edition of the most wide-spread and quoted qualitative sociology manual of our times:

It [qualitative research] consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings, and memos of the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive, naturalistic approach to the world. This means, that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study; personal experience; introspection; life story; interview; artefacts; cultural texts and productions; observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individual’s lives. Accordingly, qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected interpretive practices, hoping always to get better understanding of the subject matter at hand. It is understood, however, that each practice makes the world visible in a different way (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3-4).

### ***The historical evolution***

The qualitative research has a long tradition in the social-humanistic and behavioural sciences, thus being considered as an integral part of the development of these disciplines. In this sense, N. Jankowski and F. Wester (1991) opine that the history of qualitativist methodology started as of the last decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, all the researches of the sociology founding fathers (Émile Durkheim, Max Weber, George Simmel and George Herbert Mead) being essentially qualitative (Ilut, 1997: 44) and influenced by the philosophical writings of the precursors of the interpretivism, amongst whom, the most often evoked names are those of Sir Francis Bacon (in the United Kingdom), Charles Sanders Pierce, William James, John Dewey (in the United States), Immanuel Kant, with his *The Critique of the Pure Reason* (1781) and Wilhelm Dilthey whose works “(during the 1860s-70s) emphasised the importance of ‘understanding’ (or ‘verstehen’ in his native German) and of studying people’s ‘lived experiences’ which occur within a particular historical and social context” (Snape and Spancer, 2003: 7).



There are also opinions according to which the story of the qualitivist tradition goes back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century. We are speaking about the periodisation made by A. J. Vidich and S. M. Lyman (2000), according to which, the first one among the six stages of the qualitative research development in the social-humanistic field would be that of the early ethnography, dominated by the ethnographers of the 17<sup>th</sup> century who confirmed the cultural and race diversity of the people on the globe, trying, at the same time, to enclose these data in a theory about the origins of history, races and civilizations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 14).

Most social sciences treatises and manuals establish, however, as a starting point in the evolution of the qualitative research the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is also the case of the third edition of the famous work *Handbook of Qualitative Research* (2005), in whose *Introduction*, N. Denzin and Y. S. Lincoln, analysing the historical aspect of the qualitivist dimension of the social-humanistic research (predominantly Anglo-American), resort to elaborating an “eight”-staging, whose *initial phase* starts around 1900.

Referred to as *the traditional period*, this first stage dominates the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, being ontologically associated to the social realism, and epistemologically associated to the positivist scientist paradigm which focuses of the objectivity of the knowledge process. In anthropology, this traditional period is related to names such as those of B.K. Malinovski, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson, while in sociology, the dominant tone is given by the representatives of the Sociological School of Chicago: W.J. Thomas, E. Burgess, Robert Park, H. Mead. The predominantly used methods of this period were the observation, spontaneous or induced autobiography and the *life-history*.

The second stage of the periodisation made by Denzin and Lincoln is called the *modernist phase* or *the golden age* and it stretches over more than two decades, starting in the period immediately following the World War II and ending in the '70s. From the ontological point of view, the modern period is built on the ideas of the social realism, shared in the previous stage, while, at the epistemological level, the post-positivism prevails. In addition to that, new interpretative perspectives appear: ethnomethodology, phenomenology, critical theory and feminism. In this stage, the qualitative research evolution would be however a relatively sinuous one, the qualitative methodology and paradigm development interfering with the advances in the quantitative orientations. The qualitative research would have to lead a not at all negligible fight against the supremacy of the Parsonian theories in the '40s and '50s, but also against the proliferation of the statistic methods, in the '60s (the inquiry, the opinion poll) and of the softwares allowing very large quantities of quantitative data being processed in a relatively short period of time (Gobo, 2005: 10).

In order to cope with this struggle, the qualitativist scientists thus focused on formalizing the qualitative methods, trying to elaborate as rigorous methodologies as the qualitativist ones. Representative for this period remains the work of H. Becker and of his collaborators, *Boys in white* (1961), which tries to catch the aspects of deviant behaviour in schools by means of a methodological mix including, besides the classical method of participative observation, investigations based on the semi-structured interview, the data thus collected being quasi-statistically processed. "This was the golden age of rigorous qualitative analysis, bracketed in sociology by *Boys in white* (Becker et al., 1961) at one end and *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) at the other." (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 17)

The third moment identified by Denzin and Lincoln in the evolution of qualitative research starts in 1970 and lasts until 1986, being referred to as the moment of *blurred genres*, due to the multitude of paradigms, methods and strategies used in that period by the qualitativists in their researches. From the point of view of the manners of knowing the social-human universe, a remarkable paradigmatic effervescence was recorded in this period: the positivism, the post-positivism and the neo-positivism, the symbolic interactionism and the naturalist research, the structuralism and the post-structuralism, the semantics, the constructivism and the deconstructionism, the critical theory and the neo-Marxist one, the feminism and various ethicist paradigms, they were all aimed at by the qualitativist researchers. The research methods and strategies also varied, from ethnomethodology and phenomenology to the *grounded theory* and the case study, or from the historical, documentary, biographical and ethnographic research methods to the action and clinical research.

The fourth moment, also called of *crisis of representation*, lasts from 1986 until 1990 and is highlighted by the imperative need to develop a critical and reflexive research granting a special attention to certain variables, such as the sex, class, race or ethnic group ones. *The crisis of representation* is caused by the challenging of the fact that the qualitativist researcher could directly capture and then faithfully rendering the experience lived during the *fieldwork*. The challengers opine that the discrepancies between the real facts, the ones caught by the researcher on the field (or narrated by the subject), and the drawing up of the social text are considerable:

Qualitative research becomes a continuous process of constructing versions of reality. The version people present in an interview does not necessarily correspond to the version they would have formulated at the moment when the reported event happened. It does not necessarily correspond to the version they would have given to a different researcher with a different research question. Researchers, who interpret this interview and present it as part of their findings, produce a new version of the whole. Different readers of the book, article or report interpret the researchers' version differently. This means that further versions of the event emerge (Flick, 2005:12).

Moreover, *the crisis of representation* is also accompanied by a *crisis of legitimation*, triggered as a result of having challenged the traditional assessment and interpreting criteria of the qualitative research, which entails, in its turn, the need of rethinking some concepts such as the validity, generalisability and reliability ones.

*The postmodern period* (1990-1995) is the fifth moment in the evolution of the qualitative research, referred to by Denzin and Lincoln as the *triple crisis moment*. The acute evolution of the two previous crises triggered the occurrence of a third crisis, the *crisis of practice*, which raises a question mark related to whether the sociology plays its active, interventional role, under the conditions that its results were limited to the social texts. In this sense, the focus changed from the external, detached observation of the knowledge subject to the participative observation, and from the big theories, from the vast narrations to the micro-theories, centred on particular problems and situations.

The sixth moment is that of the *post-experimental research* (1995-2000), characterized by a effervescence of experimental studies and scientific essays whose intention was to shade off the borders between the social sciences, and which were generally published in the series of *Ethnographic Alternatives* of the American AltaMira Press publishing house (a humanistic division of the Sage famous publications) or in the two profile, newly published scientific magazines: *Qualitative Inquiry* and *Qualitative Research*.

As regards the seventh moment (2000-2004), known as that of the *methodologically contested present*, Denzin and Lincoln do not provide us with many details. They only observe that this period is one of conflicts, of great tensions and, in some cases, even of the suppression.

The last moment of the periodisation of the Anglo-American qualitative research development made by Denzin and Lincoln is the *fractured future period*, who claim that the social sciences should turn into place of critical debate on the matters related to democracy, race, gender, class, national states, globalisation, freedom and community (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 5).

Denzin and Lincoln's staging referred however, predominantly, to the features of the Anglo-Saxon social qualitative research and, especially, of the North-American one. The Anglo-Saxon ideas and tendencies are extremely penetrating, rapidly and extensively spreading amongst the international qualitivist scientific community, through the multitude of current editorial projects (treatises, manuals, reference works, academic magazines of profile) and scientific projects (conferences and congresses). This diffusion is also facilitated by the privileged status it holds in the English-speaking academic world. Although it usually makes up significant reference points for the European social research, the tendencies existing at a certain given moment in time, at the level of the North-American scientific community will not always have the same echo in the European, continental

area, as well. Moreover, account must be taken of the fact that the continental Europe was and is, in itself, the stage for the unfolding of important and specific qualitativist sociological traditions. In France, for instance, there is a powerful tradition of the discourse analysis; in Germany, there is a powerful hermeneutic tradition, Poland being famous for deepening the autobiographic perspective. In one of his latest articles, Paul Atkinson, one of the outstanding names of the British contemporary qualitative sociology, speaks, amongst other things, about the weaknesses of the (post)-postmodern enthusiasm, predominant nowadays in the American qualitative research:

In no spirit of general anti-American feeling, I note that the global production of qualitative methods is dominated by American perspectives. Now the American traditions have undoubtedly provided many of the main foundations for qualitative research. But there are also profound weaknesses in the general climate of American methodology at the present time. Too often, for instance, the social and the political are translated into the *personal*. Likewise, the restless search for new paradigms and innovation has resulted in a proliferation of methodological pronouncements and prescriptions that often break free of any disciplinary basis. (Atkinson, 2005: para. 25).

At the same time, Atkinson disapproved of the lack of methodological rigour of the new post-modern currents, predominantly noticed in the American social sciences, where various forms of experimental and innovative research developed, drawing, meanwhile the attention on the perverse effects the culturally unconditional and unfiltered takeover of the methodologies put forward by the dominant scientific communities over the European ones:

Too many advocates of postmodern qualitative research, and its equivalents, repeatedly rob social life—and hence its investigation—of any sense of *order*. [...] Methodological approaches that wash out those indigenous orders of action and representation empty the social world of many of its most significant (and signifying) phenomena (Atkinson, 2005: para. 24).

In September 2005, the reputed online electronic magazine in the field of qualitative social research, *Forum: Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, published a thematic issue dedicated to the European qualitative research and entitled *The State of the Art of Qualitative Research in Europe*. The issue brings together the points of view of specialists in the USA, as well as from ten European countries (UK, Northern Ireland, Germany, France, Israel, Italy, Switzerland, Poland, Slovenia and Spain) regarding the status the qualitative sociological research holds in each of these countries. The final argument of launching such an issue is that of raising the awareness on the importance the principle of “unity in diversity” has for the real progress of the qualitative research in the social sciences:

The goal, then, is to provide an overview of the activities in qualitative methods at the European level in a way that tries to include as much as possible, rather than excluding the unknown. That is to say, we do not want to reduce qualitative research to what is internationally dominating these days. A discipline fond of its passion for context and differences must also be open for its own internal differences. Thus, the overviews aim to present the state of the art of qualitative social research in various countries and nations. (Knoblauch et al., 2005: para. 2).

In the Romanian contemporary sociology, it can be easily found that the qualitative research did not succeed to rise to the level of interest aroused in the interwar period by the monographic qualitative studies produced by the representatives of the Sociological School of Bucharest. This might be due, on the one hand, to the political regime established in Romania after World War II, which clipped the wings the monographic sociology had developed in that period and which, then, censured and suppressed the qualitative and quantitative sociological researches for several decades, while the West-European and American qualitative sociology gained momentum. On the other hand, the still frail development of the Romanian contemporary qualitative research might also be due to the fact that, in the post-December period, the Romanian sociologists let themselves be “won over” even further by the technological advancements and by the proliferation of the statistical methods of quantitative data analysis, technologies they had not had access to during the communist period. Finally, a third cause could be the will of being in line with a quasi-general trend of legitimating the qualitativist research and of doubt (otherwise, unjustified) as regards the virtues and validity of the qualitative methods of researching the social-human universe.

The in-depth view obtained from the description made across time and space of the qualitative research renders legitimate the assertion about the existence of multiple ways of performing the qualitative research, and therefore, the idea according to which these ways are inscribed in the orbit of a complex process of interconnected factors, at the centre of which there is the researcher with his/her personal biography. In other words, the researcher will enter the research process armed with a set of principles and ideas specific to the interpretative scientific community he/she is a part of (the beliefs related to ontology, epistemology and methodology), but also with his/her entire genetic and social heritage (the so-called affiliation to a certain race, ethnic group, gender, social class, culture and so on and so forth). All of these will give a specificity character to all the subsequent activities engaged in the research process.

The gendered, multiculturally situated researcher approaches the world with a set of ideas, a framework (theory, ontology) that specifies a set of questions (epistemology) that he or she then examines in specific ways (methodology, analysis). That is, the researcher collects empirical materials bearing on the

question and then analyzes and writes about those materials. Every researcher speaks from within a distinct interpretive community that configures, in its special way, the multicultural, gendered components of the research act. (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 21).

With a history of over one century, the qualitative research holds, nowadays, in the world, in the sphere of social sciences, an unanimously acknowledged place (even if not yet as influent as that of the quantitative research), representing not only a specific scientific approach, used ever more courageously in studying the people's social life, but also a subject for debate and dispute, found more and more often on the spotlight of the international scientific community and, to a certain extent, of the national one as well.

### **The Value of the Qualitative Data – between Permanence and Transience**

The semantic richness of the qualitative data is indisputable, since they are true treasures for the one who dares to enter the profound semantic universe of the social life. The qualitative data catch the interpretations that the social players assign to their own feelings, attitudes and values, as well as to the events they witnessed or not, but which influenced their lives in some way. Moreover:

... [the] qualitative information is valuable in that it helps to grasp the full social density of cultures, social bonds, and the complex strategies of subjects and groups within society [therefore] it produces a less simplistic picture of social reality than the predefined categories often used in quantitative analyses (Cribier, 2005: para. 9).

Some qualitivist researchers did not however let themselves be spellbound so much by the richness of the qualitative data, to the point of settling for the value they have *hic et nunc*. Thus, the debates on the effectiveness of the qualitative data originating in the social sciences went further, pushing the discussion to a point where it triggered numerous controversies: is the value of qualitative data perennial or ephemeral? To say it differently, can the qualitative data gathered in a certain research context (by certain researchers, in order to clear certain matters) constitute, similarly to the quantitative data, the raw material for subsequent researches (developed or not on the same topics or by the same researchers)? Or should they be catalogued as “disposable data”, lacking validity beyond the research they were collected for?

The first one to draw the attention on the potential of reusing the qualitative data is considered to be the renowned American sociologist, Barney Glaser, one of the founders of the grounded theory methodology, who touched tangentially on this matter, in the '60s, in two of the studies published on the topic of the secondary analysis of survey data (Glaser, 1962, 1963):

To be sure, secondary analysis is not limited to quantitative data. Observation notes, unstructured interviews and documents can also be usefully reanalyzed. In fact, some field workers may be delighted to have their notes, long buried in their files, reanalyzed from another point of view ... Man is a data gathering animal (Glaser, 1962: 74).

Despite the prompt formulated by Glaser in the '60s, the matter of the secondary analysis of the qualitative data will remain in the shadows for over three decades. Although, in the meanwhile, at the level of the international scientific community, the qualitativist researchers took sporadic initiatives to reuse and reanalyse certain qualitative data (usually, the ones gathered by themselves during previous investigations and stored in personal micro-archives), it was only in the mid-'90s that the matter of reusing the qualitative materials truly gained a wider scope. By assigning functions to it, such as to investigate new research matters, to check, to reject, to refine the existing research or to perform meta-researches, in order to synthesise the knowledge resulted from the studies existing up to a certain given moment in time (Heaton, 2004: 9-11), the secondary analysis soon became a topic which was as popular, as it was controversial, especially within the Anglo-Saxon scientific community.

## **The Secondary Analysis of Qualitative Data. Facts and Controversies**

### ***The Feasibility of the Secondary Analysis of qualitative data***

The first and thorniest one amongst the controversies started around the topic of the secondary analysis of qualitative data is related to the validity of this practice, itself.

The opponents of the qualitative data reuse support their point of view on the defining features which grant value and weight to the qualitative data compared to the quantitative ones – the reflexivity and the contextuality. They argue, on the one hand, the fact that the interpretation of the qualitative data depends largely on the context they are in at the time the research is performed, as well as on the researcher's reflexive interpretative practices. On the other hand, the fact that the reflexivity and the context cannot be practically immortalized or fully rendered in words in order to allow the data proper reuse by other researchers and/or in other contexts. Consequently, the secondary analysis of qualitative data raises, from their point of view, serious epistemological problems. Some supporters of this theory (N.S. Mauthner, O. Parry, K. Backett-Milburn) thus opine that the primary qualitative data can only be reused in historical or methodological researches and not, also, for developing the knowledge:

If researchers generate new substantive findings and theories from old qualitative data, without attending to the epistemological issues, they are being naively realist thus unwittingly serving to reify the data by hoodwinking us into believing they

are entities without concomitant relations. Furthermore, while archives may be an extremely rich source for historical and methodological exploration, any attempt to go further than this is incompatible with an interpretive and reflexive epistemology (Mauthner et al., 1998: 743).

On the other side of the barricade we find the supporters of the secondary analysis of qualitative data (Moore, 2007; Bishop, 2005; Hammersley, 2010; Savage, 2007; Silva, 2007; Van den Berg, 2005, Heaton, 2004), who come with interesting solutions counteracting the limits highlighted by their opponents.

They mention, on the one hand, the fact that the secondary analysis must neither be regarded as a repetition, nor as a reconstruction of the previous research but, rather, as a new approach implying the primary data recontextualization and reconstruction. Therefore, the role of the initial research context and reflexivity must not be generalised, to the disfavour of the *new* context and of the *new* reflexivity involved in the performance of the *new* project (Moore, 2007: para. 3.5). Of course, it is nevertheless desirable that the contextual information be as rich as possible.

On the other hand, the supporters of the qualitative data reuse admit that the secondary analysis is not always feasible, in which case the primary analysis is recommended and, consequently, the gathering of new data. It is not however less true that the problem of lack of fit between data and research questions, and the issue of sufficiency of contextual knowledge occur in the primary analyses, as well, although with a lower probability (Hammersley, 2010: para. 2.4). In this respect, it is preferable to make the decision regarding choosing one or the other of the (primary or secondary) analysis types only after having carefully assessed the relation between three strongly interdependent factors: the research purpose, the type of data involved in the research and the quantity of contextual data at hand (Van den Berg, 2005: para. 45-47).

As regards the last factor, account should be taken both of the strict context of the initial research (the space, time and circumstance-related coordinates of the collection activity, the data identifying the research subjects which should be as rich and accurate as possible, and others), and the broader context where the respective study was born and developed (the dominant social, cultural and political circumstance in that period, the researcher's academic profile – the paradigm he/she is framed in, and others), all these influencing strongly and directly all the stages of the research process (starting from the topic choice, to the methodology preparation, and ending with the data interpreting).

***“Primary Data”/“Secondary Data”, “Given Data”/“Constructed Data”***

Another debate on the secondary analysis of qualitative data is the one related to the nature of the materials to be reused, which refers to the ontological and epistemological aspects of the matter: are the data “out there”? do they



exist independently from the research process? or are the data “here and now”, being built over and over again, with every new research process?

Firstly, we find the ones challenging the *secondary* character of the data gathered during previous researches which are to be reused. They believe “the notion of pre-existing data is at odds with the widely held understanding in qualitative research that data is not collected, gathered or found, but rather that it is created and co-produced in the research process” (Moore, 2007: para. 2.3) Thus, any “secondary analysis” is actually another “primary analysis”, on the grounds that a new analysis implies a new contextualization and, consequently, a new set of data, co-built in the interaction between the researcher and the revised data:

Once the data is transformed through the process of recontextualization, it is not so much that we now have a new entity to be termed ‘secondary data’, and which might require a new methodology to be termed secondary analysis, rather, that through recontextualization, the order of the data has been transformed, thus secondary analysis is perhaps more usefully rendered as primary analysis of a different order of data, as accounts of reuse by Bishop (Bishop, 2005), Savage (Savage, 2007) and Silva (Silva, 2007) so clearly demonstrate (Moore, 2007: para. 2.3).

Secondly, we find the adepts of the idea that “the first and most rudimentary principle of secondary analysis is that it involves the use of *pre-existing* data” (Heaton, 2004: 2). In Heaton’s opinion, the qualitative data are divided into two large categories: *non-naturalistic or artefactual data* (which imply the researcher’s intervention – field notes, observational records, interviews, focus groups, questionnaires with open-ended questions, solicited diaries and life stories) and *naturalistic data* (found or collected with minimal interference by researchers – life stories, autobiographies, found diaries, letters, official documents, photographs, film, social interaction). In this context, Heaton believes that only the *artefactual data* are appropriate for the secondary analysis, thus being able to receive the name of *secondary data*; the *naturalistic data* would be contrarily be regarded as *primary data* every time and regardless of who researches them; therefore, the *naturalistic data* analysis will always be a *primary* one and it will have either the shape of the documentary analysis, or that of the conversation analysis (in the case of studying the everyday social interactions).

Finally, the third view, somewhat combining the principles of the first two, acknowledges both the *given* character of the data, and the constructed one: the data “are not created out of nothing in the research process, nor should we construct whatever inferences we wish to on the basis of them” (Hammersley, 2010: para. 4.9). In Hammersley’s opinion, the status of the collected data changes during the research process as it follows: initially, we gather the gross data found in the field (field notes, observational records, interviews, life stories,

autobiographies, found diaries, letters, official documents, photographs and so on, and so forth); then, we select these data and (re)construct them in the sense of producing evidence supporting the inferences which are relevant for our research. In the secondary analysis, the things are somewhat similar: the data we start from will have, for us, the status of given data, even if they were evidence (constructed data) in the previous researches we took them from; they will then be reconfigured and turned into new evidence for the new research:

Initially, we look for and take what seems relevant to our work and use it to create an initial sense of the phenomena we are interested in investigating, as yet perhaps not well-defined. Here, we treat data as given but also work them up into some intelligible picture. And this is an interactive, not a one-way process. Later, we are more concerned with turning these data into evidence that can enable us to answer our research questions. And, at the point of writing the research report, we are primarily interested in whether we have the evidence to support our conclusions, from the point of view of the target audience, and how reliable that evidence is (Hammersley, 2010: para. 5.4).

## **Archives and Archiving**

### ***The Qualitative Data Archives***

Some British commentators of the matter (Heaton, 2004; Moore, 2007) opine that, at the basis of the momentum gained during the past 15 years by the topic of qualitative data reuse, there is, on the one hand, the establishment of the Qualitative Data Archival Resource Center (Qualidata, between 1994 and 2003, and ESDS Qualidata, after 2003) within the UK Data Archive (UKDA), at the Essex University (UK), and, on the other hand, the publishing, in 1996 of the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Datasets Policy, stipulating the obligation of the researchers receiving ESRC grants to offer copies of their data in order for them to be stored in the Qualidata. The British researcher Janet Heaton saluted the initiative of founding Qualidata, as well as the activity performed by it, in its first volume, dedicated entirely to the principles and problematic raised by the use of qualitative data in the social sciences, *Reworking Qualitative Data* (2004):

Qualidata was the world's first co-ordinated effort to facilitate the archiving of qualitative data sets on a national basis. The work of Qualidata has led to an increase in the number of qualitative data sets archived in the United Kingdom. It has also contributed to and helped to fuel a growing national and international debate over the possibilities and problems of re-using qualitative data and, in so doing, sought to stimulate a culture of data archiving and re-use in qualitative research in the social sciences (Heaton, 2004: VIII).

Furthermore, the Qualidata project was and still is given publicity in the media and analyzed at the level of the British scientific community and not only, both during the thematic scientific meetings (workshops and conferences), and by means of the virtual meetings, in the pages of renowned online scientific publications (*Social Research Update*, *Sociological Research Online* or *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung / Forum: Qualitative Social Research*). As it also results from the statements of the specialists directly involved in managing the Qualidata activity (Louise Corti, Libby Bishop, Gill Backhouse, Annette Day and others), the supreme mission of this project would be that of saving the materials which were at the basis of the most valuable and significant qualitative researches from the past. For this, Qualidata undertakes the following roles: localising, evaluating and cataloguing the valuable data; organising the selected data transfer to the appropriate archives; giving publicity in the media of their existence at the level of the scientific community; encouraging the reuse of the collections existing in the archives (Corti, Backhouse, 2000: 1). Similar roles will gradually also be undertaken by other national, European and West-American, physical and/or virtual qualitative archives, which will slowly start taking shape, detaching and standing out from the traditional archives based exclusively on the qualitativist data: *Mass Observation Archive*, University of Sussex (U.K.); *Murray Research Center: A Center for the Study of Lives*. Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study, Harvard University (U.S.A.); *German Memory*, Institute for History and Biography, FernUniversität Hagen (Germany); *Archive for Life Course Research*, Special Collaborative Center 186 "Status Passages and Risks in the Life Course", University of Bremen (Germany); *MEDARD: The Digital Archive of Soft Data*, Prague (Czech Republic); *Provincial Archive for Oral Tradition – Archive of Memory and Identity* (Italy); *ADPSS Sociodata*, University of Milano (Italy); *Verbatim: Qualitative Data Archiving Base* (France), *DANS – Data Archiving and Networked Services* (Netherlands), *1956 Institute – Institute for History of the 1956 Hungarian Revolution* (Hungary), *JAKOB Archive: Psychodynamic Psychotherapy Research* at the University of Zurich (Switzerland), *Spoken Language Corpus of Swedish*, Göteborg University (Sweden).

As regards the qualitative data archiving, the Romanian social-humanistic research cannot unfortunately take pride, to date, with notable achievements. Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning the national folklore and musicology archives sponsored by the Romanian Academy, operating at standards from the point of view the international requirements, being carefully monitored by the specialised academic institutions (The "Constantin Brailoiu" Ethnography and Folklore Institute, The Romanian Academy Folklore Archive – Cluj-Napoca). Moreover, these institutions organise, on an yearly basis, at the level of the academic community, public debates regarding the various problems the researchers face in the archiving process. This year, for instance, the "Constantin Brailoiu" Ethnography and Folklore Institute together with the Romanian National Commission for UNESCO

organised a debate session, *The "Brailoiu Workshops" – the National Immaterial Patrimony between Desideratum and Reality*, where aspects were discussed concerning safeguarding and valuing the national immaterial patrimony, as well as the methodological matters, focused on indexing, preserving, digitizing and valuing the multimedia archives.

Another initiative worth mentioning is also the *Romanian Social Data Archive – RODA*, an institution established in 2001, as a national development of the Quantitative Data Base Department of Research Institute for the Quality of Life, in collaboration with the Bucharest University, the Sociology department. Specialised in archiving the electronic quantitative data collections resulted from the social survey, the *RODA* affiliated as of February 2002 to the CESSDA, Council of European Social Science Data Archives, and as of December 2002 to the IFDO, International Federation of Data Organizations. Unfortunately, due to the lack of funds and, probably, to a certain extent, also due to the researchers' reluctance related to the data sharing phenomenon, the operation and development of this Archive is currently difficult. For the already mentioned grounds, the expansion of the *RODA* in the sense of including in the archive the qualitative data, as well, remains, for the time being, at the level of a "desideratum".

Except for the two wide-scope initiatives mentioned hereinabove, no special interest can be seen at the level of Romanian social sciences community either regarding the data archiving matter, be they quantitative or qualitative, nor regarding the secondary analysis one. This passivity can be seen through the extremely low quantity of Romanian scientific works, debates and projects dedicated to the matters at stake. The fact remains that the creation and, later on, the long-term management of professional national archives requires both the logistical support of the scientific community, and the consistent and sustained financial support of stable financiers, amongst whom, at the top of the list, there should be the State. Therefore, in Romania, as in other European states, as well, the matter of research funding, especially of the qualitative funding, which is still regarded suspiciously by the autochthonous scientific community, is a sore point.

In close connection to the matter of qualitative research funding, as well as to that of raising the awareness on the importance of qualitative data archiving, it is worth mentioning that the Romanian qualitative research has enriched its record of achievements during the last years with yet another important "piece". We are speaking about the research project *RO-ARCHIVE – re-updating the image of Romania as an European State based on an electronic archive of images and texts with artistic valence and scientific objectivity*, which, although it can be regarded as a rather isolated initiative, it actually represented a small but significant step forward. Developed by an interdisciplinary team and sponsored by the Arts University of Bucharest, the project received the

blessing of Consiliul National al Cercetării Științifice din Învățământul Superior (the National Council for Research in Higher Education), being financed within the IDEI Programme (Exploratory Research Projects) in the period from 2007 to 2010 (PN II, 718/2007). The concrete project objective consisted of catching the various types of real social life manifestations and their translation in visual manifestations with artistic and scientific valences at the time, in order to create an Archive of images that are representative for the contemporary Romania:

RO\_ARCHIVE puts together a proposal centered on the model of the Postmodern and Post-structuralist archive. The modernist collection of cultural objects preserved as testimony of an identity past becomes nowadays form of artistic expression, over-encompassing factor, or filter of cultural redundancy. No longer limited by its condition as treasurer of the past, the archive is free to be a part of the mapping of the present and the facilitation of the new (Extract from the presentation of the RO-Archive project, author's translation. Source: <http://www.roarchive.ro>).

Within the same context, one could also mention the meritorious initiative of The Aspera Romanian Educational and Charitable Foundation, Inc. (Boston) and of its corresponding Romanian foundation, Aspera ProEdu (Brasov) to develop and support a digital library of interviews, memoirs, oral history studies, books and images from Romania's recent history, its aim being that of presenting the political, social and cultural events of the 20th century as they are reflected in the consciousness of those that lived them ([memoria.ro](http://memoria.ro)). With its both theoretical and practical/methodological usefulness, the digital library [memoria.ro](http://memoria.ro) targets a diverse audience:

For the general audience of any age, [Memoria.ro](http://memoria.ro) is a resource for learning about historical events as witnessed and experienced by the people of the time, a way of discovering different viewpoints or, on the contrary, hearing the confirmation of history and stories as told by our parents. For the young, the site can become a bridge towards the understanding of what was, what should be continued, and what should be avoided. For students of history, the database contained here could add valuable information to a traditional bibliography. Given that the Internet is used more and more in Romanian schools and universities, we hope that this site will become a valuable didactic instrument. For researchers and specialists, the site can become a medium through which they can make their work known to other specialists around the world. For foreigners interested in Romanian history, the site can become a rich resource of information, as interviews, abstracts, and studies are being added in English, German and French. (Extract from the presentation of the [Memoria.ro](http://memoria.ro) site. Source: <http://www.memoria.ro>).

Although it does not actually represent a scientific archive of qualitative data (as it does not abide by the standards of such an approach), the [memoria.ro](http://memoria.ro) project could be taken for a good model and a valid starting point for the development of qualitative data scientific archives.

### ***The Qualitative Data Archiving***

The importance of having Archives sheltering valuable qualitative data, gathered or constructed by the researchers of a national scientific community, in the spirit of sharing and in the name of scientific progress, is unquestionable. The road to achieving this desideratum is however a long and sinuous one. It starts by accepting the desirability and feasibility of the secondary analysis of qualitative data; it goes on with the researchers' active involvement in producing archivable qualitative data; then with the effective entrusting of the valuable materials to the Archive, which will have the role, as of that moment on, to professionally and efficiently manage all the *values* entrusted thereto; no less important will also be the scientific community's availability to use the archived data to generate new valuable researches.

The qualitativist social scientist, an archiving follower, must not however lose sight of the fact that every data collection campaign only has a reason in the concrete context of a research, given that it has no value in itself. In other words, the data collection *per se* is not scientifically justified and, therefore, it should be avoided.

Besides the epistemological problems related to the archivable qualitative data feasibility, problems which have already been highlighted (the problem of the lack of fit between data and research questions, and the issue of sufficiency of contextual knowledge), the effective qualitative data archiving also raises a series of ethical and methodological problems.

As regards the ethical size of archiving, I shall only mention two of the problems triggering the most frequent cause of concern related to the archiving process: we are speaking about the problem of the archived data *confidentiality* and about the problem of obtaining the *informed consent*, that the research subject must express in relation to the archiving and eventual reuse of the data provided by him/her during the research.

In this respect, it is worth mentioning that in some Western European states one can already find codes of ethics having the status of laws and regarding the rights and obligations of the researchers, as well as of the participants in various scientific researches in the social sciences. However, a few of the ethical guides and rules of conduct refer to the problems raised by the qualitative data archiving, leaving the final responsibility for making the decisions regarding the compliance with the study participants' integrity with the researcher (Corti et al., 2000).

The methodological problems raised by the qualitative data archiving process occur at each of its levels, around the dysfunctionalities appeared in coordinating the main players in the process: depositors – records keeper – depositaries – applicants. Furthermore, this chapter also includes the problems caused by the more or less appropriate methods the records keepers use in attracting, selecting, storing and disseminating the archived materials.

## Conclusion

Concerned by the effective understanding of the world he/she lived in, the qualitativist researcher in social sciences generally claims, as a final epistemological reason for his/her approaches, to catch the meaning of the social life, as it is reflected in the eyes of the studied subjects. Starting from the interpretativist thesis according to which the social life is a building erected by means of the interpretations the social players assign to the various aspects of the reality; one might even say that the task accruing to the qualitativist researcher would be that of reconstructing the subjective perspectives of the social. In fact, this is about what Ronald Hitzler very metaphorically called “understanding of understanding” (Hitzler, 2005) and Antony Giddens, “double hermeneutic” (Giddens, 1976).

Regardless of the dominant paradigm, the *qualitative research* will allow the use of *qualitative data* in their “tri-dimensional” form, *text-image-sound*. Thus, the qualitativist researcher in social sciences will be able to lean, in the process of constructing the social world, on a multitude of data types: from the texts of certain social, personal or public documents, to the field notes and to the interview scripts, from the static images given by photographs, drawings, sketches, maps, to the dynamic images, accompanied by sound, given by the video recordings, from the audio materials collected during the fieldwork, to the ones produced for cultural-artistic purposes. The potential of all these qualitative data is not however exhausted once the researches they were produced in are completed. The full valuing is achieved in time. That is why, the creation and, then, the proper operation of national social archives of qualitative data, insuring both the preservation and the management of all the valuable data produced at a certain time, at the level of the autochthonous scientific community is imperiously necessary. In this sense, it would probably not be hazardous to conclude that sharing within the scientific community all the valuable qualitative data, resulted from the researches in various branches of the social sciences, could have an extremely beneficial result on the development of the social life knowledge process, offering us a multidisciplinary, panoramic and panhistorical perspective on the world we live in.

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***Methodological Forum:***  
***Ethnography and Autobiography***



## **FOREWORD TO THE METHODOLOGICAL FORUM ON ETHNOGRAPHY AND AUTOBIOGRAPHY**

**IRINA CULIC\*, RALUCA PERNEŞ\*\*, ALINA CUCU\*\*\***

Trademark of cultural anthropology, ethnographic fieldwork has enduringly stayed at the centre of the discipline as method of research. It is defined by long-term involvement with a community in a particular setting, entering its everyday life and learning its ways. This mode of data collection makes the researcher its main instrument, her body and mind the site where the object of research takes form through subjective interaction between two different cultures. Understanding and portraying an “other” requires building spaces of liminality that position both the anthropologist and her subjects outside the grip of the taken-for-granted of their social worlds. That fieldwork is more than a method of data collection and engenders huge ontological and epistemological consequences is the task of this methodological forum to take on to show.

Starting from a single first encounter with the field, the socialist factory as the space where labour is produced through labour, Alina Cucu develops a more abstract argument on the mutual historical constitution of reality, researcher, and knowledge, apparent in fieldwork experience as epistemic and ontological sources. From a critical realist position, the ethnographic time of the fieldwork interaction is conceptualised as a window into historical time, across which deeper structures and larger processes unfold to generate specific individual trajectories.

Raluca Perneş makes a case for dispelling the illusion often created in representations of ethnographic research, namely that work and life operate as separate domains during fieldwork. Personal relationships are presented as the ethnographer’s privileged means to gain knowledge and to have a real chance at assembling and representing the word views of their collaborators. These relationships also turn a research experience into a process constitutive of one’s own life.

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Irina Culic discusses the social production of knowledge through the corporeality and reflexivity of the anthropologist. Her entering the field begins the production of a liminal cultural space between the researcher and the other, unfolded through interaction, transformation, and resignification. She argues that fieldwork should be approached as total engagement with the community under study, assuming the violence it entails, but that its rendition requires restraint. She also proposes the moment of writing as the primary ethical, ontological, and epistemological moment in the whole anthropological undertaking.

Ultimately, these articles do more than impart epistemic insights developed on field. They bear material evidence of a more elusive yet fundamental transformation of the authors, predicated on their full body and mind involvement in the production of the social world and its sense.

## FOR AN ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE REAL

ALINA-SANDRA CUCU\*

**ABSTRACT.** The present article was imagined around one single field encounter which took place in the very first days of my PhD research on working-class formation in socialist Romania. It starts with a one-day, non-eventful interaction between me, my research assistant and our newly found informant. This meeting prompted me to rethink and discuss the ethnographer's problematic encounter with *the Other*, beyond the crisis of representation in which post-structuralist and post-modern anthropology submerged in the last decades. It builds upon the fundamental relationship between ethnography and history, and it argues for the continuing methodological strength of ethnography to access and reveal both the systematic and the contingent layers of the real. It does so by connecting *my* history and *the Other's*, as empirical, materialized, and therefore, historically contingent manifestations of deeper, broader, and complex processes and relations which can be theoretically described and explained. I argue that grounding our encounters into a strong realist ontology, while acknowledging our ethnographic accounts to be social artifacts, we can reempower anthropology both methodologically and politically, evading at the same time the old foundations of ethnographic authority.

**Keywords:** ethnography, critical realism, field encounters, the Other

Apart from the newly renovated administrative building, the electronic gates, and the perfectly clean alleys at the main entrance, the old factory looked deserted, too big and inutile in July 2010, when I started my research on the relationship between labour and the state during the socialist-led Romanian industrialization. Its massive buildings stand completely silent in the hot day of summer, staring at me with broken windows and shriveled walls. Where the plaster on the walls still survived, some traces of green and yellow are still visible but the smoke and the dust reign over the old industrial halls, homogenizing their former life under an all-powerful ash-grey. The weeds and some small white flowers are trying to cover the piles of broken glass and the old equipment laying everywhere. The silence is flowing through the thousands of pipes and cables linking the industrial buildings, and no sound breaks the unnatural quietness of the place, except for the skinny dogs barking loudly at our passing and the monotone explanations of our guide.

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The man has been asked by the factory manager to assist me and my research assistant<sup>1</sup> in finding the location of the supposedly existing archives and libraries on the industrial platform, but, as *it is my first ever visit in the most important space where production and life constituted each other in socialism*, he offers to give us a complete tour of the plant, with full descriptions of the past and the present function of each building. He walks along silently, speaking only when asked about the utility of a certain space, resisting to all our attempts to start a conversation, not reacting to any of our comments regarding the place, and manifesting no curiosity related to our presence in the factory. Although *I framed our presence there properly*, when talking to other people, he generally refers to us as ‘two students who want to write a paper’ and need to be helped “because they are young and nice”. Sometimes, he completely forgets about me in the course of these interactions, and refers only to my research assistant, as being “a young gentleman interested in the history of the factory”. *I make a note of the gender bias and I know I have to work more for building a deeper and stronger relationship with him.*

There are clocks at the beginning (or the end) of every pathway, visible from almost any point on the industrial platform, all showing a different time of the day, although nobody knows in what year they stopped. I ask how strictly the work schedule was controlled, *thinking about how others framed the socialist time as going through a process of “etatization”* (Verdery, 1996). The man answers that the degree of time and schedule control varied with the changes in management – tighter in the 1960s, more relaxed in the 1970s, and extremely strict in the 1980s. My research assistant smiles and *I know that we share the same thought, rooted in the knowledge gained along similar academic trajectories. I remember a critique one of my supervisors had about how the etatization of time<sup>2</sup> is conceived, as being not open enough because it does not allow for more specific and narrow structures of power to have their say on the structuration of everyday time and schedule, as state did not shape the lived time directly, but through various materialities and agents.*

Our guide’s presence facilitates the contacts with people who still work within the factory as we try to identify the place where the old archives are kept. It takes us hours, several phone conversations, and several evasive and uninformed face-to-face answers to understand that the archives are nowhere to be found on the industrial platform. We slowly reconstruct the fate of the documents from several people who are recommended as the ones who “should know everything” about what happened in the factory during the last decades. It seems that the

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<sup>1</sup> I thank my research assistant, Sergiu Novac, for sharing his insights into this field encounter with me. They proved to be essential for reconstructing this day.

<sup>2</sup> The comment belongs to Mark Pittaway, from Open University. Mark was my supervisor at that point and died unexpectedly while I was writing this article. Everything I write about working-class in socialism is for ever influenced by his scholarship, insights, and political stance.

documents were completely destroyed in several stages. Some of them contained dangerous information about the way the *Securitate*<sup>3</sup> was functioning at the factory level; some others offered detailed information about the fixed capital of the factory before it was bought by its current owners; and still others, especially the documents referring directly to the workers and the processes of production, were considered useless or “garbage”. All of them were burnt, or melted and transformed in toilet paper in a nearby factory. *I think about labour’s loss of symbolic capital and its disappearance from the public space in postsocialism* (Kideckel, 2002, 2008). *In the context, the melting and the transformation of the factory documents appears as the perfect symbolic end for the memory of working-class. My own research appears more and more as a project of recovering this memory from a long process of forgetting. It also appears to be dangerously close to an end, as I don’t see how I could find the data I need to uncover the broad and complex processes related to working-class formation in socialist Romania, to understand the ways in which labour was an integral and central part in the economic and ideological logic of the Party-state, and to reveal how these power relations were experienced at the shop floor level and in people’s everyday lives. I think quickly that the only choice left is to shift the aim of my research toward an attempt to recover the experiential dimension of working-class formation processes through life-histories. I feel profoundly dissatisfied with this constraint which pushes me far away from how I first imagined my research.*

The only collection of documents left untouched is the one of the technical archive, and a corresponding technical library. Our guide is their keeper, moving around, checking, and rearranging the books and the drawings as different parts of the industrial platform are rented out. He leads the way into a former office building which seems to bear the traces of an atomic attack<sup>4</sup>. There are signs of dirt brought by dogs up to the third floor, while trying to find better shelters during the night. We quickly see a phone with no tone, family pictures on the walls, an organizer which is still open, and pretty girls smiling from outdated calendars. The old carpets are covered with crumbled paper and the men are discussing about it as the work of the rats which are everywhere in the empty building. *I have always been scared of rats, so my whole body contracts because of the fear.* The chaos ends in a medium sized, light room where the technical library is located. The bookshelves, the tables and the blackboard *make me feel familiar with the place for the first time.* Our guide explains the purpose of different types of documents: translations from the Soviet technical literature, folders with hundreds of innovations of the people in the factory, studies about the production norms, calculations of prices, diagrams for the whole process of production, and technical

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<sup>3</sup> The Romanian state security during the socialist regime.

<sup>4</sup> This is how my research assistant framed it. I found it useful for description purposes.



specifications for each product. *I feel obsessed with understanding how state power was exercised in production and at shop-floor level, so I ask him to detail the information he has on the subject.* He unfolds the drawings, describing how each step in the fabrication of the lorries also meant a person in a decision chain, a certain space within the factory, and a specific time, with a specific requirement. *I went in the field with the assumptions that the socialist factory represented both a space of production and a fundamental part of the workers' life world. I have never expected though that I could reframe the socialist factory so quickly as one point in the capillary and, surprisingly, not uni-directional flow of power which gave birth to the production plan, to the setting of the working norms, or to the calculation of prices in socialism. I feel the joy of discovering dimensions of the Romanian socialism which were never mentioned in the literature but at the same time I become more aware of the dangers of over-interpreting the details I see around.*

We are guided into the corresponding production halls, and we are offered detailed explanations on the role of the machinery, on the logic of the division of space, and on the place of each worker within the fabrication process. Our guide points towards the hut where the foremen spent their time. *I ask if the foreman's hut was placed above the shop floor for controlling the workers more efficiently.* Our guide answers that their placement at an upper level was important both for control and “for seeing immediately if their help was needed”. *I think about Foucault, Bentham and the Panopticon. I think about the entanglement of care and surveillance as definitory for the socialist state.*

The old posters with rules and warnings related to labour protection are still on the walls, exposing suggestive drawings with a funny tint, but cautioning on a serious tone: “Alcohol does not help one's work, but it can provoke accidents”, or “Do not interfere in work you are not qualified for”. The new ones also made their appearance, using a more abstract language and imagery, promoting “Less noise, more harmony” and “Safe labour, safe earnings”. *I think the socialist posters are certainly better: more concrete, not detached from daily work routine but embedded in it.* We can contemplate the now empty flaunt for the union's announcements and propaganda, where the names of the slackers and of the leaders in production used to be displayed.

Although the explanations of our guide help me to reconfigure my entire research, and partially substitute my image of a factory built from the literature with a lively description of the place based on everyday experience, my efforts to build a closer relationship with him seem more or less futile until, after many hours and many unsuccessful efforts to shift the interaction between us to a more personal one I ask him for how long he has been an employee of the factory. We learn that he came in 1974, as a young man, after he graduated the Polytechnic School, but his relationship with the industrial plant was even

older, as he also did his practice in production in the same place. My remark that his long-term employment allowed him to see all the transformations of the factory makes him turn around quickly and react: "I did not *see* the changes! I *lived* the changes!"

His reply shifts the dynamic of our walk together in a second, as he realizes how much this tour talks about his life, and *I face the inherent fallacies of my "ethnographic eye", no matter how much "thickness" my description would exhibit*. As he is opening in front of us, his explanations become more personal, populated with animated characters, sounds, scents, and feelings of fear, work exhaustion, personal accomplishment, pride, joy or comradeship. He starts talking about his daughter expecting a baby, about his neighbours, his friends and his family; about his days of hard work in production during the socialist times; about his nowadays days in a desk job in the postsocialist factory, and his long evenings spent in front of the computer, looking for undefined "opportunities".

He offers to help us further with our fieldwork, contacting former key employees of the factory for interviews. He gradually realizes that his knowledge is essential for us, and his life in a socialist factory has value beyond his own attachments, loyalties, memories and frustrations. The reality he experienced grows in his own eyes, it gains significance, and it becomes a story which needs to be told. He makes no secret from the fact that he helps us because he considers our project to be an important one. We are slowly converted into his instruments and into his voices, who are in exchange allowed to use him, and *I am fully aware of this change*. His attitude becomes more and more protective, as he enters his role of a proper informant. Our relationship shifts in a few hours from distant to personal, from vision to lived experience, from indifference to protection, and, its most rewarding facet, from "two students" to "two sociologists", a status upgrade earned only when he convinces himself we are able to understand and communicate his story.

As we are heading towards the exit, *I try hard to go beyond a very emotional first encounter with the factory, to see everything, to memorize everything, and to picture the factory full of people, full of noises, smells, and lights. Hearing the weak but annoying noise of the electrical wires accompanying our entire trip, I comment with my research assistant: "Imagine this sound when there were 1,000 workers in one hall and all these presses were working"*. Our guide drily comments: "You could not hear the electricity anymore when the presses were working". *I notice his smile, as the smile of a person who has access at a different form of experience, one that I cannot even imagine. I start thinking quickly about what 'being there' means to me in this context, when my research object is only half present, and when it cannot be recomposed from smells, visual elements, sounds, and feelings. I was sure that "hanging around" was revealing, important, and useful, but it was impossible to see exactly in what way, and how the work of imagination must do the rest of the job for me. Although my encounter with the factory within an industrial*

*space which is only a shadow of what it was proved to be very personal, fascinating, and moving, my research object was hiding, both in terms of historical traces, and in terms of ethnographic experience. Its reconstruction seemed almost impossible.*

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From the first day, field experience put to work my methodological and epistemological instruments, accessed my previously gained knowledge, caught me in complex personal relations with my informant, and made me feel, almost painfully, the limits of my access to different “cultures” and “experiences” through immersion into other people’s lives, even when doing anthropology at home. It forced me to think about the impossibility to avoid the traps of the writing process and of representation through text (Clifford, 1986), even though at that point writing was something loose, distant, and undefined. It pressured me to (re)draw the boundaries of what my field was (Candea, 2007), challenging at the same time the relevance of my sensual experiences and their very possibility to be transformed in “proper” narratives, and made me feel exposed as an intellectual, as a woman, and as a young person with my own feelings, anxieties, frustrations, and disappointments. While the fullness of my informant’s life became more and more apparent, the limits of my “skilled vision” (Grasseni, 2007) were also made clear, and I realized I would never be able to *know* or even to *imagine* these people’s experience, and even less to write convincingly about it, without misrepresenting it. I understood that transforming this man and his fellow workers in a text will inevitably go through a process of othering, this time based more on class and generation than on other dimensions. In other words, I had my reflexive moment.

This paper could revolve around two related stories: the chronicle of my participation in the never-ending saga of our broader crisis of representation, along with the personal account of a semi-failed research. The two stories seem to converge into a similar outcome, although from very different directions. The former would lead to failure as it would proclaim (yet again) that the only thing we can honestly do is create an artifact about our fieldwork even when trying hard to demystify our presence there and our interactions with our subjects. The latter would have the same ending, since after only one week I have decided to move my whole research in a different city because of the lack of material and information. Nevertheless, the two ways of failing lay on extremely different epistemological and corresponding ontological assumptions: on the one hand, we fail because of our impossibility to know and represent *the Other*. On the other hand, we fail because we miss *evidence* for what we search for. But since evidences are ambiguously connected to equally problematic notions as “truth” or “reality”, we suddenly find ourselves in the very heart of the antique ontological dilemma of the existence and nature of the real, in the middle of endless justifications for our (institutionalized) positioning in relation to it, and in the core of our epistemological confusion created around what we actually *do*: construct or discover.

As the history of the discipline has revealed (Vincent, 1991; Truillot, 1991), the belief in the very existence of a research object independent of the researcher's knowledge about it represented the fracture line between realist and constructivist perspectives in anthropology. Positioning along this line became a criterion for judging if anthropological work is good or bad long before *Writing Culture*. Blurred lines of division were created around two extreme and opposed norms for what good ethnography is: reflexive enough and truly assuming its status as (literary) creation or fiction – in Geertz's (1973) sense, or accurate enough and uncovering our subjects' realities. The two positions operated differently with concepts like 'culture' or 'experience' and with research practices which involved access, observation, participation, immersion and writing. However, the disciplinary division line proved to be extremely fluid, as research itself showed that we always reveal and construct simultaneously, and that ethnography requires both reading-keys for the landscape of other people's lives and the involvement of one's self until the boundary between *me* and *the Other* melts away. Even more important, the fracture within anthropology was grounded on levels of abstraction which placed the fundamentals of ethnographic research outside the realm of the "theories which are specific enough to have specific empirical consequences" (Stinchcombe, 1968: 47) and made dialogue almost impossible. Of course, neither evidence-based nor reflexive and very personal accounts from the field can ever justify the fundamental decision we make between reality as a given or reality as construction and, correspondingly, between ethnography as discovery and ethnography as fiction. No matter what kind of fieldwork we do, how we do it, and how we write about it, the ontological and epistemological grounds of the anthropological enterprise will be a matter of choice, based on personal preferences ingrained in specific intellectual and academic traditions, in beliefs we hold about the world, and in our specific relationship with it. In other words, these premises can be rooted in anything *but* in our fieldwork experiences and encounters, be they reflexive, representational, or in search for a middle ground. Although few of us are ready to accept, we never build our research on ontological certainties or on falsifiable statements but on the shallow sands of abstractions which can never be proven wrong or right. Stinchcombe (1968:49-50) discusses seven levels of generality which underlie social science research, ranging from "general ideas of causality, about what can be accepted as a fact, about what forms of logical inference are valid" to "the empirical consequences of theories" and "assertions that the observation in a particular case support or refute the empirical specifications" of the theory. Realist or constructivist pictures of the world, materialist or idealist perspectives of change, dialectical or linear visions of history, conflict or contract – based visions of society, individualist or communitarian answers to political issues, egalitarian or differential stances regarding social justice, utilitarianist or altruist accounts of the human action, all of them are placed at a level of generality which does not allow certainties or proofs. Consequentially, if we truly recognize and assume our limits in the realm of speculative metaphysics, our positioning appears as a voluntaristic

moment whose supremacy cannot be proclaimed in absolute terms and whose truthfulness cannot be assessed by confronting it with empirical evidences.

A different line of thinking emerged in anthropology, calling for the acute need of the discipline for historical and political awareness, starting with the establishment of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute and culminating with the paradigmatic shift from an anthropology of culture to an anthropology of power (Wolf, 1990). By now, many other scholars have convincingly argued for the gains of an anthropological quest which takes temporality and social processes seriously (Kalb and Tak, 2005; Sider, 2005). The discussion regarding the basic binder of any social order moved from the cultural logic of the interpretivists and from the purely materialist logic of the classical marxists, to the underlying structure of power for the scholars identifying themselves with the historical turn in anthropology. Anthropology also moved from extreme visions of society based on either consent of conflict to deeply historicized attempts to understand how order is negotiated relationally, in shifting configurations of power. Thus, the (observed and potential) political consequences of our research became the most important measure for ruling out certain ontological and epistemological assumptions about the world, ourselves, and *the Other*.

An anthropology aiming to uncover structures of power is in need for a specific ontological and epistemological positioning which allows the researcher to deal with processes, relations, macro-structures and to access them through the mediation of very mundane, ordinary, and intimate encounters and practices. So *I choose* critical relational realism as the foundation of my research practices. Critical realism is grounded on several core postulations: deep, stratified ontological realism, epistemological relativism, and the transphenomenality of knowledge. The ontological assumption of “depth realism” claims the adequacy of a “vertically stratified picture of reality” (Steinmetz, 2004), built upon three different layers: the real - everything that exists and can exist, the causal structures and powers of objects, within or beyond our experience of them and within or beyond their actualizations; the actual – the activations of these causal structures and powers; and the empirical – the world of experience and observables<sup>5 6</sup>. As our

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<sup>5</sup> For synthetic overlooks of critical realism in social sciences see Sayer (2000) and Steinmetz (1998 and 2004).

<sup>6</sup> As Andrew Sayer synthesizes: “First, the real is whatever exists, be it natural or social, regardless of whether it is an empirical object for us, and whether we happen to have an adequate understanding of its nature. Secondly, the real is the realm of objects, their structures and powers. Whether they be physical, ..., or social, ..., they have certain structures and causal powers, that is, capacities to behave in particular ways, and causal liabilities or passive powers, that is, specific subceptibilities to certain kinds of change. ... Whereas the real in this definition refers to the structures and powers of objects, the actual refers to what happens if and when those powers are activated, to what they do and what eventuates when they do. ... Realists therefore seek to identify both necessity and possibility or potential in the world – what things must go together, and what could happen, given the nature of the objects. ... The empirical is defined as the domain of experience, and insofar as it refers successfully, it can do so with respect to either the real or the actual though it is contingent (neither necessary nor impossible) whether we know the real or the actual” (Sayer, 2000: 12-13).

aim is to gain knowledge of the real, through the actual and the empirical layers, it is assumed that knowledge is transphenomenal. As Steinmetz (2004: 377) argues, “ontological stratification between the levels of the empirical and the real allows for disjuncture between underlying causal mechanisms and observable phenomena”. Employing further the distinction between “events” and “mechanisms” allows the researcher to account for “contingent, nonrecurrent, conjectural determination of events within open systems like the social” (Steinmetz, 2004: 373), preserving the explanatory power of the “time, space, concept, and practice dependency” (Steinmetz, 2004: 377) of the human beings. Critical realism does not deny the existence of universals, but it rejects altogether the idea that there is only one way in which any causal structure, universal or not, is related to empirical events. Therefore, historical variation, temporal and spatial dependency are not avoided, and contingency becomes exactly what we search for in order to describe and explain how causal mechanisms are related to empirical stratum of the social<sup>7</sup>.

The other source of my situatedness in the anthropological space is a form of relational and processual ontology (Emirbayer, 1997) which does not allow the assumption of a simply existing *me* or *the Other* as independent of specific configurations of power defined in time and space. Recurrence, stability, the possibility to cause an action, the possession of a specified attribute, involvement in a specified type of relationship, or participation in a given event or activity are considered as being the signs that an entity exists ‘out-there’ in the world. But entities are always in formation and their very existence has to be explained. So rather than describing or explaining the relationship between me and my subjects, I use the changing content of this relationship for understanding both what *me* and *the Other* mean in different (space and time) power configurations, and for exploring how we were produced by and within ever-changing, fragmented and multivocal social relations, as “assemblages of various sites of difference ... set[s] of boundaries in the topologically strict sense, boundaries that define an inside and an outside” (Abbott, 2001: 273).

My first day of fieldwork coagulates then the encounter between two historically constituted subjects and their history together as the fieldwork unfolds. As my informant talks and I can situate in time and space the events of his life, I realize that *I lived the changes, too!* I witnessed and experienced the broad structural transformations as he did, although from different locations. We both *lived* socialism and postsocialism in our own ways, using our resources to face specific constraints, being forced to cope with complex

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<sup>7</sup> As Bob Jessop states, “‘Contingent’ is a logical concept and concerned with theoretical indeterminability, ‘necessity’ is an ontological concept and refers to determinacy in the real world. Thus ‘contingent’ means ‘indeterminable within the terms of a single theoretical system’; it can properly be juxtaposed to the notion of ‘necessity’, which signifies the assumption underpinning any realist scientific enquiry that ‘everything that happens is caused’” (Jessop, 1990: 12).

economic, political, and cultural experiments and being differently (dis)empowered by them. The same socialist project which transformed his family from a rural, poor one to an urban, secure, and upwardly mobile one, limited the possibility of my parents, as intellectuals, to think critically and to use their knowledge as political weapons. The same nationalistic turn of the late socialism subjected him both as a worker and as a Romanian, and affected for a long time a profound level of relationships among people of different social backgrounds. I was born when he became a technician in the factory and when the miners rioted in the Jiu Valley, and I started to read when he was allowed by the factory union to move in a bigger apartment because he had his second child. In 1987, while he was witnessing the revolt of the workers from his factory who were asking for bread in the streets, I was occupying the highest rank in the pioneers' hierarchy in my secondary school. It was the first step for a very probable career path within the Romanian Communist Party which was not possible anymore after 1989. In the 1990s, while his factory was dying and its number of workers went from over 10,000 to only several hundreds, my university was flourishing in administrative terms, reaching out over 70,000 students. The same postsocialist changes which allowed me to benefit from an enhanced access to education, flexibility, openness, and good perspectives, made him redundant, useless and without horizons.

Thinking about his life *in time*, made me realize that my history was hanging around, too, and that my fieldwork was not just a fascinating combination of life, vision, memory, emotion and imagination, but the site of connecting multiple histories which were still in the making. It was also the ground for revealing that we do share the same history and that our subjectivation processes take place as much in separate spaces of practices and knowledge, as within broader and more encompassing power relations. *Being there* and *being then* appeared together in my field encounter, as dimensions of the processes in which both *me* and *the Other* are produced. Thus, the field connected only what it could be connected, what was made possible by personal trajectories embedded in a common history. In critical realist terms, field encounters become the site where we learn that we have a *real* history together, which we live it separately in its *empirical* materializations.

Consequentially, we can understand our situatedness not as a point, but as a shifting relation between always in the making subjects, from which we can and should produce privileged knowledge by revealing both the systematic and the contingent layers of reality, by connecting *my* history and *the Other's* history, as empirical, materialized manifestations of deeper, broader, and complex "structures and powers". Instead of seeing and representing *the Other*, we follow both our subjects and ourselves polyphonically, within multivocal and always emerging structures. We track simultaneously our parts in the emergence and the

transformation of these crystallizing structures and, by doing this, we understand how their materialization *causes* the transformation of *our* trajectories, practices, dreams and hopes.

Therefore, no ethnographical account could ever be unhistorical. First, because we always undertake ethnography only through historical location, even when we do not make this explicitly. Second, because a processual ontology assumes a fundamental relationship between causality and time. Kirsten Hastrup (2004) suggests that following causality in the linearity of the historical narratives or in previous spectacular events is problematic, as causes are to be discovered only if what is ordinary, enduring, and recurrent is made visible as condition of possibility for anything to happen. The causation is to be found in the links between events, and not in the events themselves. From this perspective, history becomes for anthropology more than just 'context', while anthropology becomes for history more than just the study of the consequences of great events in the lives of the ordinary people. It offers relational access to a relational reality which constitutes both the result of multiple intersecting processes and the production of a new structure of possibility for any future event.

Ethnography is above all about unveiling more of the polyphonic structure of the real, and so is history. This should lead further to a full awareness that othering is not only a professional practice, it is not generated only and mainly in interactions or in our texts. *Being there* and *being then* appear together in our field encounters and they are always and inescapably about *me*, *the other*, and *us*. Being reflexive about the different positioning of *the knower* and *the known* in specific fields of power will not make the uneven, unfair, and problematic colonial relations, gender relations, or (less problematized) class relations between us disappear once we have left the field. In fact, making them disappear from texts only would be a problematic mystification. *The Other* is brought into being structurally, exactly like *me*, within specific fundamental power relations which cannot be erased through politically correct writing or through the exercise of reflexivity alone. But acknowledging the inseparableness of our history can reassess various practices of othering as dimensions of wide-ranging historical processes of subjection, (dis)possession, and (dis)empowerment. This way, we can escape one of the worst nightmares of the (post-modern) anthropologists, we can leave the worries about othering as a professional practice behind, and we can reappropriate it as a necessary and powerful tool for understanding the systematic character of certain power relations, together with fully fledged instances of their variations.

In the last decades, critiques stemming from different lines of the anthropological thinking exposed certain forms of representing *the Other* as part of the processes of making imperial subjects, revealed the Wizard-of-Oz-anthropologist behind the text scene or disclosed the problematic character of



giving a voice to the subalterns and the recognition of ethnography as a relational process of knowledge production became a requirement. The present article argues that we are indeed in a crisis, but not because we cannot know and represent *the Other*, but because we should not even attempt to do this as it was often imagined in classical anthropology. Instead, we should aim to retrace the very localized and contingent trajectories of our subjects and of ourselves, to conceptualize our making as entities *together*, within broader and more encompassing structures of power which act upon us but can also be acted upon, to locate *me* and *the Other* in the midst of both localised and generalized forces, and to contribute to the production of togetherness through mutual reflexivity and solidarity.

But the most important consequence of embracing Plato's "world of becoming and passing away", of assuming a realist ontology in pure processual and relational terms is that *the Other* cannot be anymore understood as our mirror-self, as our conceptualized difference. *The Other* can be seen only as our counterpart in a deep ontological *us*. Even if the historically constituted Other is everything we are not, even if the Other constitutes the most fundamental negation between A and non-A, this negation cannot be thought outside an (onto)logical togetherness, broken in its empirical, fully historical determinations. As our histories apart unfold and we are going through our own stories of becoming, we produce difference (or it is politically manufactured for us). But when we do fieldwork, when we live our encounters, we do surface our deep ontological togetherness, we do reveal the commonality of our history which made the connection of our trajectories possible, and we do contribute to the empirical and, most important, political production of *us*.

### **Concluding Remarks: For a Critical Realist Ethnography**

The present article could be considered first of all a rejoinder of those intellectuals for whom time matters, but it does not represent an attempt to bring more elements into any debate about what we gain if we let ourselves be converted into more historically minded anthropologists. It should be read most of all as an argument about the method, about the anthropological craft, and about the necessity to assume the fundamental capacity of ethnography to expose multiple histories at once and to create forms of "being in the world" together, within and outside (if and when possible) of the hegemonic unfolding historical processes. Acknowledging this almost unique quality of the ethnographic method does not entail a return to older notions of ethnographic authority. The present article does not suggest that we should reconvert ourselves in old believers in the limitless possibilities of the participant observer to see, represent, and write about the Other. Nonetheless, it is grounded on an understanding of our

situatedness not as a handicap, but as a chance to produce privileged knowledge. This is possible only insofar as we understand our positionality in pure relational terms, when we understand *me* and *the Other* as always in the making, as always constituted in contingent processes of subjectivation, but which are, in turn, produced within broader configurations of power relations which have a systematic character and, consequently, they can be theoretically accounted for.

Can the subaltern speak? I do not know. Can we speak for *them*? Not likely. It might be truly impossible to make their hopes, dreams and experience transparent for others. All we can do is to speak for *us*, grounding our discourse not in old universalistic pretensions, but in a deep and radical sense of togetherness which should be at the same time recovered for anthropology and nurtured as an ideal for a broader field of politics. Understanding our common partaking in complex, fluid and fragmented, but nonetheless systematically linked and increasingly all-encompassing power relations, functions both as the condition of possibility for any future ethnography, and as its end or meaning, as ethnography produces at the same time an account of the real, in its above mentioned understanding, and an openness for a certain possible, which is always altered, sometimes fundamentally, by our interactions in the field.

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## PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE FIELD OR THE MAKING OF THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL SELF

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**ABSTRACT.** Doing fieldwork, a crucial formative experience for an anthropologist, is an occasion for reworking one's theoretical and epistemic uncertainties through repeated confrontations with the empirical realities of research. The ideal of participant observation is increasingly difficult to pursue in fragmented and complex field sites, but the aspiration remains for a way of being in the field that guarantees meaningful interactions between the researchers and their interlocutors. Based on my field research in a peri-urban community in southern Ghana<sup>1</sup>, this paper investigates some of the options available for negotiating and asserting an anthropologist's place in the world while in the field. I maintain that, in spite of ethical complications, the most reliable strategy of accessing knowledge is by integrating in the field as a person and building relationships with interlocutors in the same way. In a web of partial views of the world, we must concede the impossibility of representing the other accurately and completely and our main responsibility becomes that of assembling and representing these views from our own partial position in the shape of complex, fluid, fragmented, yet sound knowledge. This is knowledge that needs to be aware of its limits and make them visible through exposing the scaffolding of its production.

**Keywords:** ethnography, fieldwork, personal relationships, Ghana

Waves of change have been rippling through the discipline of anthropology repeatedly – as they have through the world it studies – but one of the few loci of consensus still in place concerns the centrality of ethnography as a method of research. Saying this, however, we risk falling into caricature, since the normative, prescriptive and descriptive content of “ethnography” across the professional community remains vague at best. How then is a newcomer to anthropology supposed to orient themselves? The proliferation of epistemological and methodological stances, especially after the reflexive turn in the '80s and early '90s, offers a befuddling array of possibilities. Once we drop the lens of metaphysical realism, the search for the social “truth” ceases and the ways to the empirical multiply (Hastrup, 1996).

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This essay aims to illustrate a particular grammar of positioning within the field of anthropology by focusing on an individual trajectory – mine. It investigates a conjunction of possibilities and a series of contingencies – some auspicious, some ominous – that carve an epistemological and methodological standpoint, mainly during that most emblematic and formative stage that is fieldwork research. It is, then, necessarily, a very personal account. This is even more so because I maintain that the most valuable methodological tool an anthropologist can use is, still, their own (anthropological) self. Building on this, I go further to claim that the privileged means anthropologists have to access knowledge is the personal relationships they establish. Far from advocating solipsism and undermining any reliability of information thus collected, I believe that the anthropologist needs to make use of the methodological wisdom, but only as a repository of tools, the selection of which will be “conditioned by the vernacular social realities and contingent human preoccupations” (Comaroff, 2005). As long as the knowledge feeds into the construction of sound, compelling theory, this seeming weakness of the discipline is converted into strength.

A researcher needs to forge her way from a broad theoretical position to fashioning an empirical research approach that resonates with her interlocutors and her own way of being in the field – and in the world. This is a lengthy process with successive stages, some of which are deliberate and conscious. Others become transparent only in retrospect, and yet others may forever remain obscure.

At cognizant level, academics in the field of anthropology are taught their research needs to be original, meaningful, and innovative. These criteria are inoculated most forcefully through the process of selection that takes place in the academic field, where only research going by these principles – amongst other requirements – will get funded and/or published in prestigious publications. Complementarily, as the professionalization of the discipline advances, these principles are explicitly taught to students. Whereas just a few decades ago students were lamenting the dearth of guidance available before they went off to the field<sup>2</sup>, at the moment there is no shortage of methodology classes, methodology textbooks, and explicit methodological installments in most anthropological texts.

A quandary ensues: how is one supposed to diligently assimilate the best practice recommendations in a multicephalic discipline, afflicted by multiple streams of self-criticism and self-reflexivity, while simultaneously advancing innovative research practices and writing strategies? In the academic environment, the one element that simplifies choices is ethics guidelines and etiquette (see

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<sup>2</sup> The collection of advice/anecdotes compiled by Evans-Pritchard before his own field research in the 1920s remains famous and gives an inkling of the degree of sophistication and/in formalization that occurred in anthropology over less than a century (Evans-Pritchard, 1973). Malinowski’s tip, “not to be a bloody fool”, certainly stands the test of time.

ASA Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice for an example). In their formalized articulation, these can sometimes seem inflexible, if not outright stifling on the thorny issue of informed consent, especially in American context, but they remain essential for good practice in research. Some of the canons are inherently methodological, yet still allow the researcher a lot of space for choice – in terms of the “techniques” put to use, and, equally important, for the fashioning of one’s own ethical apparatus, attuned to the needs of their own interlocutors.

As a means to an end, the selection of methods from the toolkit is part of an epistemological perspective and a way of engaging with the social reality. Crises of research and representation can be averted by coming to terms with the nature of this type of work: in the terms of Strathern (2004), the world is ontologically multiple and we can only achieve partial connectedness. Ethnographers are partial participants and the result of ethnographic work is partial truths (Strathern, 2004). This counterpoints Clifford’s discussion, leading to a similar conclusion but for the process of writing in anthropology, of partial ethnographic truths as products of the selectivity of the ethnographic text’s maker (Clifford, 1986). Strathern’s position follows on the steps of Haraway, who notes that our perceptions of the world depend on our bodily organs and because of this specificity and difference are unavoidable. From this point of view, rational knowledge has to be engaged and objectivity itself is about particular and specific embodiments rather than transcendence (Haraway in Strathern, 2004).

I am tempted to rename Haraway’s “objectivity” as good old fashioned subjectivity – and perhaps further discuss what we mean through “bodily organs” –, with the corollary that striving for objectivity where human agents are involved is rewardless and distracting from the objectives of the research. But the main tenet remains crucial: what happens in the social world is a continuous meeting of partial views of the world, and what happens in the interplay between a social scientist and their interlocutors cannot fundamentally differ. Once we stop approaching social science as a sub-genre of positivist stories-about-the-world, we can proceed to crystallize heuristic approaches able to generate knowledge, fragmentary and inter-relational as it may be. The type of academic enterprise suggested by Haraway and Strathern risks to poke an Achilles’ heel at us through exposing their very endeavor as just another partial view and still, against a background of defined conditions of possibility for the production of knowledge, this materializes as the ultimate worthwhile effort in the social sciences.

But just how is the anthropologist to work with this subjectivity? Are they to distill their subjectivity as researchers from their subjectivity as individuals? Collapsing conventions of method and representation in the age of the linguistic/literary/reflexive turn in anthropology, and subsequently with postmodernism, postcolonialism, or feminism, opens up spaces of possibility for fashioning new

acceptable strategies for sound research. It is in these spaces that from time to time volumes with collections of works insert themselves, with the explicit aim of enacting the use of a specific lens to illuminate aspects of our relationship with knowledge, learning, and, ultimately, our object of study<sup>3</sup>. I will take a closer look at two of these works. Borneman and Hammoudi's *Being There* (2009) sets out to reinstate the uttermost role of the ethnographic encounter for the anthropological account, in spite of challenges to ethnographic authority and to the ethics of representation. Davies' and Spencer's *Emotions in the Field* (2010) is a "project placing emotions on an epistemologically relevant plane" (Davies and Spencer, 2010:3), which persuades through a critique of the consequences of concealing emotions in the history of anthropology and proceeds to offer a new alternative methodological framework. What interests me most in these two very new collections is how they define what we can achieve through utilizing the chosen specific lens. Borneman and Hammoudi warn that recurrent contemporary theoretical claims that stress ideas of constructedness, plurality, instability, and in-between-ness run the risk of becoming excuses for the display of superficial translations. Advocating "deep translation", they attempt "to bring ethnographic practice and reflexive writing together so as to produce knowledge that can acknowledge its relationality and still aim for the truth" (Borneman and Hammoudi, 2009:8). They look into the possibilities of theoretical production based on intersubjective questioning that result in "objectivities in progress", as an alternative to normative prescriptions in both theory and methodology. To me, this concept remains empty unless reformulated as a succession of subjective and relational encounters branded as objectivity by virtue of some special skills of the anthropologist. Davies and Spencer aim not for the truth, but for understanding, which is to be pursued, after William James, from the position of radical empiricism, understood as an epistemological modality that infuses methodological heurism. By aligning themselves to the idea that there is no cut between the subject and the object of research, they place themselves in a posture explicitly critical of an implication of postmodernism – that "subjectivity has only a corrosive effect upon the process of research" (2009:2) – and of the tenets of traditional empiricism, which stand for rationality and detachment (Davies and Spencer, 2010).

What happens is symptomatic for a state of the discipline where the struggle to achieve the most adequate and meaningful theoretical and epistemological strategies can masquerade as a gratuitous claim for innovation and originality. The two perspectives produce bodies of discourse that, although propelled by

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<sup>3</sup> See for example Kulick and Willson, 1995 on the role of erotic subjectivity in the production of anthropological knowledge; Reed-Danahay, 1997 on forms of boundary-crossing between the ethnographer and the 'others'; Amit, 2000 on the need to not overdetermine fieldwork practices; McLean and Leibing, 2009 on the overlapping of life and experience as an ethnographic resource, etc.

similar impulses – underlining the vertebral role of fieldwork and relationality –, support entirely different epistemological stances: critical distance in the case of *Being There* and a type of critical nearness in the case of *Emotions in the Field*. My own experience suggests that, while the former might be still a desirable accomplishment in many professional circles, the latter is more likely to be implemented in the actual practice of field research, the possibility for its reformulation later notwithstanding. To stick to an unattainable desideratum, moreover, risks having a corrosive effect on the productivity of fieldwork.

### **Doing fieldwork, living life**

Like many students of anthropology, I went to the field terrified of the reality of everyday life that was expecting me in the new environment and plagued by uncertainties regarding my research, which, for almost a year, had been looking back at me, toothless, in the shape of nothing more than a project on a page. My angst was enhanced by what seemed like aggravating circumstances: I was one of the very few students I knew of that had no previous knowledge whatsoever of their field site when deciding their research topic; I had a background in sociology and little experience with anthropology; and, perhaps counterintuitively, I had never been eager for adventure. I ended up working on problems of land tenure, management and development in a peri-urban location, looking at the dynamics and interfaces of the different forces regulating these processes. The field research took just over a year.

My methodological toolkit was generous, to allow for subsequent selection. I was torn trying to make up my mind about what to expect and what not once I got to the site of my research. When I finally moved to the field in the south of Ghana, it all seemed utterly unreal. There I was, with a room in the house of a host family, living in a village for the first time in my life, committed to be there for an entire year, yet not sure even about my next move, even at the most trivial level. Unaware of the ongoing debates on this topic, I had decided before going to the field that the following period was not going to be just a year of work; it was a year in my life as well and needed to be treated as such. This aspiration was complicated by the approach according to which everything we do in the field is part of research, since everything can prove significant for our understanding of the world we temporarily inhabit or for the particular subject we research. To me, however, going shopping to the market in the nearest town never seemed the same with having a conversation with a compound courtyard full of women. For a while, I diligently took notes regardless and mused endlessly on the tiniest of details. Days which, by the end of my stay, would have counted just as “uneventful”, produced notes that rivaled in detail and introspection depictions of the busiest days. I was attempting



to construct myself as an anthropologist and those around me as informants through these mundane actions, awaiting a time when a cumulative effect doubled by a change in the nature of my relationships with the people would guarantee the leap to genuine anthropological knowledge production. In the process, I was a victim of many a false revelation and sometimes had the dispiriting feeling the successive layers of progressive “understanding” would never see me to the core.

For weeks and weeks, being in the field colonized my thoughts and my time, if only because most of the activities I was normally pursuing in my “spare” time were unavailable here. For anthropologists who travel to the field with their partners, children, or both, dilemmas faced in everyday life are endless. Yet, in terms of belonging, there is at least one certainty, that of being attached to one’s own family. This I clearly lacked. My position as a research student was straightforward and most often elicited a positive reaction on the side of new acquaintances and my interlocutors. But this status had to be claimed and obtained, since at first sight I was a white person, and also a single and childless woman occupying a room in the house of a family – usually just a stage in the life of women typically younger than me. I negotiated slippery terrain between being accepted as someone significantly different and being allowed “in” by virtue sharing the same place in the world, if only temporarily.

I tried to “get entry”, “establish rapport”, and move on to the business of participant observation, complemented by a few questionnaires in the very beginning, interviews, as well as archival documents and state statistics. Three months into my stay, my initial topic had been scrapped, I was at war with my field assistant *cum* translator, who happened to be closely related to one of my key informants, and was regularly confronted with such large amounts of white and not-so-white lies by my interlocutors that I was certainly losing faith not only in questionnaires in this context, but also in much of the interviewing. To add insult to injury, even though I felt I did things “right”, participant observation seemed an elusive ideal, given the fact that my interests extended way beyond the contexts where I could become a member – which was actually at that point limited to my host household. The anthropological ideal of belonging, though perceived as an ideal from the very beginning, was difficult to approximate. Even as I became temporarily part of the social texture of the village, I was constantly aware of the precarious position I was holding. The volatility of my position was exacerbated by the seeming randomness of the incidents I read as negative, in particular receiving inaccurate information from my interlocutors. Unweaving the rationale behind politically motivated strategies of disinformation was challenging enough, and ultimately rewarding, but being misled on unloaded topics made me doubt my most basic capacities of accessing any kind of information and made me question bitterly the truthfulness of my interactions with my subjects.

### Translating difference

One day around lunch time I arrived at the house of Bro Kofi<sup>4</sup>, a farmer I knew was cultivating some land down the stream dammed within the rice farm. He was not in and I asked the women in the house whether they could call one of the children to show me to his land. They suggested they send one of the children to bring him home instead, since the farm would be too muddy for me to go there. I insisted to walk there myself, but they were adamant I stayed. Bro Kofi appeared a quarter of an hour later and promptly agreed to talk to me about his farm and his work. This was strictly a hot pepper farm, used for commercial purposes, he explained to me. There were no other farmers working in that specific area, nor were there any residential plots, due to the vicinity of the water. He was working the farm alone; the other family members had their own things to do. He then dwelt with me on the intricacies of land ownership and especially the history of his farm relocations throughout the years and the rationale behind them, which were the main focus of my interest. He seemed at ease and treated our interactions like a relaxed conversation, occasionally getting enthusiastic about certain details, especially technicalities about the plot he cultivated at the moment. At the end of our talk, increasingly eager to demonstrate some of the things he had told me about, he agreed to let me join him on his way back to the farm, even though he did mention repeatedly the mud and got scolded energetically by the women for taking me along. The pepper farm was bordered by cassava on two sides and on one section there were rows of garden eggs and tomatoes between the hot peppers, for household consumption. On the southern end of the site, two Asian men were working vigorously on their own farm. Two young boys, household members and relatives of Bro Kofi, were at work watering one of the corners of the pepper farm. Suddenly, the exhilaration I had felt upon meeting such a “good informant” withered away. Almost none of the information he had given me about the farm was accurate. Could I trust any of the other information elicited from him?

There is much to learn from a situation like this: growing food for household consumption alongside commercial crops goes without saying<sup>5</sup>; foreigners are sometimes not mentioned in accounts of activities routinely conducted by autochthones; the work of young household members will not always be acknowledged as separate from that of the head of the household. But more importantly, I learned from this type of interaction – of which there

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<sup>4</sup> „Bro Kofi”, 42 years old, had moved to the village about 20 years ago. As a non-native of the area, he did not „own” any land and was living in a compound house on a piece of land given to him through an informal arrangement, for free. He lived with his wife and their three children and they were sharing the compound with one of his sisters and her family.

<sup>5</sup> This was also widely practiced on state managed projects. While never formally approved, the practice was tacitly accepted and therefore customarily silent.

were many – that I could not take at face value what I was told and needed to verify, ideally repeatedly, ideally by checking factual information with my own eyes – an advantage I did not have for other types of knowledge. Making sense of the gap between discourse and reality was a task which featured more prominently in my activities than I would have expected initially precisely because of interactions like the one with Bro Kofi: sometimes there was nothing at stake when I was receiving distorted information from people. Put differently, I was not dealing with lies *per se*, but with culturally different ways of expressing reality in discourse. The taken-for-granted of my interlocutors simply did not match mine. This was evident to me, but, especially once I became less illiterate in Ghanaian realities, was less and less obvious to those who were talking to me. My efforts at speaking and acting in a manner familiar to my interlocutors, as well as indicating that I was conversant with the basic aspects of their life paradoxically worked against me at times, indicating that we had in common more than just universal similarities and thus creating the illusion that I would share at least some of the taken-for-granted dimensions of their lives. The only way to access my informants’ universes was to connect to them in a way that was not participant observation in the strict sense of the term, but rather a bond between two individuals that was strong enough to grant occasional access to their lives and their work. I needed to be not a researcher asking for cooperation, which would prompt a straight face and formal, empty discourse, but a person entering a relationship with another person, be it as neighbors, friends, fellow church goers, or even fellow researchers.

### **A way in? Establishing personal relations in the field**

I figured out working ways of achieving these relationships only along the way, after I had been through the experiences of not only failing in my research, but also failing in finding a good way of being myself, which led to me being failed by my informants, and also by my friends. Most of the people I met for the first time automatically assumed I was either American or British, or maybe, once I told them my name, German. In the first weeks of my stay in the field, those around me were so curious about what had brought me there that I had to struggle to have the chance to ask questions myself. In order to keep things simple, I replied to some of the questions about myself and answered a few about my country, after which on most occasions I was prompted to switch to details about London – often a synecdoche for the UK –, a common ground with many of the people in my village who had relatives or friends working there. On virtually every occasion when we discussed the history of Ghana and particularly the colonial times, the British would be referred to by my interlocutors as “your people”, a fact I initially commented on but eventually left unnoticed in casual

conversations. Those I was closer to gradually got told my country was different from the ones in the Global North they were familiar with in that it had never been as wealthy and had never had colonies. This point was slightly confusing since, with my country, my place in the world became more ambiguous as well. Normally, a few weeks after another clarifying conversation, we would revert to the point where I was discussed as just another westerner and an adopted Londoner. For me, focused on garnering information and assembling a representation of the community I was working with, the effort they were investing on a micro-scale to do the same thing about me almost escaped me for a long time. I was busy editing myself out of the picture of our mutual social reality in the belief that this way I would get access to unadulterated images of my informants' own worlds. I had already compromised on my comfort and my aspirations of being perceived as I wanted to be perceived by my peers by the very act of being in the field and therefore considered any further suspension of my own self as integral part of what is supposed to be the effort of doing fieldwork. Moreover, I was pursuing a clear and aware policy of not being offended by what my interlocutors were saying, for the practical purpose of not interrupting the flow of their discourse and also in an attempt to be politically correct. This way, they had the impression of a cordial conversation, while in fact I often managed to just nod alongside monologues. I had the feeling of having mastered one of the most subtle of the interviewing techniques. The charade I had put together continued seamlessly for a few months, when two separate incidents pointed out aggressively what I had previously tried to obscure: by actively silencing my own voice in the interaction with my informants, except for nudging along discussions with questions, I was first of all undermining my own efforts of turning this field experience into a substantial effort constitutive of my own life, and secondly, by doing so, I only managed to replace a distorted reality with an alternative distorted reality. Even without my self-imposed control, what was being said in my presence was fundamentally altered by it. More importantly, my disengagement prevented me from building the genuine, meaningful relationships that would later on become the key to my understanding the fabric of my fieldsite.

In the first incident, after lengthy planning, we had finally managed to organize a day trip for me, my field assistant and two of her siblings. We went first to a national park and then headed to Cape Coast to visit the slave castle. The girls and I were there for the first time, while their brother had visited once before. The guided tour took almost an hour, in scorching heat, our attention occasionally distracted by other groups with their guides or by speculation about the nationalities of the tourists in our group. We walked up and down the stairs within the intricate structures of the castle, to the darkness of the slave dungeons, where, crammed in, we were struggling for air, and then back

in the blinding sun. The guide was competent, his story compellingly phrased, with dramatic undertones and yet not all gloomy. He was describing the history of the slave trade in a low but clear voice, making use of numbers and dates and then swiftly switching to stories of individuals and appeals for us to picture a space or another in a different time in the past. As we were going lower and lower towards the sea level and also closer and closer to the sea shore, through a narrow corridor, the story was obviously about to reach its narrative climax. The group grew quieter and then completely silent as the guide was wrapping us in the drama of the slaves being taken out of the castle and to the Gate of No Return to be embarked on the ships. In the unbearable heat and the density of air created by too many bodies in a tight space, we could all guess and anticipate the breeze and light available on the other side of the massive door. We almost audibly gasped for air as the gate finally opened and, suddenly, we were again out in the light, in the soothing sounds of the waves and of the fishermen's voices, mending their nets just in front of us on the shore. In the general atmosphere of relief, I could suddenly hear the voice of my assistant saying "See what your people did to my people?" At that very moment, having been transported to a different world in time and space and effectively out of the space of the village, where I had firmly established a routine of non-response, I finally had a reaction. I determinedly pointed out that at the very historical time we were discussing my own people were also victims of exploitation, the women and children kidnapped, and the fruits of their labour periodically stolen. I suddenly realized my previous assertions had been so weak they did not even take root in the minds of the closest of the people around me. The pretext of the reaction was insignificant; if anything, in a clear state of mind, I would have taken issue first and foremost with pointing out to the contemporaries the mistakes of those who lived several generations ago. But there I was; I had found my voice again and realized it was only through my constitution as a historical, situated, opinionated being that I could build a dialogue and elicit reactions, at the risk of appearing less pleasant – but also less bland – than before. At the same time, my knee jerk reaction warned me of the damaging effects my withdrawal in myself had had on my social persona.

In the second incident, I went one step forward from asserting my identity, rooted in my past, to asserting my opinion of events in the field as they were happening. It was six months into my stay when a friend came to visit me. So determined had I been to immerse myself in the field and only in the field at that stage, even as the exclusive background to my life, that he was also the first white person I was communicating with in Ghana. On the first evening of his visit, we made the trip across the road from my house to the nearest drinking bar. Amongst aggressive mosquitoes and a few men having a drink before bedtime, we chatted about the people he had met during his first

day in the village. I could not help but complain about the openly misogynistic attitude and behaviour of one of the men we now both knew. As we were speaking, the very person we were discussing parked his car in front of the bar, came in and joined us at the table. He had already had one or two drinks and soon after he began drinking again he started illustrating the very attitude I had been complaining about. A few long tirades later, in which he made sweeping generalizations, deploring the fate of Ghanaian men at the hands of Ghanaian women, he left. Over the course of the discussion, my friend had imitated my own position and did not react in any way. Now that we were alone again, he looked at me and said: "I can't believe you just listened to him like that!" The artificiality of the situation, of which I had been aware before, struck me at a different level this time. Attentive at the effect open disagreement might have had on the discourse of my interlocutors, I had been blind to the even more perverse effect this had on my own person and, more importantly for my research, the wealth of potentially meaningful reactions I did not generate by avoiding conflict. Indeed, I was not there to teach my informants how to behave or why some of their assumptions were wrong. Still, it was only by asserting my own position in the world that I could achieve a type of relationality with my informants that gave us both a chance to a meeting of worldviews. Only by making myself in turn more aggressive and more vulnerable than I had been did I stand a chance of not being on the receiving end of sterile, unsituated views, attempting to synthesize for me the very partial views I aimed to access at individual level.

My new stance was certainly more productive, but also more tiring and often frustrating. My day to day existence was extremely dense in justifications and explanations, especially confusing to others because of my otherwise conformist behaviour. In the second half of my year in the field, I altered the texture of my stay radically, by joining a Twi language class in Accra and spending an afternoon a week with expats, making friends and having access to people going through the same type of liminality as myself. I had grown to accept I could not share all of my life with the people I was working with and I was in dire need of being listened to and understood myself, an exercise in empathy and a burden I could hardly place with any of those around me, regardless of how friendly we had become. Having an internet connection and keeping in touch had helped tremendously, but only to the point where my very person was transformed so much by my stay in the field that my main concerns, dilemmas and inner fractures were all related to the field experience and became more prominent than the features of my pre-field persona. I regained balance and made huge interpretative leaps through the interactions with my colleagues. What had seemed an escape from full engagement with the community proved to be an exercise in gaining perspective, systematizing and expressing in a coherent

manner what my life and work were about. A decision that was supposed to help me immerse better in the local community – through developing my language skills – was ultimately transformed in the ideal device for assuming critical distance and then zooming back in while I was still in the field.

Unsurprisingly, in retrospect, my research took off to a different level once I started a relationship with one of my informants. It was at this point that the previously blurred line between research and life in the field dissolved completely and the realization dawned on me that aspiring to put aside a personal domain separate from that of the research was untenable and unnecessary. While my knowledge of the space and social environment I was living in deepened at a much faster pace, I was in doubt about the ethical implication of my new strategy of gaining insights. I was also very much affected in any situation where I had the impression my research relationships were altered by this now primarily personal relationship.

As the owner of several plots of land in the village and thanks to his own personal and professional connections, my partner was in a position to share with me his experiences and to introduce me to other informants. Crucially, he was one of the very few people I could observe in the situations I was interested in and about which I would most times collect second hand stories. I could join him in land buying trips, observe his arrangements for land sales, participate in the endless to-and-fro of documents involved in each transaction, verify data at the town planning authority and go through the tedious periodic task of checking none of the lands had been encroached on. I could finally investigate how and why people were taking what were to me unreasonably high risks in land transactions. I got details of undocumented informal arrangements that helped me formulate and refine my dialogues with other informants on the same matters. I could gradually assemble the taken-for-granted that had been not expressed in any of the discussions I had had on these topics. This, at a time I was still doubtful of the reliability of what I was told, came as much more than sound information: it was reassurance that there were ways of getting genuine knowledge. One aspect was problematic nonetheless; in certain circumstances, I was granted access and confided in not as a researcher, but as a person in a certain web of relationships. Getting informed consent became an ongoing process and an ongoing problem, especially when it was obvious to me that bringing it up in the conversation would immediately change the course of events. I settled for the moment for gaining the knowledge and converting it to an ethically correct, acceptable written form at a later time.

Much of my energy before going to the field and in the early stages of field research had been invested in learning how to become a functional, reasonably polite member in my new community, attuned to the most basic cultural sensitivities. I had assembled a set of tips compiled from anthropological

works, tourist guides, friends' anecdotes, and even language textbooks. But, while learning the greeting and small talk rituals was relatively easy, especially thanks to my host family, it was only with the help of a relationship as close as that with my partner that I could move into dealing in an appropriate manner with more delicate circumstances, such as tension and conflict, sexual advances, or money matters. At the end of months of striving for inconspicuousness, the best compliment I received was that I had managed to have a fight just like a Ghanaian. Complementarily, I learned a lot more of the reverse lens – how my own way of being was read or readable in my current environment.

My new relationship meant not only a reformulation of my rapport with one person, but brought about sensible changes in relations with many other individuals. I had had from the beginning a very good relationship with my host family. I was granted almost effortlessly some of the marks of acceptance and gaining membership many anthropologists seem to value; I did have a local name and was addressed by my adoptive family as a daughter, even if the fact I was a foreigner always remained in the background. But, once my structure of affiliations became more complex, the perception of my being there and, with it, the people's behaviour towards me, changed visibly. Now I was expected to return to Europe only temporarily, to complete my degree, after which I would go back, get a job, have children and generally "become Ghanaian".

The relationships we establish with our informants are problematic at many different levels. Due to the history of anthropology as a discipline established and developed under colonialism, keeping under scrutiny relations of power becomes essential and a prerequisite for ethical research. Sensitized by post-colonial guilt, many anthropologists become self-aware of their relationships with their informants to such an extent as to prevent them from establishing fully productive connections. There is undoubtedly enough diversity in contemporary anthropology to render debatable any generalization about the status of researchers as compared to those of their subjects. Still, more often than not, anthropologists doing research away from "home" find themselves in spaces where they are relatively more "powerful" by virtue of their material status, level of education and access to different resources. With the rise of a new wave of non-Western anthropologists, however, and the multiplication of the sites of research to include less underprivileged environments, the situation becomes even more complex and relations of power even less clear. The ability for continual self-reflection, readjustment and repositioning becomes the only tool at hand to recreate equilibrium in unbalanced situations. However, awareness of our own privileged positions aside, and also putting aside the hefty overload of political correctness this often implies the understanding of us researchers often being in the vulnerable position, with our relatively more powerful (global) selves suspended or meaningless in the context of field research. At different times



and in different occasions, my partner and I both felt one of us had the upper hand. I was better educated; he was successful professionally; I knew my way around Europe; he knew his way around Africa; I was punctual; he had the sense of being appropriately late I never seemed to master. Our positions in fields of power shifted continually, making any definitive assessments improbable and the overall relation rather more balanced than I would have ever expected under the circumstances.

### Conclusion

With a few notable exceptions, most anthropological accounts obscure the significant personal relationships of the researchers, be they with individuals from 'home' or those from the 'field'. In my reading, this communicates an aspiration on the side of most anthropologists to accept the impossibility to achieve objective, cold data, but with the corollary of adopting a set of conventions in form and content that maintain the illusion that professionalism and detachment are nevertheless attained. Throughout this paper, I describe the ways in which personal connections in the field are our privileged avenue for gaining insights into the worlds we temporarily inhabit. In the emotional rollercoaster that is fieldwork, these relationships – varying from friendships to love and from antipathy to outright conflict – temporarily suspend ontological doubt and give us mediated access to other worldviews. The interaction between *self* and *other* has the chance to be transformed, if only momentarily, in a meeting of two or more *selves*.

We all leave to the field with a world view, with a way of being in the world, with previous research experiences, with a complex toolkit of empirical strategies we think we might use to advance our work. At this stage in our lives and our careers, we bear coherent systems of ideas shaped by our biographies, our embeddedness in histories, and our academic trajectories. It is perhaps one of the most amazing and mixed blessings of anthropology that these are still often and radically shaken during the experience of fieldwork. As a trained sociologist who used to believe in the possibility of using different methodological strategies for achieving the same kind of knowledge about the world, I was the first one to be surprised by what to my former self would have seemed the progressive radicalization of my epistemological and methodological stance. Thanks to my experience in the field, I became by necessity skeptical of translations we make in casual encounters with informants – most situations of interview included – and deeply critical of apparent sharedness of our respective taken-for-granted. This is not to say I gave up on the promises of social research. We need to constantly investigate and push the boundaries of the possibilities of knowledge and understanding in the social world and the only advantage of

the mode of knowledge of the anthropologist is their reflexivity. In a web of partial views of the world, we must concede the impossibility of representing the other accurately and completely and our main responsibility becomes that of assembling and representing these views from our own partial position in the shape of complex, fluid, fragmented, yet sound knowledge. This is knowledge that needs to be aware of its limits and make them visible through exposing the scaffolding of its production.

At the end of any research enterprise, it becomes obvious that the two apparently separate issues discussed by Strathern (2004) and Clifford (1986) merge necessarily; the partial view of the world we achieve as individuals needs to be translated further into a partial representation of our experience in writing, one that is ethically aware and standardized to conform to norms and rules proper to the anthropological writing and not just the anthropological research. I do not necessarily argue for experiential ethnography as the only way of writing in anthropology, explicitly incorporating the experience and the relationships of the researcher in the fabric of the anthropological text. Yet, I am also not partial to maintaining the illusion of monophonic authority (Clifford 1986). We can only strive to produce accounts that are true to ourselves and attempt to be true to those we try to represent, making the most of the ontological circumstance that, as individuals, we shared a certain space and moment in history.

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## **AUTOBIOGRAPHY AS ETHNOGRAPHY. DOING FIELDWORK AT HOME AWAY**

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**ABSTRACT.** Ethnographic fieldwork as method of research configures a specific relationship between anthropologist and her object of research, whereby the epistemic position is one of mutual constitution. Knowledge is produced within and through a liminal cultural space between the researcher and her anthropological subjects, unfolded through interaction, transformation, and resignification. Based on my experience of fieldwork among fellow Romanian immigrants to Canada, this article discusses the tensions entailed by such reversal of the classic ethnographic situation. Autobiography precedes anthropology and survives it. Both the researcher and the researched are away, having already experienced the immersion into another culture in complex ways, during the process of immigration, and after the settlement in the new country. The stance towards fieldwork proposed here is one that upholds forceful and total engagement with the members of the community under study, which does not circumvent confrontation, strong emotions, or pain, but requires discretion, temperance, and prudence in its rendition. It also proposes the moment of writing as the primary ethical, ontological, and epistemological moment in the whole anthropological undertaking.

**Keywords:** ethnographic fieldwork, autobiography, writing, ethics, Romanian immigrants, Canada

### **Introduction: Entering the Topic and into the Field**

This article is a chronicle of becoming. It documents the making of an anthropologist. That the anthropologist is also or strives to be a critical sociologist, a woman and a feminist of sorts, an immigrant from the former communist bloc to an advanced industrial country in North America and a transnational subject, are important details, which decide the shape of the story. The narrative bears little eventful material, but it nevertheless encompasses transformative moments of which the writing of the text itself is one, and begins with the very moment of its conception.

The Association for the Studies of Nationalities (ASN) annual convention, where I first presented a paper based on my ongoing social historical study of Romanian immigration to Canada, draws scholars from across the social sciences.

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It is a hub for political scientists, international relations scholars, historians, sociologists, political philosophers, linguists, and others sharing an interest in ethnicity and nationalism in Eastern Europe and Eurasia. My paper, organized around the notion of ethnicity as relational historical construction, started with an ethnographic description of the celebration of Pentecost in Windsor, Ontario's Romanian Orthodox Cathedral. This account of the single point where Romanians of different waves of immigration meet was intended to point to the paradoxes structuring my discussion of what ethnicity was and how it mattered.

During the ritual introductions of participants before the start of the panel, the discussant situated me within the discipline of anthropology, based on his reading of my paper. A rather rare occurrence in a space dominated by positivist political scientists and historians tackling fiercely contested national pasts and presents, my ethnographic passage aligned with the contributions of my co-panellists, which used similarly "qualitative" material: accounts of theatrical re-enactments of history through performative commemorations, and of lived history through cinematic renderings. The discussant had just published a collection of texts aimed to bring ethnographic approaches into the discipline of Political Science, which was to constitute the focus of one of the conference's book panels (Schatz, 2009). Therefore part of his comments to my paper concerned the ethnographic method I apparently used to assemble my object of study and of which I had given no details. In fact, disclosure of methods was absent in my paper, and very little was explicitly said about the stakes of its epistemological approach.

The first question concerned my "entry" into the field. Originating from the tradition of travel writing, accounts of author's first contact with her object of scrutiny have been incorporated into anthropology from its very beginning. For the canonical rules of writing ethnography, the episode of first arrival in the field still represents the legitimate single section of personal narrative in a body of objectified description. As such, it is a crucial part of the report and represents the place where the association with the "other" is laid bare. It provides elements of the landscape, in the larger sense, where the intersubjective space between the anthropologist and her subjects starts being built. This unfolding space of mutually transforming subjectivities through successive interactional passages of reflexivity and objectivation generates the events that will become ethnographic data. Authors assume and are forced into variable power positions from the very beginning, and consequently their stances on the possibility of "knowledge" of the other and/ through "writing" the other are shaped in particular ways. Images of royal arrivals (Firth, 1936), castaways (Malinowski, 2002), or contaminants (Lévi-Strauss, 1955) help us decipher the distance between fact and data, object and concept, lived experience and written ethnography (see Pratt, 1986).

Since my paper told no story of my entering the field, I was asked to provide one as a token of authenticity of the data, but also out of sheer interest in the methodological operations that had converted them into a structured

arrangement of concepts and relationships. But I could not oblige, since there had been no such event as a proper entrance, first contact, or genuine first encounter with the other. I was a landed immigrant from Romania in Canada studying landed immigrants from Romania in Canada.<sup>1</sup> I had been immersed in the reality of my object of research from the very beginning, by being and living. I had shared the same life in Romania during the communist regime and after. I had undergone the same process of remaking of the self while waiting for my permanent resident application to be processed (Culic, 2010). I had experienced anticipation, joy, wonder, anxiety, uncertainty, pressure, and strain in my new country, like all my fellow Romanian immigrants. My answer to interpellations about my fieldwork will always be self-referential. But my fieldwork was not, nor was the object of my research merely self-referential.

A peculiar fieldwork situation like this while perplexing may nevertheless uncover productive tensions in the practice of ethnography and force us rethink the relationships through which we conjure the ontology of our object of research. The strategies we employ to arrive at knowledge claims formulated in variable idioms of construction and discovery, representation and revelation, invention and rescue are shown from very distinct standpoints, engendering very distinct concerns. The junction between anthropology and autobiography takes here a form that *reverses* the usual epistemological and existential configurations between the ethnographer and the researched. As such this research may be portrayed as an odd instance of repatriation of anthropology as cultural critique (Marcus and Fischer, 1999: 111-36). The culture I investigate is my culture, and the agents' way of thinking and relating to objects are self-evident to me. But this anthropology at home is in fact taking place *away*. My subjects are immigrants, aliens in a new country and a new culture.

In the 2005 edition of *Welcome to Canada*, immigrants' official guide to their new country, the federal department responsible for immigration and settlement warned new immigrants of the risk of culture shock, and described its symptoms: "Your first year in Canada will be emotional and full of change. [...] Regardless of your situation, being a newcomer may mean giving up some familiar things for a new way of life. As a result, you may feel anxious or afraid, especially during the first few days and weeks" (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2005: i). All immigrants are explicitly alerted, in its 2010 edition, that "Canadian society and Canadian values may be different from what you are used to; some cultural practices in Canada may seem strange by the standards of your culture of origin. At the same time, some cultural practices in your country of origin may be considered unacceptable in Canada" (Citizenship and

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<sup>1</sup> I immigrated to Canada as a permanent resident (landed immigrant) in December 2005. Since 2007 I divided my time between Canada and Europe. The ethnographic fieldwork reported here took place in Windsor, Ontario, during April-September 2009 and March-August 2010.

Immigration Canada, 2010: i). Not only are immigrants selected by the Federal Skilled Worker scheme reflexively refashioned through anticipatory socialisation with an imagined Canadian space, by subjective submission to state's and their own desires during the immigration process (Culic, 2010); they have to confront both the cultural image transported by the Canadian state in the implementation of its policy, and the version of Canadian culture they actually experience once landed and settled in Canada. They go continuously through successive episodes of re-mapping meanings and re-signifying facts. Such acts of objectivation and an existential liminality that may last for long periods of time open their practical reasoning to the elusiveness of things and the transposability of experience. But if the deep structure and the general script of this huge experience and transformation are the same, they nevertheless take variable actual shape for individuals. As one of my anthropological subjects worded a theme traversing immigrant talk, "Immigration gives the measure of you as a person".

Due to my always already being immersed in the reality of my subjects, forever constituted by it and constituting it, "entering the field" counts for the precise moment I took the decision I *wanted to write* about immigrants' experience and their lives, their thoughts, and their emotions. By this I wanted to arrive at some sort of self-analysis, starting from what was originally the grounding for postulating a *legitimate* assumption of an unconscious: "all the acts and manifestations which I notice in myself and do not know how to link up with the rest of my mental life must be judged as if they belonged to someone else" (Freud, 1989: 575). I wanted to tell the story of these immigrants and of their self-making throughout the immigration enterprise as much as I wanted to make sense of a life I had difficulty managing at that particular moment in time, where immigration was an episode that still needed to be explained. Hence, I embarked on an anthropologic research that implied psychoanalytic practice. Rather than take subjects' conscious moves to shield sensitive knowledge and unconscious defenses in interaction as obstructions to understanding, concealment was to be placed at the centre of ethnographic insight (Robben, 2007: 161). Interaction that claimed intellectual as much as bodily and emotional engagement was the only epistemological choice I could envisage for this.

### **Being in the Field: Engagement and Violence**

My approach to data gathering in what was an emotionally charged setting for me and for my subjects thus departed from the model of the anthropologist as the "stereotypic stoic and faceless tabula rasa, which was to be the most receptive object of the analysand's inscriptions" (Robben, 2007: 163) or as "a sort of non-person, or more accurately a total persona [...] willing to enter into any situation as a smiling observer and carefully note down the specifics of the event under consideration" (Rabinow, 1977: 46). Empiricism or the use of methodology

as anxiety-reducing device made little sense to me. I was not going to look at and see practice as spectacle, by theorising distance into my conception of self and other, subject and object (Bourdieu, 1977: 1). Neither was I impressed by the announced “methodological” risks of narcissism, exhibitionism, self-indulgence, confession, or lyricism, which I relegated as technicalities to be dealt with in the artisanal “writing” part of the research. I was ready to engage into struggles with deceit, exaggeration, defences, disinformation, and resistances as much as I felt that I had to deal with repression in myself. That I thought this was the proper way to render the world of my subjects as a whole and to reach deep understanding there was no doubt. I placed myself alongside anthropologists who “exploit the intrusive self as an ethnographic resource rather than suffer it as a methodological hindrance” (Cohen, 2007: 111. See also Okely and Callaway, 1992; Davies and Spencer, 2010). At that point however I was striving to see for myself how it was going to be done.

Rabinow’s account of fieldwork unrolls incessantly shifting spaces of the world *between* the anthropologist and the others, predicated on interruptions and eruptions, on the constant breakdown of this ever liminal culture through which communication is made possible (Rabinow, 1977: 154). His assembling of data was often accomplished by “intruding beyond the boundaries which were acceptable and comfortable” (Rabinow, 1977: 130), “transgressing the integrity of [his] informants” and performing “essentially an act of violence [...] carried out on a symbolic level” (Rabinow, 1977: 129). Yet another experience of an absorbing violent field relationship with her Australian Aboriginal informant is reported by Marcus (1992), unavoidably so as it had been forged within state-orchestrated structures of racism, realized through all-encompassing surveillance. “What I had to learn was that there was no outside position from which to observe, and that giving up my personal power was an exercise of self-delusion that was of no use to anybody” (Marcus, 1992: 108). While liking one another may have helped building a relationship between the anthropologist and her subject, friendship could not have been possible, and the exchanges followed a pattern of “constant re-negotiation, anger, suspicion and deep mistrust,” where the “researcher was to become, like the informant, a resource-person to be manipulated,” who “had to try to relinquish the weaponry of cultural and race capital, to leave [herself] unarmed, naked and exposed” (Marcus, 1992: 108). These field autobiographies are permeated by uncomfortable sentiments of guilt, bewilderment, and exasperation. They record acts of confrontational extraction, and their counterpart in the physical and emotional work done by the anthropologist under a constant pressure for intellectual reshuffling. Rabinow (1977: 38) recounts this: “But one cannot engage in questioning and redefining twenty-four hours a day. The scientific perspective on the world is hard to sustain. In the field there is less to fall back on; the world of everyday life changes



more rapidly and dramatically than it would at home. There is an accelerated recognition of new experiences and their normalization.” Out of these chronicles of anthropologist’s projections and introjections, the personhood and wholeness of the people they evoke are nevertheless recuperated.

Violence is the running head of all reflexive epistemology grounded on the incorporation of the interactional, sensual, and emotional experience of fieldwork. While fieldwork stories relate caring attachments between the anthropologist and her subjects: moving friendships, solidarity, affection, love, and passion, and while the methodological injunction to give proper space to their voices has been widely internalized and given various expression, the appearance of symmetry is denounced every time. The anthropologist’s project always takes priority over the other’s project. Her questions are unsolicited, her probing into silences amounts to intrusion and pain (Hastrup, 1992: 121).

How was my own position within my immigrant culture, whose history I also shared, going to configure the anthropological position then? How did the fact that in my case *autobiography preceded anthropology*, and was also most likely going to *survive it*, change the ontologically and epistemologically troubling relations in the field? This was a space of self-objectivation, where everyone’s task at hand was to reinvent themselves for a new social space and a new life. Every success story and every failure were object to close surveillance and immediate feature in a self-writing urban culture *qua* history of the present. How would a “native” anthropologist fit in here and what would her “fieldwork” look like?

Bourdieu’s *Sketch for a Self-Analysis* (2007) and *The Bachelors’ Ball* (2008), published in English and read at the point of my conversion, helped me make sense of my ethnographic stance and also gave me elements for a system of reference to organize my biographical illusion (Bourdieu, 1999: 58-65). Bourdieu went back to his native village in Béarn to do research, after he had repeatedly appealed to his knowledge of Béarnais peasants’ world as anchorage to resist the spontaneous sociology offered to him by his Kabyle informants. His rethinking of his epistemological strategies turned into relentless efforts to objectify the subjectivity of the objectifying researcher. He took on to expose the difference that separated his familiar relationship with his childhood’s social world from the scientific relationship arrived at by casting an external gaze upon it, pulled together by instruments of objectivation such as genealogy and statistics (Bourdieu, 2007: 60-61). This intellectual and theoretical reorientation entailed social repositioning too. “The deliberate renunciation implied in this negative displacement within the [scholastic] hierarchies would no doubt not have been so easy if it had not been accompanied by the confused dream of a reintegration into my native world” (Bourdieu, 2007: 60). Conducted with the help of his father, in an intensely emotional atmosphere, the fieldwork recorded the return to one’s relegated past

accompanied by a “return, but a controlled return, of the repressed” (Bourdieu, 2007: 62). Research was carried out alongside self-analysis. The emotions elicited by reconnection, reconciliation, and recognition engendered by total involvement with his object of study, in Béarn as much as in Kabylia, were worked through in frantic collection of empirical data. Pieces of evidence such as a familiar sculptured door or the plan of his childhood house helped the reconstruction of both his self and his relationship with knowledge and its institutionalized forms.<sup>2</sup> The ethical and political thrusts of his work were grounded in close engagement with persons and objects, revolt against suffering and injustice, and struggle for autonomy by the objectification of the limits and conditions of freedom. The ambivalent relationship with the academic institution, grown out of a trajectory that combined high academic consecration and low social origin, was expressive of the profound internal tension between the self-certainty of recognition and the radical uncertainty towards its institutional source.

It was in the most serious yet unescapably self-ironic way that I claimed for myself a family resemblance. This is not the place to substantiate it by bringing birth records, family photos, and coming of age diaries to certify my ways “in the field” and to document the entangled history of my ethnography and my autobiography. I thought that the socio-analysis and self-analysis submitted to us showed not only that knowledge cannot be detached from the social conditions of its production; that emotions, when the anthropologist strives for critical distance and reflexive temperance, rather than corrupting knowledge and the context of its production, effect bodily and mindful dispositions that allow deeper access to the layers of the real and finer grasp of signification; and that personal and social trauma may be made into turning points in the expansion of the human self, occasions for illuminating misrecognitions, and steps towards reflexivity. They also presented us with a particular way of dealing with the intricate relationship between ethnographer, anthropological subjects, and knowledge. There is a permanent quest for objectivity and objectivation, which focuses on practices of both actor and researcher, relating categories of practical reason with the analytical categories of researcher’s practice.

What I also found in Bourdieu’s work as a whole and which took me some time to make sense of was a way to record ethnographic data that exposed the “best-kept and worst-kept secrets” (Bourdieu, 1977: 173) – the untold collective forms of bad faith maintained through the complicity of all, underpinning social life, or, in other words, the analysis and accounts susceptible of violating the privacy of the community and its right to keep its secrets. By using abstract concepts to render the very locality and particularity of practices and relationships,

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<sup>2</sup> For a fine review essay on Bourdieu’s *Sketch* and *Bachelor’s Ball* focused on questions of self-analysis and socio-analysis see Pop, 2011.

and by an attentive dialectics of ethnographic detail, construction of concepts, and formulation of theory, the knowledge thus produced protected the privacy of individual agents and their integrity. Subordinate to his overarching project of objectivity and objectivation, this unswerving care, sensitivity, and sympathy for the people he worked with represented the subtext of all his writing. Most acute in the articles relating the research conducted in his native Béarn, Bourdieu avows it in *Sketch for a Self-Analysis*: “And the objectivist restraint of my remarks is no doubt partly due to the fact that I felt the sense of committing something like a betrayal – which led me to refuse to this day any republication of texts whose appearance in scholarly journals with small circulation protected them against malicious or voyeuristic readings” (Bourdieu, 2007: 63). This fundamental position towards fieldwork, research, and knowledge I read to myself as one that, while rescuing the humanness of all interaction on field, upholds prudence, discretion, and astuteness in its epistemic rendition. It also made me see the moment of *writing as the primary ethical moment* in the whole anthropological undertaking.

### **Writing Ethnography: Matters of Boundaries**

The arrival at this point, surely, was much more tortuous and confused than the narrative here suggests. Much of what I tried to figure out during the first weeks “in the field” was how to reconstruct my relationships with the people that were already part of my life and had now become my object of research. I was keenly aware that this repositioning would necessarily imply change and I struggled to think this change through, for *them* as well as for myself. At about the same time I applied for funding for my newly envisaged research and completed the forms for Research Ethics Board (REB) clearance.<sup>3</sup> Pondering about what “informed consent” should mean for my closest friends, family, everyday companions, and acquaintances became an obsessive and consuming activity. I felt that the instruments required by the REB and the terms in which clearance was granted pinned down the fluidity and the “order” of all interaction, and were at points quite absurd. Besides its particular materialisation in documents and forms with specific contents and rules of conduct, the clearance procedure undoubtedly served its purpose by the effect created in terms of dispositions of the mind and alertness of the person.

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<sup>3</sup> I was affiliated with the University of Windsor in Canada, which follows the common policy of ethical conduct for research developed by the Medical Research Council (MRC) now the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). The *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (1998) sets out the minimum for approaching research in an ethical manner. The second edition was published in December 2010.

My job as anthropologist stumbled at the very beginning due to one of my closest and most cherished friends. The way she relates to people is one that combines deep care and genuine wish to help with mutual and self-serving interest. My coming out as ethnographer and the discussion of the possibility to work with her as my research assistant were enthusiastically embraced and promptly integrated into a larger scheme that she thought would have served both our interests. She literally started to organize the field for me by enacting her own interpretation of what I should be doing, already approaching people of our acquaintance, and quite overtaking my own thinking about it. She also envisaged this prospect as a means to revamp her then crumbling social status by our “research association” and incumbent resources. The research she was lying in front of me would have cut out huge extents of the social life I wanted to grasp. Clearly I had not found the best terms to explain what my enterprise meant and how to pursue it. More importantly though, I had not considered fully how she would incorporate my ethnographic plans within her own life and momentary crisis, within *our* life at that moment really. The idea that I could separate the ethnographic-work from the life-work when the object of the *ethnography* was our shared *life* struck me as utterly unrealistic.

Out of anxiety-ridden nights and days of disquiet, I came to assume a particular ethical stance. I would not separate what were my personal and my scientific relationships with all the people involved, just like I could not disentangle practically and theoretically my autobiography from my ethnography. Drawing a dispassionate “objective” boundary between the personal and the professional in my ethnographical doings would not be a matter of concern as a principle. The way this boundary is conceived and constructed in the field and in the production of its account is crucial, and my *not* drawing it was a deliberate and momentous decision. In the approach of the construction of this boundary our ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions are formed and knowledge is shaped. I would not in any way detach myself from the people who were making me, and shut my scientific self from parts of their lives that were also part of my life. I was not going to spare them confrontation, challenge, thoughts, and emotions, just like I had not when they had been merely my friends. Nor would I constantly remind them in various ways that they were anthropological subjects as much as they were simply themselves in interaction with me. I could not use the flat terms outlined by the REB instructions to explain to them what I was doing, or present them the informed consent form, get their signature, and transfer to them the responsibility of all “data” ensued. Each of my close friends would have a specific scientific or ethnographic relationship with me just like we had a specific private one.

This is unquestionably a power position, but one that has been thought through. It is meant to engage and embrace the people and their reality, at times in ways they might not recognize or acknowledge. This power position

is armed with alertness, receptivity, and affection. It refuses the “attitude of moral indifference [that] has no connection with scientific ‘objectivity’” (Weber, 1949: 60) and assumes the symbolic and interpretive violence that comes with the conceptual, theoretical, and political version of community the anthropologist puts forth.

This relationship of power actualizes especially in the “writing” of the ethnography – when there remains only one genuine acting agent in the production of the story and of the reality. The anthropologist-author-scholar orchestrates the voices and organizes the plot. Practicing objectivism qua detachment in writing hides the substantiality of both the anthropologist and her interlocutors, and effaces the untidy space collectively authored to achieve understanding. Anonymity, omission, and disguise through various stylistic genres, hardly protect anyone or respect the privacy of the community. They slit the wholeness of field’s lived experience and obscure the epistemic and self-making journey the anthropologist and her subjects have accomplished, enacting yet another illusion of objectivity by distance and neutrality. “Anonymity makes us unmindful that we owe our anthropological subjects the same degree of courtesy, empathy and friendship in writing as we generally extend to them face to face in the field where they are not our ‘subjects’ but our boon companions without whom we quite literally could not survive. Sacrificing anonymity means we may have to write less poignant, more circumspect ethnographies, a high price for any writer to pay” (Scheper-Hughes, 2000: 128). Allowing subjects a dignified presence in the written reality is a matter of integrating them as full persons in the text. This means that their social historical constitution is recovered and anthropologist’s political and ethical standpoints in representing it are made clear.<sup>4</sup>

If ethnographies begin with a story of arrival which glimpses at a world of expanding subjectivity, shared time, and emergent insight, they never end with a matching story of departure. Perhaps this is because the anthropologist never fully leaves the field. She may keep in contact with the people encountered, revisit them, and follow their fate. Her body and mind may hold inscriptions that tie her to that experience in significant ways: a love relationship, a staunch commitment, a burning longing, or a professional interest. The field continues to exist and is reconstructed discursively through writing after the consummation of the experience. Fieldwork data are internal to writing and become through writing. The text is an exercise in epistemology: a rendering of objects and acts through the meanings attached to them; through the concepts built to grasp them into a coherent edifice; and through the theory that unites them into a

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<sup>4</sup> Max Weber’s exceptional essay “‘Objectivity’ in Social Science and Social Policy” (Weber, 1949: 50-112) stands as the classic statement on the relationship between empirical knowledge and evaluative judgments.

global discourse. The fieldwork is constitutive to the anthropologist not only through the transformations engendered by her engagement with her subjects in the field. It constitutes her through its narrative, which assembles actions and characters, weaving them into a plot only made possible because the anthropologist related to these actions and characters, and responded to them in a particular way. By assuming the point of this creation, the anthropologist should not fix their historical time. "Above all, we should not pre-empt the creativity of the 'others' within our own invention. By a narrow historicising approach we claim to have exhausted a moment. We have not; meaning is infinite, and the 'other' may have her own project which we should not violate" (Hastrup, 1992: 126, original emphasis).

If leaving the field might never happen for the anthropologist, her leaving is something that *happens* for the other. Ethnographies rarely talk of the anxiety brought by the anticipation of anthropologist's leaving or of the loss incurred upon the other by her departure. This loss however is real, and the ethnography stands witness to it. The writing of ethnography thus becomes necessary, as a means to integrate all worlds thereby ensued.

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