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CULTURAL CAPITAL AND READING PERFORMANCE OF THE ROMANIAN STUDENTS IN POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA. CAN THE GAPS STILL BE RECOVERED?

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Abstract

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) has indicated over the years modest improvements in the reading performances of the Romanian students. Nevertheless, Romania still lags far behind the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average and remains among the laggards at EU level. In the present paper we discuss, based on PISA evaluations of 2009 and 2015, the relation between cultural capital and reading achievement among Romanian students. We come to the conclusion that the transformations undergone by the Romanian society in the post-communist period contributed to a continuous and steady decline in the importance of cultural capital with slim chances to redress this tendency despite the strong interconnection between cultural capital and reading performance.

Keywords: PISA, cultural capital, reading performance, Romania, quality of education

Almost three decades ago Romania embarked itself on the transition from a communist regime whose distinctive features included “public/state ownership rather than private, an ideological emphasis on equality rather than freedom, an economy organized on a plan, central control and direction rather than through a market, and a collectivist and public form of personal integration rather than an individualist one” (Lane, 2014: 11). Along the way Romania has undergone profound political, social and economic transformations. The

process of European integration interacted with the one of domestic makeover and contributed significantly to the shape of the new regime. Romanian education system could not escape these transformative changes although it proved to be more resilient as, in spite of a protracted crisis that began in the 1980's and overwhelming difficulties and restrictions, proved not to be “entirely inefficient, inert, or anachronistic” since it could produce yearly international ‘Olympics’ in core academic disciplines like math, physics, computer sciences or winners of international contests in arts performances (Bîrzea, 1997: 322). In the Romanian context, the efforts for the country’s modernization that got underway at the end of the 19th and the start of the 20th century gave rise to appropriate and stable institutions, like the education system, which due to the structure and organization of the studies, school orientation and curriculum organization, interest in the situation of the teaching staff, fostering of research (Reianu, 2014: 300) could not be entirely corrupted by communism (Bîrzea, 1997: 323). After 1989, Romania, like most of the Central and Eastern European countries with the notable exceptions of Slovenia, Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Poland, has not proceeded to systemic reforms. It rather opted for a reform by infusion characterized by the observance of the principles of subsidiarity not only through decentralization, but also through vertical devolution (to local public authorities, communities) and horizontal devolution (to civil society); increased importance attached to the roles of experts and professors in all project development stages. This reform strategy was motivated, on the one hand, by the acknowledged failures of the top-down reform, and, on the other hand, by the underdeveloped state of the civil society that proved to be unable to unleash a bottom-up reform (Bîrzea, 1997: 323-324).

The Romanian educational system seeks to focus on the formation of competences, understood in the sense of knowledge, qualifications, motivations, attitudes, emotions, as well as other social and behavioral components appropriate to the context that a person needs for its own personal and professional development, for its social inclusion and integration into the labor market. However, in a world undergoing rapid change as a result of globalization and modernization, the society as a whole and each of its members in particular are exposed to many challenges. Swift technological changes in the workplace and in day-to-day life lead to the need to process a considerable amount of information. As a consequence, reading

competences become essential for engaging in social, economic and cultural life, and achieving individual aspirations. Educational systems have the mission to provide a framework for lifelong learning to the society in order to be able to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Its members need to be prepared to respond successfully to complex requirements, in various contexts, by mobilizing their cognitive and psychological resources. In this context, the formation of reading skills acquires special significance as reading is indispensable for learning in all disciplines and is an essential element in any professional activity.

The performance of the Romanian education system in an increasingly competitive environment can be best assessed by PISA tests performed by OECD that have proved to be a reliable source of information for monitoring the outcomes of education systems in terms of student achievement, within a common internationally agreed framework, and a useful tool for refining educational policies. They are and meant to assess the competences of 15-years old students in reading, math and science. Conducted every three years since 2000, they focus each time round on one of the three above-mentioned areas of interest, whereby the other two remain in the background. They are based on the idea of competences gained by the students until the end of the compulsory education in most OECD countries and understood as "ability to meet complex demands, by drawing on and mobilising psychosocial resources (including skills and attitudes) in a particular context (OECD, 2005: 4). It is true that over the years the capacity of these tests to provide credible information about the success of the younger generation has come to be questioned on the ground that education is more than doing good on tests, that correct interpretation of the results of standardized tests with such a high degree of complexity is generally extremely difficult to accomplish, or that their stake is only the assessment of knowledge. It is accurate to stress outright that the tests cannot capture the ability of young people to interact with others, to control and resolve conflicts, to respect and appreciate other values, i.e. essential skills for the social and professional integration of young people although a number of studies in the literature have highlighted the interrelationships between academic competences and social and emotional skills (Oberle *et al*, 2014: 146-147). Moreover, several studies have shown that PISA tests have a great predictability ability on adolescent future success (Schleicher, 2007: 354-356).

The reading skills assessed through PISA refer to the ability to access, control, integrate and evaluate information, to think creatively, to formulate hypotheses, to communicate effectively one's own ideas. So the stake is not primarily to test the ability to absorb information, but especially to extrapolate it and use it in new situations, similar to those of real life. The reading performance framework has constantly evolved over the years from the need to enrich the concept of reading literacy and align it with the requirements of the current digital age. OECD studies refer to "understanding, use, reflection and engagement with written text in order to achieve personal goals, develop knowledge and potential and participate in society" (OECD, 2016: 48-50).¹

Without any intention to overdo the value of these tests, we have to acknowledge the fact that the PISA tests have from the beginning highlighted the modest level of knowledge of the Romanian students in reading, math and sciences. As shown in Table 1 the Romanian students underperform in all three areas of evaluation and their results are well below the OECD average and remain far behind the top performers and the other EU Member States. Looking only to the last assessment, the one from 2015, the performances of the Romanian education system can be regarded as close to those of EU countries like Bulgaria, Cyprus and Malta, and at an international level similar to those of Uruguay, United Arab Emirates, Turkey, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, Montenegro and Colombia. Although Romania is praised for taking effective measures for improving performance, our country's position in the ranking has not made any notable progress.

¹ Reading skills of young people are assessed on an ascending scale from 1 to 6. The critical threshold is considered to be the bottom line for level 2 (i.e. 407 score points), regarded as correspondent for the basic level of knowledge, necessary to be reached by students until the completion of their compulsory education. It assumes that the student is able to locate one or more information that may require deduction and fulfillment of multiple conditions, recognize the main idea of a text, understand relationships or build meaning within a particular part of the text when the information is not obvious. At the same time, the student needs to make simple deductions, comparisons or oppositions based on a single feature of the text, draw parallels with non-textual knowledge, using personal experiences and on the basis of individual attitudes. Below this threshold are levels 1a and 1b, which correspond to a totally unsatisfactory level of knowledge, while at the opposite end there are levels 5 (scores between 626 and 698) and 6 (scores higher than 698), indicating excellence in reading. These students are considered to have the ability to locate and organize more hidden information in the text, to identify truly relevant information, to critically evaluate or formulate hypotheses based on specialized knowledge, to fully understand a text whose content is not familiar to them.

Table 1 – Romanian results in PISA testing

	2000			2006			2009			2012			2015		
	R	M	S	R	M	S	R	M	S	R	M	S	R	M	S
Score points	428	-	-	396	415	418	424	427	428	438	436	439	437	418	435
OECD average	496	-	-	496	494	502	493	496	500	496	494	501	493	490	493
Difference in score points to OECD average	68	-	-	100	79	84	69	69	72	58	58	62	56	72	58
Top score	525	-	-	546	544	563	556	600	575	570	613	580	535	564	556
Difference in score points to top position	97	-	-	150	129	145	132	173	147	132	177	141	98	146	121
Position among participating countries	^{-4/} /43	-	-	51/ 57	44/ 57	47/ 57	49/ 65	48/ 65	47/ 65	51/ 65	45/ 65	50/ 65	48/ 72	45/ 72	48/ 72
Position among EU countries ^{5/}	17/ 17	-	-	26/ 26	25/ 26	25/ 26	25/ 26	25/ 26	25/ 26	26/ 27	25/ 27	26/ 27	27/ 28	26/ 28	27/ 28

Source: OECD *The OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)* www.pisa.oecd.org.

Notes:

1/. R = reading, M = math, S = science

2/. Romania did not participate in the 2003 evaluation.

3/. The bold characters indicate the area in focus at each evaluation and the results achieved by the Romanian students in this area.

4/. Results from PISA 2000 for Romania were, for technical reasons, not available when the report was assembled, and included later in an addendum to the main report.

5/. Results for Malta are available since 2015, whereas for Cyprus since 2012.

For the purpose of this research, we intend only to discuss the results obtained by the Romanian students in reading at the 2009 evaluation that focused on this competence and the one from 2015 as this is the last one before the next year's assessment concentrated again on reading. Whenever possible we will bring in inputs from the 2000 assessment whose main target was yet again reading, but employed slightly different techniques of evaluation. We proceed from the assumption that reading is the basis of learning in all disciplines and an essential element in any professional activity. In a world undergoing rapid change as a result of globalization and modernization, society as a whole and each of its members in particular are exposed to many challenges. Fast technological changes in the workplace and in day-to-day life lead to the need to process a considerable amount of information. Under these circumstances, reading skills become essential for engaging in social, economic and cultural

life, and achieving individual aspirations. Educational systems have the mission to help train lifelong learners to meet the challenges of tomorrow. This further raises the question of their preparation to respond successfully to complex requirements, in diverse contexts, by mobilizing their cognitive and psychological resources.

The main research question revolves around the role of cultural capital in reinforcing reading achievements and the way this was affected by the transformations undergone by the Romanian society in the post-communist period. We consider the concept of cultural capital, as coined by Pierre Bourdieu in 1977 and later developed in his further research, of particularly usefulness for explaining unequal intellectual accomplishment of children stemming from different socio-economic backgrounds. As such, it comprises the social assets of a person (education, intellect, skills, style of speech and dress, etc.) that uphold its social mobility in a complex society and represents a break with the assumption that the academic success or failure depends only on natural aptitudes and the amount of educational investment. The cultural capital coexists according to Bourdieu in three forms – an embodied state that combines the hereditary intellectual legacy with the acquisition of scholarly and social skills throughout the entire period of socialization, an objectified state that refers to the number of properties that help a person wield strengths and obtain profits in the artistic field, scientific field, etc. and an institutionalized state that exist in the form of academic qualifications (Bourdieu, 1986). The scientific literature on cultural capital indicates two different approaches to its conceptualization – a narrower one emphasizing the exclusiveness of high status cultural resources (i.e. high culture extracurricular activities such as music, dance, drama lessons, etc.) and a broader one in the sense of a comprehensive toolkit of skills, styles, and habits that people use in everyday life to construct designs of action. In an international context, the explanatory power of cultural capital (especially in its objectified form) for reading achievements varied depending on the features of the societal structure and its educational system (Bodovski *et al*, 2016: 2-3).

In an Eastern European setting, the resort to cultural capital proves to offer certain benefits as the education systems still bear features that can be ascertained to their communist past. These regimes aimed to create a supposedly equal society, one in which there are no classes and each person is seen as part of the collective whole, working toward the end goal

of political, economic, and social equality. The Communist regimes did provide free, universal, and compulsory education. Admissions to elite schools and universities (with the exception of politically sensitive specializations such as law, philosophy, or sociology) was open to all, education was affordable, state grants to both schools and students were relatively significant. Illiteracy was virtually eradicated, but education was highly regimented and “the curriculum was strictly controlled, as all-important decisions were centralized” (Reisz, 2006: 74). By controlling the information that reached the classroom as well as the teaching methods, the Communist regimes sought to imbue students with Marxist dogma training them to be future, faithful Communists. Throughout the education process students were not encouraged to think critically on their own, but rather to commit to memorize and deliver. Dissatisfaction with the education system remained high among those seeking spiritual and intellectual freedom and/or planning to specialize in neglected, if not entirely forbidden or heavily distorted fields (Antohei, 2004). After the shift, reforms took place that altered curriculum, added supplementary options for textbooks, endorsed activities that develop critical thinking and practical skills and increased teacher autonomy. However, the process of reform has been slow and current educational practices are still dealing with the effects of Communism (Istrate *et al*, 2006).

As far as the reading skills of the Romanian students are concerned, despite the outstanding performances of the few Romanian students participating in international Olympiads in core academic disciplines or international contests in arts acts, the bulk of the Romanian students achieved results that place them either slightly above the minimum line or outright beneath this. Cumulating the average score with an even more worrying one emerging from the same tests, namely, that more than one in three secondary school graduates is functionally illiterate (in the sense that although is capable to read, still is unable to understand the message of the text, see Table - 2), we can say that we are faced with a systemic problem whose main roots need to be identified and properly addressed especially if we take into consideration that a number of other national tests only confirm the results of the PISA assessments (Centrul Național de Evaluaare și Examinare, 2016: 9-12). From the point of view of increasing the achievement of Romanian students, absolute priority must be given to improving performance at both extremes. On the one hand, there is the problem of

recovering those with poor results, since up to Level 2 in PISA assessment Romanian scores are well above the OECD average. On the other hand, from Level 3 upwards Romanian students' scores are well beneath OECD average this meaning that, given the way in which the Romanian education system works, not even this group of outstanding students can be properly valued and it is completely out of the question to consider that it can stimulate other able students to reach the peak of their performance especially if we take into consideration that according to former Romanian Minister for Education Mircea Miclea, in any education system, no matter how performing or poorly performing this may be, we have a proportion of 3-5% students with exceptional results, who "are their own product" and not the product of the system (Pantazi, 2013b).

Table 2 – Percentage of Romanian students at each grade level. Percentage of Romanian low achievers and top performers in reading in comparison to the OECD average

	Below Level 1b (below 262.04 score points)	Level 1b (from 262.04 to less than 334.75 score points)	Level 1a (from 334.75 to less than 407.47 score points)	Bellow Level 2 (less than 409.54 score points)	Level 2 (from 407.47 to less than 480.18 score points)	Level 3 (from 480.18 to less than 552.89 score points)	Level 4 (from 552.89 to less than 625.61 score points)	Above Level 5 (above 613.33 score points)	Level 5 (from 625.61 to less than 698.32 score points)	Level 6 (above 698.32 score points)
Proficiency levels in PISA 2009	4.1 ▲	12.7 ▲	23.6 ▲	40.4 ▲	31.6 ▲	21.2 ▼	6.1 ▼	0.7 ▼	0.7 ▼	0.0 ▼
OECD average in 2009	1.1	4.6	13.1	18.8	24.0	28.9	20.7	7.4	6.8	0.8
Proficiency levels in PISA 2015	3.7 ▲	11.6 ▲	23.4 ▲	38.7 ▲	29.5 ▲	21.3 ▼	8.4 ▼	2.0 ▼	1.8 ▼	0.2 ▼
OECD average in 2015	1.3	5.2	13.6	20.1	23.2	27.9	20.5	8.3	7.2	1.1

Source: OECD (2010) *PISA 2009 Results. Volume I: What Students Know and Can Do*, Paris: OECD Publishing, p. 194. <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/pisaproducts/48852548.pdf>.

OECD (2016) *PISA 2015 Results. Volume I: Excellence and Equity in Education*, Paris: OECD Publishing, pp. 373-374. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264266490-en>.

Beyond these figures, which are in themselves significant enough, we need to view these results also in a European context. While it is true that the cultural capital has a certain bearing on the level of education, the former's association with a higher level of Europeanness in the sense of *shared values* associated with collective identity constructions

about Europe, and at the same time with "common cultural traditions and historical experiences, common development of distinct constitutional and political principles, a definite sense about what constitutes Europe's 'others'" (Păun, Ciceo, 2010: 95) or an increased role of interculturalism in European integration (Dan, 2014) remains still to be debated. Examining the association between education and the sense of a European identity, Best (2012: 217-227) came to the conclusion that although higher levels of education may elevate elites' Europeanness and impact positively on their attachment to Europe as well-educated individuals possess increased cognitive abilities and social competences that allow them to better interact in complex institutional and cultural settings, its impact on common citizens' support for European integration according to Inglehart's theory of cognitive mobilization remains limited.

The effects of cultural capital on school attainments has been studied over the years from different perspectives. A number of studies offered comparative analyses on the nature of this relation (Barone, 2006; Xu, Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Byun *et al*, 2012; Bodovski *et al*, 2016) based primarily on the results of PISA evaluations. There were also attempts to analyze this relation in a national setting either based on country-level surveys (Crook, 1997; Sullivan, 2001; De Graaf *et al*, 2001; Yamamoto, Brinton, 2010) or based on comparisons with other countries based again on information from PISA database (Pavlovic-Babic, Baucal, 2011; Byun *et al*, 2012). Based on data from five national representative and fully comparable surveys conducted in 1993 in Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia, Kraaykamp, Nieuwbeerta (2000) studied new forms of political and cultural transmission in former socialist countries. Subsequently, we intend to explore, based on the poor results of the Romanian students in PISA evaluations why cultural capital in all its three forms remains a relevant concept for explaining these results in the context of the fundamental changes undergone by the Romanian education system as a result of the transition from a communist past. As already mentioned, for reasons related to the limits imposed on this article we will focus the entire discussion on how the reading skills come to be influenced by this transformed concept of cultural capital, being convinced that these can contribute to the remedy other counter-performances of the Romanian education system, such as, the share of school leavers before graduation (in Romania 19.1%, compared to the EU

target of 11%), the employment rate of graduates, especially those with high school education (Romania 59.8 % of the EU target of 71%) or the percentage of those enrolled in university studies (25.6% in Romania, compared to the EU target of 38.7%) (European Commission, 2016) and bridging the profound fault line that separates the country from the rest of Europe.

Although visibly not entirely unambiguous in construction, cultural capital proved to be practical enough for researchers and generated a good deal of empirical work, the most important part of it being focused on the relation between cultural capital and educational attainment. In general, education assumes the existence of an embodied cultural capital produced by family upbringing, but how parents pass on this non-material asset to their children needed to be tested as Bourdieu "assumes much of what he sets out to prove" (Sullivan, 2002: 153-155). Further on, Bourdieu presumed that cultural capital facilitates the acquisition of educational credentials which further influence the way in which riches and supremacy are transmitted between generations, but again was ambiguous in explaining the mechanisms behind this process. As the definition of the concept lacks the necessary clarity it has been operationalized in different ways (Lareau, Weiniger, 2003: 570-573). Of relevance for the present discussion are those studies that link children's cultural capital to their parents', and especially those that focus on reading behavior of both children and parents (De Graaf, 1986; Aschaffenburg, Maas, 1996; Crook, 1997; De Graaf *et al*, 2000; Sullivan, 2001). These studies have indicated that reading is strongly associated to academic success.

That is why improving reading skills would be an important premise for reviving the parameters in which Romania's educational system country operates since we live in an era when, thanks to modern technologies, information is relatively easy to access for everyone. We have to start from the assumption that in their future adult life today's teenagers will face the most diverse forms of text from which they will have to extract relevant information on certain topics important to them in order to assimilate new content or solving complex tasks. What makes the difference between a competent adult capable of engaging in society and one less prepared for this is the ability to process, analyze, interpret and apply information.

Reading skills are essential to any kind of vocational training, they are critical for school/academic performance in all disciplines, they contribute decisively to the lifelong learning effort and ultimately determine the social and professional insertion of anyone.

However, reading skills cannot be equated with knowing how to read. As a rule, they sweep across a broader spectrum – from the ability to detect significant details and to integrate and interpret ideas by referring to other relevant texts to the impossibility of explicitly recognizing, locating and reproducing information in a single text. The absence of these abilities deprive a reader of properly collecting the fruits of the effort to go through a text. Theories of reading have demonstrated the development of these skills in stages, each one characterized by different acquisition models. It is generally believed that children first "learn to read", and only thereafter begin to "read to learn" (Clarke *et al*, 2014: 13). In other words, early school years are essential for the acquisition and development of reading techniques. Matthew's Effect ascertained that their absence by the end of the primary cycle, when the reading techniques are assumed to have already been acquired, can trigger for children a spiral of negative effects, since after this moment it becomes somewhere between very difficult and almost impossible to recover the gap separating these children from their school mates and engage consistently in understanding a written text (*Ibidem*, 25). In our view, it is equally important to take into account that reading skills need to be expanded, deepened and refined throughout the entire education cycle. By the time of leaving the school students need to be equipped with a set of knowledge, skills, and strategies to decode the written text. Only this way can they realize their life goals and to be able to cope with the demands of the real world without difficulty.

Reading stimulates creativity, empathy and tolerance towards others, is essential for overcoming cynicism and selfishness, understanding of values, communication, impartial and objective search for truth, critical thinking, plays an extremely important role in forming a capacity to react to the blind power of tradition or abuse of power by the authorities (Dumitru, 2016). By reading a text must an individual has to be able to identify the main subject, appreciate the general relevance of the text, assess the credibility of the information, discern between relevant and irrelevant information, establish connections with information from other sources, critically analyze the content, draw the correct conclusions. In order to understand the meaning of a text it is necessary to acquire decoding and understanding techniques influenced by cognitive, motivational, socio-cultural factors. Reading is in itself a transformative experience. In the effort to understand the meaning of a text, only part of the

information comes from the text itself, the rest is the result of the interaction between the text and the reader. Reading skills take into account the interactive nature of reading and the constructive nature of meaning-building processes, as the reader generates meanings in response to the text message, using the knowledge accumulated up to that point, and a series of reader keys that are professionally formed, socially and/or culturally. Therefore, reading skills should be supported by general culture, cognitive development, reading motivation, understanding of the interactive nature of any reading.

Texts can be extremely diverse - longer or shorter, richer or poorer in informative content, with a simpler or more complex construction. In general, it is considered that the development of the ability to engage in the penetration of the written text is acquired at all disciplines studied in school, but it is a priority for language courses (maternal, foreign, etc.). This is done in steps, through specific methods and techniques (Hadârcă, 2015). Regardless of the discipline, the main pedagogical resource for the formation of these competences is the written text. However, at present written text is not only in printed or hand-written format. More and more written text is presented in electronic format, contains hyperlinks and is accompanied by visual images such as diagrams, photos, pictures, tables, and graphics, and requires specific decoding techniques. Being literate today means being able to use blogs, text messages, search engines, social networks, internet communication tools, mobile apps. Tomorrow, this IT resource inventory that needs to be mastered will expand in order to meet requirements that are still hard to predict (Leu *et al*, 2011: 6). Under these circumstances, the content of reading skills is constantly changing.

In general, electronic texts are nonlinear, interactive, contain multi-media representations, open the way to extremely varied formulas of text interaction. Whereas the conventional texts present the information in the form in which it was organized by the author, and the reader, even when deciding to run over the pages or browse through the text, can only peruse the content of a text with a linear format and a relatively rigid structure, the electronic format almost invites the readers to build their own version based on the information they make available with search engines or multi-media inserts, they can engage in dialogue with the author or other readers, can express their opinions (Coiro, 2003: 460). In this fundamentally changed context, beset with both opportunities and challenges for our

ability to become active members of the society, the arsenal of tools needed to support reading skills is radically changing, as it becomes imperative to critically evaluate the sources from which information is retrieved, locate relevant information, draw parallels with real life situations, manage databases, use search engines, cope with information validation strategies. The role of the teacher remains essential, even if his mission changes fundamentally, and his support by the family and community through the promotion of appropriate policies and the involvement of non-governmental actors (foundations, civic organizations, networks of actors involved in reading promotion) needs to be reinforced. Moreover, OECD has opened since 2009 the possibility of evaluating students' performance in electronic format, and by 2018 it would impose this type of assessment on future tests, as in the 21st century, reading skills should include both printed and electronic text. This means that students need to be familiar with IT equipment and master techniques for navigating and searching information in hypertext (*i.e.* text containing hyperlinks and non-sequential structured pages). For students to learn the necessary cognitive and metacognitive techniques, the teachers themselves have to review their own training so that they can build the reading skills of students in all disciplines. The curriculum is bound to be brought into line with the new role of technology and revised in a way that encourages transdisciplinarity. A greater autonomy for schools and teachers in organizing study material would become an imperative must. By performing systematic research projects, performance can be assessed, compared, and used to identify good practice. In a European context, this process is favored by the regulatory and competitive pressure created on authorities to adopt competitive educational policies (Lawn, Normand, 2015: 8-10).

Romanian education system has undergone major changes since 1989. There is now a growing shift from teacher-centered to student-centered teaching, as officials hope to move away from a reproductive-learning approach to one that focused more on problem-solving and empower children to think critically. Nevertheless, the process is very slow. It was found that even after the curriculum had been changed for several years, only twenty-five percent of the teachers indicated a dramatic change in their instruction methods (Istrate *et al*, 2006). This basically means that the reading skills are still to a large extent generated by methods inappropriate for allowing students to cope with the demands of the digital age.

A number of studies have indicated that “children seem to benefit more from their parents’ linguistic and cognitive skills” (De Graaf *et al*, 2000: 11) and that the effect of parental reading on the students’ academic performance is significant yet less important than the effect of financial resources (Crook, 1997). PISA surveys have confirmed that in the case of Romania the below-average reading performance is associated with an average impact of socio-economic background and the figures presented in the report are further compounded by low enrollment rates (OECD, 2010).

Conclusions

Reading skills play an essential role in integrating and actively involving all of its members. Developing the necessary reading skills for deciphering the sense of the written text remains a major desideratum, but we must keep in mind that the format in which the written text is presented has experienced spectacular developments in the digital age. Without losing relevance, the techniques, strategies, knowledge needed to understand the printed text must now be enriched to effectively explore the resources offered by the Internet. The two text formats are not mutually exclusive and must be exploited effectively. The latest simulation of the National Evaluation exam for 8th grade students (at the end of their compulsory education) has shown how even a relatively innocuous printed text can create major problems for students insufficiently prepared to decode meaning, capitalize on information and establish connections².

For Romania, overcoming the modest results achieved so far in international tests, means that it needs to review the way in which reading skills are formed in school, given the pedagogical and psychological dimension in which these skills are formed, and the impossibility of limiting them to intuition or sterile engagement. Otherwise, Romanian education will be condemned to remain inefficient, irrelevant, unfair and of poor quality (Miclea *et al*, 2007: 7-9). If we also take into account the gaps that need to be recovered, the

² In 2017, 8th grade students had to analyze in a simulation for the Romanian National Language Examination a non-literary text and establish who is the organizer of an exhibition of chess pieces in a museum – a teacher as private collector and owner of the chess pieces or the museum as a public institution whose mission is to bring together and display valuable art collections (Ministry of National Education, the National Evaluation and Examination Center, 2017).

urgency of the measures becomes even more prominent as otherwise we will continue to sell illusions of competence and we will end up not counting on the global labor market (Pantazi, 2013a). So far, apparently, it seems to be a moving target to which we are heading, but cannot hope to reach it very soon.

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CULTURAL DIVERSITY IN THE WORKPLACE - DISCOURSE AND PERSPECTIVES

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Abstract

The main purpose of this article is to outline the various current theoretical positions in the discourse on cultural diversity at the organizational level and the practical implications deriving from these different types of discourses. The analysis identifies two major types of positioning: the managerial perspective and critical studies in diversity management. The practical consequences of certain theoretical stances are varied. Hence, in the first case, the emphasis is put on diversity management, on the advantages and disadvantages of cultural diversity in relation to organizational performance. In the second case, the emphasis is placed on power relations, social exclusion and the need to create inclusive professional climates.

Keywords: cultural diversity, workplace, managerial perspective, critical studies in diversity management

I. General Considerations

Cultural diversity in the workplace reflects the existent demographic, social and cultural differences on a societal level (Gotsis and Korte 2015). At level of the European Union, diversity management is considered to be an important pillar of the Europe 2020 strategy in creating a sustainable and inclusive economy (European Commission, 2012). This is due to the belief that through an effective diversity management, organizations gain numerous benefits, such as: an increase in creativity, an increase in staff retention and job satisfaction, an increase in consumer engagement, etc. (European Commission, 2012). Thus,

since 2004, 13 national Diversity Charters have been implemented, with the EU-level Diversity Charter Platform being created in 2010, and a research conducted in 2014 showed that by joining this platform, the 13 charters were signed by more than 7,100 companies (enterprises, public bodies, NGOs), including over 13.6 million employees (European Commission, 2014). The diversity charter means: *"(...) a short document voluntarily signed by companies which outlines the commitment of the undersigning organization to promote diversity and equal opportunities in the workplace, regardless of, for example, age, disability, gender, race or ethnic origin, religion or sexual orientation"* (European Commission, 2014: 6).

At the organizational level, the concern for cultural diversity is central, mainly as a result of the global economy, which has brought the internationalization of organizations and a change in the composition of the workforce, primarily through immigration and guest workers. Also, global legislative trends concerning anti-discrimination oblige firms to adopt such policies with respect to their employees (Mor Barak, 2014). Thus, on an organizational level, a series of programs, practices and interventions are developed in order to capitalize on the positive aspects of a diverse workforce (Gotsis and Korte 2015). Most often, these are reflected in human resource practices, e.g.: increasing numerical representation of employees coming from minority/vulnerable groups (e.g.: criteria based on ethnicity, race, gender), mentoring, educational and diversity training programs (e.g. diversity and cultural awareness), work-life balance programs for vulnerable groups (e.g. women, people with certain religious affiliations, the elderly, etc.) (Gotsis and Korte 2015), new family friendly policies adapted to new types of family (Racolța-Paina and Andrieș, 2017). This concern for workplace cultural diversity is also reflected in the existing literature within this field of study, which has developed relatively recently into a scientific field (approximately 30 years ago). Thus, in the last 10 years there has been an increase of more than 110% in scholarly interest compared to the previous decade, and in the popular press there has been an increase of roughly 500% concerning the topic, as compared to the initial years of the field in the mid-1980s (Jonsen, Maznevski and Schneider, 2011).

The preoccupation with cultural diversity in the workplace has its roots in the debate that began around the 1980s, concerning the influence of national culture on management and

organizational practices and on the behavior of individuals. This debate was part of the broader discussion on the issue of cultural convergence - divergence in the field of management, the prevailing concept of that time being the existence of a "*one best way*"- type approach to manage organizations. It may be argued that the first theories that opened the way to studying the impact of culture on organizations are the theories of structural contingency, which questioned, even if only partially, the idea of a "one best way" kind of approach in organizational management and raised the issue of the existence of a relationship between organizations and their "environment", however, without explicitly focusing on culture as such. With the development of neoinstitutionalist theories, the issue of the influence of culture (this time explicitly included in the environment) and the relationship between the organization and society becomes clearer (Rojot, 2003). Thus, in the 1970s and 1980s, culture and its influence on the organization fell into the purview of organizational researchers, first in the form of the exchanges/relationships existing between a company and society (Bollinger and Hofstede, 1987). It is believed that the first author who formulated a theory that clearly demonstrated the existence of a relationship between culture and organization is Geert Hofstede (Segrestin, 1992), based on research that has shown that organizations are influenced by national culture (*culture-bound*), developing a model concerning the dimensions of national culture (Hofstede, 1996), and opening the way for popularizing some models that were not as well-known and for developing new ones. Although Hofstede's model, and generally the national culture model approach, is criticized (McSweeney, 2002), it continues to be a landmark within the literature and current research endeavors in the field.

This debate resulted in outlining a new field within organizational studies namely cross-cultural management. The central point of interest in cross-cultural management has been, and still is, the way in which national cultural differences influence the behavior of individuals within their work. Thus, cultural diversity was mainly understood as a national cultural difference. At the present time, this conception still persists; however, a critical trend has been emerging against it, the main argument of which being that of a deterministic, essentialist and positivist conception of national culture and the inadequacy of the concept of national culture. Cross-cultural management and diversity management are the two faces of

the same coin, denoting the same reality, that of a diverse cultural workforce, cross-cultural management being used predominantly when there is a question of the existence of a diversity of national cultures.

Mor Barak (2014) notes a gradual change in diversity management theory and research, driven by increased cross-national collaboration that has led to new perspectives by highlighting the specificities of different contexts. Prior to this change, research into individual and intergroup differences in the workplace was poorly articulated, using different frameworks and terminology, resorting generally to social psychological theories on diversity, social identity and intergroup relations developed in North America and Western Europe. Currently, diversity management has become a distinct scientific research field and at an organizational level, specialized departments in Diversity and Inclusion (D & I) have been created, which develop policies and practices in this respect (Mor Barak, 2014).

Nonetheless, engaging in a literature review of the field of diversity, Jonsen, Maznevski, Schneider (2011), concluded that the existing literature is not as diverse, being mainly dominated by US-centric research.

II. Defining the Concept of Workplace Cultural Diversity

A literature review of the fields of HR, organization, and business identifies several categories in which the definitions of cultural diversity can be included:

a) *narrow category-based definitions* - cultural diversity is defined by gender, racial, and ethnic differences. These definitions are determined by discrimination legislation, originating in the US and do not necessarily apply to other cultural and social contexts.

b) *broad category-based definitions*. Alongside the categories included in the narrow category-based definitions, there are a number of other variables, such as: age, education, marital status, cultural background, social class. Two subcategories can be distinguished within this category: visible diversity and invisible diversity. Visible diversity (e.g. race, gender, physical disability) represents a preferential basis for stereotypes, prejudices and biases more so than invisible diversity (religion, education, socio-economic status, etc.) Diversity also arises from the interaction between visible and invisible diversity, which often generates inferences about the person's internal attributes.

c) *definitions based on a conceptual rule* (e.g. variety of perspectives, differences in the actions etc.) (Mor Barak, 2014).

Another approach in defining cultural diversity is based on the criteria/methods to differentiate individuals among themselves, making a distinction between primary, secondary and tertiary dimensions of diversity (Mazur, 2010). Primary dimensions include: gender, ethnicity, race, age, mental/physical abilities. Secondary dimensions refer to: religion, culture, sexual orientation, lifestyle, political orientation, work experience, education, language etc. And tertiary dimensions address: beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, attitudes, feelings, values. All these dimensions are seen as interacting in creating the identity of the individual, generating similarities and differentiations that affect the work environment. This perspective is a reaction to the conception that predominated in the organizational field, according to which diversity was only associated with multicultural, multiethnic and multiracial aspects (Mazur, 2010).

Mor Barak (2014) detects a problem in the discourse attempting to define cultural diversity, which lies in the enthusiasm and appreciation of diversity, often without presenting the way in which the existence itself of differences negatively impact individuals. Thus, he highlights focusing on benign differences (e.g. preferences concerning food, clothing, hair color), which are individual differences which lend unique qualities to human beings, while placing in the background those differences that practically and negatively impact individuals (race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc.), which are qualities given by a person's belonging to a certain group, with its positive or negative consequences. The results of Mor Barak's (2014) research on global corporations shows that diversity is defined by managers and employees, as a form of inclusion.

Analyzing the concept of workplace diversity, Gotsis and Kortezi (2015) point to the importance of understanding the existence of a contextual definition of cultural diversity, the criteria for forming individual and group identities varying in time, space and cultural contexts (e.g. gender).

III. Perspectives and Discourse on Cultural Diversity within Organizations

III.1. The Managerial Perspective and the Management of Cultural Diversity

At an organizational level, the issue of cultural *diversity management* has been raised, as in formalized actions for its management, in the hopes of achieving a type of "harmony" that can be achieved through proper diversity management (Mor Barak 2014). The more or less explicitly articulated goal behind this demand is mainly increasing efficiency and individual and organizational performance. "*Diversity management refers to a set of managerial actions aimed at either increasing diversity and/or promoting amicable, productive working relationships.*" (Jonsen, Maznevski and Schneider, 2011: 36).

Therefore, we can observe a *managerial perspective* on organizational cultural diversity, in which the latter is seen either as a resource or as an obstacle for performance and an element that can be used by the management in one way or another. This is the reason why management needs special skills to manage cultural diversity (Mazur, 2010).

The issue is addressed through the *advantages and disadvantages of cultural diversity within an organization and its impact on organizational performance.*

According to Milliken and Martins (*apud* Mazur, 2010), diversity influence the functioning of an organization by four types of mediating variables "affective consequences" (low satisfaction or organizational commitment), "cognitive outcomes" (increased creativity and innovation), "symbolic effects" (the reputation of an inclusive and egalitarian organization), "communication effects" (effective or poor communication).

Among the frequently mentioned advantages the following are included: enhancing innovation and creativity, increased efficiency in decision making and problem solving as a result of the many perspectives/experiences/backgrounds, high adaptability to change (Cox and Blake, 1991; Kearney et al., 2009; Mazur, 2010), reducing the group thinking effect (Barinaga, 2007). The less-favored advantages, mainly mentioned by sociologists, are the promotion of inclusion and acceptance in the workplace (Gossen, 2016).

Starting from the conception of cultural diversity in terms of national cultural differences, often times the performance of nationally homogeneous groups and that of nationally heterogeneous groups are compared. In a study focused on group work on international projects, Barinaga (2007), Chevrier (2000) show how national culture and

cultural diversity are instrumentalized in order to justify the differences in performance. Such an approach gives cultural differences a positivist status, a single explanatory variable, falling within a deterministic perspective (Barinaga, 2007). Barinaga (2007), Ailon-Souday & Kunda (2003) complete the image according to which national culture and cultural diversity are used by members of the group as a discursive resource in their everyday interaction, to explain/justify confusion, misunderstanding, to position and justify actions/decisions towards the group. According to this perspective, national culture is not something predetermined, cultural diversity is not an objective reality, but a discourse produced and reproduced continuously by individual actors in their daily interactions. (...) *“group members use “national culture” and “cultural diversity” as tools to get organized, reproducing the truth effects of “cultural differences”* (Barinaga, 2007: 3).

The opposing position states that cultural diversity negatively influences the performance of the group. The negative results of cultural diversity on the group's performance are explained through theories of social identity and self-categorization (Barinaga, 2007; Mazur, 2010). According to these theories, the heterogeneity of the group decreases the level of communication within the group, as well as the level of satisfaction and cooperation, while increasing emotional conflicts, as the social comparison and categorization processes as well as in-groups/out-groups and cognitive biases are more present than in the case of homogeneous groups (Mazur, 2010). Several research findings show that these are more common in medium-heterogeneity groups than in very diverse ones, in which there is a high level of heterogeneity, where conflicts and identifying with the group disperse as a result of frequent interactions with members from the out-groups (Mazur, 2010).

Other perceived disadvantages of cultural diversity are: the consumption of energy, time and resources for problem solving, confusion and frustration resulting from a high degree of uncertainty and complexity, difficulty in obtaining an agreement in the decision making process, low level of identification with the group and organizational integration leading to low performance (Mazur, 2010). Add to this increasingly hostile social environments towards those who look/behave differently from the mainstream, as a result of the reinforcement of national identity – *“In the public and political spheres, there is*

increasing talk about erecting walls, both physically and metaphorically” (Mor Barak, 2014: xvi).

Barinaga (2007), however, considers the results of research into the advantages or disadvantages of the organization in terms of organizational performance to be inconclusive. His explanation is that mixed and contradictory results derive from the positivist conception of national culture, seen as the only explanatory variable of different behaviors that lead or not to performance.

This conception is derived from the wider, predominant conception of cross-cultural management, according to which there are a series of dimensions of national culture that influence the behavior of individuals in that particular culture (Kluckhohn and Strotdbeck, Hofstede, Trompenaars, etc.), national culture being seen as a form of collective mental programming (Barinaga, 2007). This effect is accentuated when working with an antiquated, semi-digested and simplified bibliography produced before 1970 in the field of cultural anthropology. Typically in these cases, culture is approached from an essentialist, structuralist (Staber, 2006) and positivist (Aycan, 2000) perspective, the main consequence being the neglect of cultural interactions that take place within an organization. Moreover, these models have a limited capacity to explain and predict organizational behavior at a micro level (Yeganeh, Su, 2006) and do not take into account other factors such as organizational, economic, individual, contextual, and other factors. Since the essentialist perspective conceives culture as having clearly defined boundaries, individuals are defined by their affiliation with a particular culture, from which they cannot escape; this affiliation differentiates them from other individuals, who are, in turn, carriers of another culture (Grillo, 2003). Culture as a structure is seen as a normative and interpretive framework for individual experiences with a high degree of stability, which would imply a high degree of stability also with regards to the orientations and motivations of individuals (Staber, 2006). The positivist approach of culture is based on the premise that it is an objective phenomenon, which can be measured, observed and analyzed with precision (Yeganeh, Su, 2006).

III. 2. Critical Studies in Diversity Management

Positivist managerial discourse on workplace cultural diversity continues, being still a prevalent part of the existing literature within the field, although about 20 years ago a critical reaction against it emerged (Gotsis and Korte 2015), with new sub-disciplines arising within the literature (e.g. context-sensitive studies of diversity policies/management in practice - Dobusch, 2017; Tomlinson and Schwabenland, 2010 Zanon and Janssens, 2007; critical studies in diversity management - Gotsis and Korte 2015).

Dobusch (2017) summarizes the main criticisms on cultural diversity brought on by the managerial perspective:

- a) the existence of an insurmountable distance between economic/business reasons and social justice reasoning;
- b) the lack of consensus on producing a considerable impact through "diversity turn" on the growth of historically disadvantaged groups and that of inclusion in general;
- c) the existence of doubts/reservations concerning the effectiveness of policies/diversity management
- d) creating a superficial image of diversity, without changing organizational practices, structures and culture;
- e) focusing on practices that target the individual (e.g.: diversity training) and failing to take into account the power relationships at an organizational level that generate organizational inclusion/exclusion policies;
- f) an essentialist and homogenizing perspective on diversity - a distinction between groups on the basis of one-dimensional, fixed criteria (e.g. gender *or* race, etc.) and not taking into account individual diversity within the group;
- g) the inclusion of historically vulnerable groups into the diversity category, which in fact strengthens the distinction between them and other groups (e.g. those at the managerial level who are in charge of managing cultural diversity).

In their synthesis of the literature on critical studies in diversity management Gotsis and Kortezi (2015) highlight the main theoretical premises and its contributions to the field:

- a. a non-essentialist, non-positivistic concept of diversity;

b. the influence of a social context on the way in which the different socio-demographic identities that are the sources of diversity at the organizational level are defined and constructed;

c. highlighting power relations, inequalities and the role of different social actors in a particular social context that generate certain meanings of diversity;

To this we can add that the managerial perspective does not take into account the real political stakes at the organizational level of the existence of cultural diversity, with various work environments having the potential of becoming hostile and discriminatory environments where social exclusion is practiced on the basis of different criteria (e.g. nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, race, gender, social class, etc.). Social exclusion through open practices resulting from either the formal or informal policies of the organization is one of the main problems facing the workforce in national and international work environments, an issue highlighted by several authors (Mor Barak, 2014).

Among exclusion practices the following are included: exclusion from professional opportunities, informational networks, participating in teams, investment in human resources, positions of power, engagement in decision-making as a result of an affiliation or perceived affiliation by the employer to a minority or disadvantaged group, based on negative stereotypes (Mor Barak, 2014). For the individuals affected, exclusion generates the feeling that they are not seen as an integral part of the organization, being used as a justification for their dissatisfaction concerning their role in the organization and their decision to leave a job (Mor Barak, 2014). Because inclusion is positively correlated with career advancement, job satisfaction, professional opportunities, well-being, work performance, organizational commitment, all of these aspects have a direct influence on the decision to stay in or to leave a job (Mor Barak, 2014).

Mor Barak (2014) proposes to overcome the managing diversity stage by creating an inclusive climate. According to his own definition (Nishii, 2013: 1754), an inclusive climate is one “(...) *which involves eliminating relational sources of bias by ensuring that identity group status is unrelated to access to resources, creating expectations and opportunities for heterogeneous individuals to establish personalized cross-cutting ties, and integrating ideas across boundaries in joint problem solving.*”

IV. Conclusion

Cultural diversity is a reality of organizational life, one that has generated concerns about its management, the social exclusion produced, and the creation of an inclusive environment. However, beyond the different theoretical positions and the practical implications of the concept, I believe there are a number of aspects that are not taken into account. For example, the discourse on cultural diversity practiced at large corporations does not take into account the practices of labor exploitation, abuses, poorly paid work in different countries, usually the poorly developed one, where they have subsidiaries that operate as subcontractors, etc., where the cost advantage prevails. Generally, in these cases, when the matter of exploitation and abuse are brought to the forefront, the generic issue of human rights violations is cited. Nonetheless, it concerns a “generic” human being, if we could use that term, as in without highlighting their socio-demographic characteristics, economic conditioning, social positioning, occupation, professional qualification, position within the organization, etc. Thus, it raises a number of questions that may represent new research endeavors: What are the legal, political, socio-cultural contexts in which the issues of diversity, diversity management, social exclusion, the need for an inclusive climate are raised? When the interest dictates that the main priority of a business is cost advantage, can one still speak of the matter of respecting diversity and inclusion?

Additionally, there is a need for a more in-depth study of diversity and diversity management at the level of SMEs where there is often a lack of the knowledge, skills, and structures needed to address the issue. This can lead to the enrichment of the field’s theoretical and practical approaches, by having access to a reality that is less biased by the social desirability of the discourse concerning cultural diversity.

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CROSS CULTURAL ISSUES INVOLVED IN AN APPOINTED COMMITTEE MANAGING AN ARAB LOCAL AUTHORITY IN CRISIS IN ISRAEL

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Abstract

The Israeli government appoints committees to manage failing local authorities based on the assumption that failure was due to deterioration in human resources, expressed in lack of managerial skills. Additionally, many times a committee comprised of members from one culture are appointed to manage a local authority from another culture. The purpose of this article is to present partial findings emerging from a qualitative research that focused on cross-cultural factors involved in the management of those failing Arab local authorities managed by Jewish committee members. The findings show that culture embodies a significant component in the committees' practice. Therefore appointed committees wishing to succeed in rehabilitating failing local authorities should strive to bridge the culture gap.

Keywords: cross-cultural processes, intercultural negotiation, managing local authority, appointed committee, culture gap.

Introduction

This article is based on a research that examined cross-cultural issues involved in the management of failing Arab local authorities managed by an appointed committee chaired by a Jewish member. The Israeli government appoints committees to manage failing local authorities based on the assumption that failure was due to deterioration in human resources,

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expressed in lack of managerial skills. It is commonly assumed that committees are appointed in order to rehabilitate failing local authorities' economic situation (Beerli, 2009). This article attempts to illuminate the cultural and intercultural aspects involved in managing a failing public organization.

As of the 1980's, public organizations in general and local authorities in particular have been subject to structural changes resulting from a comprehensive reform known as "New Public Management" (Ben-Elia, 2005; Christensen, Laegreid & Stigen, 2004). Local government in Israel has reached a state of acute economic crisis, which includes the collapse of services in some local authorities. In response, the central government has, inter alia, increased financial supervision of local authorities, and in extreme cases, replaced leadership and senior management in its entirety, or in part, with an appointed committee (Ben-Bassat & Dahan, 2008; Beerli, 2009).

This approach is based on the assumption that failure is mostly the outcome of deterioration in a local authority's human capital, expressed in leaders and managers who lack management, leadership and political qualifications required for proper management of local authorities (Schendler, 1975; Grinyer, 1990; Mellahi, 2004). In this sense, the Israeli perception regarding failing local authorities derives from an ongoing, sharp decline in internal organizational resources, such as lack of leadership, lack of flexibility, failing financial management, and lack of motivation among local authority workers.

The question with regard to assigning appointed committees is controversial: on the one hand, the ousting of a local authority leader, or the whole leadership, by the Minister of the Interior, directly harms the democratic principle of the right to vote. Residents have the basic right to choose their representatives to lead their settlement. On the other hand, central government has a responsibility to those same residents, primarily with regard to guaranteed provision of appropriate services, including various public services, and for this reason central government has the authority to intervene and even dismiss elected local government. There are those who argue that this policy is likely to encourage a majority in a local authority not to support its leader, and as such bring about elections at any given moment.

An appointed committee is a committee formed to carry out the tasks of a local authority leader and the local authority. It comprises public figures and experts who fulfill the

roles of the leader and members of the local authority, following a decision and appointment by the Minister of the Interior. This strategy is only used in exceptional cases when the leader of a local authority and/or the local authority as a whole are not functioning as required, and this substantially harms its ability to manage the organization.

In a comprehensive survey that was initiated by the Israeli government, Beerli and Kohel (2009) argued that designating an appointed committee is not an ideal or natural step, but provides a golden opportunity to heal the authority. They pointed out a number of reasons for this opportunity: firstly, an appointed committee is not responsible for the failure. Secondly, it is not tied to outdated traditions. The abilities of the members of the committee are proven and they have no local political aspirations. In addition, an appointed committee earns a high level of legitimization from central government. Moreover, they examined the influence of assigning an appointed committee on the democratic deficit of local authorities. The democratic deficit is defined as the gap between what exists and what is fitting, that is to say, between a local authority being a democratic institution to some extent, but not sufficiently so. The deficit can result from disappointment in a local authority's functioning, from the way in which it makes decisions or the quality of its services. Symptoms of the deficit can be withdrawal from political participation, despair and lack of belief in an organization and its leadership. According to Beerli and Kohel (2009), designating an appointed committee is the final formal expression of central government's disillusion in the functioning of a local authority and lack of belief in its ability to rehabilitate itself.

Hence, this situation challenges the policy of coping with poor performing local authorities in Israel, from an intercultural point of view. This article focuses on one Arab local authority in Israel that was run by an appointed committee comprising of Jewish members and also was chaired by a Jewish member. Thus, the article provides a unique outlook on a cross-cultural process and ultimately offers insights that can help in developing a framework for managing local organizations within an intercultural context in a globalized era.

Literature Review

As mentioned earlier, appointed committees are assigned to fulfill the roles of local authorities and their leaders. In general, it can be said that the designation of an appointed

committee takes place when a local authority demonstrates general dysfunction, shows heavy deficits or sets and collects too little local rates and taxes, fails to carry out recovery plans or to agree on a budget. As well as cases where such appointed committees have balanced the books and successfully provided local services, the need for and suitability of this policy have been criticized from the points of view of feasibility and democracy.

That is to say, from an applied perspective, there are no structural mechanisms for these appointed committees except for a decision to establish them, their supervision and inspection and an overall view of their workings, which is recovery programs and public participation (Ben-Bassat & Dahan, 2008). There is a distinct lack of clear and systematic procedures to nurture failing local authorities. Additionally, from the democracy standpoint, affected citizens' preferences should be strengthened and they should be able to take responsibility for what is happening in their local authority.

In a cross-cultural context, intercultural needs to be dialogue is employed. An intercultural dialogue is understood as 'the exchange of views and opinions between different cultures'. Thus, an intercultural dialogue seeks to establish linkage and common ground between different cultures, communities, and people, promoting understanding and interaction (EU Council, in Puscas, 2009). In the intercultural context under the investigation of this study, communication seems a critical factor for managing an organization. More specifically, intercultural communication needs to be employed, and views need to be exchanged respectfully between the parties involved who are different in terms of religion, language, and heritage (Puscas, 2009). This study concerns with a dialog maintained between the appointed committee belonging to one culture and the organization which belongs to another culture.

No research has been found that addresses the intercultural processes involved in an appointed committee comprised of members from one culture managing a public organization from another culture, hence the significance of this research. Thus, the aim of the study was to explore the cross-cultural issues involved in managing an Arab local authority by an appointed committee whose members' culture is different than the culture of the local authority.

Methodology

A qualitative research approach was employed to understand the cross-cultural issues involved in managing an Arab local authority by an appointed committee whose members' culture is different than the culture of the local authority. A qualitative research approach was chosen because, according to Richardson (1996), it is predominantly relevant to understand complex situations in which issues need to be revealed as the people involved in the situation experience them. Furthermore, according to Tzabar Ben-Yehoshua (2001), a qualitative research is appropriate in order to understand social phenomena from people's opinions and perceptions. Therefore, this approach was found to be the most suitable for our research.

Research Population

Since this research sought to gather information on cross-cultural issues involved in managing a failing Arab local authority organization, nine employees in managerial positions at the Arab local authority under the ruling of an appointed committee agreed to provide data.

Research Tools

Semi-structured interviews were used to gather information in order to understand the phenomenon under investigation. According to Creswell (2012), semi-structured interviews can help collecting the data as they allowed for generating insights, thoughts and provided an opportunity to describe activities that are directly related to the researched issues. The interviews were conducted as conversations, and included questions that touched upon pre-determined major issues that were congruent with the research questions (Creswell, 2012). The data were collected during the year 2014.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was used to analyze the data collected, while the units of analysis were words or phrases as they pertained to the research aims, questions, and the researched issue. The analysis process began with an initial mapping stage, during which various interviewees' statements were compared for the purpose of identifying similarities and differences inductively. Similar statements were joined together under the same category

according to contents (Shkedi, 2011). The categorization process was conducted as interpretation and conceptualization, meaning, creating a system of concepts that would provide meaning to the data.

Findings

The content analysis that was employed on the data collected from employees in managerial positions at the Arab local authority yielded three themes and nine categories. The findings are presented according to the emerging themes and their respective categories.

Theme 1: Expectations and Role Perceptions

Category	Evidence
Expectations	<i>I demand and expect from the Council in charge to facilitate public services and bring them to the village as certain medical services or the establishment of academic education institutions,</i>
Role perceptions	<i>The wise committee chairman will leverage the community between the two cultures, and establish a management team of the local village council</i>

Expectations

The evidence shows that the residents of the Arab local authority have a number of expectations of the appointed committee. For example, A said that: *I demand and expect from the Council in charge to facilitate public services and bring them to the village as certain medical services or the establishment of academic education institutions.* The expectations are expressed in terms of ‘demands’, and relate to expectations to rehabilitate the public services that enable normal life, such as medical and educational services. Moreover, the residents expect the appointed committee to run the village in the highest quality possible, so that, in the words of A, the residents can enjoy *‘medical services that are*

still far away, and job opportunities that are limited, because the village is located in the periphery'. It can be said, then, that the appointed committee is perceived as an opportunity to resume normal life including upgrading public services.

Role perceptions

In addition to the expectations of appointed committees assigned to rehabilitate a failing Arab local authority, another category that emerged illustrates the role perceptions of the committee. In the words of B, *'The wise committee chairman will leverage the community between the two cultures, and establish a management team of the local village council'*. According to the evidence, the chairman of the appointed committee who belongs to a different culture is perceived as having the wisdom to raise the level of the community by including local residents to join the management team and bring the local authority to a reasonable function. It can be said, then, that the role of the appointed committee within an intercultural context is perceived as bridging the cultural gap and resuming the management of the local authority by local members.

Theme 2: Ambivalence

The content analysis that was employed to understand the cross-cultural issues involved in managing a local authority within an intercultural context yielded two categories – difficulties as well as benefits.

Category	Evidence
Difficulties	<i>No cooperation from the residents and the local leaders.</i>
Advantages	<i>-The difference of nationality can positively influence the committee chairman who comes from a different culture and a different management culture – Another origin mayor with the villagers can create great work and the circuit more efficient-' Some areas are not influenced by the chairman's origin such as infrastructure and engineering, and other matters that are done following certain rules.</i>

Difficulties

The evidence gathered shows the difficulties associated with the work of the appointed committee, mostly relating to reluctance to cooperate with the local leaders and committee members. According to C, *'there was no cooperation from the residents and the local leaders'*. Additionally, according to D., *'every family wants that the head of the local authority will be one that belongs to them, therefore, there is always resistance coming from the other families'*. In other words, the difficulties are related to the traditional struggles within Arab communities on the leadership. Another interviewee, E, said that *'when the village is run by a foreign body that is not familiar with our culture and our people or our place, it will take quite some time until it will get into the atmosphere of the place. Then the committee will start working by the will of the residents and not by strict criteria that are not appropriate to our arena'*. Again, the difficulties are expressed in terms of the culture gap and are associated with the fact that the committee is perceived as a 'foreign body' to the local culture.

Benefits

According to the interviewees, there are benefits to an appointed committee in the process of rehabilitating a failing Arab local authority within an intercultural context. According to A., *'on the other hand, the difference in nationality can bring about a positive influence because the chair of the appointed committee coming from a different culture will bring with him another culture, and will know how to leverage the village'*. A similar view was expressed by C who said that *'Another origin mayor with the villagers can create great work and the outcome will be more efficient'*. In other words, the chair is perceived as a manager who has no political aspirations regarding leading the community, and therefore, does not embody any competition to the local leaders. Hence, the work of the appointed committee is perceived as purely for the benefit of the villagers' needs, so the work of the appointed committee has a fair chance to be efficient.

Support for this view was gained from E who said that there is an advantage in a chairperson from another culture because *'Some areas are not influenced by the chairman's*

origin such as infrastructure and engineering, and other matters that are done following certain rules'.

In sum, it seems that the work of an appointed committee within an intercultural context is perceived as an ambivalent process, including difficulties as well as benefits that stem from the cultural differences.

Theme 3: Cross-Cultural Issues

The cross-cultural issues that emerged from the content analysis relate to four categories, i.e., a common language, communication, democracy, and culture gap.

Category	Sample Evidence
A common Language	<i>If he speaks in the same language he will not have difficulties in communicating with the public around him , the media is a very important criterion for cooperation between the residents and of the Council</i>
Communication	<i>A chair of an appointed committee who comes from another culture will find it difficult to communicate with the local people.</i>
Democracy	<i>And when the council is ready, they appoint someone from the village</i> <i>It must be built with the continuing local Council, namely, to build a future generation of residents of the community, integrating them into the management council appointed to finish the task and continue for the proper management and development in all democratic aspects.</i>
Culture Gap	<i>It is a disadvantage that he (the chair of the appointed committee) does not know the local culture</i> <i>There is no doubt that the different origin of the Committee can interfere because of the lack of knowledge of the local and its preferences.</i>

A Common Language

The evidence gathered for this study yielded language as a central issue related to cross-cultural contexts. According to C, *'If he (the chairperson of the appointed committee) speaks in the same language he will not have difficulties in communicating with the public around him'*. Moreover, a common language allows for cooperation, as can be seen in the words of E: *'the language is a very important criterion for cooperation between the residents and of the appointed committee'*. In other words, language as a critical concept within an intercultural context is the key for cooperation, probably because it allows for direct communication with the residents, which can facilitate the rehabilitation of the failing Arab local authority.

Communication

Associated with language is communication as a key factor in managing the failing Arab local authority in Israel. In the words of A., *'A chair of an appointed committee who comes from another culture will find it difficult to communicate with the local people'*. As stated previously, direct communication with the local residents can allow for exchange of views, for expressing feelings and ideas, thus allowing for the committee to fulfil its aims for the benefit of the local residents.

Culture Gap

The data gathered through the interviews yielded culture gap as a central issue in managing a failing Arab local authority within an intercultural context. Evidence can be seen in the words of A who said that *'It is a disadvantage that he (the chair of the appointed committee) does not know the local culture'*. Moreover, *'There is no doubt that the different origin of the Committee can interfere because of the lack of knowledge of the locals and their preferences'*. In other words, when the appointed committee is chaired by a person who is foreign to the local culture, a gap is created which interferes with the management of a failing Arab local authority within an intercultural context.

Democracy

The data gathered from the participants in this study show that the ultimate goal of the appointed committee is to restore the democratic rights of the local authority residents. The participants expressed this wish clearly when they said that (D): *‘And when the committee is ready, they appoint someone from the village’*. In other words, the committee is required to identify a person from the village to whom the reins will be passed in order to resume the local authority’s ruling. Moreover, *‘It must be built with the continuing local council namely, to build a future generation of residents of the community, integrating them into the management council appointed to finish the task and continue for the proper management and development in all democratic aspects’*. In other words, an integral part of the appointed committee’s aims is the need to ensure that the democratic rights of the local residents are restored by maintaining a proper management of the local authority as the appointed committee’s task is over, and providing supervision and accompaniment.

Discussion and Conclusions

This research on cross-cultural issues involved in managing a failing Arab local authority in Israel has indicated the need to address the culture gap that is created in this intercultural context. As maintained by Beerli and Kohel (2009), appointing a committee to rehabilitate a failing local authority is not an ideal or natural step, but still it bears potential to heal the authority. The findings that emerged from this modest research show the high expectations of the appointed committee to manage the failing Arab organization, higher than those assumed to the failing local authority itself. Additionally, the findings portray an ambivalent picture of the appointed committees’ work within a cross-cultural context. On the one hand the process seems beneficial because of the opportunity to resume normal life including upgrading public services. However, on the other hand, the committee is perceived as a ‘foreign body’ that creates a culture gap which impedes cooperation with the local residents. Furthermore, the culture gap is due to lack of common language and communication, which in return impedes negotiation processes that are necessary for proper public organization management. In a cross-cultural situation, where the parties are different

in their language, religion and culture, intercultural communication is necessary in order to allow for exchanging ideas and views in a respectful manner (Puscas, 2009).

The findings further show that the role of the appointed committee within a cross-cultural context is to bridge this cultural gap and to resume the management of the local authority by local members. Ultimately, the committee is expected to restore the democratic rights of the local residents by maintaining a proper management of the local authority as the appointed committee's task is over, and to ensure continuity of quality local authority management (Ben-Bassat & Dahan, 2008).

In conclusion, awareness of the difficulties in bridging the cultural gap as well as of the advantages in managing the failing local authority by an effective appointed committee will facilitate the acceptance of leadership from another culture. Furthermore, it seems necessary to manage negotiation processes with the local residents while adopting intercultural processes based on a common language and communication and with the promise to restore the democratic rights of the residents. Finally, an intercultural negotiation management will allow for identifying failures and obstacles in the performance of a local authority early on, enable the development of appropriate intervention tools, provide help that may lead to significant recovery and change, encourage a productive organizational culture and prevent the recurrence of periodical crises in local authorities which are not equipped with sufficient forces for recovery.

As for a future research, it seems worthwhile to investigate the situation after the committee finished its term, and to examine whether supervision and accompaniment are provided and to what extent.

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THE IMPACT OF DISSENT ART IN AMERICA VERSUS THE SOCIAL MEDIA

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Abstract

The current study attempts to provide a comparative analysis of dissent art in America of the 20th century and the social media of the 21st regarding the protests which took place in the USA during the two centuries.

The results reveal the fading of some tactics used by protesters such as poetry and music and the rise of other methods such as images, videos and interactive content shared in the virtual space, putting a heavy accent on the role of social media as a communication channel for both gathering and uniting the people for a common goal.

Keywords: Dissent Art, Social Media, Protests, Protesters, USA

Art is used by people since the beginning of times in order to express their feelings and emotions. These expressions can manifest itself in paintings, sculptures, poetry and music, depending on the situation. During history, dissents of America used these channels to communicate with their target group in trying to inform them of their beliefs and to convince them to act together for a greater purpose.

This is how art became an important tool of dissent and the movements they started in the 1960s. Today riots and protests are happening more often due the many favorable conditions provided by the laws of states regarding freedom of expression and freedom of speech, but also thanks to the technologic development which had a rapid ascension since then. This is how new tools were created involuntarily which aim to contribute to the spread of information and to gather people to act.

The connection between individuals now more than ever is thanks to the existence of the Internet and all the features provided by it. The most powerful tool existent these days are the social media networks, created to bring people from all around the world closer and to make to know each other. The after effect of these informatics systems is that people are brought together to sympathize a cause and makes whistleblowers information to break viral on the internet. Dissents of America and from all around the world are eager to use the internet in order to spread the news about their dissatisfaction related to something taking place in our times, and to change that by making people to react. Due the globalization phenomena which is intensifying day by day, shortens the time and the distances between individuals. This is why dissents need to act as fast and as convincing as possible in order to manage to spread their discontent until the problem will not become outdated and the uninformed individuals will lose their interest in it.

Brutal, romantic, passionate, direct, subtle or even hidden in the lyrics, protest music was the faithful expression of how society was set up. It showed clearly in one voice the story of the bitter injustice the people had part of and also their disregard and anger.

An intense moment in this regard happened at the civil rights movement where black cultural forms, including music, had a great contribution in mobilizing the people. Therefore, the black music tradition labeled the civil rights movement with the gospel blues, more importantly the songs of Thomas A. Dorsey as sung by Mahalia Jackson. Due the numerous television appearances and recordings, she managed to bring the gospel music into the broad American culture. As well as she inspired the people with the freedom songs to participation rate in the movement has rose considerably (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998).

Music was an indispensable element of the African-American religious culture but also for the secular sides of the southern black lives. When the boycotts began in 1954 in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and Montgomery, Alabama, the music was already present because the church represented the main meeting place for the protestors. As the church had such a main role in these events, it was inevitable that the music genre was according to it. Furthermore, the music was giving strength, commitment and emphasized solidarity. The bridges between social classes and status groups of black people and white supporters of the cause and also between rural and urban areas, northern and southern regions were built by

music. The gap between supporters and its leaders was erased and people started to see each other as equals and realized that acting in one big group in name of a cause, was more effective than following their individual goals. As the movements developed and expanded beyond the local level including wider sections of population, the music was opened up for new influences and got new functions (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998).

The civil rights movements of the sixties used stirring songs to dramatize the situation, but also to bring awareness about the mistake the leadership is doing by depriving American citizens from their fundamental rights, which should not be taken by no human being and this way inspired the masses and reached emotional knots in people's hearts which when got lighten, started the riots and protest in order to gain which was rightfully theirs. In one sentence, the humanization of the American society has begun by musical notes which inspired and gave the strength to react and stand still until the goal was reached (Malone, 1969). The following musical current which reached those behind bars was the rhythm and blues inspired songs which kept on high the morale of the inmates, facilitated the communication and created a bond between them, hoping together to see when they come out from jail, an American state ruled by equal treatment to all races and peace (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998).

Probably the most long-lasting genres of all times, characteristic even in our days to protest music was the folk and rock music. These genres were introduced with the biggest success to the popular culture and audiences seeking world peace and equal treatment to the people, by Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin. Others like Miles Davis, Frank Zappa, Gram Parsons and Van Morrison came up with a mixture of rock music with classical, jazz, Irish and country influences (Eyerman and Jamison, 1998).

The importance of mixing two genres had many advantages. One of them was the fact that people from different places, with different social status and different background, could easily get "connected" to others due the mixing of the musical preferences. In this way, more and more people could be convinced about the importance of fighting for a cause, but also, by the musical blend, all people could feel the lack of difference between them, feeling all just humans without the etiquette of race, religion, social status or skin color, and enjoy the harmony and peace surrounding, and binding them. Also, since the people in their thirties and

above had their consecrated music genre to which they were used, but which maybe didn't had such a great influence on their children, the mixture of rock music with traditional music gave the new generation of youth a new genre of music, according to their rebelliousness and for some, who were heading in no direction, was acting as a compass to compassion, peace and freedom for which the youth always stood up to maintain and protect since then. One of the most important gathering places where artist and their fans, sharing the idea of peace, was the Woodstock Festival which had its first three-day edition in 1969. In a year, where America seemed divided and corrupted, where thousands of people were marching for the civil rights, riots were disturbing the order and soldiers were fighting in Vietnam some people just wanted peace for everyone and to bring an end to the war. Woodstock was the place where more than 400.000 young people celebrated world peace on the sound waves produced by world-known artists (Reynolds, 2009). With the risk of being called communist, anti-American or simply just a coward, young people who truly understood the value of human life, harmony and peace, stood up against the government and against some of the American people who saw the war justified, and spread thru the lyrics of music the ideas they believed in. Yet, the lives of those who gave their life for the country should not be forgotten, so do we need to admit that the young people protesting the war, were as brave as the fallen, and in some cases more American than those hoisting the Star-Spangled Banner in the front of their homes.

In these times was created by Phil Ochs one of the most popular protest song album called "I Ain't Marching Anymore", which can be characterized as an album of those people who instead of asking for a change, they themselves become one (Hardeep, 2015). The advantage of the protest songs beside the produced feelings was the rhythm, the chords and the catchy but direct lyrics which abled anyone with basic guitar skills to play it and even sing it. This advantage in the youth community was enormous thanks to the created bonds between groups of teenagers who joined the cause as friends and this way, not only the amount of people grew, but also their power as cause-brothers and sisters.

With the rapid technological evolution of the 21st century, the people changed, also every action of them got an "upgrade" and here we can include also the protest and riots.

The globalization phenomena shrunk the Earth and shortened the distances. Communication were no longer a question of “how?” but to “which?” channel should be used in certain circumstances. In the modern world we are living today, people make bounds within each other at music concerts which can barely go up to half a dozen, meanwhile, within the virtual environment, they can keep in touch with dozens of people, from all around the world, in the same time, without leaving their chair.

Social media networks have the most important role in maintaining these relations but also these are the channels where news can become viral in hours and influence thousands. Examples in this regard are starting with the Occupy Movement and can go further until presidential elections and the occupation of Crimea Peninsula by Russia.

In the case of the Occupy Movement art played an essential role in its creation. Here we are not talking about music but about graphical art which posted in virtual environments like Facebook and Tweeter became viral and touched people so deeply, that they felt that the time to react has come. The anonymous cultural production played a vital role in the birth of the Occupy movement by creating various photoshopped images like those featuring Lieutenant John Pike, the “Pepper Spray Cop” or the “Occupy Sesame Street” illustrations. The images created by the dissent artist were ironic, hilarious, enraged but most of all inspired awareness of the mechanism in which society is used without people’s knowledge. This awareness campaign of illustrations, later was expanded in other sorts of materials like videos and documentaries, which depicted the raw reality of our times and motivated people to make a step forward and show their voice for a change (Lang and Levitsky, 2012).

This is how the movement evolved and got globalized. People from all around the world started to show their disparagement regarding certain governmental policies and acted as one to prove that those who are elected must be concerned about their electors and act in their favor not for personal gains.

The technological evolution created tools which could not be influenced and stopped by the governments of the states. The people of United States of America, showed that the 99% has the power and made an example from this movements so every country on earth can see that the power is in the hands of the people, and it should be used when the government is no longer working in the benefit of the people, but only for a smaller circle of individuals. As

the music was the biggest connection creator during the 1960s, because of the power it was able to transmit, showing the raw reality and couldn't be banned since everyone could sing the lyrics and gather to fight together for a cause, in the modern era we are living in, the place of music was taken by the internet. The virtual environment to which so many people have connection and which can be accessed today from almost any kind of electrical device from almost anywhere from the world, became a place which couldn't be controlled by the authorities. The social media networks which became a part of our everyday life starting with Facebook and Tweeter are the tools which can reach out to most of the people from the online hemisphere. Here the materials distributed can become viral in matter of hours and reach out to thousands of people regarding their interests. This is how the protest music tradition faded in front of the new technologies, but didn't lose its importance. The rush, lack of time and stress in our modern society made that people value more the time and try to spend it more effectively, so when it comes about transmitting a message, the point is to be as short, creative and to raise awareness. That is why, using images in order to raise awareness on some issue, is more effective, than sharing a protest song, which sometimes is so metaphoric than many wouldn't pay the necessary attention and the cause would not have such a fast reaction from the people. The social media networks facilitated the creation of different groups in which information about a cause was updated constantly so the supporters could know every time about the progress. Visual art has a key role in these groups to maintain the morale high, and when there is no progress in solving it, to keep the people focused on fighting and resisting, meanwhile posting creative and sarcastic images to reach out to more people and keep the protesters fate. Other type of art like poetry for example, was also a successful method to bring people to protests and motivate them. The problem in this regard hides in the group to whom the poem is addressed. The youth of our days is interested in smart, creative and direct information, like the photos with writing on them but could not pay attention for a longer poem. In this matter these kind of awareness bringing methods have to be addressed to another type of people like the academics. Teachers can use the method of protest poetry in their class, analyze it together with the students and draw conclusions. This kind of method can be very effective because of the interventions of the students and also by making them understand the problem as a whole and giving extra information which couldn't

be told by an image shared on the social media networks. Also, these poems can have a very deep emotional impact, similar to the protest songs, and could influence people to act. But in case a student is influenced by a poem in school, it will share its feelings, emotions and instructions to act not by a poem but with an image which can bring awareness and reach out also to those who are not interested in this form of art or simply don't have the time and interest to read it.

Art is an important part of our daily life, even if we don't observe it. We are surrounded by art at every second of a protest or in its preparation. The images on the social media networks, the protest music, and the banners at protest are all art to bring awareness to a cause. Sometimes one is used more than the other, but they are there, no matter what. We shouldn't be disappointed about the fact that there is no more protest music created in the present. The problem is that we may not hear it for the moment because the famous artists of our days have different preoccupations than singing protest songs, when the social media is full with protesting images or simply they are not interested in protesting. The protest music will always exist thanks to the "smaller" musicians who are not very known for the public and their works of art will come to surface whenever there will be a protest and a need for a song. Emotions given by protest music cannot be replaced by anything else. It has its uniqueness and power. The other types of art is also useful for transfer of knowledge and information and combined all of them, we can describe the whole process of a modern protest because it has all these elements. Whenever there will be a protest, elements of all sort of art will be present, doing their part in the benefit of the success of the cause, but there will be always songs singed at protest, no matter what, even if the protesters will have to write the lyrics on the scene, no protest will end without the people singing together.

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BRAIN DRAIN: ARE WE LOSING OUR MINDS? A STUDY ON THE ROMANIAN HUMAN CAPITAL F(L)IGHT

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Abstract

In a truly internationalised world, where the mobility of workers and students is encouraged, the transfer of skilled individuals (geographical brain drain) is a problem that affects many of the developing countries around the globe. The purpose of our research is to see whether Romania is still a country strongly affected by the geographical brain drain, as well as to find out the reasons behind the intention to seek employment abroad. As such, we wanted to find out if the students enrolled at the Faculty of European Studies within Babeş-Bolyai University already know what they want to do after graduation, i.e. leave the country / stay in their country of origin, and to find out to what extent the possibility to study abroad for one semester or a year through the Erasmus+ Programme or to go on a 'Work & Travel' programme influences students' decision of leaving the country after graduation.

Keywords: brain drain, human capital flight, employment, study mobility, work and travel mobility, Romanian students

1. Introduction

In a globalised world, where the movement of workforce is commonplace nowadays, so is the transfer of (highly) skilled individuals from one region to another or from one country to another. More commonly known as *brain drain*, this phenomenon affects most of the countries of the world, and increasingly more people are tempted to leave their country of origin in search of better opportunities, of a better place for their professional and personal development.

It is also the case of Romania, which has been, in the past decade or so, one of the European countries that has been increasingly marked by this large-scale phenomenon. Romanians of all ages and educational backgrounds have decided to leave their homeland to find better job opportunities.

Starting from the concept of the *geographical brain drain* of highly skilled individuals, the purpose of our study is see whether the students enrolled at the Faculty of European Studies within Babeş-Bolyai University already have an idea of what they want to do once they graduate, i.e. leave or stay in their country of origin, as well as to find out to what extent the possibility to study abroad for one semester or a year, or to go on a ‘work & travel’ programme influences students’ decision of leaving the country after graduation.

2. Literature Review

Brain drain has been a long-discussed topic. It was initially used by the British Royal Society to refer to the exodus of European intellectuals to the USA and Canada in the ‘50s and the ‘60s (Cervantes and Guellec, 2002), as World War II and the Nazi politics of exterminating Jews led to the emigration of many intellectuals to the American continent in order to escape the persecution (Gâz 2012: 116). Since then, a lot of scholars have focused on the negative aspects of it or, starting from the ‘90s, on its (possible) positive aspects and its solutions (Kwok and Hayne, 1982; Ranis et al. 2000; Adams, 2003; Mahroum, 2005; Çağlar & Schiff, 2006).

Over the years, the meaning of the term has changed and does not only refer to the migration of highly educated individuals from one country to another, but also to their movement from one region to another or from one city to another. Similar terms are *brain*

circulation and *brain waste*, but some scholars consider these terms pejorative and recommend the usage of the term *human capital flight* (Pistone et al., 2007).

The Oxford Dictionary defines the term as “the emigration of highly trained or qualified people from a particular country”, while the Merriam Webster Dictionary provides a more detailed explanation, stating that *brain drain* represents indeed the emigration of highly skilled individuals, but it also adds the possible reasons for this: “the departure of educated or professional people from one country, economic sector, or field for another usually for better pay or living conditions”. According to these definitions, *brain drain* can be classified as geographical (the departure of individuals from one country to another to find better living conditions and better paid jobs), industrial (the departure of employees from one economic sector to another) or organisational (the departure of employees from one company to another). We shall refer in this article to the *geographical brain drain*.

Some scholars believe that the most educated people are the ones most tempted to migrate (Mora & Taylor, 2006; Dustmann & Glitz, 2011). Docquier and Rapoport (2012), for instance, some state that the term *brain drain* is used to refer to “the migration of engineers, physicians, scientists, and other very highly skilled professionals with university training”. They also state that “a brain drain can induce occupational shortages in certain sectors and professions (e.g., teachers, engineers, physicians, nurses)” (Docquier and Rapoport, 2012: 698).

In 1951, the “push-pull” basic change model was introduced by Lewin. According to this change model, there are factors pushing professionals from their home country and factors that pull the professionals to a host country. This model introduced by Lewin also refers to intermediary stages: unfreeze, transition, and refreeze. In a later study, Ambrosini et al. (2015) consider that migrants can be assigned to two categories: high-skill cells and low-skill cells. These skill cells are defined by the migrants’ level of education, age and gender. According to Ambrosini et al., in the case of Romania, highly skilled individuals prefer to emigrate to “traditional immigration countries (US, Canada, and Australia)” mostly for educational purposes (Ambrosini et al., 2015: 758), but also because such developed countries offer higher wages than other less-developed countries. “The number of Europeans going to North America is double those arriving from there” (Mahroum 1999: 21).

Some authors see a silver lining in *brain drain*: they do not think of this process as a loss for the country of origin, but as a gain for both the host country and the sending country, namely the *beneficial brain gain* (Mountford, 1997; Stark, Helmenstein, and Prskawetz, 1997, 1998; Beine, Docquier, and Rapoport, 2001, 2003). This *brain gain* could translate, for instance, into a powerful Diaspora or in remittances for the home country (Çaglar & Schiff, 2006).

3. Current Situation in the World and in Romania

The United Nations has recently published a report on the *World Population Prospects*, mentioning that, in 2017, there are more than 7.5 billion people living in the world, only 10% of them living on the European continent. Although the world population is projected to grow slightly but constantly by 2060, the European population will see a decrease while “Africa will be the main contributor to the global population growth” (UN, 2017: 3). In contrast to the African continent, several European countries are expected to register a decline in the number of their citizens, and Romania is one of them.

According to a recent Eurostat survey, in 2015, 1.9 million European citizens migrated from their country of origin to another EU member-state, the Romanian citizens accounting for one of the largest shares of migrant population (Eurostat, 2016). The same survey reports that, as of 1st January 2016, “there were 16.0 million persons living in one of the EU Member States on 1st January 2016 with the citizenship of another EU Member State” (Eurostat).

In 1950, Romania registered a population of more than 16 million people. By 2017, the number has increased by more than 15 reaching 19,679,000 inhabitants. This last number is likely to gradually decrease, so that by 2030 the number of inhabitants of Romania will be of roughly 18.5 million inhabitants, 16,397,000 inhabitants by 2050, and an alarming number of 12,082,000 inhabitants by 2100 (UN, 2017: 26). The reasons for this steady decrease are detailed in a document drafted and issued by the Romanian National Institute for Statistics (INS), and they are: the fertility rate / birth rate, the mortality rate, but the most important one is the international migration. This last factor is described by the INS as a “demographic phenomenon whose evolution is directly dependent on the force of the factors specific to the

‘attraction / rejection’ mechanism, which are predominantly economic”⁴ (INS, 2017: 19). As such, citizens decide to emigrate to more developed countries, where the living standard is higher than in Romania, in order to find better jobs and better living conditions: “the profound transformations in the legislative system and the free movement of people represent the premises for the sharp increase in the level of international migration” (INS, 2017: 19).

Generally speaking, some of the most important causes of *brain drain* refer to the social and economic situations existing in the emigrants’ country of origin. If citizens do not have the proper economic, political, social and educational environment, they will leave to other countries to find a better job, better living conditions. “The majority – doctors, engineers, lecturers, researchers and senior managers as well as students – are tempted by more attractive career opportunities, salaries and living conditions. A university degree is also the safest passport out of an unstable political environment.” (UNESCO, 2006--2007: 4).

It is the case of Romania and of its highly skilled citizens. According to a European study on the movement of skilled individuals carried out between 2003 and 2014, Romania ranks on an “unfortunate third place, after Poland and Germany” (Pop-Flanja, 2015: 29). The survey analyses the destinations preferred by the EU-born migrants as well as the “most mobile brains in the EU since 2003”. As such, it seems that the most mobile individuals, according to their profession, since 2003, have been secondary school teachers, doctors, nurses, physiotherapists, and dentists. In the case of Romania, for the period of time ranging from Romania’s access to the European Union until 2016, according to the EU Ranking for Temporary Mobility, it seems that the most mobile ‘brains’ were secondary school teachers, ski instructors, physiotherapists, veterinary surgeons, radiographers / radiotherapists, dentists and doctors of medicine, pharmacists, architects, nurses, and civil engineers (EU “Overall statistics on temporary mobility”). We also have statistics showing the countries preferred by the migrant population once they obtained their degree: Germany (20%), the UK (17%), Denmark (14%), Italy (14%), France (10%), and other countries (25%) (EU “Overall statistics on temporary mobility”).

⁴ Authors’ translation.

4. Erasmus+ Study Mobilities and Work & Travel Programmes

Erasmus+ and Work & Travel offer temporary mobility programmes and their purpose is not that of ‘stealing’ highly skilled students, but that of offering them a new life experience that can open their minds and broaden their perspective. Both programmes commit to sending students back to their country of origin. One of the documents posted on the website of the Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) operating under the auspices of the European Commission, referring to the Erasmus Mundus Programme, even addresses the issue of the possible *brain drain*, stating that “all participating institutions commit themselves not to carry out any activity susceptible of encouraging the brain drain (for example, offering jobs or further possibilities to study in the hosting university)” (EACEA, 2007).

In the *Decision No. 1298/2008/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 establishing the Erasmus Mundus 2009-2013 action programme for the enhancement of quality in higher education and the promotion of intercultural understanding through cooperation with third countries*, article 9 talks about the quality of the European higher education, the understanding between peoples around the world, as well as about the sustainable development of higher education which can only be achieved through “integrated study programmes (...) at all levels of study, (...) scholarships for the most talented students and projects to enhance the worldwide attractiveness of European higher education”, while “the Commission should pay particular attention to its potential brain drain effects” (Official Journal of the European Union, 2008).

The Erasmus Impact Study - A Comparative Analysis of the Effects of Erasmus on the Personality, Skills and Career of students of European Regions and Selected Countries, published by the European Commission in 2016, presents an analysis of the impact of the Erasmus+ Programme, identifying the regional aspects in the effects of student mobility on employability, careers, skills and social lives of students from Northern, Southern, Western and Eastern Europe (EU, *Erasmus Impact Study*, 2016). According to the study, “at least 90% of Erasmus students in all regions participate in Erasmus in order to experience living abroad, meet new people, learn or improve a foreign language and develop their soft skills” followed by the “wish to enhance employability abroad (87%), which is more important than

employability at home (77%)” (EU, *Erasmus Impact Study*, 2016: 13). The motivations of students to go abroad are slightly different throughout the regions. Whereas for North-European and West European students the focus is primarily on living abroad and meeting people, students in Eastern Europe primarily choose to go abroad to improve their foreign language skills and to broaden their career prospects. Of all the regions, students in Southern Europe have the highest motivation to participate in the programme in order to increase their future employability abroad. Even if the main purpose of the programme is study mobility, the study shows that “Erasmus promotes labour mobility after graduation. Of the Erasmus alumni, 40% had moved country at least once since graduation compared with 23% of non-mobile alumni. In addition, 93% (compared with 73% of the non-mobile students) could envisage living abroad.” (EU, *Erasmus Impact Study*, 2016: 19).

Hence, we have a clear correlation between this type of study mobilities and the increased perspective of relocating and labour mobility after graduation is envisaged as well. Participating in such mobility programmes can contribute to the development of cultural characteristics such as indulgence, one of the characteristics that is considered to play a “causal role in social development processes” (Dan, 2017: 119). However, although we cannot argue that there is a wider range of employment opportunities due to the increase in certain skills required on the labour market, the question that we are trying to address in the case study of this article is whether it is the mobility *per se* that determines the increased numbers from this point of view, or is it that mobile students already have this availability for working abroad prior to the mobility, and it is this availability that actually determines them to take part in the Erasmus programme to begin with.

While the Erasmus+ Programme is meant to foster students’ mobility to have a study experience abroad, the Work & Travel USA Programme has as purpose to offer full-time students the possibility to work in the USA for a limited period of time. Compared to the Erasmus+ Programme that puts emphasis on study and cultural exchange opportunities, Work & Travel USA is aimed at offering work / money-related opportunities or an intercultural experience. Erasmus+ gives students the possibility to benefit from a study period in one of the countries around the world that is part of this worldwide community, while Work and

Travel USA offers them the possibility to work for a short period of time, usually during summer, up to four months (*Work and Travel USA* official website).

5. Research Findings

As previously stated, the main aim of the study is to analyse the underlying factors that contribute to the graduates' intentions to pursue a career abroad and to what extent it is strictly determined by their participation in study mobility programmes or international cultural exchange programmes such as Work and Travel, particularly whether or not they already have an intention to find employment abroad before actually taking part in such programmes. Should the hypothesis be confirmed by the results, participating in mobility or exchange programmes contributes to reinforcing or not the intention, to increasing accessibility or it directs the individuals towards certain destinations, without actually being at the core of brain circulation.

a. Methodology

The research design chosen for this study is the quantitative method. However, elements of the qualitative method, such as participant observation, have also been used. The results have been interpreted using the SPSS (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*) software.

The survey, consisting of a questionnaire having both closed and open-ended questions, was applied on 157 first-year Bachelor's degree students of the Faculty of European Studies, Babeş-Bolyai University of Cluj-Napoca, representing 48% of the total number of students enrolled in the first year for full-time studies at the faculty. The reason for selecting this group is the international profile of the faculty and the wide network of international cooperation agreements, in proportion to the number of students of the faculty. More precisely, the faculty has more than 80 Erasmus+ bilateral agreements and a number of approximately 1400 students, Bachelor's, Master's, and doctoral levels. The specialisations chosen for the study are International Relations and European Studies, full time programmes offered in Romanian, English and German, as well as European Administration (in Romanian). Therefore, the study used the following selection criteria: a participant had to be

a first-year student, not to have taken part in Erasmus+ or Work and Travel study mobility and cultural exchange programmes, to be enrolled full-time in one of the above-mentioned specializations of the Faculty of European Studies, not to know the purpose of the survey, to be in the age group 18-25. Only one of the participants did not comply with the criteria, and, being outside the age group envisaged, he was excluded from the study, as the factors that might have contributed to the answers given were considered more diverse.

b. Results

A specific objective of the study was to analyse whether the students' language of study influences their choices of participating in study mobility programmes, in international cultural exchange programmes, or of relocating abroad, whether students enrolled in full-time programmes in a foreign language are more prone to undergoing such activities.

The results show that there is no direct correlation between the intention of the students to seek employment upon graduation in Europe or in non-European countries and the language of instruction. As to what the percentages of the respondents who expressed the intention to seek employment in a European country other than Romania is concerned, 60% of the students from the Romanian line of study expressed this interest, 64% from the English one and 45% from the German one. Similarly, the percentages for those declaring the intention to seek employment in a non-European country are of 26% for the Romanian line of study, 25% for the English one and 9% for the German one. Hence, apart from a slightly smaller percentage of the students from the German line that expressed an intention to work abroad upon graduation, studying in a foreign language does not represent a factor to influence the decision of the surveyed population of students from this point of view.

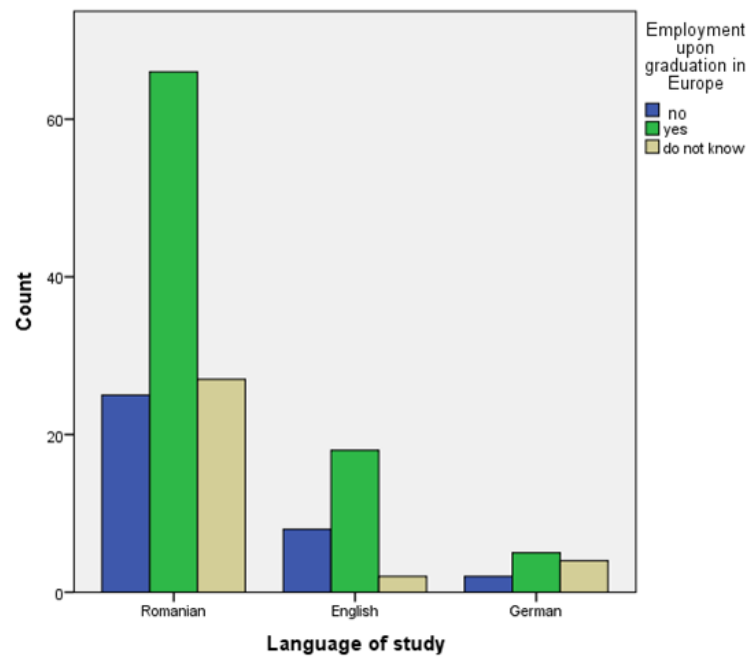


Table 1. Correlation: Language of study - Employment in other European countries

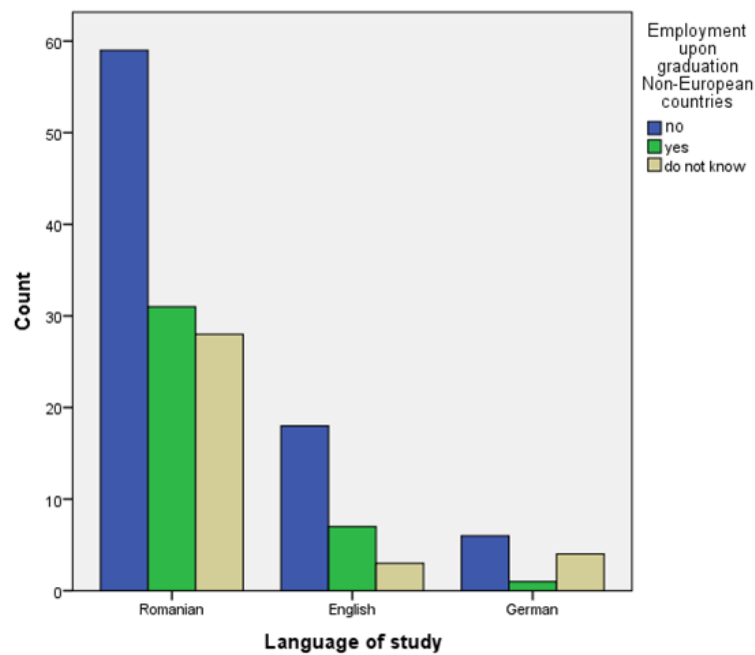


Table 2. Correlation: Language of study - Employment in a non-European country

Next, we are going to present the results related to the intention of the surveyed students to seek employment upon graduation in Romania, in another European country or in a non-European country. The responses revealed that the intention to seek employment in Romania was expressed by 38.9% of the respondents, whereas 40.1% declared not having this intention and 21% being undecided. As to what working in other European countries is concerned, 56.7% answered *yes*, 22.3% said *no* and 21% chose *I do not know* as option to answer. As estimated, the situation for the choice of a non-European country is different, with only 24.8% expressing an interest in those areas. This choice can be explained by the capacity to adapt to a more contrasting non-European environment or by proximity reasons. The degree of uncertainty in this intention was also slightly higher, of 22.3%.

The respondents that declared being undecided in their intention to seek employment in a certain geographical area were roughly the same for all three categories, the reasons being mostly the lack of knowledge on what opportunities and perspectives might be offered by any of the above-mentioned areas.

Out of the 33 respondents who were undecided regarding seeking employment in another European country, 28 expressed an intention to take part in student mobility programmes, which means that there is an availability towards a medium term international experience. It is to this category that a future decision of relocating abroad could be considered as being mostly determined by the future intercultural experiences that they might have, such as a future Erasmus+ mobility. However, as the factors that may influence their decisions are complex, what we plan to analyse is solely the intention expressed.

Next, we are going to present the results on the reasons presented by the surveyed students in support of their interest into studying abroad. As this was an open-end question, the students had the opportunity to answer freely, without particular reasons being suggested to them. In order to interpret the results, we have grouped their answers in different categories, based on the degree of occurrence. As the graph below shows, out of the 89 students that presented an interest into working in a European country (57% of the total number of respondents), 27 focused on the general opportunities and perspectives that a foreign European country can offer. Financial reasons were mentioned by other 27 respondents, but additionally to the opportunities, perspectives, personal and professional

development. We are aware that the opportunities and perspectives offered by a foreign country may also refer to the personal or professional development, depending on what each respondent understood by these terms, but we have decided to keep the exact terms used by them, for accuracy purposes.

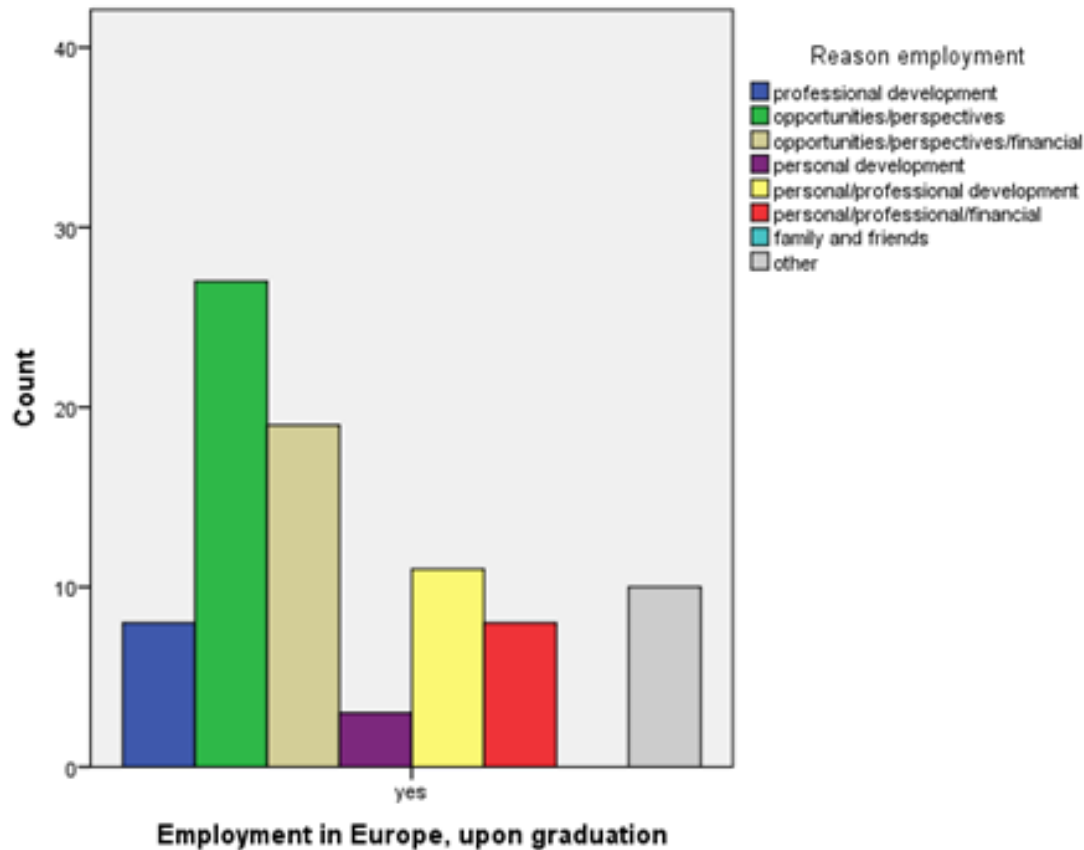


Table 3. Reasons for seeking employment upon graduation in other European countries

As for the 35 respondents that declared not having an interest into studying in a foreign European country, the main reasons presented were the family and friends that they have in Romania, as well as the opportunities and perspectives that Romania can offer them.

Regarding the intention of the respondents to study abroad, 81% of the students showed an interest into taking part in a study mobility through the Erasmus+ programme. The reasons for their options are as follows: 67% for travel purposes and for getting familiar to

new cultures/new people, 61% for personal development and new experiences, 54% for academic/professional development and of their language competencies, and less than 2% for relocation purposes. Hence, this type of study mobilities are being perceived more as a means of cultural awareness, of visiting new countries and personal development, and less as a means of enriching knowledge in the field of study. Relocation purposes were not clearly presented as being a strong reason for most of the respondents.

This aspect, correlated with the big number of respondents that showed an interest into working abroad, can lead to the assumption that students do not perceive Erasmus+ mobilities as a doorway towards working abroad, but more as a means of being more culturally aware, of developing mostly personally but also professionally, though to a smaller extent. What we can notice is more of an availability towards finding out what opportunities might be available for them, than a clear intention to seek employment or relocate abroad.

A big number of students also expressed the intention to take part in the Work and Travel USA programme, more precisely 60%, whereas 30% declared not being interested into this programme, and only 10% not knowing about this programme. Among the reasons for taking part in the programme, the most common ones were travelling and knowing new people or cultures with 74%, personal development 46%, financial reasons 27% and professional development, including language acquisition, 25%. Only one respondent presented relocation as a reason for participating in the programme. We did not identify a causal relation between students' interest into participating in the Work and Travel USA programme and their interest into finding employment in a non-European country upon graduation, as 48% of the respondents interested in the programme declared not having such an employment intention, 30% declared that they do have such an intention and 20% were undecided. However, we have estimated these results because, as previously mentioned, choosing a non-European country implies a higher degree of availability to adapt to a more contrasting cultural environment and to a more remote destination.

Total: 157 respondents		Employment in Romania	Employment in other European countries	Employment in Non-European countries
		yes	yes	yes
Intention to study abroad	yes	50	80	36
Intention to go on Work and Travel USA	yes	36	57	29

Table 4. Correlation: Intention to study abroad and to participate in the Work and Travel USA programme - Intention to seek employment abroad upon graduation

To sum up the findings of our study pertaining to the intention of the surveyed student population of the Faculty of European Studies to study abroad, to take part in the Work and Travel USA programme, to seek employment abroad upon graduation, and how these variables interrelate, we can state that the respondents expressed a big interest in studying abroad and a rather big interest in participating in the Work and Travel USA cultural exchange programme, the most common programme of this type among the students of this faculty. More than half of them also expressed an interest in seeking employment abroad, in another European country, more than those expressing an interest into their home country.

Taking into consideration the fact that none of the respondents took part in a study exchange programme prior to responding to the survey, we can conclude that their availability from this point of view is not determined by the mobility, but that it already exists, and that their openness towards having an international experience is high. Hence, although our study is based on the intentions declared by the students and not on specific facts, we can still state that participating in mobility or exchange programmes contributes more to increasing accessibility, raising cultural awareness and knowledge, it is more the context than the cause of human capital flight among the young graduates in this field of study.

This paper should be interpreted as an initial stage in a more complex research, the next envisaged step being an analysis of the current situation of students' intentions to study and work abroad at the level of other faculties within Babeş-Bolyai University.

6. Conclusions

The international migration of skilled individuals has shaped both the home country and the host country, imprinting on them either a phenomenon of *brain drain* or one of *brain gain*. Although the departure of professionals from their country of origin might have, according to some authors, certain advantages (e.g. remittances for the home country), the *brain drain* phenomenon is unquestionable and has many negative consequences at least on the economy of the sending country.

Study mobility programmes, such as Erasmus+, or international cultural exchange programmes, such as Work and Travel USA, are not a cause of concern when it comes to ‘losing the minds’, to losing the (highly) skilled population of certain countries. These programmes have the purpose of increasing awareness on what the world has to offer, and they represent one of the benefits of internalization upon individuals, whatever the impact on the home country might be. If there is an intention of young graduates to seek employment or to relocate abroad, this intention is determined by the incapacity of their home countries to respond properly to their needs and expectations when it comes to professional or personal development.

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FROM ENLARGEMENT TO BREXIT. THE ROAD OF GREAT BRITAIN WITHIN THE EU AND THE ROAD OF THE EU WITHOUT GREAT BRITAIN

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the main aspects of the relationship between Great Britain and the European Union (EU) from the time of accession (1973) up to the time of Brexit's initiation (2016) and to outline the future relationship between them, after the exit procedure of Great Britain from the EU (2019) is finished. In this context, the attention will be directed toward classifying the relations between Great Britain and the EU, from a historical perspective in an attempt to identify the premises that contributed tacitly to the choice of the British to withdraw from the EU. The study then continues with a radiography of the ante and post Brexit events, in order to try to contribute to solving the most important problems caused by Brexit: setting the borders of Great Britain and Ireland, determining Great Britain's bill concerning the "divorce" from the EU and last but not least, establishing the situation of European citizens settled in Great Britain and of British citizens settled in the EU countries. A special section of this study is dedicated to summarizing the future socio-economic-political-cultural relations between Romania and Great Britain. The end of the study is dedicated to the presentation of the Brexit phenomenon as cultural element in the Community, met in painting, literature and theatre, form of manifestation generally embraced by the British supporters of Great Britain's remaining in the EU, who succeeded to create, combining reality with fiction, true works of art in every sense of the word.

Keywords: Brexit, historical perspective, new borders, Great Britain's bill, the status of the EU citizens, the British-Romanian relations, Brexit as element of culture.

1. Introduction

Without doubt, 2016 was a very important year throughout the whole European Community and will certainly become a reference year in the history of the EU.

After the great widening and deepening of European integration in 2004 and 2007, after overcoming the devastating effects of the financial crisis of 2007-2010, which has affected all Member States, in particular, Greece, has led to the creation of the Grexit phenomenon, after Croatia joining the EU in 2013, after the considerable efforts made by the European Union in solving the crisis of refugees, the increasing terrorist attacks, while facing the cooling of relations with the United States of America as a result of the setting up of the Trump Era and with Russia's new political ambitions, the European Union was faced with effect from 2016 with a new challenge: Great Britain unexpected withdrawal from the European project, after more than 44 years of membership. Thus, 2016 is by far the year of Brexit, an unprecedented event for the EU, from its creation until today. The withdrawal of a Member State from the EU structure is an event that many of us have never believed we will be witnessing, but yet we have been.

The inevitable uncertainty caused by the separation of Great Britain from the EU has generated many questions that require prompt answers. Why did Great Britain decide to leave the EU? What was the triggering factor? How will the European project continue without the British State? What will be the new relations between the two actors? What agreements will be maintained? What understandings will be discarded? What new arrangements will be signed? How will the new EU borders look like? What will happen with the EU citizens established in Great Britain? What will happen with the relations between Great Britain and Romania? What will happen with the Romanians living in Great Britain? are certainly the most up-to-date questions of the moment. In this study, an effort will be made to answer these questions. In order to do this, will be analyzing the Great Britain's course within the EU, before and after the waves of accession in 2004 and 2007. To identify the cause for the breakup of Great Britain from the EU, the speeches of British and European officials will also be analyzed.

Also, for a better understanding of the Brexit paradigm, particular attention will be paid to the British Referendum and to the progress of Great Britain and of the EU in creating a new framework for cooperation between them from their new positions: The EU - 27, and Great Britain in its new position of non-Member State of the European Union.

"Brexit" phenomenon and the way in which this will be finalized in 2019, will have a significant impact on the future of the European Union, which is currently at the cross-roads. Last but not least, an aspect at least interesting on Brexit is represented by the fact that it has exceeded the political-economic-social boundaries, being found more often in the cultural space in which artists excel in presenting its negative facets for Great Britain and its citizens, some of the scenarios having apocalyptic features for the future of the United Kingdom, which will pay a huge price for the inability to form a membership and a true European solidarity in the best four decades at their disposal.

The results of the research, as we shall see, indicate that there is a common will from Great Britain and the EU to settle the issue of divorce in the most amiable terms, the stake being to establish the best possible future relations of cooperation between the two actors.

2. Great Britain's road within the EU

As noted in the history of the European construction, in 1951, six European states: France, Germany, Italy, Holland, Belgium and Luxembourg, known in literature also under the name of "Inner Six", have signed the Paris Treaty establishing the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), and in 1957 were signed the Treaties of Rome establishing the European Economic Community (EEC) and the European Atomic Energy Community (EAEC). Ten years later, the three structures have operated under the name of "European Communities" (EC). The British course along with the EU got off on the wrong foot, in 1963, when the United Kingdom of Great Britain has requested for the first time accession to the EC, request that was denied vehemently by the French president Charles de Gaulle. Four years later, the integration of Great Britain is again blocked by the French president.

Thus, in 1967, Charles de Gaulle is again retelling a determined "no" for the British to access to the common market. During a press conference at the Elysée Palace in Paris on November 27, 1967, Charles de Gaulle warned the five partners that if they will support the accession of Great Britain, to the detriment of the contrary French will, this will result in the dissolution of the European Community (BBC, n.a., 1967). Also, General De Gaulle accused Great Britain of a deep hostility toward the European construction, stating that London has shown for a long time, a total lack of interest for the common market and in order to be part

of this, Great Britain should operate major changes prior to its accession to the EC, because the Great Britain's economy is incompatible with the common market of the six Founder States of the EC (BBC, n. a., 1967).

He listed the aspects of the British economy which are incompatible with the member status, the most important aspect highlighted being that of the British practices in the field of agriculture. The President of France did not oppose the trade with Great Britain, if they had been carried out through an association between Great Britain and the EC, but nothing more (BBC, n.a., 1967). With this approach, Charles De Gaulle didn't let any hope to the British Prime Minister, Harold Wilson to join the EC in the near future.

Great Britain's chance to become a Member State has reappeared after Charles De Gaulle was forced to give up the presidency of France in 1969 and, therefore, on October 17, 1972, the British Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath signed the Treaty of Accession of the United Kingdom of Great Britain to the EC, becoming a Member State with full rights on January 1, 1973, together with Ireland and Denmark, event celebrated with great enthusiasm in Brussels (BBC, n.a., 1973).

Thus, in Brussels at midnight on January 1, 1973 was raised a "Union Jack" flag to mark the enlargement of the European Union from six to nine member states. Prime-Minister Edward Heath showed his optimism about the British success, considering that the Union will bring prosperity to the country. He said: *"It will be a gradual development and, obviously, things will not happen overnight. But from the point of view of our everyday lives we will find there is a great cross-fertilisation of knowledge and information, not only in business but in other spheres also. And this will enable us to be more efficient and more competitive in gaining more markets not only in Europe but in the rest of the world"* (BBC, n.a., 1973: para. 6). The United Kingdom of Great Britain succeeds, after more than ten years of trying to be part of the European project, being very optimistic with regard to its great future in this structure. In the process, over 1000 British have relocated to Brussels to occupy their positions as public servants of the Community and the English language gradually became the common language of the Community, as Charles De Gaulle feared in 1963 and 1967 (BBC, n.a., 1973). Finally, the British have achieved the much desired and expected success.

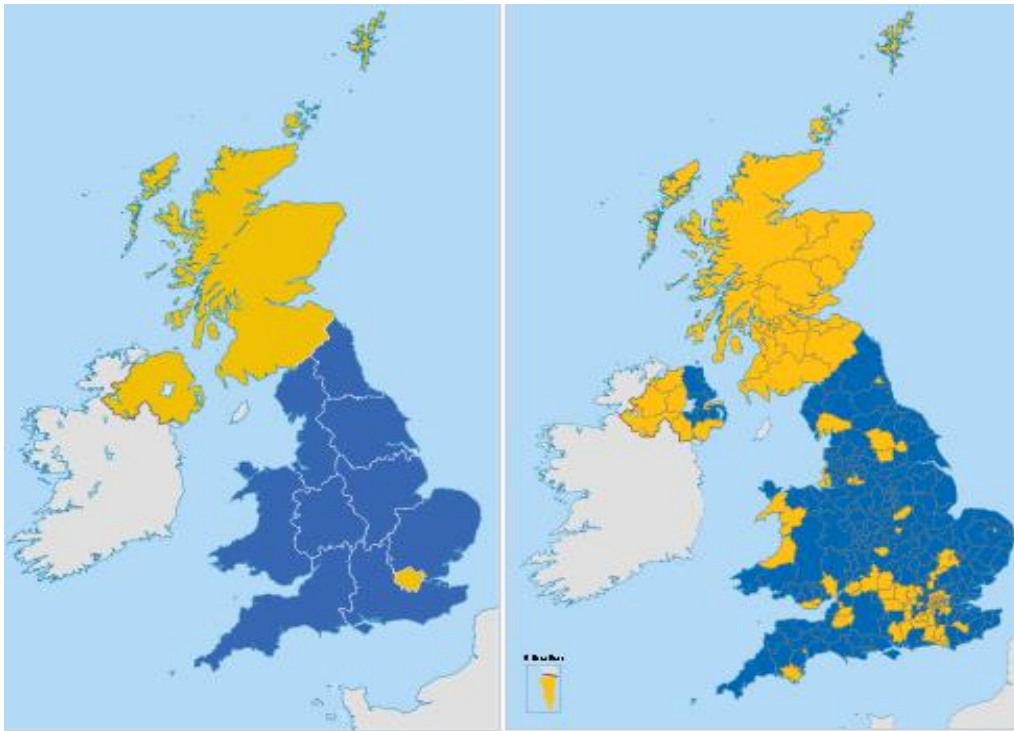
The happy marriage between the EC and Great Britain has lasted only two years. In 1975, in the context of the misunderstandings between the ruling Conservative Party and the opposition Labor Party, the divorce issue from the EEC emerged for the first time in Great Britain.

After the general elections in Great Britain since October 1974, the Labor Party wanted to renegotiate the conditions of accession of Great Britain to the EC and then to organize a referendum regarding leaving the community if the conditions were not enforced. After the changeover of power, the Labour Party has established itself as the ruling party and in spite of the distinct views of all major political parties in Great Britain and of the British press who have pleaded for the British state to remain in the European Community structure, on the date of June 5, 1975 took place the first national referendum with regard to the exit of the Great Britain from the EC (May, 1998). After the referendum 67,2% of the electorate voted to remain in the European structure (Becker, Fetzer, Novy, 2016). Great Britain's course next to the European Community has started to deteriorate since the time of the first referendum, Great Britain, thus becoming the EC's "strange partner" (Stephen, 1998, p. 6), whose own interests are wanted to be placed above the EC's interests. In 1983, the Labour Party has conducted a new election campaign on Great Britain's withdrawal, this time without a previous referendum, but after it has been defeated in the political fight, the party has changed its political approach toward the European project (Rajini, 2010).

Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom between 1979-1990, militated throughout her term of office a Eurosceptic attitude, which has contributed to fuelling the discontent between the British country and the EC that would become the future EU on November 1, 1993. Euro scepticism has further developed in British politics. Thus, in 1993 the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was established, which adopted a strong Eurosceptic doctrine. UKIP has obtained the third place in Great Britain in the European elections in 2004, the second in the elections in 2009 and the first place in the elections in 2014 (Mason, 2014). UKIP's electoral success in 2014 was regarded often as a factor in support of the United Kingdom decision to leave the EU.

3. Brexit: the beginning of the divorce between UK and EU

The Brexit means, according to the Oxford Dictionary: “*the withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union*” after the referendum of June 23, 2016 (<https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/brexit>). The Brexit or Brixit (the most recent version of the term) is an association of the terms British (or Britain) and exit, by analogy to the term Grexit (the possible exit of Greece from the Euro area or even from the EU, as a result of the adverse effects of the financial crisis). The term Brexit was used for the first time on May 15, 2012, by Peter Wilding, in a post on the Euroactiv blog, (Wilding, 2012). International press refers often at Peter Wilding with the appellation of “Mr Brexit”, being famous for the fact that he sustained a smart Brexit that does not affect Great Britain's economy, issue which is very difficult to achieve in practice. Therefore, in the context of the crises in the Euro zone, fuelled by the migration problem and many other discontents, triggering Brexit was inevitable and the result announced in the morning of June 24, 2016 was one surprising: 51,9% of the British have chosen to leave the EU permanently. This result has enabled the officials of this campaign to make the necessary arrangements to trigger Article 50 of the Treaty of Lisbon and to set the date of the definitive exit from the EU on March 29, 2019, the task being fulfilled by the Prime-Minister Theresa May: “*Under the terms of Article 50, a country which invokes it automatically exits from the European Union after two years in the case in which the other 27 Member States do not agree unanimously, to extend the time limit*” (Toma, 2017: para. 2). Also, in the future, the EU “*will have to rewrite part of the philosophy of integration with the prospects of leaving the Community, a measure that already become operational through Brexit*” (Păun, 2016 : 81).



Results by region (left) and by local council district (GB) & UK Parliament constituency (NI) (right)



United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, 2016		
National result		
Choice	Votes	%
 Leave the European Union	17,410,742	51.89%
 Remain a member of the European Union	16,141,241	48.11%
Valid votes	33,551,983	99.92%
Invalid or blank votes	25,359	0.08%
Total votes	33,577,342	100.00%
Registered voters and turnout	46,500,001	72.21%
Voting age population and turnout	51,356,768	65.38%
Source: Electoral Commission 		

Figure 1. The referendum in Great Britain, 2016 (Electoral Commission, <https://www.electoralcommission.org.uk>).

In addition to the wave of questions which the Brexit triggered, within the negotiations on future relations between Great Britain and the EU were highlighted three important issues that require a common agreement and beneficial to both sides up to the date of March 29, 2019, the official date of Great Britain's definitive withdrawal from the EU. On the success of settling these three major Gordian Knots will depend the very type of collaboration that will be established between the two actors after 2019. The three key Brexit issues requiring immediate solutions are:

- to establish the functioning of the borders between the Republic of Ireland, an EU Member State and Northern Ireland, an integral part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain;
- the bill on which Great Britain must pay for the withdrawal from the EU;
- to establish the rights of European citizens in Great Britain (the most stringent issue of all).

Since the Brexit was initiated up to the present, were held five rounds of negotiations concerning a common agreement on the three essential aspects mentioned, but as we will see, without concrete results.

The first round of negotiations took place on June 19, 2017. Negotiations between Great Britain and the EU began in a constructive way. The two parties have agreed that Brexit to be carried out in an orderly manner: it was established the Brexit agenda which included organizational aspects, Brexit's priorities and a number of another four rounds of negotiations (Drăghici, 2017).

With regard to the first round of negotiations, Michel Barnier, the European Commission's representative in the discussion stated: *“We wanted to establish the principles of the challenges associated with Great Britain's exit from the EU. A fair agreement is possible and will be much better than in the absence of an agreement. My main priority is to offer certainty concerning the rights of EU citizens who live in the UK and of the British citizens in the EU. It's about reciprocity, continuity, the absence of discrimination”* (Drăghici, 2017: para 3).

What have the European Commission and Great Britain agreed to? According to the same sources, the British Prime Minister, Theresa May has expressed in the first round of

negotiations, the wish that the border between Great Britain, Ireland and the European Union to be a unitary border after Brexit. The subject of the amount due by Great Britain to the Union, as a result of leaving the Community block has not been addressed in the first round of negotiations.

The second round of negotiations started on July 17, 2017 in Brussels and lasted four days. According to the European Commission's negotiator, Michel Barnier, the most debated topic was the one related to the rights of European citizens in the EU. At the end of the second round, according to Michel Barnier's statement, there remained a fundamental divergence between Great Britain and the EU on protecting the rights of European citizens, the EU wishing that such rights to be protected by the European Court of Justice and Great Britain by British legal courts, causing the danger that in the future Great Britain to amend the legislation to the detriment of European citizens living in the United Kingdom (Ionescu, 2017).

The third round of negotiations, carried out with effect from August 28, 2017, aimed at first to clarify the draft law of Brexit and the Irish border situation by London. The third round of negotiations started in a tense climate, the time pressure bringing dissatisfaction on both sides. Apart from Great Britain's position on the jurisprudence of national courts concerning the rights of European citizens established in their territory, London had not presented until that moment a clear position on the Brexit "bill" or on maintaining the same rights for Community immigrants in Great Britain of which they have received in the past (Popescu and Arustei, 2017). In the given context, the Europeans have refused to talk about a future commercial agreement with Great Britain before the conditions of its separation from the EU were established concretely.

The fourth round of negotiations held between September 25-28, 2017, practically resumed talks concerning the three major objectives of the EU (the border with Ireland, the bill and guaranteeing the rights of EU citizens) upon which no agreement has been reached in the previous round of negotiations. This time, it could be noticed a more cooperative attitude from the British Prime Minister Theresa May, from the British negotiator for Brexit, David Davis and his European counterpart, Michel Barnier. In this round was debated the issue of the financial debts which the United Kingdom has to pay to the EU. According to the

European side, the financial regulations of the separation were estimated between 60 and 100 billion euros, while London, which has undertaken to pay the so-called “exit bill” assessed the amount due to 40 billion pounds (the equivalent of 45 billion euros), the amount representing the contribution to the European budget until 2020 and other commitments (Traci, 2017). Up to now, no agreement was reached clearly on Great Britain's bill, aspect that blocks the proper conduct of the negotiations between London and Brussels.

The most recent and the last round of negotiations, the fifth, took place between October 9-12, 2017, at the headquarters of the European Commission in Brussels. Although the expectations of both sides involved were high, the much-desired agreements on the 3 priorities of EU-27 which to allow the amicable separation from Great Britain have not been completed as desired, before the beginning of the works of the European Council of October 19-20, 2017 (Adevărul, n.a., 2017).

The end of the fifth round of negotiations has brought to light serious disagreements between the two protagonists of Brexit (Great Britain and the EU-27), which have so far failed to reach to a common position which to allow the conduct of the second phase of Brexit concerning the implementation of concrete measures of Great Britain's exit from the EU and of the negotiation of the trade agreements between the two sides. The means of guaranteeing European citizens' rights in the United Kingdom after Brexit remain the apple of discord between London and Brussels, in spite of the assurances received from the British State that they will be respected on the basis of the principle of reciprocity.

No doubt, it is true that the United Kingdom was a “difficult” partner in the EU structure, but it is also true that the leaving of the UK will mean for EU the loss of “*the second largest net payer to the Eu budget and the country with the third largest population in the EU*” (Dahl and Skomorokhova, 2017 : 277).

4. The new relations between Great Britain and Romania, from the immigration perspective

Although there is no official document in this respect, the British officials who undertook visits to Bucharest in the last few months have given assurances that the rights and freedoms of the Romanians established in Great Britain will be complied with. Boris

Johnson, British Minister of Foreign Affairs stated during a meeting with his Romanian counterpart, Teodor Melescanu, on September 25, 2017 the following: *“I don't think that they should be worried at all. They should not worry because they are extremely valuable members of our society. We love them. They have a huge contribution to the United Kingdom's economy, to the British culture. When you travel through London, you see a lot of Romanian shops, Romanians who work in all areas. We believe there are half a million of Romanians in the United Kingdom. We would be crazy to let them return to Romania. We want to keep them, we want to make sure that they feel safe and that their rights are protected”* (Agerpres, n. a: para. 3).

In the interview given by the British official, he stressed the fact that after leaving the Community block, the United Kingdom will remain open for people with "talent, ambition and determination", but would like to control their immigration system in the future, in accordance with their own rules where the passport and visas will most likely be included after 2019.

As regards the Romanian-British bilateral relations, the British Embassy in Bucharest said in a press release that the United Kingdom wants to cooperate closely with Romania in the field of security and defense policies, of combating Russia's influence, of modern slavery, the drug trafficking and terrorism. At least at informal level, future relations between Great Britain and Romania seem to be good. If it will be so or not, it remains to be seen.

5. The Brexit in Fine Arts, Literature and Theatre

Although so far a common agreement between Great Britain and the EU has not been reached on the border of the Republic of Ireland, the Brexit's bill and the statute of European citizens in the United Kingdom or other equally important agreements on trade-related aspects between the two entities, agreements relating to the British airspace, fishing in the British maritime area and the Brexit's effects on British academic research, Brexit has gained important ground in the cultural field. Most of the artistic representations have been created by the British artists who opposed Great Britain's exit from the EU. Banksy, an anonymous graffiti artist from Great Britain made in May 2017 a mural painting which shows a worker

who uses a chisel to detach a star from the EU flag. The painting is located in Dover, southern England.



Figure 2. Banksy Brexit mural of man chipping away at EU flag appears in Dover (Petersen, 2017).

One of the first novels related to post-Brexit era was the novel “Rabbitman” written by Michael Paraskos in March 2017. According to the novel, Britain's vote to leave the EU was the result of a pact with the devil, and consequently the British society will collapse and become dependent on food aid from the EU. The novel “Love like Blood”, published in June 2017, by Mark Billingham is a thriller in which Brexit is considered to be responsible for the increasing criminal offenses based on hatred and xenophobia. In June 2017, at the National Theatre in London, the play "Brexit in my country: a work in progress" written by Carroll Ann Duffy was played for the first time. The play is centered on the goddess Britannia, concerned about the future of the British people and is, unlike the other works of British artists, closer to the Brexit side than to the anti-Brexit side, a trend that can also be seen in the documentary films about Brexit.

Conclusions

Without claiming to have exhausted the subject, however, we can conclude that Great Britain's course alongside the EU (although hindered by obstacles since the accession and

opinion differences throughout the partnership) has been beneficial for both the United Kingdom's development and for the EU's budget, which will decrease considerably after the "strange" British partner withdraws definitively. Although Brexit is a difficult step, the EU's course will continue on the same path after finishing the procedures, aiming at widening and deepening the European integration. Although we do not have a complete overview of how British-European relations will look, we can see a common determination on the part of the two actors to maintain beneficial collaborations for both sides in the future. Time pressure, however, is starting to make a difference and Great Britain will have to adopt concrete negotiating positions in order to have the necessary answers to Brexit's stringent questions as quickly as possible. For the other side, EU has to pay more attention to the "lesser Europe" movement which culminated with the Brexit, by bringing more arguments "in favor of the pragmatism of the slogan Unity in Diversity" (Barna and Maniu, 2016 : 20).

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