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ASSESSING THE SOPHISTICATION OF THE ROMANIAN ELECTORATE: AN OVERVIEW OF STRATEGIC VOTING IN ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT. This paper provides evidence that the Romanian voters have become familiar with the electoral system and they behave in such a manner as to maximize their utilities. For this purpose, it investigates whether strategic voting occurs and whether some electoral formulae provide more incentives for tactical voting than others. Namely, the presidential and parliamentary elections were compared, with encouraging results. The data used to measure voters' predispositions for sophisticated voting was gathered from the Soros Foundation's Public Opinion Barometer and was aggregated according to the requirements of the study. Individuals appear to be more conscious about wasting their votes in the more restrictive majoritarian election for president. The second part of the study focuses on identifying patterns of strategic voting by analyzing the effects of individual traits on one's chances of voting tactically. The method used was binary logistic regression. With some exceptions, Romanian voters conform to expectations drawn from relevant literature.

Keywords: Strategic voting, young democracy, Romania, parliamentary, presidential elections

One of the numerous problems facing a young democratic society is teaching its citizens the mechanisms of the newly developed institutions. An informed and responsive society eases the transition to democracy and facilitates the development of a stable political system. One such institution is the electoral system. Assuming that voters are rational in their behavior, deciding who to vote for is a complex process, which depends on many factors, such as policy stands, candidates' images, and viability. In this paper, I will look at a particular behavior to evaluate whether the Romanian electorate has familiarized itself with the particular mechanisms of the electoral system.

In theory, voters may decide to abandon a candidate they prefer if that candidate is perceived not to have enough chances to win. In some circumstances, voters may decide to abandon their favorites even in districts with large numbers of seats, if they base their decision not so much on whether a candidate has a chance at winning seats, but on whether she has the power to influence policy

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outcomes further on. This behavior is considered strategic or tactical voting. The aim of this paper is to assess whether the phenomenon of tactical voting is present among the Romanian voters and to examine which factors have an influence on individuals' decision to vote strategically.

Given the particularities of the electoral formula in majoritarian systems, rational behavior would dictate that these systems offer voters more incentives to vote strategically. This theory, which came to be known as Duverger's Law, will be presented and discussed in the following chapter. The second chapter is dedicated to the theoretical concepts developed around the two approaches to the study of strategic behavior. In the third section I will review the two main approaches used to measure tactical voting. While some look at the system as a whole, evaluating electoral fortunes of third parties, the other approach has as its main focus the individual, calculating the amount of strategic behavior by looking at voters' declared behavior. In Chapter 4, the Romanian electoral system is presented, both for presidential elections and for parliamentary ones. Based on electoral patterns of other young democracies, I believe there is reason to suspect that Romanian voters are sophisticated enough to vote strategically. Tactical voting could be considered a sign of political sophistication if it occurs in an appropriate institutional context. To my knowledge, no other study has investigated this behavior in the Romanian arena. In order to test the hypothesis, I used data from five Public Opinion Barometers, gathered between 2003 and 2007. The second part of this study uses binary logistic regression to determine which socio-economic factors increase or decrease the odds of voting strategically. In total, three models will be tested.

Most of the expectations about electoral behavior among the Romanian electorate were confirmed. My results suggest that voters understand the implications of electoral mechanisms. There is evidence that their electoral behavior changes according to the necessities imposed by the electoral system.

1. Duverger's Law

For as long as different formulas existed for electing representatives in public office, political scientists have wondered about their possible impact on the political system. The first known account of what came to be known as Duverger's Law is Henry Richmond Droop's description of plurality rule electoral systems in 1869:

> "Each elector has practically only a choice between two candidates or sets of candidates. As success depends upon obtaining a majority of the aggregate votes of all the electors, an election is usually reduced to a contest between the two most popular candidates or sets of candidates. Even if other candidates go to the poll, the electors usually find out that their votes will be thrown away, unless given in favor of one or other of the parties between whom the election really lies." (quoted in Riker, 1982, p. 756)

Throughout the years, Duverger's Law became widely accepted among political scientists. Carl Friedrich stated that "single member district with plurality elections […] forces the electorate to make up its mind between the two clear-cut alternatives" (1937, quoted in Riker, 1982, p. 758). Nevertheless, it was only in 1951 that Duverger actually formulated the law as it is known today. While studying party systems, he concluded that:

> *"The simple-majority single-ballot system favors the two-party system. Of all the hypotheses that have been defined in this book, this approaches the most nearly perhaps to a true sociological law. An almost complete correlation is observable between the simple-majority single-ballot system and the two-party system."* (Duverger, 1951 p. 217)

Of course, there has been much criticism of the law, much of it based on empirical counter examples. Canada has a tradition of simple-plurality single-member district elections. While this would suggest that the number of parties should have gradually faded to just two, the Canadian House of Commons has included at least one third party since 1921 (Elections Canada ON-Line, 2010). Nevertheless, this might be a consequence of parties which are third on a national level being stronger locally, as is the Parti Québécois, which draws its support from the Quebec area.

As Duverger himself admits, there are some limits to the explanation power of the law. The simple-majority single-ballot system "tends to the creation of a two-party system inside the individual constituency, but the parties opposed may be different in different areas of the country" (1951, p. 223).

Duverger finds two ways in which third parties are eliminated from the competition: the mechanical and the psychological factor. The electoral formula disadvantages third parties by under-representation, i.e. the percentage of seats received by weaker parties is smaller than the percentage of votes they have received. While much discussed, this mechanical factor is widely accepted. For the purpose of this paper, I shall focus more on the psychological effect. When there is a three-party competition in a simple-plurality single-member district election, electors soon realize that votes given to the weakest party are wasted. Therefore, wanting to avoid the greater evil of the two strongest parties, they will vote for their second choice (Duverger, 1951, p. 226).

The impact of Duverger's psychological effect has been studied on two levels. Some authors look at the party system and analyze the fate of third parties in different systems, while others conduct analysis on individual-aggregated data, looking at voting behavior and individual characteristics which predict strategic behavior.

2. Theoretical concepts

Strategic voting is defined as: "a vote for a party (candidate) that is not the preferred one, motivated by the intention to affect the outcome of the election." (Blais et al., 2001). The concept is directly related to the notion of rationality. For one to decide whether to vote strategically, one must rationalize the utility of her vote, considering her preference ranking and candidates' chances of winning.

In his "Economic Theory of Democracy" (1957), Downs explains the rationale behind strategic behavior in multiparty plurality systems. Using the example of supporters of the American Progressive Party which chose to vote for the Democratic presidential candidate in the 1948 elections, Downs notices that "there is one eventuality in a multiparty system that does not arise in a two-party system: a rational voter may at times vote for a party other than the one he most prefers" (1957, p. 47).

> *"A rational voter first decides what party he believes will benefit him most; then he tries to estimate whether his party has any chance of winning. He does this because his vote should be expended as part of a selection process, not as an expression of preference. Hence, even if he prefers party A, he is <<wasting>> his vote on A if it has no chance of winning because very few voters prefer it to B or C. The relevant choice in this case is between B and C. Since a vote for A is not useful in the actual process of selection, casting it is irrational."* (1957, p. 48)

2.1 Party system models

One way of estimating the levels of strategic voting is by comparing the aggregated effects of different electoral rules. The German and the Japanese cases are some particularly appropriate examples, as they offer the opportunity to compare two electoral formulae within the same system, for the same elections. The elections for the German Bundestag give the voters the opportunity to cast two votes, one for candidates in single-member districts and another one for state lists. Because the second vote decides the overall composition of the legislature, voters can punish or reward parties, regardless of the candidate they voted for in the SMD election. Stephen L. Fisher (1973) compares the votes received by parties on PR lists with those received in SMD elections. The same method is used by Reed in his 1999 study of the Japanese electoral system. In Japan's case the seats allocated through the two rules - plurality in SMD and PR - remain independent of one another, yet voters face the same incentives for voting strategically. This means that they can cast a PR vote for a smaller party, which they do not vote for in the simple plurality election because it has no chance of winning in that particular constituency. Reed also compares a candidate's results with that candidate's party's results in the same district, arriving at the conclusion, similar to Fisher's, that smaller parties do better in PR elections.

While these mixed systems offer ideal circumstances for studying tactical voting, it is sometimes useful to estimate the effects of strategic behavior over time in the same system. Shively (1970) used this method to assess the amount of strategic voting in Great Britain from 1892 until 1966. He calculates the expected chances of a candidate winning in a certain district as a function of that candidate's results in the previous election, relative to the share of votes the winner received. Shively expected that, in a district where a candidate's likelihood of winning is lower, his vote share would increase slower or decrease faster than in other districts. Blais and Carty (1991) take another approach. They study the impact of the electoral formulae on two dependent variables: the number of parties contesting elections and the fractionalization of the vote.

2.2 Voting Behavior Models

The literature on formal models of electoral decisions can be classified in two lines of study. Over the last three decades, a formal mathematical approach has developed, trying to accurately predict decision-making processes in terms of expected utilities and perceived probabilities of outcomes. Another stream of research has tried to isolate individual characteristics which facilitate one's decision to vote tactically.

Cain (1978) develops a model of rational voting to estimate the probabilities of one voting strategically. He's analysis develops on the idea of maximizing utility. Therefore, the expected utility derived from voting sincerely can be formulated as such:

$$EU\ (V_1) = \ q(u_1) + \ t(u_2) + \ (1 - q - t)(u_3) - c \qquad (1)$$

where q, t and 1-q-t are the probabilities that the first, second, respectively third preferred candidate will win, u_1, u_2 and u_3 are the utilities derived from

each of the candidates winning, and c is the cost of voting. He argues that, "as the utility difference between the first and second preferences increases and the closeness of the race increases for the first preference, then the probability of voting for the first preference will increase. In this model abstainers will be individuals who perceive that they cannot alter the outcome for either preference and who see small differences in the utility of the competing parties" (Cain, 1978, pg. 642). The tests done on data from the 1970 British elections seem to back his model. In the same fashion, Black (1978) extends the model to a multi-candidate situation. Applying the model on data collected from two Canadian election surveys, Black finds that voters' choice can be predicted quite well by the probability and utility factors. Probability has even greater predictive power among those with higher education. Merolla and Stephenson (2007) use a

similar model to predict sophisticated behavior in a cross time analysis of Canadian election data. While voters which are confronted with incentives to vote strategically are found to be more likely to do so, only a small percentage of the electorate is found to actually make use of the utility model.

Using laboratory experiments, Herne and Yuval (2005) compare the effects of majoritarian and non-majoritarian formulae on strategic behavior, reaching a different conclusion than that of Durch and Palmer discussed below. They develop an eight-step model to predict the occurrence of tactical voting. The model takes into account voter *i*'s preferred outcome, the amount of support for *i*'s preferred candidate, for *i*'s second preference and for his least preferred candidate, and the potential impact of voter *i*'s decision (for similar models of decision-making see Farquharson, 1956). Their results suggest that under majoritarian voting rules individuals tend to engage more frequently in sophisticated behavior than under non-majoritarian rules.

Stephen Fisher (2001) observes that strong party identification is associated with low levels of strategic voting. Looking at the behavior among risk population in British, he finds that 10% of those with strong party identification vote tactically, while up to 22.4% of those with weak party identification do so. Regarding education, Fisher finds no significant pattern. While indeed, those without a qualification and those with higher education tend to engage in less tactical behavior, the differences are quite small: 15.8%, respectively 18.9% of the mentioned groups vote strategically, compared to a mean of 22.1% for the other educational clusters. Interest in politics, on the other hand, is strongly associated with strategic voting. Among those who did not care much for the result of the election, only 14.8% voted tactically, compared to the overall mean of 19.7%.

Durch and Palmer (2002) study the strategic voter in the context of a post-communist democracy. The authors claim that there are two misconceptions concerning new democracies, post-communist or otherwise. First, there seems to be the assumption that voters in such states are overly-sincere due to their inexperience with democratic institutions. Second, the implementation of a proportional electoral system decreases the incentives for strategic voting, as opposed to plurality rules. The particular complex nature of the Hungarian electoral formula, with its multiple layers of distribution and electoral threshold, makes it possible for some voters to consider tactical behavior. Durch and Palmer find that, when specifically confronted with a wasted-vote situation, 13.6% of the sample declare their intention of voting strategically. Factors related to the level of information do not seem to have any significant effect, but this is expected since, in the survey data used by the authors, respondents are informed about the existence of a wasted-vote situation beforehand. One would expect information to have more of an impact on the recognition of such a situation. Being born after 1970, on the other hand, does positively affect

tactical voting. Strength of party attachment is negatively correlated with voting strategically, as is evaluation of the government's performance for supporters of opposition parties. This indicates that voters who want a change are more prone to avoid wasting their vote, while respondents dissatisfied with the political system as a whole were less likely to act tactically.

3. Measurement

Before looking at the empirical evidence of strategic behavior over time, I shall review the specific methods used to measure the extent of tactical voting. Alvarez and Nagler (2000) identify and analyze three approaches used in the literature for measuring strategic voting. The ***aggregated inference*** methodology implies using election results to extrapolate on the level of tactical voting that occurs by comparing the success of minority parties in different electoral formulae, or comparing electoral outcomes over time. The problem with this method is quite obvious: one risks drawing incorrect individual-level conclusions from aggregate electoral data. The "vote" variable, which is used to infer on electoral preference actually comes, in time, after the preferences have been formed. While this method is convenient in large-n studies - be it comparing the effects of different electoral systems, as in Blais and Carty (1991) or of different formulae within the same system, Reed (1999) - the results should not be taken for granted and, whenever possible, should be confronted with individual-level data. The second method mentioned by Alvarez and Nagler is ***the self-reporting intentions methodology***, where voters are directly asked about their reasons for choosing a party or candidate (e.g. Black 1978). Nevertheless, in such studies, the researcher must assume that voters are being sincere in declaring not only their vote, but the reasons behind it also. However, there is reason to doubt this sincerity. Using the American National Election Study data from 1955 to 1988, Gerald C. Wright finds more self-reported voters for the House of Representatives winner in their respective district than the actual vote share. Diskin and Felsenthal (1981), in an experiment employed on Israeli voters, find the same tendency of subjects to be insincere when interviewed about issues they consider to be sensitive.

The third method consists of directly measuring strategic voting as the difference between the subject's vote and her stated preferences. Like Alvarez and Nagler, I consider the ***direct measurement methodology*** to be the most objective method for measuring tactical voting (see also Blais and Nadeau, 1996). While this method does not ask the voters to be fully aware of the reasons behind their vote and to be sophisticated enough as to necessarily identify strategic situations, it suffers from the same weakness as the previous method. There is no evidence to assume that voters will be sincere in declaring their true feelings towards parties or their actual vote.

3.1 Comparing Party Systems

The first attempt to measure the psychological effect of Duverger's law was made by Shively (1970), who studied the elections in Great Britain from 1892 to 1966, under single-member plurality rule, Germany from 1871 to 1912 under single-member run-off rule, and Germany from 1920 to 1933 under what he considers to be a proportional representation system. He expected that, if Duverger's law were accurate, the psychological effect should be present only in Great Britain. Taking into account the possibility of abstention, which Duverger does not mention, Shively reformulates the hypothesis concerning the psychological effect as follows:

> *"Where the likelihood that a party can win in a given constituency is low, voters are less likely to continue voting for it, or (if they have not voted for it previously), to begin voting for it."* (1970, p. 117)

He estimates a party's chances of winning by dividing its vote in a certain district in the last election by the winner's vote. In districts where a party had low chances of winning, the increase of votes should be lower, compared to districts where the party had done fairly well in previous elections. Using this logic, he concludes that the psychological effect has but a "trivial impact on election outcomes" (p. 119).

Fisher (1973), as a criticism to Shively (1970), treats the German electoral system as two different systems, because a voter casts two votes, one for candidates in single-member districts and a second for a party-list at national level. His findings confirm what one would expect from the psychological effect: larger parties receive more votes in SMD than on national lists, while smaller parties benefit from PR lists. While the difference is small, similar to Shively's study, Fisher concludes that it is relevant, since it is constant and regular.

Reed (1990) studied the Japanese system, which offered some peculiarities suitable for studying elite behavior. The system, which is locally called 'medium-sized districts', used simple plurality formula in multi-member districts. Usually, there were around 3 to 5 seats allocated per district, but voters were allowed to cast just one vote. The formula made it difficult for parties to coordinate their behavior, since the number of seats won by a party was not necessarily dependent on the total number of votes all its candidates obtained. Reed's comparison of electoral outcomes spanning across 40 years (1947 - 1986) shows that, over time, voters do learn the principles of the system, with the first n+1 candidates (n=district magnitude) becoming serious contenders and a clear gap developing between the first and the second runner-ups. Strategic voting is evident after an estimation of vote-loss, based on previous vote-share. While just half of the runner-ups lose votes in the next elections, about 70% of second runner-ups do so. In a later study, Reed (1999) looks at the reformed Japanese electoral system in a way similar to Fisher's approach to the German one. The new system is a perfectly parallel one, with 300 SMD seats and 200 PR

seats attributed independently of each other. Reed finds evidence of strategic voting in the 1996 Japanese elections: "candidates who finished first or second got many more SMD than PR votes and those who finished third or fourth got more PR than SMD votes" (pg 261).

Blais and Carty (1991) conduct a more comprehensive large-N study of Duverger's psychological effect, comparing various electoral systems. They describe the psychological effect as a mixture of voter and elite anticipation, brought about by the mechanical factor of Duverger's law (p. 82). The authors expect to find fewer parties contesting elections and a less fractionalized vote in plurality systems, as compared to proportional ones. Their study covers 509 elections stretching across a century in 20 countries. Blais and Carty's conclusions support Duverger's claims. The number of effective parties is 56% higher in PR systems than in single-member plurality systems, with 3 more parties contesting elections. As expected, vote fractionalization is also lower in single-member plurality, with third parties receiving twice as many votes in systems based on proportional representation. Single-member majority systems behave similarly to proportional ones, but multi-member majority systems exhibit a greatly reduced fractionalization, with third parties receiving about 8% of the votes. Blais and Carty estimate the impact of the psychological effect at some 20% (p. 91), keeping in mind that this effect may be underestimated, as the authors acknowledge, because it assumes a zero-level psychological impact of proportional systems, which would be unlikely.

More recently, Moser and Scheiner (2009) look at the frequency of ticket-splitting in Mixed-Member electoral systems. Their sample includes 35 elections, from 10 countries, covering over 7000 district level observations. The study suggests that strategic voting occurs more frequently in races that are close. Furthermore, new democracies exhibit lower levels of sophisticated voting, suggesting that voters have a hard time interpreting and acting according to the information they receive.

3.2 Voter Behavior

While political scientists agree that strategic voting does occur, their estimations of the levels of such behavior vary greatly. The results of empirical studies range from one-figure numbers (Cain, 1978) to 17% (Niemi et al., 1992). These differences can be attributed to the political settings of each election studied, to the use of different models, or just to the definition researchers give to strategic voting. While some consider only the instances where the candidate actually chosen is different from the voter's first preference (e.g. Black, 1978; Cain, 1978), others look at voters' capabilities to identify strategic situations and act accordingly, irrespective of whether they end up voting for their actual first choice (e.g. Niemi et al., 1992; Durch and Palmer, 2002).

Black (1978) calculated the level of strategic voting in Canada using two separate surveys. In the 1968 study, preference was established using a 'feeling thermometer. In 1972 open-ended questions were employed and coded for positive, respectively negative connotations. While not ideal, as the author himself acknowledges, the 1972 study verifies the main results. Of those interviewed, 11.7% actually voted strategically in 1968 and 13% in 1972. Niemi et al. (1992) look at the 1987 British elections to study incentives for strategic voting and instances when this actually occurred. What is innovative about this study is the variety of classes of voters that were considered tactical. Besides respondents which openly admitted to having voted strategically, the category was extended to include respondents who reported wanting to see a party win more or less seats, or expecting that a party is a sure winner and would not need any more votes. After controlling for overlapping answers, the authors conclude that some 17% of the respondents had voted "at least partly on the basis of tactical reasons" (p. 231). Of course, there are some limitations to measuring strategic voting by voters' self-described behavior. As Alvarez and Nagler (2000) argue, voters tend to declare having voted for the winner when interviewed after the elections. Also, voters would be wary of admitting to a behavior which may sound somewhat unethical (Niemi et al. 1992). Strength of attachment to one's preferred party is strongly related to the occurrence of strategic voting. Among those declaring themselves strong partisans, only 10.9% voted strategically, while over 50% of weak or fairly weak supporters named strategic consideration for their voting decision. Education was also found to be a predictor of strategic voting, with higher educated subjects, who are probably more aware of the political situation in their constituency, being more likely to behave tactically. In the same fashion, those who correctly estimated parties' chances of winning were also more prone to identifying a tactical situation and acting accordingly. Strong dislike of the winning party was also found to influence strategic voting.

One of the most appropriate settings for studying voters' ability to evaluate situations which favor strategic behavior would be the American primaries, since one can eliminate the party identification variable. Abramson et al. (1992) looked at the National Election Study's Super Tuesday surveys, conducted throughout several weeks before Super Tuesday, to identify sophisticated behavior on behalf of the voters. They were asked which of the Republican/Democrat candidate they intended to vote for (dependent variable), evaluated all the candidates they were familiar with according to a feeling thermometer and then they estimated each candidate's chances of winning. Their analysis reveals that some 10% of those interviewed declared a vote preference for their second choice. As Abramson et al. (1992) point out, these figures represent only the situations in which a voter's vote preference and her candidate of choice do not match. The overwhelming majority who voted

for their first choice might have strategically straightforward choices, meaning that they consider their first choice to have a real chance of winning, thus eliminating the option for strategic voting.

In study covering three British elections, from 1987 to 1997, Stephen D. Fisher (2001) compares the actual levels of strategic voting over time. He discovers a steadily increased amount of tactical voting, from 5% in 1987 to 7.7% in 1992, reaching 8.5% in the 1997 elections. While these numbers are useful in assessing the importance of strategic voting for elections in general, Fisher finds it more practical to analyze how many of those facing a tactical situation actually behave accordingly. He defines his risk population as "all those voters whose preferred party came third or lower in the constituency at the election under investigation, at the previous election or in a poll estimate of the election result" (2001, p. 7) The range of the risk population covers a quarter of all voters. Among these subjects the same pattern can be observed, with tactical voting increasing from 13.1% in 1987 to 23.6% in 1997. Shaw et al. (2005) find a greater amount of strategic voting among 'risk populations'. The 2003 California recall elections provided an even more appropriate setting for strategic behavior, with voters having a number of viable options, from choosing among several candidates, to opting against the removal of the incumbent governor. Pre-election data show that, of the total population, 19% intended to cast a strategic vote. Like Fisher (2001), the authors also mark out voters which find themselves in the position to vote strategically. 56% of the electorate was found to be in such a position. Out of these, 35% declared they intended to cast a tactical vote.

Whatever means of measuring one uses, strategic voting appears to be a consistent and relevant behavior. While not beneficial for small parties, one could argue that such behavior indicates that voters understand certain constraints of the electoral system and react to them. Namely, they realize that their favorite candidate has no chances of winning and choose to maximize the utility of their vote by switching it to a second preference. The question remains whether the Romanian electorate is sophisticated enough to act according to this principle. On the other hand, it may be that the institutional setting does not always offer the incentives for tactical voting.

4. The Romanian Context

Parliamentary elections in Romania during the period covered by the surveys used in this study (and immediately after) have been held under a proportional representation formula. While candidates do have the opportunity to run as independents, the vast majority was elected from party lists. In accordance to Law 373/2004, parties nominate closed lists of candidates at the county level. Seats are allocated under a proportional system which makes use of an

electoral quota in the first stage and the d'Hondt method of reallocation. The system loses some of its proportionality due to the 5% threshold imposed for parties, respectively a maximum of 10% for coalitions.

Presidential elections are held according to the principles under article 81 of the Constitution and Law 370/2004. Consequently, the president is elected under a majoritarian formula. If no candidate receives 50% + 1 votes in the first tier, a second tier is held, between the first two candidates that had received the highest number of votes.

As far as mechanical aspects of the electoral system imply, voters should have more incentives to vote strategically in presidential elections, rather that parliamentary ones. The real questions lies in whether the Romanian electorate is mature enough to identify a 'wasted vote' situation and sophisticated enough to switch their vote in favor of an alternative with more chances of winning. Data from other countries in the region is mixed. Jack Bielasiak (2002) investigates party and electoral institutionalization in post-communist states a decade after the fall of communism. While electoral volatility and party fractionalization continue to be much higher than in established democracies, the electoral system has shown improvements from the initial situation in the early 1990s. Romania's fate seems to exhibit few motives for optimism. Over the 1990-2000 period studied by Bielasiak, electoral volatility remained at a high average of 19.6%, compared to the 20.3% average of the region. Moreover, the effective number of electoral parties was of 5.1 in the four elections under study. On the other hand, considering that the first parliamentary election held in 1990 saw no less than 18 parties gaining seats, there seems to have been a genuine improvement over a decade. Tavits (2005) finds that democracies need roughly about 11 years of existence before the electoral system starts to truly stabilize itself. Moreover, short-term economic factors also seem to lose importance in time, suggesting that voters are less inclined to make an electoral decision on recent economic developments and are more oriented toward economic voting.

5. Hypotheses

Based on the existing literature, this study developed several expectations regarding the Romanian voters' behavior. The approach undertaken in this study examines strategic voting as a result of three factors: the impact of the system, individual characteristics, and the relationship between individuals and the system. The first part of the study regards the institutional determinants of voting behavior. I expect that voters would be more wary about wasting their votes when the electoral system imposes more restrictions. In presidential elections, the contest is given for the first two places in the first tier (supposing no candidate receives more than 50% of the votes) and for the first place in the second. However, the opportunity for tactical voting only appears in the first round where voters are offered more alternatives. Therefore, supporters of

the candidates which are not among the first three contenders are susceptible to strategic voting. In other words, any individual whose preferred candidate is not expected to pass to the second round may consider switching her vote for someone who is more likely to gain enough votes. In the case of parliamentary elections, the threshold imposed to parties and coalitions can provide a stimulus for individuals to abandon their top choice if it is not expected to reach the threshold. Nevertheless, whereas for presidential elections all but the few top candidates are vulnerable to such decisions, in parliamentary ones only a small number of voters have the opportunity to act strategically. Secondly, I would expect tactical voting to reach the highest amount in the surveys taken just before elections. Strategic voting requires a conscience ranking of one's preferences and some expectations about the electoral outcome. Information about candidates'/ parties' electoral viabilities becomes more accessible to voters in the short period before elections, due to more media coverage and an abundance of opinion polls. It is to be expected that individuals have a clearer image of the electoral arena in this period and are better equipped to make a rational voting choice. The first two hypotheses state as follows:

H1. Strategic voting should occur more frequently in presidential elections, as compare to parliamentary ones, due to the nature of the electoral process.

H2. Strategic voting should rise as the date of the survey is closer to the next election date.

The second part seeks to identify several factors which influence sophisticated voting. Two types of individual level determinants are expected to have an influence on voters' probabilities of acting tactically. First, attitudes towards the system are expected to have an effect on voting behavior. Secondly, individual characteristics, such as education and interest in politics, should prove useful in explaining the occurrence of tactical voting.

H3. Voters which are strongly attached to a party are less inclined to abandon it.

H4. Individuals who are dissatisfied with the government's activity are more concerned about the electoral outcome and should be more inclined to vote tactically.

H5. On the other hand, voters who are dissatisfied with the political system as a whole are expected to engage in expressive voting and less prone to tactical voting.

H6. Individuals that are more interested in politics should be more inclined to engage in sophisticated voting, as they are expected to be more aware of candidates' chances and the stakes of the elections.

H7. Similarly, individuals that are better educated are expected to better understand the utility of their vote and to vote strategically.

H8. Age is also expected to be a factor, with adults being more oriented toward sophisticated voting.

6. Data and methodology

For the purpose of this study, I used data from five Public Opinion Barometers, conducted by Soros Foundation, Romania. The surveys were carried out in:

- October, 2003
- May, 2004
- October, 2004
- October, 2006
- October, 2007

The samples contain between 1800 and 2200 adults, representative for the population of Romania.

Strategic voting was coded after comparing respondents' voting intention and their true preferences. For both presidential and parliamentary election, *voting intentions* were tapped with a standard open-ended question in all the surveys: "If parliamentary elections were held next Sunday, what party or political alliance would you vote for?", respectively "If elections for the country's president were held next Sunday, who would you vote for?". Regarding the actual *preference*, two types of questions were used over the years, inquiring about the amount of trust one has in particular parties or individuals. While trust may not perfectly overlap with one's political preference, it should prove a useful prox. In order to reduce the risk of overestimating strategic behavior in presidential elections, I eliminated those subjects who preferred politicians which did not run for offic. In the two surveys from 2004, respondents were asked a direct open-ended question regarding trust in parties, respectively politicians: "From the political figures in Romania today, who do you trust more?", "From the political parties in Romania today, which do you trust more?". For these two data sets, I constructed a dummy variable to code instances when voting intentions and preference did not match.

The other remaining three surveys (2003, 2006, 2007) contained a group of questions quantifying trust in each party and political personality: "How much trust do you have in X?", with a scale from 1 to 4, with 4 being the maximum. Another set of dummies was created to identify the party/individual enjoying the highest trust among all the options. Then, for each respondent, the voting intention was compared to the highest rated actor. When the two did not correspond, it was tagged as an instance of strategic voting. When two or more actors received the same level of confidence, it was coded as strategic behavior only if the voting intention did not match either of those with the highest trust score. Moreover, only the relative amount of trust was relevant for this part of the analysis, meaning that the highest amount of trust declared was taken into consideration, be it a high level (4) or a lower one (i.e. 2). Again,

people whose preferred parties/personalities did not appear in the dataset as voting options were discarded. The same holds true for respondents whose voting choice was not included in the group of items measuring trust, as not to overestimate the dependent variable. One must keep in mind that, due to the nature of the questions in the survey, what is being measured is not the actual occurrence of strategic behavior, but respondent's declared intentions.

Example. Respondent n assigned the following levels of trust to 4 parties:

Party A – 2
Party B – 3
Party C – 1
Party D – 3

Both B and D enjoy the highest level of trust, both receiving a score of 3. Her vote would be considered strategic only if she declared her intention to vote for A or C, which received a lower mark, of 2, respectively 1.

Another discussion is necessary regarding the 2004 presidential elections. The 2000-2004 period covered President Ion Iliescu's last mandate. According to the law, he was unable to run for a next term in office.

Nevertheless, among the questions regarding voting intention, voters had the chance to declare a vote for Ion Iliescu. For the individuals whose most trusted personality was the incumbent president, naming another person as their vote choice would not constitute strategic voting, as their decision might have been based on constitutional restraints. Therefore, I have eliminated from the analysis those respondents who named Ion Iliescu as their most trusted public figure.

In the second part of the study, a binary logistic regression was employed to investigate the effects of the variables anticipated to have an impact on one's decision to vote strategically. DeMaris (1995) explains why, when dealing with a binary variable, a logistic regression is more appropriate. Should a linear regression be used, the probabilities could range beyond the interval [0,1]. The function for a logistic regression is:

$$P(y = 1) = \frac{1}{1 + e^{-z}} \quad (2)$$

with z being the accumulated impact of each variable in the model on the probability of the event *y=1* (i.e. in this case, that strategic voting occurs). In this study:

$$z = b_0 + b_1 Optimism + b_2 Economy + b_3 Education + b_4 Gender + b_5 Age \quad (6)$$

In the second and third models, the variables 'interest in politics', respectively 'strength of attachment' were also included.

To assess the overall significance of the models, a Hosmer and Lemeshow test was conducted. Hosmer et al. (1991) discuss the importance of testing the goodness of fit of any model when using logistic regression. The null hypothesis is that there is no difference between the expected and real values of the dependent variable. In order to verify the null hypothesis, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test divides the cases into deciles. If the test statistic has a high p-value, then the null hypothesis cannot be rejected at the 5% confidence level, meaning that the model adequately captures the data.

The analysis was run on the pooled data, from the five databases. Wherever necessary, responses where recoded, as to create a common response-set for every database. Approval of the government's activity is measured according to the responses to the public opinion barometer question:

What amount of trust do you have in the government?
1=none/very low   2=low   3=high   4=very high

Overall contentment with the political system was measured through two items:

How do you think you will live a year later? (coded Optimism in the regression output)
1=much better   2=better   3=worse   4=much worse

Compared to the year (previous year, different for each survey, do you think Romania's economy is better off, worse, or the same?
1=better   2=the same   3=worse

Two other possible items relevant to strategic voting were available in the surveys. One question investigated one's satisfaction with the standard of living and the other asked whether the respondent believed the country was headed in a right or wrong direction. However, a preliminary analysis revealed that these items were closely related with the optimism about the future and were subsequently dropped.

The level of education was measured by the last degree the respondent received, with ten possible categories: no school, primary school, secondary school, vocational/apprentice school, first stage of high-school (9th and 10th grade), second stage of high-school (11th and 12th grade), post-secondary school, college, graduate, post-graduate.

In order to allow for the inclusion of relevant variables not present in some surveys, the whole sample was divided into several sub-samples. The first such sub-sample included the October 2003, October 2006 and October 2007 datasets. They contained questions measuring the strength of one's attachment to a candidate. Namely, respondents were asked to rate each candidate:

How much do you trust X?
0=not at all   1=a little   2=somewhat   3=a lot   4=very much

When one's favorite candidate was coded, a new variable was created to tap the level of trust in one's choice of preference, by calculating the maximum from all the ratings given to candidates.

The second sub-sample included a variable that measured interest in politics. It was featured in the October 2004, October 2006 and October 2007 datasets. Two types of questions were employed:

How often do you discuss politics with your close ones?
1=a bit/not at all   2=not much   3=a lot   4=very much

How interested are you in national politics?
1=a bit/not at all   2=not much   3=a lot   4=very much

Due to the different nature of the independent variables, two types of comparison methods were used. For optimism about the future, trust in government, education, interest in politics and strength of attachment, each category is compared to the subsequent. For the state of the economy, the reference category was "the same", meaning that respondents were compared to those who felt that the economy had not changed. Regarding gender, being female was used as the reference category.

7. Empirical Results

Initially, the overall amount of strategic voting in both types of elections was calculated over the whole period.

Table 1.

Level of Strategic Voting

Date	Parliamentary Elections		Presidential Elections	
	Relative frequencies	**Absolute Count**	**Relative Frequencies**	**Absolute Count**
2003 October	2.8%	57	6.7%	137
2004 May	2.7%	60	6.6%	132
2004 October	2.1%	38	13.9%	226
2006 October	2.3%	45	5%	98
2007 October	3.1%	61	5.2%	72

As expected, the level of strategic voting is much higher in presidential elections than in parliamentary ones (Table 1), suggesting that voters have at least some understanding of the differences between the two electoral formulae and, when confronted with a clear wasted-vote situation, as in presidential elections, they behave as expected, confirming the first hypothesis. Regarding the

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rise in the amount of strategic voting before an election, the pattern is less conclusive. For presidential elections, the highest amount of sophisticated voting occurs right before the 2004 elections, when the respondents are more likely to be aware of the candidates' ratings in pre-election opinion polls. On the other hand, for the data on parliamentary elections, strategic voting reaches a lowest level in the autumn of 2004. The following chart displays more clearly the pattern of sophisticated voting over time. Overall, the second hypothesis can be partly confirmed: for presidential elections, the level of sophisticated voting spikes around the time of elections, but not for parliamentary elections.
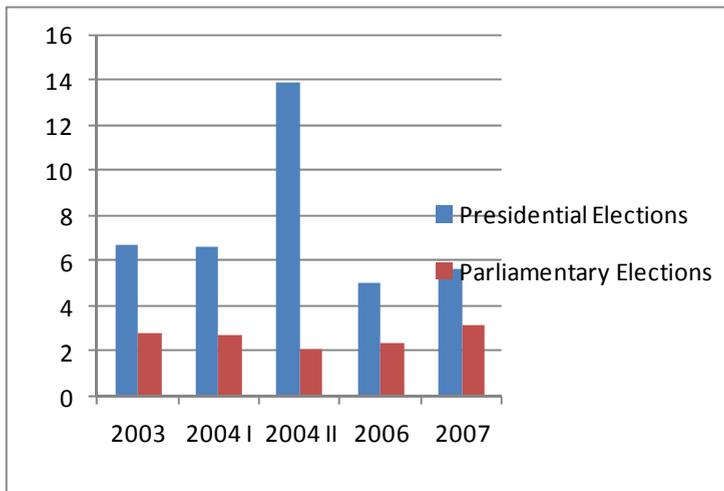
Figure 1. Pattern of strategic voting

In order to determine the factors which influence strategic voting, a logistic regression was employed. Due to the low number of valid cases, the regression was run on the pooled data and only on those cases where the respondents declared their intention to vote tactically or sincerely at *presidential elections*, since those results were statistically relevant. The same analysis was performed on parliamentary elections. However, as the results were not significant in any way, they were not presented here for the sake of brevity. Overall, there were 6972 selected cases, with 576 instances of strategic voting, meaning 8.26%. The somewhat lower number of instances included in the analysis, as compared to the sum of the figures presented in the last column in Table 1, is due to the fact that logistic regression eliminates cases where values are missing for at least one of the factors. Therefore, not all cases could be included. These results are consistent with Alvarez and Nagler's (2000) assessment of the 1987 British elections, where the authors found a level of 7.2% of tactical voting in a multi-party context.

Table 2.

Hosmer and Lemeshow Test

Chi-square	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
12.952	8	.114

The Hosmer and Lemeshow test (Table 2) indicates that the overall model fits the data. The nonsignificance indicated by the test suggests that the predictions incorporated in the model are not considerably different from the observed data.

Table 3.

Logistic regression - model 1

Variables	B	Significance	Odds Ratio Change
Age	.005	.071	1.005
Optimism		.045	
Much better	.399	.126	1.491
Better	.210	.086	1.234
The same	.005	.974	1.005
Worse	-.256	.342	.774
Economy		.008	
Better	.298	.006	1.347
Worse	-.018	.875	.982
Trust in government		.203	
None	.034	.783	1.035
Low	.006	.964	1.006
High	-.391	.115	.676
Gender	.105	.239	1.111
Education		.000	
No education	-1.273	.078	.280
Primary	-.999	.000	.368
Secondary	-.364	.012	.695
Vocational	-.064	.645	1.066
High school I	-.103	.583	.902
High-school II	-.028	.863	.973
Post-secondary	.237	.223	1.309
College	.237	.504	1.267
Graduate	.089	.844	1.093
Constant	-2.844	.000	.058

An initial look at the output in Table 3 reveals that not all variables are significant. Age is barely significant at the .071 level, with every year increasing the odd ration of voting strategically by .005. Optimism about the future is fairly significant at 5% level. The analysis reveals that those respondents who are confident their standard of living will improve are more willing to vote for a

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second choice by 23% than individuals who do not believe their situation will change. The pattern is reversed for those who are truly pessimistic about their future, but it is not statistically significant. The economic factor, on the other hand, is significant at the .008 level, indicating a highly significant result, consistent with Alvarez and Nagler (2000). Respondents who consider that the state of the economy has improved over the last years are 34% more likely to vote strategically than those who do not perceive any change. The results indicate that those satisfied with the political system as a whole are, as predicted in Hypothesis 5, more interested in having an influence on the outcome of the elections. Both factors measuring contentment with the political system reveal that a positive attitude is positively correlated with sophisticated voting. This conclusion is consistent with Durch and Palmer (2002), who find a modest, but consistent effect of satisfaction with political system on the predicted probability of strategic voting.

Trust in government falls far from being statistically significant. Durch and Palmer's analysis yields somewhat similar results, their variable tapping satisfaction with governmental activity being significant only for supporters of small parties.

While gender has no considerable influence on the dependent variable, education proves to be a powerful factor (p<.000). For people who have not earned a high-school degree, each level of education added increases the chances that they will vote for their favorite candidates. The subsequent categories do not fall into an acceptable confidence level. Niemi et al. (1992) find comparable results, while Fisher's analysis reveals that those with the highest education in his sample are similar to those without a qualification, meaning that they are less prone to tactical voting (2001). Two reasons may explain the low levels of strategic behavior for those individuals who have a lower education. First, these respondents may be less interested in politics and the electoral outcome. Therefore, they have no incentives to rationalize the utility of their vote and to cast a vote for a less preferred candidate in order to maximize their utility. Secondly, as Blais et al. (2005) point out, the first step in the process of strategic voting is the identification of a wasted-vote situation. Less educated individuals would find it harder to estimate candidates' chances of winning and to realize that their vote can be used to avoid a lest-desired outcome, i.e. voting for a second preference, against a candidate.

A second model was tested for the October 2004, October 2006 and October 2007 surveys in order to assess the influence of being interested in politics on the decision to vote tactically (Tables 4, 5). The logistic regression was run on 3824 cases, 347 of which were instances of strategic voting. The model maintains its goodness of fit, as indicated by the Hosmer and Lemeshow test (p<. 326).

Table 4.

H-L Test - model 2

Chi-square	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
9.199	8	.326

The new variable proves highly significant (p<.000), so much so, that other variables lose significance. Age, optimism and education are no longer significant in the second mode. Economy, on the other hand, fares better (p<.004). The analysis indicates that both those who are satisfied with the progress of the economy and those who are not are considerably more inclined to vote strategically than those who believe the economy is in stagnation. The second category, of people dissatisfied with the economy, becomes significant, as opposed to the first model, and the relationship does not fit with the hypothesis. It would appear that those who have a distinct opinion about the state of economy are more preoccupied with the outcome of elections.

Table 5.

Logistic Regression-model 2

Variables	B	Significance	Odds Ration Change
Age	.001	.804	1.001
Optimism		.192	
Economy		.004	
Better	.450	.001	1.568
Worse	.341	.025	1.406
Trust in government		.064	
None	.345	.063	1.412
Low	.518	.021	1.679
High	.368	.375	1.444
Gender	-.083	.475	.920
Education		.143	
Interest		.000	.650
None	-.430	.002	.601
Low	-.510	.001	.918
High	-.086	.690	
Constant	-2.704	.000	.067

The evaluation of the government becomes more significant, with those with a low trust in government being more likely to vote strategically than those who are more trustful. The results confirm the forth hypothesis and are in accordance with the results obtained by Durch and Palmer (2002).

Interest in politics influences the dependent variable as expected. Those which are not particularly interested in politics are consistently less inclined to vote strategically. Even between the distinct levels of trust there is

significant difference. More specifically, those with no interest in politics are less probable to vote strategically by 35%, compared to those with a low level of interest. The latter are 40% less likely than interested voters to vote tactically. Fisher (2001) also finds a strong association between strategic voting and interest in politics. Those not very preoccupied with politics are less likely to be sophisticated voters.

The final model of this study takes into consideration the strength of attachment to one's preferred candidate and includes only data from October 2003, 2006 and 2007, due to inconsistencies of data among surveys. The model does not include a variable for interest in politics. The analysis is conducted on a total of 4128 cases, with 252 cases of strategic voting. As with the previous model, the Hosmer and Lemeshow test shows a good fit of the model. Again, the new variable is highly statistically significant, overshadowing all the other variables in the model.

Table 6.

H-L Test - model 3

Chi-square	Degrees of Freedom	Significance
5.884	8	.660

The results contradict the third hypothesis, which predicted that individuals highly attached to their preferred party would be less willing to abandon it at the polls. The respondents of these surveys appear to be substantially more willing to abandon their favorite candidate at the polls as their trust in her increases, contradicting previous studies (e.g. Fisher, 2001; Durch and Palmer, 2002, Blais et al., 2005).

Table 7.

Logistic Regression - model 3

Variables	B	Significance	Odds Ratio Change
Age	-.003	.439	.997
Optimism		.632	
Economy		.567	
Government		.182	
Gender	-.011	.933	.989
Education		.117	
Intensity of attachment		.000	
None	-1.129	.034	.323
Very low	-1.134	.055	.322
Low	-.763	.000	.466
High	-.406	.005	.667
Constant	-5.088	.994	.006

8. Discussion and Conclusion

The first hypothesis predicted that the level of intended strategic voting would be higher in presidential elections than in parliamentary one. It is safe to say that this has been confirmed. While for parliamentary elections tactical behavior barely reaches 3.1%, the pooled data from the five databases studied reveals a mean of 8.26% for presidential elections. The data also suggests that the amount of intended strategic voting increases in the period before the elections. This could not be confirmed for general elections, as the pattern is only visible in presidential contests. In October 2004, just before the November 2004 presidential and parliamentary elections, strategic behavior in the case of the former rises to 13.9%. This is to be expected, as voters are more exposed to pre-election polls in this period, are more able to take this information into consideration and coordinate their action according to their desired outcome.

Regarding attachment to one's favorite candidate, this study has found a strong positive relation with strategic voting. Voters who feel very strongly about their preferred candidate appear to be more inclined to switch their vote. The results are puzzling and suggest that further attention should be given to the relation between strength of attachment and strategic voting.

Interest in politics has also proved to be a strong factor in explaining strategic behavior. Those with no or low interest in politics are less likely to act tactically by about 40%, than those who are more interested in politics, confirming Hypothesis 6, which predicted a positive relation between interest in politics and sophisticated voting. Those who are not particularly interested in politics in general would also be less interested in the outcomes of elections. Education displays the same pattern. Less educated individuals were less likely to declare an intention to switch their vote, confirming the expectations (H7). It would make sense that less educated people would find it harder to understand the mechanisms of electoral processes and thus not have enough resources to maximize the utility of their vote.

In the fourth hypothesis, it was predicted that those satisfied with the government would be less motivated to vote strategically, suggesting that individuals who are not satisfied with the government and want a change are more sensible to not wasting their vote. The expectations were met only in the second model, which also included among the factors interest in politics.

Interpreting the data on satisfaction with the political system as a whole requires more attention. Two variables were used to measure overall contentment: the outlook on the progress of economy and attitudes towards the future. In the first model, only a positive view on economy was related to strategic voting. Namely, individuals satisfied with the progress of the economy were more inclined to vote strategically. In the second model this relationship is maintained, but those with a negative view on the economic situation, were also more prone to

vote strategically. Optimism about the future is only relevant in the first model, with those being convinced their standard of living will improve having being more likely to vote tactically. The results call for a reassessment of the fifth hypothesis. It was predicted that voters satisfied with the political system as a whole are more engaged in political issues and more interested in the results of elections. Therefore, they would have more incentives to not see their vote go in vain. The results seem to contradict this assumption. Perhaps, disenchanted voters are also concerned enough to avoid wasting their vote. Age was, as predicted (H8), positively associated with sophisticated voting, but the relationship was not highly significant.

One must remember that this study is exploratory and must take care in generalizing the results. An important point to make is that the model does not measure strategic voting per se, but how predisposed individuals are to vote for a candidate different than their most preferred one. The data analyzed in this study was gathered in the period 2003-2007 by the Soros Foundation Romania, as part of the Public Opinion Barometer. Because not all surveys were taken before an election date, or even in an electoral year, the amount of strategic behavior found may be underestimated. Nevertheless, the results are encouraging. A more extensive investigation into this subject may shed more light on it.

The results of this study suggest that part of the Romanian electorate may indeed be sophisticated. Most of the hypotheses were confirmed, indicating that voters appear to understand the differences and the implications of different electoral formulae and to behave according to this information. A fair amount of strategic voting was found, painting an optimistic image of the Romanian voter. As a continuation of this study, it would be interesting to investigate whether the change of the electoral law in 2008 had any effects on electoral behavior. Among the long debate over the law in the press and the complicated formula used, one would expect that the voters be extremely confused. Further inquiry might establish whether the electorate found it harder to coordinate their votes.

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INTERNET, FROM ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP AGENCY FORMATION TO POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT? A NEO-MARXIST PERSPECTIVE

ALEXANDRA DOBRA[*]

ABSTRACT. The present paper constitutes a theoretical research. It argues that the internet does neither constitute the centre of a new epistemological representation of the individual – individual acquiring citizenship agency – nor is it transforming the modes of apprehension towards reality – increase in political participation. The internet is not a displacement media but a spectacle of democracy and thus reinforces preexisting social structures, norms and practices. The principal originality of this paper resides in the development of three models: (i) the mechanistic model; (ii) the pyramidal model; and (iii) the model of system theory, adding theoretical input to the actual state of literature. Furthermore, by interpreting information in a new way, as a social process defined within a relational paradigm of the *alter*/*ego*, the very importance of the human agency capacity is evidenciated. Lastly, it is shown that the individual is caught and administered into an imaginary collective conscience since the internet is subjected to marketing and commodification.

Keywords: Internet; Citizenship; Model; Commodification; Heteronomy; Information; Relational paradigm; Critical.

Introduction

The voter turnout in France in 1973 was 81,31%, while it reached only 60,44% in 2007. Seemingly, the voter turnout in the UK was 78,94% in 1974, while it attained only 61,36% in 2005 (OECD, 2009). On the basis of similar reports regarding other established democracies, it seems that the decline in political participation is of general concern. How to reconstitute an engaged *demos* which cannot be found in the form of a political community ? For avoiding procyclical patterns a new *agora* must be implemented, allowing the operational representation of the *vox populi*. The internet by being a new technology brings discussion about its capacity to build a new *agora*.

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Optimists argue that the internet has the capital of enhancing deliberative communication, in order to stimulate exchange and to give democracy a more deliberative turn (Castells, 2001). Hence, *"the extraordinary opportunities provided by the internet"* can be used as *"an instrument of citizenship in which people continually enlarge their horizons, often testing their own views by learning about alternatives"* (Sunstein, 2001: 194). On the other hand, pessimists (Putnam, 2000) argue that the internet demobilizes the electorate. Arguably, these contradictory findings may be a function of the overreliance on direct effect models – where media influence is often contextually dependent and highly mediated through interpersonal conversation and intrapersonal reflection (McLeod et al., 2001) – and poor measurement of media use, which has consequences in terms of underspecification of influence processes (Shah and al., 2005). Hence, what are the key determinants enabling the internet to be a vector for citizenship identity, and are these sufficient for compensating the crisis of conventional forms of participation ?

This work is inscribed within a line of specialised literature assessing the correlation between internet and political engagement. It's originality resides in analyzing the articulation between internet and political engagement under a critical focus, which had as outcome the elaboration of three theoretical models. The internet is a platform – tangible basis – providing information – cognitive dimension. Hence, it is subjected to financial interests and marketization – net-economy has exceeded 3000 Milliards $ in 2004 (Jacquet, 2001) –, and is constructed by a netocracy. The internet is not a displacement media and does, alike other institutions, reinforce the power of system structures and the internalization of preexisting societal norms responsible for political education and attitudes. The user does not become empowered, but rather closed into a uniformity of mediocrity and alienation (e.g.: very poor quality of blogs). The development of three models: (i) the mechanistic model (page 19), (ii) the pyramidal model (page 22), and (iii) the model of system theory (page 25), aims to demonstrate that the transfer from intra-virtual involvement practices to the intra-State scale is function of the human agency, and that the individual is caught within an imaginary collective conscience.

The present work had as objectives to: (i) reconsider the very concepts of civic agency and information *via* the development of three models, adding thus theoretical input to the current state of research ; (ii) bring a new lighting on the articulation between internet and political engagement, through analysing it *via* a neo-Marxist prismatic ; and (iii) show that the internet, as a solution for the formation of active citizenship agency, is facing inherent limitations.

Related to these objectives, this work falls under the category of theoretical research and draws on mostly qualitative data from specialized literature, addressed *via* inductive, analytical and dialectical methods. This work contains

four chapters, as outlined hereafter. The first chapter consists of an analysis of pertinence with the aim to identify the research question and the subsequent hypothesis. The second and third chapters deal, respectively, with a conceptual analysis and a synthesis. Hence, it is postulated that the internet has the potential to be a social capital able to implement a model of instructive citizenship. This would allow the rise in cognitive capacities, via information and exchange, and lastly it would enhance political participation via the formation of an active citizenship agency. The notion of information is examined and interpreted as a social process defined within a relational paradigm. Finally, in the fourth chapter the elaboration of different theoretical models, of which I am the author, is done. It is emphasized that the internet is a communication instead of an information tool, which clusters the individual within a spectacle of democracy. Furthermore, it is evidenciated that the internet is subjected to a global netocracy which has engendered a new representation of the individual as a consumer disconnected from the *être de l'ensemble*. On this account, the internet does not implement among its users a practice and identity of active citizenship, nor does it re-symbolize the political sphere and cannot raise political participation.

1. Setting the scene: definition and general context

1.1. Political engagement what is it, what are its central features?

The notion of political participation is very polysemous. Political engagement is *"the set of activities susceptible to grant the governed influence on the functioning of the political system"* (Brand, 2000). This paper considers political engagement as the capacity of an agent to acquire information and to critically and reflexively apply this latter at the civic level – e.g.: vote; implication in community. In order for an agent to become an active citizen, he must be instructed, included in cooperation and empowered. Since the internet is an informative and deliberative platform, it should become a pedagogical and social tool able to implement within its users an identity of citizenship which would become a civic engagement. Deliberation is at the core of political engagement and it has a pedagogical function above all, since it enables individuals to *"think in public terms, as citizens"* (Barber, 1997: 172).

1.2. The crisis of political participation as the common denominator for democracies

The decline in political participation is of general concern to established democracies. The number of those turning out in elections has fallen, as has membership in all kinds of political organizations (Putnam, 2000). This crisis is principally characterized, via uncivic habits expressed through citizen disaffection

towards conventional forms of participation (see table 1, p.3). This disaffection has its roots in the loss of the political sphere's legitimacy, on account of the power concentration within a *super elite*, which has as consequence the lack of citizen confidence within democratic mechanisms.

Table. 1

Political participation: crisis and/or renewal
(extracted from Brechon, 2003)

	Year	Abstention rate	Year	Abstention rate
Belgium	1987	6,6	2003	12,0
Danemark	1988	16,0	2001	12,9
Luxembourg	1989	12,6	1999	13,5
Italy	1987	11,1	2001	18,6
Austria	1986	9,5	2002	19 ,5
Netherlands	1986	14,2	2003	19,7
Germany	1983	10,9	2002	20,9
Sweden	1985	10,1	2002	21,0
Greece	1989	15,5	2000	25,0
Finland	1987	27,9	2003	30,4
Spaign	1989	30,0	2000	31,3
France	1986	21,5	2002	35,6
Irlande	1987	26,7	2002	37,0
Portugal	1987	27,4	1999	39,0
United-Kingdom	1987	24,6	2001	40,6

The growing individualism and obliteration of hierarchical and comprehensive structures is also made responsible for the current crisis of disengagement. The individual becomes increasingly multidimensional and his propensity to recognize himself in collectives of defence of categorial interests is declining. More specifically, because systems of differentiation inside our societies tend to evanesce (e.g.: class splits; ideological ideals), the democratic system of representation entered into a new crisis. The representative mechanisms cannot work properly if it cannot be graft on clearly identifiable variables. In a society which is less ideologically fragmented and sociologically decipherable, representative procedures lose their sensible evidence. The consequence is a growing electoral instability which feeds the circle of higher volatility and unpredictability of votes and gives birth to a *new voter* (Habert, 1996). Therefore, a new model of democracy arises: the weak democracy, characterized by a negative sovereignty recovering two facets, the impeachment power and passivity – e.g.: tacit election and loyal *versus* volatile voter. It is this very negative form of democracy which is at the origin of political disaffection: a systemic impotence makes citizens no longer interested in conquering power and exercising it. How to envisage the resymbolization of politics?

2. The internet, a source of potentialities

2.1. From the internet as a model of virtuous participation …

Under a communitarian prismatic, new technologies of communication can create social links and enforce identities. In this line, the concept of *social capital* offers useful insights for how the internet can be the source of positive externalities at the scale of a community. According to Coleman, social capital is a facilitating resource, considered as a natural characteristic of communities and not as the result of a purely individual strategy. It is the social organization itself which, outside personal intention of investments, produces a positive externality. This positive externality is conceived within a system of rational choice, where the social capital does essentially constitute an economy of transaction costs, which favours a higher density of social relations, an easier and higher access to information and norms of behaviour (Coleman, 1998). Furthermore, studies in terms of social interactions, demonstrate that the internet via the possibility it offers to enter into a social relation, while keeping a parcel of anonymity, enhances the expression of the personality of individuals. Internet allows reduced-cues interaction and is therefore appealing to individuals who do not necessarily wish to socialize in a face-to-face setting (McKenna, and al., 2002). Once the access to information is acquired, the personality does emerge and the individual becomes a citizen by appropriating himself the new tool of communication and information. Therefore the individual becomes active while he was anteriorly passive. Shah, et al. (2005) found that information gathering is positively linked with social capital.

Hence, the internet plays a central role in creating social capital and favours the building of a unified community, deprived of classical hierarchical channels of expression. By enabling the rise of a shared community the internet creates an ecosystem of virtuous cooperation. This latter plays a facilitator role and is vital for further political engagement. Indeed, the more people share information, the more people do enter into social relations, the more the positive cycle of participation does aggregate a larger number of citizens. In this line, the way in which the internet might be at the origin of higher political engagement, operates via two complementary ways. First, the model of participation acquired on the internet becomes transferable at the political scale. The internet does create personal attributes as well as alter pre-existing ones, by enabling the acquisition and internalization of norms. Second, social mimicry applies between individuals. Indeed, if the variable participation becomes an integrated norm, then a non-participatory behaviour will become socially stigmatized as deviant.

Following Shouten (1991: 413), an individual's identity is the *"cognitive and affective understanding of who and what we are"*. From the perspective of a symbolic interaction on the internet, identity is shaped by several factors,

among which the feedback and evaluation provided by others (Blumer, 1969). Owing that the platforms offered by the internet (e.g.: blogs; forums; etc…) are providing feedback, identities are altered. Hence, if an alteration occurs, then at some point, individuals will tend to conflate all the different variables involved in the shaping of their identities and will become more homogenous – thereby enabling the mechanism of behavioral mimicry to apply. The internet thus helps to promote a collective identity, by enabling the production and endogeneisation of social norms via two levels: (i) at a holist scale, by instituting norms via collective transmission and (ii) at a personal scale via the interaction of actors. Collective identity corresponds to the perception among individuals posing them as members of a larger community by virtue of the grievances they share (Garrett, 2006: 205). Fisher *et al.*, (2005), for example, show that internet resources are crucial for political activist to stay more closely connected towards their related global causes and be able to engage in a struggle that targets transnational actors. Through the internet citizens can learn from each other, observe and validate each others' actions, which then can take place very rapidly and simultaneously on multiple fronts, and in multiple ways (Lipschutz, 2005). Parks and Floyd (2005) have conducted a study revealing that people participating in internet newsgroups were able to form quality relationships similar to those offline relationships developed in an in-person setting.

2.2. … to the internet as the tool for the public space's renewal

The internet, trough supplying information can contribute to the emergence of a new civil society, aiming to reformulate the societal ethic of liberty and responsibility, where knowledge societies would be founded on the share of cognition – since knowledge would acquire the status of public good. Therefore civic competence is directly implicated within the development of deliberative democracy. Informational quality, sophisticated collective discussions (Milner, 2004) are heavy factors counting for the formation of political preferences and engagement. According to Milner (2004: 173), democratic societies distributing in an egalitarian manner the intellectual resources, achieve higher rates of political engagement, which in turn contributes to a virtuous cycle, enabling the political sphere to become more empathetic to the *demos*. Furthermore, cognitive predispositions exist and enable therefore debates, dialogue, and practices susceptible to favour political implication and to include those who feel politically marginalized or dispossessed by the cultural and social apparatus. *"Now, thanks to webs and numerical integration, both the economy and the information society are being instituted. The knowledge becomes the raw material of society and industry, to the extent to which they circulate in a transparent manner and allow cognitive democracy!"* (Jeanneret, 2007: 70).

The internet is also the most important source of political information, and this information is in turn an important source of political engagement (Pasek et al., 2006). The literature indicates high expectations for the media as knowledge transmitters (Delli Carpini and Keeter, 1996). It has often been argued that accessible and visible media, or following the news routinely (Wattenberg, 2007) is correlated with higher political knowledge. Lupia & Sin (2003), for instance, found that the internet has the potential to draw new people to offline political participation or at least increase political awareness. Political messaging permits to share perspectives and concerns with a much wider and geographically dispersed array of people through *"interactive messaging technologies such as e-mail, instant messaging, electronic bulletin boards, online chat, as well as feedback loops to news organizations and politicians"* (Shah et al., 2005, p. 536). It reduces the costs of mass expression and collective organization, and allows individuals to *"post, at minimal cost, messages and images that can be viewed instantly by global audiences"* (Hill & Hugh, 1998). Such messaging is also largely textual rather than verbal, and as such it may produce stronger compositional effects associated with preparation for communication (Lerner & Tetlock, 1999) and writing about one's own perspectives.

3. The internet, an insolvent source of potentialities

3.1. From the insolvency of the internet as an equal access information platform ...

It is assumed that the internet is the solution for the creation of a more informed society. Technologies of information have always brought with them a new advent on the political scene. Indeed, media constitutes the first tool enabling political spheres to become socially visible, while it is also the dominant source of political information for the plebe. The internet however, has distinguishable features not only does it gather the sum of capacities offered by the other aggregated media means, but it does also add new dimensions to these former. Indeed, every information consumer is also an information producer on the internet – e.g.: reading an op-ed and commenting it, or sending it via email, are current practices on the internet. Now, the question to ask is whether this plethora of available information can be used in a viable and performative way by citizens ?

Is plethoric information availability the central variable enabling an informed society to arise? Many studies have shown that excessive information does obstruct people's ability to make judgements (Vickers, 1965). The economy of attention in agency theory is seen as a precious commodity. The internet and its interactive possibilities are so numerous that attention can easily be overwhelmed. In number of political-oriented forums, a number of unfitted

participants can be noticed, which in turn tend to exclude the most actively engaged. Hence, a large amount of information does not generate higher intelligibility and pertinence. If pertinence is defined as the adequacy of a message to the desideratum of citizens, then it is imperative for the internet to achieve this latter. Verily, the internet is increasingly becoming the collective debris in which a higher immorality, in Mills's terminology, occurs, due to the crescent supply of information. In a paradoxical way, the increase in the sum of knowledge goes hand in hand with an overall decrease of the critical sense. On that account, the pertinence is function of the level of critical intelligence of agents. Studies have suggested (Smith, 1995) that the availability of information may in fact be deleterious to democracy if citizens are unable to make effective use of the information available. Individuals may be overwhelmed by the volume of information, thereby opening the door to dependence towards other agents. Hence, it is not the amount of information *per se* which enables the attainment of a gradual and homogenous level of knowledge between citizens, but the ways into which these citizens can develop filtering habits (Hiltz and Turoff, 1985), in order to digest and make a conscient application of the information. This attention to the cognitive implications of message production bears some resemblance to Eveland's (2001) work on the cognitive mediation model, which stresses the self-reflective processes underlying the effects of mass communications.

Information, knowledge, are not the endogenous features of an object, rather they are the effect of the appropriation of the object by individuals. Information and knowledge are thus a social phenomenon. As noticed by Robert Escarpit (1970), a process into which the human does not exercise his analytical skills is a process empty of information. Hence, the information available on the internet needs to be processed, digested and criticized by the user in order to get a meaning. In absence of such a processing, information is reduced to a simple raw data, *"it is not information per se which is useful to the democrat but knowledge, information which has been distilled and contextualised so that it can impart meaning"* (Noveck, 2000: 23). An informed society appears only under the condition that citizens do react in front of objects (e.g.: the internet, forum, etc...). Information is a relation to an object and hence the very essence of information is the interpretation done by a citizen. Information and subsequently knowledge has no predefined existence and is founded only once the object containing the knowledge has been invested by the human critic. This finds its echo in the mediation communication model (Shah et al., 2005) which considers the relationship between information and participation, by situating communication among citizens as a critical mediator between news consumption and democratic outcomes. Hence, there is a positive correlation between information digestion and political participation.

Another concern arises in relation to the quality versus quantity of the available information. Most internet sources are quantitatively higher than trough traditional media channels, however, the range and diversity of arguments and analytical insights remains limited as a result of media gatekeeping processes. It follows that the obtainable information is not immune to biases and that available information is not hybrid. Search engines operate systematically to favour some information sources against others. Although the internet offers alternative sources of information, many people pursue their habits on the internet. As an illustration, a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2004 (Cornfield and Horrigan, 2004) highlights that mainstream news sources dominate the online political news environment. The survey showed that the majority of internet users reported that they went to websites of traditional news organizations such as CNN, The New York Times. This corroborates that the internet in its very use is not a substitute to traditional media: *"the Web seems to have been used more often as a means to access traditional news rather than as a radical new source of unmediated information and communication between citizens and their elected leaders"* (Norris, 1998: 89).

Finally, the variable accessibility must be assessed. The internet is a limited tool in generating a more informed society because its distribution is biased towards the different segments of population. Unsurprisingly, the internet does advantage the already well-off, at the intra and extra-State scale. Societal and structural factors grant socially dominant groups more access and greater cognitive capacity for using it. The analysis of UK national registers of regular internet users reveals that the majority is male, relatively young, well educated, with a medium to high income (National Statistics Online, 2003). Furthermore, there are also inequalities related to the urban/rural distinction furthered by the profit-oriented strategies of information technology companies. Since the provision of internet access is largely dependent on market forces, the infrastructure is highly biased in favour of developed areas (OECD, 2001). More succinctly, the lack of physical access to the internet is an important barrier to a more informed society. In a syntaxically reversed Virgilian terminology, the internet is responsible for *parcere superbos et debellar subjectis*. Hence, *"online political participation was reinforcing and in some cases exacerbating some of the existing social inequalities in offline political participation by marginalizing the less educated and those from lower socioeconomic groups and by increasing involvement online among those who are already engaged offline"* (Di Gennaro & Dutton, 2006: 306, 311-12). Social structural factors grants socially dominant groups more access and greater cognitive capacity for using it and therefore a digital divide occurs (Norris, 2001). Furthermore the differentiated use of the internet is correlated with people's level of education: more highly educated people use the internet more often as a source of information, whereas less educated people prefer the entertainment functions of the net (Norris, 2001).

Brevis e, the internet has an insufficient democratic nature which allied with its virtual dimension impeach it to constitute itself as the viable tool for the revitalization of political participation. In consonance with Norris (2001), there is a growing *democratic divide* to the extent to which civic engagement is driven by one's preexisting attitudes and resources such as political interest, convictions, engagement experience. According to a study for the French case, done by the CEVIPOF – CNRS/Sciences Po, 91% of the population having access to the internet, did never participate in political blogs, while 66% did never consult a political or civic blog (Mediapolis, 2010). Furthermore, electronic interactions are in the first place *virtual extensions* of existing social ties. It is highly disputable whether internet based communication may create brand-new social ties where there were none before (Diani, 2001).

3.2 ... to the insolvency of the internet as an equalizer of cognitive capacities ...

Agency theory seeks to describe the peculiar kind of rational agent crucial for understanding self-motivated political engagement. Agency corresponds to the capacity to choose and execute actions consistent with a coherent and reflexively determined identity. In the case of internet participation, it is noticed that the educated participate less than expected because they have difficulty finding quality conversations. Seemingly, the less educated on account of the previously mentioned endemic social structuration, tend not get involved. Following Elster, adaptive preferences formation corresponds to the habituation to a restricted set of feasible options. Such preferences rely on a mechanism for reducing cognitive dissonance that takes the form of downgrading inaccessible options so that available ones come to be preferred. Hence, routines and habits are key types of structure that simplify interactions with the environment. Habits are socially structured and interactions are often integrated by institutions. On the web, habits take hold, making the internet a less innovatory and explanatory activity and more the tool for the promotion of routines. Following this, in terms of agency theory, the determinants of political engagement are not altered via the internet, and passivity and resignation become two fully integrated variables within the determined identity. A study by Hill and Hughues (1997) revealed that only 6,6% of the 3000 usenet groups's users made reference to the word "politics" while 23,3% of them made reference to the word "sex". This shows that political discussions and concerns are not priorities among internet users and that the internet has not achieved to replace the classical modalities of political interactivity.

The internet is itself an institution and by providing superficial and often biased information, it promotes the routine of superficial news consumption, thereby failing in equalizing and raising cognitive capabilities. The internet by

providing ubiquitous information provision enables the treatment of this information to be dissolved into the human behaviour. It is based on a cautioned model of learning and reinforcement pattern – the repetition of a certain type of information – which contributes to affect behaviour (Skinner, 1938). The new realistic paradigm, developed by Norris (2001) and Hill and Hughes (1997), stressing the primacy of socio-cultural patterns corroborates this point. Indeed, the political motivation of citizens and existing offline forms of social inequality are reinforced online: *"the contemporary explosion of electronic communication is not a paradigm shift. Rather people are moving their age-old patterns of interaction into a new realm"* (Hill and Hughes, 1997: 25). In addition, the structural features responsible for a common identity and habit, conveyed via the internet, limit the potential for revitalizing political engagement. More precisely, political engagement rests on the postulate that the citizen must exercise a sovereign role. Hence, in order to be able to exercise this role, citizens must be endowed with alacrity and capacity. Capacity is a consequence of the education and *"knowledge and rules in order to understand and think well, are indispensable for the exercise of sovereignty by the people"* (Nicolet, and al. 2003: 29). At the scale of the internet, this requisition should be reverberated in a web able to rise and equalize the levels of critical capabilities. As seen, it fails: *"the citizen nowadays is a giant in terms of information and consumption, and a dwarf in terms of action. He can know everything, consume everything but he cannot act upon reality, which is too complex, too organized."* (Wolton, 1993: 231).

Politics has a fundamentally cognitive dimension, namely the production of the *polis* by helping it to acquire an autonomous representation and by confronting itself to responsibilities. The internet does neither provide a viable educational mechanism, nor a cognitive development allowing the emergence of citizenship identity. The internet merely relies on a transmisive model and therefore the structuration of the message plays a key role for its correct inception. Since *"opinion is forged slowly and cannot be reduced to an accumulation of information […]"* (Wolton, 1993: 53), it follows that information nurtures opinion but cannot be a substitute for it. The internet provides a strictly technological answer to problems which have a non-technical essence. Indeed, the internet is based on a technical conception of communication dominated by the idea of information transfers to the detriment of its signification and interpretation.

Following Ellul, the error of such a conception is that it confuses the information of structural nature with the speech of existential order. Political participation is thus reduced to a particular form of communication, following a set of pre-established principles. Now even if it is impossible not to communicate within a social environment, the logic of communication should not be imposed upon the political logic. Media transformed communication into an increased strategically focused resource through fabricating and supplying rapid information.

The problem resides in the fact that communication is dependent upon different constraints. Political communication is caught within social preconstructs, symbolic codes, norms and rules of the games at the intra-communitarian scale. Hence, political communication is not free *per se* and inhibits the expression of the political logic, which in turn impedes the citizen to regain his identity and power – citizens are still reduced to the status of spectator and not agent. The internet is not split up from traditional strategies of domination and from the logic of the *société de spectacle*. The internet forsakes to offer a more deliberative form of political logic, able to make a public use of the exercise of reason. The consequence is that politics becomes a sport for passive spectators. In this line, the communication mediation model, finds that informational media use and political discussion largely conveys the effects of background dispositions and orientations on citizen learning and participatory behaviours (McLeod, et al., 2001).

3.3 ... and to the insolvency of the internet as a creator of a new public space

According to Laswell (1948), the audience can change its media-use behaviour by replacing the old with the new medium. If the new medium is able to provide *"a superior content, technical benefits and cost efficiency"* (Linn, 1999: 24), then the mechanism of media substitution is applied. In our respective case, the internet has not achieved this substitution. Indeed, empirical studies highlight that citizens tend to prefer classical media forms in order to remain informed, on account of their less biased and more credible content (Flanagan & Metzer, 2000).

In France, in sight of the presidential elections of 2007, the most used media to gather political information has been the television, reaching 58% of the total audience, radio, reaching 17% of audience, while the internet came in the last position with only 5% audience (Perrineau, 2007). It appears that online media content plays the role of a functional supplement to instead of a functional displacement of offline media content (Lin, 2001). Hence, a metamorphosis of the informational space did not occur and there is no real change incurred in the way individuals process and learn information. This point is also corroborated via the fact that the way into which citizens make use of the internet does not open a dialectical and complementary arena, 72% of citizens are consulting internet sources corresponding to their own political views, in comparison only 46% of citizens are consulting media sources corresponding to their own views (Mediapolis, 2010).

From the perspective of a social shaping of technology (Mackenzie and Wajcman, 1999), the application of the internet is configured within the parameters of current trends in political participation. The internet is thus a

classical media (not a displacement media) which instead of transmitting the social reality imposes what it constructs within and with the public space. Internet is not a new *agora* rather it is a spectacle of democracy. Neither political offer, nor political demand, seemed to have been dazzled by the internet. Moreover, even if rational critical debate takes place on the web, it is not enough publicized, as Papacharissi (2002: 6) stresses it, the electronic public sphere is *"exclusive, elitist and far from ideal"*. Hence, the internet is merely an illusion of openness and universality. Besides, the internet also lacks the unity and the rational accord fundamental for the public sphere.

The internet has caused a metamorphosis of the informational space by hybridising contents and fragmenting information. The online discourse for instance, is globally too fragmented and decentralized to form a public space, hence online deliberation results in fragmenting cyber-discourse into mutually exclusive cyber-communities (Dahlberg, 2001). Moreover, on the web individuals drift in and out of discussion, leading to a lack of shared understanding. Finally, a Spinozian approach of democracy would consist today in increasing the action power of citizens. In order to achieve this, the notion of diversity must be at the heart of critical deliberation. However, *"online discussion forums are largely homogenous in the sense that individual messages adhere to a certain political affiliation, defined as endorsing a political candidate, platform, issue or ideology"* (Wilhelm, 1998: 320). Participation in homogeneous networks leads to polarization, a strengthening of the initial viewpoints and thus more polarized opinions will not lead to political participation. The more tightly a network is knit, the more uniform the information source will be and the less likely people will be to participate politically (Teorell, 2003). In general, it has been argued by the time-replacement authors that greater media involvement leads to the reduction of social capital and generalized trust (Putnam, 2000). Hence, the problem identified as *homophily*, arising from the potential lack of disagreement because of the polarisation of like-minded individuals into cyber-ghettos, is facilitated by the internet which clusters people into homogeneous interest groups. The second problem occurs at the other extreme and is known as "flaming" (O'Sullivan and Flanagan, 2003). Flaming is the uncivil and disruptive attitude of individuals within online activities due to the anonymous and user-friendly nature of the medium (Hill and Hughes, 1997). These practices undermine the quality of the debate and hinder the production of meaningful outcomes relating to the substance of issues and policies and have thus detrimental effects on the utility of unmoderated virtual spaces.

In short, the internet fails in *"creating a sufficiently important aggregate of informed and active citizens"* (Dahl, 1989). The mechanistic model (figure 1, page 19) summarizes and raises attention to the variables enabling the dyade between information and political engagement to exist. The internet as a tool

for increased political participation is function of the cognitive levels of development of the different individuals. For Quan-Haase Wellman (2002) the internet supplements political participation but does not change people's level of involvement.
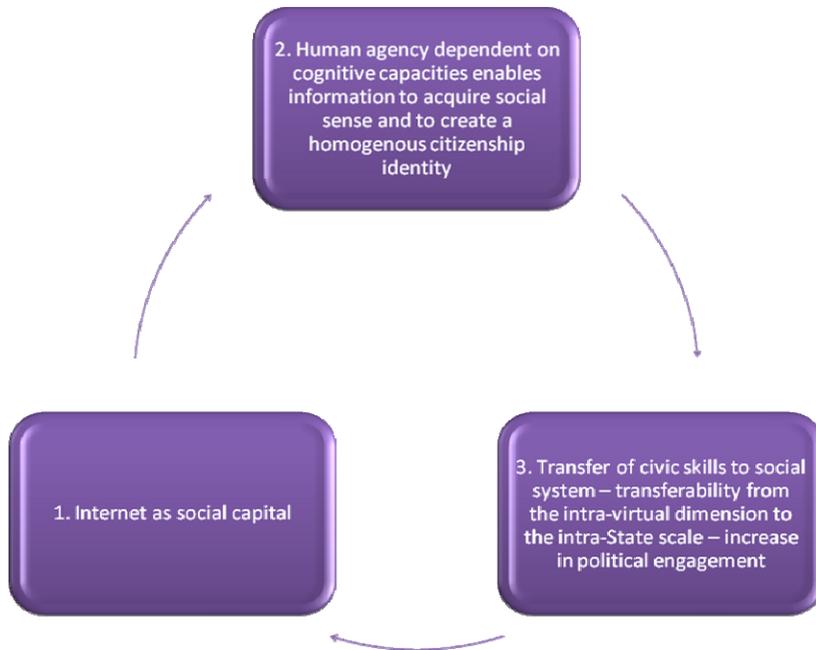

Fig. 1. Mechanistic model, a dyadic relation between information and participation

4. Neo-Marxist perspective on the internet, heteronomy and alienation

### *4.1 The internet as a commodified informational support*

The internet is mainly created by a netocracy – global upper-class that bases its power on a technological advantage and networking skills and financially supported by the digerati, e.g.: Steve Jobs (Apple), Sherry Turkle (MIT), Linus Torvalds (Linux), and Ted Leonsis (AOL). The internet is thus increasingly subjected to corporate strategies arising from companies wanting to optimize investments. The information conveyed by different online sources is mainly marketized, commodified (Gerstlé, 2004). The internet is thus very limited in its capacity to increase political participation. 91% of the internet users in France, did never use the internet in order to participate to political discussions on blogs or forums and 66% have never consulted a citizen blog (Mediapolis, 2007).

Because political issues are quantitatively large and qualitatively complex, people need to rank these issues according to their importance. The internet provides this guidance by priming – by pointing out which elements of which issues are important (Glynn et al., 1999) – on account of the juridical vacuum of its legislation. As such, people do not optimally base their decision upon full consideration of all relevant information. The internet as an informative basis is caught into a system of tension and domination. First, delocution primates on perlocution – what the internet says about the political actor is becoming more important than what the actor says. Second, reference takes the value of inference on account that associative mechanisms are embraced by the *avare cognitive* (represented by the average citizen) (Gerstlé, 1997) – because a candidate is cited within a source, this latter catches attention. For instance, by focusing on the "affaire Lewinsky", Castells (2001) concludes that *"the frontier between gossip, fantasy and political information is becoming increasingly blurred, thus complicating even more the handling of this privileged political weapon: information. For the moment, instead of stimulating citizen participation, the internet did aggravate to crisis of political legitimacy"* (Castells, 2001: 196). The internet has enabled the personal and private sphere to become *extime*.

The netocracy, as well as the average internet users are imposing via structured lenses a categorization of information. The information provided on the internet is selected in function of its nature: spectacular, sensational constructed information primes over the other types of information. There is an *effet de réel*, making the delimitation between reality and untruth blurred. The human thought is subversive, and is therefore inclined to be manipulated, structured by social phenomena, in this sense, *"rationality and reason are more due to the form of the procedure, of the approach, rather than to their informative content"* (Dobra, 2009). While *"the scientist founds his prevision on a whole theory, on the Cartesian longues chaînes de raison, the ordinary individual founds his attempt on the practice, thanks to the memory of the facts"* (Dobra, 2009). Since, the practice of democratic debates on the internet is vacuous the individual will not be able to endogenize the skills needed for a real democratic participation.

According to Deleuze, a move from Foucauldian disciplinary society to control society has occurred. Inside capitalism, a displacement took place from the organization for production towards the organization for selling. Thus, marketing has become the instrument for social control and *"forms the new impudent race of our masters"* (Deleuze, 1990: 245). Foucault pointed out the existence of conflict between a formal language of politics organised around relations between sovereign and citizen, expressed through rules backed by sanctions, and an actual experience of power being exercised through multitudinous non-state sources, often dependent on material or technological means of enforcement. The internet enables a power exercise on citizens (figure 2, page 22).

Indeed, following Castells, the conjugated action between corporate interests and States, enabled *"the emergence of an electronic surveillance system"* (218). The internet by being a condition for communication, is part of the semiotic progress, and does construct the sense of information. Now, what needs to be discovered is the way into which this construction is affected ? The function of marketing has been expanded to the quasi totality of all important sources of institutional sociality and normativity. Marketing fabricates and propagates symbolic forms corresponding to imaginary social significations of capitalism. The symbolic forms propagated by marketing are the rational devices for subjective control. These forms structure the techniques of communication proliferated via the management of opinions and public relations. Marketing has enabled to administer subjectivities via the internet.
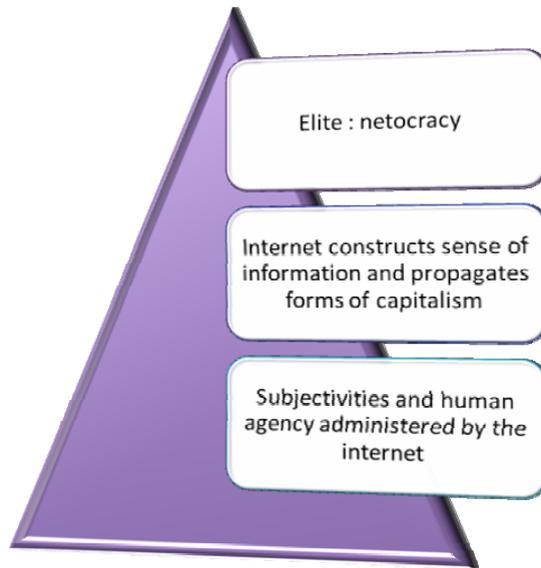
Fig. 2. The pyramidal model, an authoritative relation between
Elite - Internet – Human agency

4.2 The internet as a vector of heteronomy

The extension of the mediatisation of social relations via technical dispositive, allows to avoid the use of ideology in order to administer and control individual behaviours. The individualisation of the human is reinforced by the interaction between the individual and the machine. The contributions of ergonomists imply that they do think this interaction by focusing their attention on the individual behaviour in terms of service consumption. The analysis of

individualisation (Foucault, 1975) has demonstrated that individualisation is the corollary of a will to master behaviours. In this sense, there is a provisional logic administered by the netocracy via the internet. According to Max Weiser, *"we believe that people live through their practices and knowledge so that the most powerful things are those that are effectively invisible in use"*. Yet, in the case of the use of the internet what is invisible is the underlying marketing practice. Marketing is the dominant symbolic form structured by the imaginary significations of capitalism and structures the symbolic relations of our societies. The techniques of information and communication have been canalised towards the activity of conception, production and distribution of goods and services. The encampment of the political experience on the internet is to be perceived as the capacity of capitalism to transform the diverse aspects of the political experience into retail relations. The encampment of the political experience can be understood as a methodological tool enabling to highlight the existence of techniques managing the social arena in the frame of strategies elaborated by an *"increasingly elaborated gamma of technical disposals"* (Miège, 1997: 122-123) and in the frame of the interiorization of these techniques by individuals.

The internet user is meant to participate to the communal construction of the information and to invest it with his personal political experience. By expatiating on the concept of communicalisation which is *"a phenomenon of instrumentalization of certain ideological values of communication"*, as defined by Wahlen (1999: 327), and by applying it at the level of communication and information, it can be emphasized how the internet does favour the social acceptance of commodification. On this basis, rendered effective by the emergence of a new type of psychological individuality with narcissist tendencies, the process of retroaction proper to information is rendered effective. Hence, the informational retroaction *via* which information is assimilated and used in order to orient and control action, subjects the individual to existent societal paradigm. In the line of Castoriadis (1975), the individual becomes the fabrication of society and the internet is intrinsically responsible for the fabrication of this modern society to the extent to which the socialization of the individual corresponds to the introjection of the imaginary social significances (e.g.: norms, values, beliefs, representations) of a closed society. Hence, the fabricated individual is "closed" and adheres without reflexion to the principles of his society. To come back to the internet, if it is the new ideology, the new generator of society, then although it allows every individual to take actively part into civic networking projects, it does not allow individuals to become autonomous. As an example, the principal uses of the internet during the American political campaign in 2004, shows that 54% of individuals have searched information on the programmes of candidates while only 10% of the candidates have participated within online political discussions (Vedel, 2007b).

Henceforth, marketing is an instrument of social control and is embedded within the internet. Marketing propagates an imaginary of globalized capitalism, and diffuses its form of symbolic representation and mode of action throughout the entire society. Netocracy engendered a new representation of the individual, the individual as a consumer. This tendency towards a desymbolisation of relations disconnects the *l'être de soi* from the *l'être de l'ensemble*. Hence, the invasion of the political and private space by the commodification corresponds to a real invasion of the mental space (Klein, 2001: 101). Marketing and subsequently the internet have become masters captivating the subject via the omnipresent capitation of narcissism and libido of the individuals. Under a strategic point of view, netocracy and its constituent webmasters do schematically follow two correlated objectives: (i) to adapt services to the cognitive capacities of the individual and; (ii) to allow these new services to be inserted in existent practices of information gathering.

The marketing process of the internet and the commodification of information do psychically mobilize individuals and determine them to consider political information as merely a commodity or form of service. Following Dufour (2001), *l'être soi* and *l'être ensemble* of the subjects-individuals are disconnected by the ongoing process of individualization. Hence, in postmodernity an individual with high narcissist tendencies, atomised and alone in his autorealisation, arises as the new anthropological type corresponding to the actual social and market structure. At the level of political participation, it means that the individual because of its disconnection from the community will not become more engaged.

This paper has postulated that information is to be defined as a social process inside a relational paradigm where the *ego* is defined according and in relation to the *alter*. Because the overall social process and social structures are constructed around the practices of marketing and commodification, the individual becomes alienated, heteronymous (see figure 3) and the levels of cognitive development do not rise since the construction *alter/ego* is framed within a superficial structuration. The internet because of its embedded marketing practice commodifies information which in turn creates a histrionic individual – the internet orchestrates a capitation of attention to spectacular elements, it favours a *société de spectacle*. Histrionism is thus the plague of our current democracies, as far as it represents the infantile stage of the "I". Hence, the *ego* – formerly synonymous for the subjective construction –becomes a principle of incapability. The *ego* is only correlated with emotion and is build upon superficial exchanges. Therefore individual affects are factice and individuals are subsequently entering into a heteronymous co-construction.
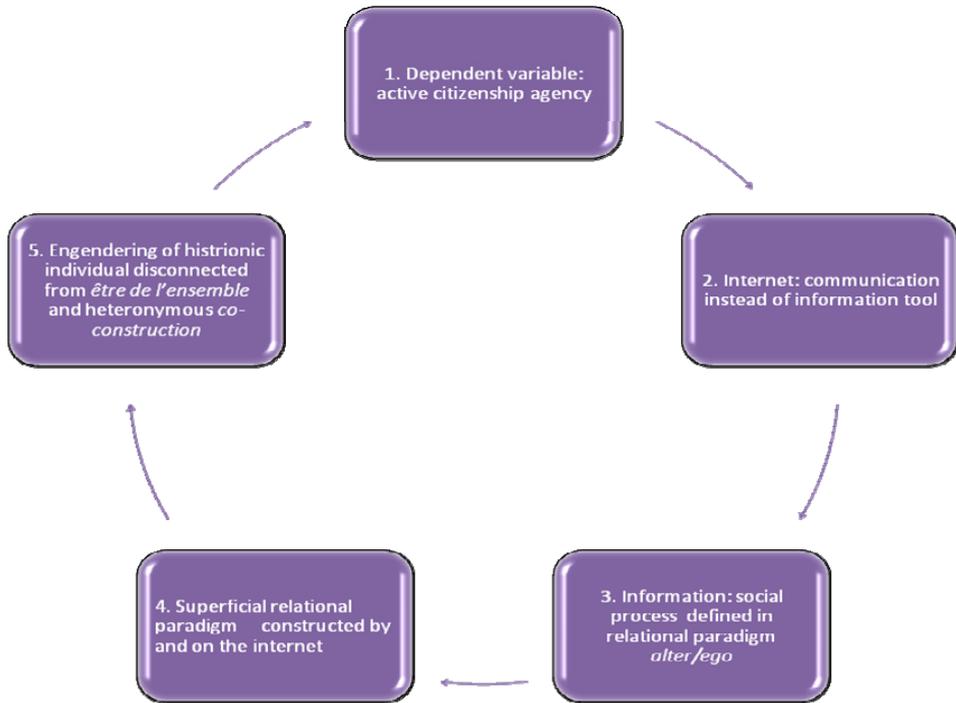
Fig. 3. Model of system theory: coordination modes and realization of active citizenship

Conclusion

        This paper has constructed an argument for why the internet does not constitute a tool for the revitalization of political engagement. The internet remains intrinsically a tool with an embedded marketization. Thus, it accentuates the retreat of individuals within the private sphere and increases the consumerist conception of civic participation (Rosanvallon, 2006). To enhance political participation, there is an imperious need to refocus on human agency. The technological determinism *per se* does not exist rather technology enforces cognitive and social pre-existing practices. Information is constructed within a social process and is defined within the relational paradigm of *alter/ego*. The internet cannot substitute itself to this relation that implies the agent and his cognitive analytical capacities. Furthermore, the internet is the product of the elite and of society and it can in turn only perpetuate this construction which clusters the individual within a narcissistic stage. *"The internet changes nothing on its own, but it can amplify existing forces, and those amplified forces might change something"* (Agre, 2002: 317).

In the frame of future cogitations, an option would be to suggest that technologies must integrate a mechanism enabling self-sustenance, thereby ensuring the increase in the level of cognitive analysis, which would preclude the risk of heteronomy.

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ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION IN POST - COMMUNIST ROMANIA

ALEXANDRA DARIA POP[*]

ABSTRACT. The present research aims to identify the existence of a relationship between electoral participation in Romania and a number of factors, which were divided into institutional factors and non – institutional factors. An interpretation of the data obtained after an analysis of the electoral law and the scores of participation from four different types of elections (parliamentary, presidential, local and European Parliament elections) and the data obtained through programs such as the Public Opinion Barometer and the Standard Eurobarometer, leads us to the conclusion that electoral participation in Romania is influenced by the type of election and the voter's confidence in the most important political institutions, but it cannot be associated with the electoral system used in elections and with the Romanians' interest in politics.

Keywords: elections, political participation, institutional trust, political interest.

Introduction

Political participation is one of the foundation stones of any democratic state. The charm of democracy consists in giving all citizens equal opportunities for participation and involvement in politics and also allowing every single citizen to decide if he wants to participate in politics, or not. Unlike authoritarian or totalitarian states, in a democracy people have the opportunity to choose the way in which they want to express their will.

Any state that calls itself a democratic one, requires citizen involvement, which is necessary for the proper functioning of the regime. Therefore, the drastic decrease in participation that is faced by many countries, is considered a serious democratic problem. In Romania, the situation is quite similar. Although the first post-communist elections in our country recorded a massive turnout, the rates of participation decreased considerably, and the last parliamentary elections recorded the lowest score of participation in the history of post–communist Romania – a 40% voter turnout.

The low support of citizens represents an issue for any democratic state but for young democracies, such as Romania, that depend on the support of its citizens to complete their consolidation, participation is vital. That is why participation must be stimulated, but for this to take place it is necessary to

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identify the causes that led to the present low interest in political participation. The present research aims to highlight the existence of a relationship between electoral participation in Romania and a number of factors that could potentially have an impact on voter turnout. Those factors will be divided into two categories: institutional factors and non – institutional factors.

As far as institutional factors are concerned, this research will analyze the impact of electoral systems on turnout and also the relationship between the type of elections in Romania and electoral participation.

Although there are several studies dealing with the relationship between electoral systems and political participation, the way in which different electoral systems affect participation were never fully explained. However, there is a consensus that proportional representation (PR) is the electoral system that boosts electoral participation. Post-communist Romania has tried PR for eighteen years and two years ago chose a mixed electoral type, with single-member districts. Voter turnout in this country, especially in parliamentary elections is steadily declining. Given that a high turnout is a guarantee of the good progress of democracy, to choose an electoral system that could have negative effects on political participation seems difficult to understand.

As far as the other institutional factor is concerned, it is generally assumed that certain types of elections generate a greater interest and a higher participation at the elections. In this paper I will try to identify those types of elections.

Regarding non–institutional factors, I will analyze the electorate's confidence in the most important Romanian political institutions and the Romanians' interest in politics. It is well known that Romanians' trust in the political institutions is low and that people distrust some institutions more than others (Mungiu-Pipiddi: 2005). As for the interest in politics, it is assumed that it has decreased over the past years, given that turnout has declined considerably. This paper will try to show that indeed, the low scores of participation were determined by the general lack of interest in politics and the lack of trust in the political institutions, among other factors.

The paper debuts with the presentation of the general theory underlying the research and is followed by the data design. The method I chose for testing my hypotheses is the method of data analysis. I worked with data obtained from the results of all ballots from 1990 to 2008 (referendums were not included in the analysis) and through programmes such as the Public Opinion Barometer and the Standard Eurobarometer. At the end of the paper the data obtained will be analyzed and interpreted.

Finally, it must be specified that a study on political participation in Romania is important considering that there aren't many researches on this topic. Electoral participation is particularly important for a young democracy and therefore the factors that caused the decline of it must be indentified and understood, and my study represents a modest contribution in this respect.

Political participation- definitions and classifications

Political participation is one of the basic ideals of democracy. Therefore, a state in which citizens' involvement in politics exists only formally or it doesn't exist at all, cannot be called a democratic state. Although political participation in democracy is moderate (lately in decline), it is a voluntary act and not an obligation, as it is in authoritarian and totalitarian systems (Hague, Harop: 2004). Citizens have the chance to get involved in the political life if they want to make their voices heard, but they may also decide not to participate if they don't want to.

Although, we tend to identify political participation with electoral participation, it is important to know that participation is a larger concept that includes various forms of involvement in politics (Hague, Harop: 2004).

Political participation includes all the forms by which citizens can advance their interests (Finkel: 1987), and that can influence the composition of governments and the actions of those who govern (Verba, Nie and Kim: 1971). Some authors consider that the term political participation includes all the actions that citizens take in order to influence the political output, even the extreme ones, such as scandals and revolution. (Kashfir: 1979).

There are several classifications of the types of political participation. A classification I mention is the one made by Finkel in 1987. Finkel grouped the forms of participation in non-violent forms (such as voting, participation in campaigns, peaceful protests) and violent ones (such as violent protests, boycotts, blocking traffic).

Another classification that is often cited in various studies related to political participation was made by Dalton in 1996. Dalton divided the activities that are linked to political participation in conventional or unconventional ones. Conventional activities include: electoral participation (the most widespread form of participation), involvement in campaigns (an extension of electoral participation which includes any activity that has an electoral purpose), communal activities (involvement in certain groups that aims to solve certain social problems), contacting government officials.

Unconventional activities include activities such as protests, demonstrations, strikes, boycotts.

None of the activities mentioned should be ignored, as they are all part of the democratic process. However, voting is the subject of this research and therefore a more detailed description of this phenomenon is required.

Electoral participation - the causes of its decline

The most widespread form of political participation is the electoral participation (voting). Generally speaking, the vote is a social choice, through which an option, an opinion is expressed (Bulai: 1999).

Political voting is the act by which citizens become active participants in the decision-making process (Almond and Verba: 1963). By voting, citizens express their support for certain candidates, parties or political motions and choose those who best represent their interests.

High turnout is considered by some authors an indicator of other forms of participation, (Alford and Lee: 1968), considering that citizens that vote are generally interested in politics and therefore engage in other political activities such as participating in campaigns or various organizations. Turnout is also regarded as an indicator of the quality of democracy, by showing the degree to which citizens are interested to be represented and that is why the drastic decline of participation has sparked concern in some democracies. Most reactions appeared in the USA where although the restrictions upon Afro-Americans disappeared since the '60s, the electorate is more educated and the registration rules for voting have been simplified, turnout is lowering (Abramson and Aldrich: 1982). The situation is similar in many European countries including the young democracies that emerged from the third wave of democratization. In these countries the first post-communist elections recorded massive electoral participation, but turnout has decreased considerably since then.

Factors influencing participation

The factors influencing participation can be divided into two broad categories: cultural factors and institutional factors.

Cultural factors (attitudes in politics, political culture) can explain to some extent the big differences in political participation between states. With regard to cultural attitudes, it is known that some groups are more likely to vote than other groups. For example, research in this field has shown that people with higher socioeconomic status tend to participate more (Lijphart: 1997) Educations also plays an important role, better educates and informed people being more likely to participate in elections than those who don't know much about the electoral process or the politic life (Norris: 2004).

Interest in policy can also be considered a cultural factor that may influence participation. However, the general opinion is that people are not very interested in politics, and therefore, they participate driven by emotional reasons (such as the civic duty or sympathy for a party or politician) and not because they thing that their vote will affect the political output (Almond and Verba: 1963).

Just as people have different political attitudes, each state has its own political culture. According to Almond and Verba (1963) the political culture of a country represents not only to the political system but also to people's feelings and evaluations. The authors describe three types of political culture:

the parochial one (in which individuals are not interested in politics and have no expectations from the political system), the dependent one (in which citizens are aware of the government activities but their relationship with the system is passive), the participatory one (people are interested in both the inputs and the outputs of the system). Each type of political culture is in harmony with a certain type of political system and the type of political culture that we are interested in – the participatory one- goes hand in hand with democracy. Almond and Verba also explain that these three types of cultures represent the ideal types, but in reality, a political culture combines elements from all three types of culture, in different percentages.

We can thus say that some countries have more participatory cultures than others. Generally high participation rates show greater political interest and greater satisfaction with the political institutions (Verba and Pye: 1965). If higher rates of participation indicate grater satisfaction with the political life, lower rates indicate an apathetic electorate. (Jackman: 1987)

Some authors consider that the national differences in participation are mainly the result of different institutional policies. Analyzing participation in 19 democracies over the 60's and 70's, Jackman (1897) concludes that the institutional factors that influence the vote in different manners are: the electoral system, the type of the party system, the existence or nonexistence of compulsory voting, unicameral or bicameral parliamentary and the existence of nationally competitive electoral districts.

Some authors have gone further, proposing some institutional solutions that could increase turnout, such as: less complicated voting registration rules (for the United States), less frequent elections, voting during weekends, proportional representation electoral system or even compulsory voting (Lijphart: 1997).

Electoral systems and their effects on electoral participation

The impact of electoral systems has always been a controversial topic. When we ask "Which electoral system best supports democracy?", the answers vary and there is certainty that consensus is unlikely to be reached very soon. Those who support a majority election system claim that this system creates the most powerful and effective governance. On the other hand, supporters of more proportional systems stress the importance of fair social representation (Norris: 1997).

As far as the impact of electoral systems on participation is concerned, it seems that a consensus was reached. Most authors agree upon the fact that electoral systems have a strong impact on participation, and many of those who studied this relationship started from the assumption that proportional representation has a positive effect on participation. In order to better understand

the nature of the relationship between the electoral systems and political participation, each type of electoral system must be studied independently, with its pros and cons.

Electoral systems – a classification

The electoral systems are methods by which the political representation is achieved. There is a strong link between the political system in a certain country and its electoral system because through electoral participation the voters chose those who will officially represent their interest.

Electoral systems can be classified according to different dimensions. The key dimensions of electoral systems are: electoral formula, district magnitude, ballot structure, unicameral or bicameral legislature, electoral thresholds, the number of legislative seats, closed or opened electoral lists.

This paper will deal more with the electoral formulas because they offer the highest number of variations (Norris: 1997). The electoral formulas are methods of translating votes into parliamentary seats (Cox: 1990) and the classification of this formulas vary from author to author. The classification I decided to use in this research is the one that Pippa Norris made in 1997. The author divided the electoral formulas into four categories: majority formulas, proportional formulas, semi-proportional formulas and mixed formulas.

Majority formulas

The majority election systems are based on the slogan "The winner takes it all" and their basic idea is that in a democracy the will of the majority is more important than a fair representation. In this electoral system voters can choose only one candidate per district. The majority electoral systems are: plurality, second ballot and the alternative vote.

The plurality system also known as "first past the post" is the most popular majority system. It is also the oldest one, has emerged in Britain and it is popular in the Anglo-Saxon world. In a plurality system, the candidate that receives a simple majority of votes (the highest number of votes) wins. This kind of system doesn't require any threshold.

The second ballot system (also called two-round system or runoff voting) is used generally in presidential elections but some countries also use it for parliamentary elections. The system requires candidates an absolute majority of votes (more than 50%) to win. If no candidate is able to obtain more that 50% in the first electoral round, a second round is organized. In the second round participate only the first two candidates that have obtained the higher number of votes. The winner of the second round is the candidate who obtained the largest share of votes.

In the alternative vote, voters are asked to rank the candidates according to their preferences. The candidate who obtains more than 50% is declared the winner. If no candidate has received 50% of the votes, the candidate with the lowest share of votes is eliminated and his votes are redistributed. This process continues until one candidate reaches majority.

Although the majority systems are well known for the strong governments they create they are accused of favoring major parties in the detriment of minor ones, who are often under – represented (Lijphart: 1999).

Proportional Formulas

In proportional voting systems, people vote lists of candidates in multi- member constituencies and seats are distributed proportional to the number of votes received. There are two main types of PR electoral formulas: the highest averages formula and the largest remainder formula (Lijphart: 1999).

The highest average formula is calculated by dividing the number of votes each party received to a number of divisors. The most proportional formula is the Sainte-Laque original formula (divisors of 1,3,5,7, etc.). Sainte-Lague modified formula (divisors 1.4, 3, 5, 7, etc.) is less proportional than the original formula and the least proportional one but also the most common is the d'Hont formula (divisors 1, 2, 3, 4 etc.) (Lihphart, 1990).

The largest remainder formulas use a minimum quota. The most popular quotas are the Droop quota and the Hare quota. The Hare quota is obtained by dividing the total number of valid votes from a constituency by the number of seats allocated. The Droop quota is less proportional as it divides the total number of valid votes by the total number of seats plus one seat.

Proportional representation systems can also be classified according to the lists they use, open or closed ones. If open lists are used, voters may choose to select a particular candidate from the list, if they are closed, voters can only vote for a party (the ranking on the list being made by the party).

Semi proportional and mixed formulas

The semi-proportional formulas are: cumulative voting, single transferable vote and the limited vote.

In cumulative voting, candidates cast a number of votes equal to the number of candidates. Each voter decides how to use his votes: the votes can be divided between candidates or they can be granted to a single candidate. The limited vote is similar to the cumulative one but voters are given fewer votes than the number of candidates. Some authors have classified the cumulative and the limited voting as pluralist systems (Cox, 1990).

The single transferable vote is very much alike the alternative vote, voters prioritizing individual candidates in order of their own preferences. A quota is calculated and if a candidate reaches the quota, he is elected and his surplus votes are transferred to the next preferences. If the seats are not filled, the candidate who received the fewest votes is excluded and his votes are transferred in the same way. The procedure continues until all seats are filled. The single transferable vote system is considered by some authors a proportional system (Lijphart: 1999).

The mixed systems have emerged in an attempt to combine the best of majority and proportional systems. The classic example of a mixed system is the one used in Germany, where half of the seats are distributed using simple plurality system and the other half by using PR.

Another example is the new Romanian electoral system used in parliamentary elections which is a mixed system with uninominal elections. Seats are distributed in two stages, the first stage in which those candidates who received more than 50% in their districts win, and a second one in which the mandates that were not won in the first stage are distributed by calculating the results obtained by the candidates on the basis of the number of votes received within the constituencies.

The impact of electoral systems on participation

The electoral systems are generally compared according to the stability of the governments they create, the proportionality of seats distribution and how representative they are.

The majority systems are appreciated for creating stable and strong governments. This type of electoral systems advantage large parties, and generally the party that wins most seats in parliament governs alone, and its capacity of governing increases because the party can implement easily its policies. Because there is a single governing party, the elections became a real control tool to voters, who can analyze the competence of the leading party and to reward it with another mandate or to punish it by choosing another party (Norris: 2004). This type of system is criticized for the disproportional distribution of legislative seats and for favoring the main parties.

In PR, representation is more accurate and the distribution of parliamentary seats reflects the share of votes that each party received, PR systems thus facilitating the representation of minorities and small parties, even if those parties obtained a relative small share of votes. PR also offers a wider range of alternatives than the pluralistic systems, and if the number of parties is larger, there are more chances that the voters will emphasize with a party and therefore being more motivated to vote (Banducci and Karp: 2009).

For all this reasons and for the fact that these systems help avoid situations in which voters believe their votes were wasted, PR systems are considered to have a positive impact on voter turnout (Birch: 2003).

Among the disadvantages of PR we can include: less stable and effective governments (which are generally coalition governments), less accountability as there are more parties in the government, the legitimization of extremist parties that have the opportunity to be part of the governing bodies (Norris: 2004).

If we strictly refer to the impact of these systems on political participation, we notice that one of the strengths of PR system is the maximizing of turnout. In a study on electoral participation in post-communist democracies, from 2003, Sarah Birch came to the conclusion that the participation scores in PR systems are about 7 percent higher than turnout scores in less proportional systems.

Arend Lijphart (1999) divided representative democracies into two types: consensual democracies, which are based on a PR electoral system, and majoritarian democracies which are based on a majority system. By comparing the two types of democracies the author concludes that as far as political participation is concerned, consensual democracies with their PR system boost participation, which is 7.5 percent higher than in majoritarian democracies.

Once some local jurisdictions drooped pluralist electoral rules in USA and chose a semi-proportional electoral system (cumulative voting) in an attempt to maximize the minority representation, a comparison of the two electoral systems has emerged. One study focused on this issue was made by Bowler, Brockington and Donovan in 2001. The authors tried to observe if after the change was made, voter turnout increased. The conclusion was that semi-proportional systems have a similar effect to PR systems, being associated with higher participation, in this particular case an increase of 5% of turnout being recorder, after the shift to cumulative voting.

Research Design

Data

The present research aims to highlight the existence of a relationship between voter participation in Romania and a series of factors, which I have grouped into institutional factors and non-institutional factors. The electoral systems and the types of elections are part of the former, while trust in institutions and interest in politics are part of the latter.

The research hypotheses of this paper are:

Hypothesis 1: *The electoral system used during elections influences the Romanian electoral participation;*

Hypothesis 2: *The type of election influences the Romanian electoral participation;*

Hypothesis 3: *The low level of the electorate's trust in institutions negatively influences the Romanian electoral participation;*

Hypothesis 4: *The low level of the electorate's interest in politics negatively influences the Romanian electoral participation.*

Data analysis has been chosen as a method for this study. The research instruments were the results of all ballots from 1990 to 2008, with the exception of referendums, in order to prove the decreasing trend of political participation, an analysis of the Romanian electoral legislation and an analysis of data collected through the Barometer of Public Opinion and the Standard Eurobarometer programmes concerning Romanians' interest in politics and levels of trust in institutions. The Romanian electoral legislation has been analyzed as well.

For the period prior to the year of the electoral reform, 2008, data has been collected from the databases of the Open Society Institute during the BPO (Barometer of Public Opinion) programme, which was held between 1994 and 2007. The Public Opinion Barometer is a research and analysis programme concerning the Romanian public opinion and relying on quantitative research and the use of surveys. The BPO surveys have been conducted biannually since 1998, in the months of May and October.

Ten BPO surveys were used in this paper in order to track the evolution of trust in the main Romanian institutions. The surveys that have served this purpose are the following: May 1998, May 1999, May 2000, May 2001, May 2002, May 2003, May 2004, May 2005, May 2006, May 2007.

In order to track the evolution of interest in politics, 6 BPO surveys have been used: October 1998, October 2000, May 2001, May 2004, October 2004, October 2006, October 2007.

Since the BPO programme was completed in 2007, for the years 2008 and 2009 the polls of the Standard Eurobarometer were used. This program initiated in the year 1973. Just as in the case of the BPO, the surveys are conducted biannually. The results are published by the European Commission's Public Analysis Sector. These surveys are seen as important and valuable tools in the shaping of a perspective about the European Union citizens' views regarding different aspects of this issue.[1]

While carrying out this research, two Eurobarometer surveys were used: one conducted in the spring of 2008 and one in the fall of 2009. Interest in politics does not appear in these surveys; trust in institutions appears in both of them.

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[1] Data from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eurobarometer, last accessed on 09/06/2010

Operationalization

Starting from the hypotheses of this paper, the main concepts have been operationalized through the variables found in the databases used.

The concept of political participation has been operationalized through the *voter turnout* variable. The concept of elections has been operationalized through the following variables: *local elections, parliamentary elections, presidential elections, European Parliament elections.* The operationalization of the concept of electoral systems was achieved through the variables: *the majority electoral system, the electoral system with Proportional Representation (PR), the mixed electoral system,* while the operationalization of the concept of trust in institutions was achieved through the variables: trust in political parties, trust in parliament, trust in government, trust in presidency, trust in city halls.

These 5 variables constantly appear in the researched databases, the only exception being the variable of confidence in presidency, which appears in all the BPO databases, but does not in the Eurobarometer.

The concept of interest in politics has been operationalized through the variables: interest in local politics, interest in national politics, general interest in politics. These variables do not appear constantly in the databases. While they appear in some of the BPO polls, they do not in the Eurobarometer ones.

The variables

Before analyzing and interpreting the data, a description of the variables is needed. In the case of the present research, the dependent variable is the electoral participation. The scores of electoral participation will be taken from the official results of parliamentary, presidential, local and European Parliament elections, from 1990 to 2008[2].

In what concerns the independent variables, there is not just one single variable, but 4 independent variables- two institutional variables: the type of election and of the electoral system, and two non-institutional variables: trust in institutions an interest in politics.

Institutional variables

In an attempt to identify a relationship between the type of election and participation, as well as between the electoral system implied and voter turnout, 4 types of elections have been studied within this research (parliamentary, presidential, local and European Parliament elections). In order to better understand the nature of these relationships, each type of election must be studied independently, along with its own electoral system.

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[2] BEC sources

For legislative elections, from 1900 to 2004, the Proportional Representation (PR) system was applied (Law no.373/2004). In the year 2008, the voting system with proportional representation lists was replaced by a mixed electoral system with uninominal voting (Law no.35/2008). In the framework of the new election system, the electoral constituencies were divided in single-member districts for the election of deputies and single-member districts for the election of senators. Only one senator will win out of a single-member district for the election of the Senate, and only one deputy out of a single-member district for the election of the Chamber of Deputies.

The distribution of seats was done in two stages. In the first stage, a candidate had to receive over 50% of the votes of the constituency for the Senate or for the Chamber of Deputies. Moreover, the party or the organization to which the candidate belonged had to surpass the threshold of 5% of the votes received at a national level for the Senate or for the Chamber of Deputies. The distribution of seats which were not won in the first stage took place in the second stage. This distribution was done by calculating the results obtained by the candidates on the basis of the number of votes received within the constituencies.[3]

Although the issue of reforming the electoral system was an older one, the legislation reform itself led to a state of confusion on the voters' side. Despite the fact that surveys showed that the citizens preferred the single-member election system to the party list vote system, participation was lower than in other years. What might be the explanation? Certainly, the fact that the population was poorly informed and did not precisely understand what the new electoral system was about and what changes it implied. The legislation also restricted participation, given that those who were not in place of residence could not vote, while Romanians abroad where given the possibility to participate only if they resided in that specific country, and those who were simply passing through the country could not. (Law 35/2008, article 81).

Although before the elections it was claimed that the new electoral system would be less complex and easier to understand for voters, that it would create a more rigorous candidate selection and it would lead to MPs' individual accountability, numerous discussions appeared after the elections of November 30, 2008, concerning the fact that a significant change had not taken place and voters were still choosing between the candidates supported by their parties.

In the case of presidential elections, the Law no 370/2004 for the election of Romania's President outlines the legal framework necessary for organizing and carrying it out.

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[3] http://www.alegeri.tv/alegeri-parlamentare-2008, last accessed on 06/06/2010

The type of ballot used is the second ballot system. If during the first ballot a candidate receives over 50% of the total number of the votes, he is designated winner of the elections. If none of the candidates obtains this percentage, a second ballot is organized for the two candidates that obtained the majority of the votes during the first ballot. The winner of the second ballot is the candidate who obtains the highest percentage of the votes. According to article 25 of the above-mentioned Law, the Constitutional Court validates the results of the two ballots and the results for the presidential elections.

Voters elect at the polling stations they belong to, in the locality where they reside. If not in residential locality, citizens may vote according to article. 7^1d and $19^5(4)$ at special polling stations. Romanians abroad may vote at special polling stations (article 7^3).

As for the local elections, Law no.67/2004 for the election of local public administration authorities, establishes the legal framework for organizing and carrying out the election of the local public administration authorities. For the election of mayors, a second ballot electoral system is applied. If during the first ballot a candidate obtains over 50% of the total number of votes, he is designated winner of the elections; if none of the candidates obtains this percentage, a second ballot is organized for the two candidates who have received the highest share of votes during the first ballot. The winner of the second ballot is the candidate who obtains the highest percentage of the votes.

Prior to the elections of 2008, the chairmen of County Councils were elected by the County Councils through indirect voting (Law no.67/2004 article 1, paragraph 5) and it is elected through a plurality system. Local and county counsellors are elected through the proportional representation system, on the basis of a poll list.

For the election of the local councils and halls, each locality represents an electoral constituency, and for the election of county councils and of council chairmen, each county and the city of Bucharest represent an electoral constituency (article 10).

According to article 3(3), voters may exclusively vote in the locality which is their place of residence. Article 83 provides for the use of the mobile ballot box for voters unable to travel because of illness or disability.

The European Parliament elections were first conducted in Romania in the year 2007. The general legal framework for organizing and carrying out the European Parliament elections in Romania is stipulated by Law no.33/2007. The electoral system used is that of proportional representation (article 4, paragraph1).

According to article 4(2) Romania represents a single electoral constituency during these elections. Electoral lists are permanent and special (article 9, paragraph1). Polling stations may be organized near institutions such as military

units, hospitals or care centers if there are at least 25 voting citizens in each institution (article 16 paragraph 1). For students studying outside their residence localities, polling stations are organized near campuses (article 16, paragraph 2). Just as in the case of other types of elections, European Parliament elections take place during a single day, on Sunday.

Non-institutional variables

In the case of the present research, there are two non-institutional variables: interest in politics and trust in institutions. As mentioned before, in what concerns trust in institutions, the variation of the level of confidence on the voters' side in a number of public institutions was tracked, more precisely, in the parliament, the government, the presidency, the city hall and in the political parties.

It is known that Romanians' trust in the Romanian institutions is rather low when compared to other European states. However, the level of confidence varies from institution to institution; for instance, the Romanians' skepticism towards the Parliament is well-known (Mungiu-Pippidi: 2005). It is precisely why it is interesting to see whether the different levels of trust in institutions reflect the scores of participation recorded in the 4 different types of elections.

In what concerns interest in politics, the variation in levels of interest in national and local politics, but also the variation in levels of interest in politics in general and whether this variation is also reflected in voter turnout rates represented a matter of interest.

Data analysis

This data analysis was conceived from a quantitative perspective, by means of associations between independent and dependent variables. The analysis was conducted by means of simple association tables.

In the case of trust in institutions and interest in politics, the data was obtained through the SPSS program. The fact that the analysis of the non-institutional variables makes reference only to the period 1998-2009 must also be taken into account. The reason why this period has been chosen was the impossibility of obtaining data for the years prior to 1995 and the unification of the database for 1995-1997 in the Barometer of Public Opinion programme. Given that the year 1996 was an electoral one, using this data may lead to errors n results.

Electoral participation- Electoral system

Electoral participation – Institutional variables

Type of elections	Year	Electoral system	Turnout
Parliamentary	1990	PR	86.19%
	1992	PR	76.29%
	1996	PR	76.01%
	2000	PR	65.31%
	2004	PR	58.51%
	2008	mixed system with uninominal voting	39.20%
Presidential	1990	second ballot system	86.19%
	1992 – First round	second ballot system	76.29%
	1992 - 2nd Round	second ballot system	73.23%
	1996 - First round	second ballot system	76.01%
	1996-Tur 2	second ballot system	75.90%
	2000- First round	second ballot system	65.31%
	2000 – Tur 2	second ballot system	57.50%
	2004 – First round	second ballot system	58.51%
	2004 – Tur 2	second ballot system	55.06%
	2009 – First round	second ballot system	54.38%
	2009 – Tur 2	second ballot system	54.38%
Local	1992	Mayor- second ballot system Counsellers- PR	65.00%
	1996	Mayor- second ballot system Counsellers - PR	56.38%
	2000	Mayor - second ballot system Counsellers - PR	50.86%
	2004	Mayor - second ballot system Counsellers - PR	54.23%
	2008	Mayor - second ballot system County Chairman– first pass the post Counsellers- PR	50.67%
European Parliament elections	2007	PR	29.46%
	2009	PR	27.67%

The types of electoral systems are seen as factors with considerable influence on voter turnout. And specialty literature generally associates PR systems with a higher voter turnout as compared to majority election systems.

The PR poll list system was applied during the Romanian parliamentary elections from 1990 to 2004 and is still in use for the election of local and county counselors and for European Parliament elections as well. The single-member majority two-ballot elections are still applied for the Romanian President's election and for that of the mayors, and for the election of the county council chairmen (since 2008).

A brief glance cast on participation percentages presented in Table I is enough to reveal that participation during presidential and local elections was significantly higher than in the case of parliamentary and European Parliament elections, but the differences in the percentages are related rather to the type of election than to the electoral system, the fact that Romanians' confidence considerably varies from institution to institution being well-known. That is why it is more recommendable to follow the voter turnout evolution in the case of the only election type in Romania in which an electoral system change took place, and that is the parliamentary elections. As mentioned, during the elections of 1990, 1996, 2000 and 2004 a proportional electoral system was applied in Romania. In 2008, this voting system was changed with a mixed electoral system with single-member elections.

A simple comparison of participation scores is enough to observe a worrying decline in voter turnout from one ballot to another. For instance, in 1990, the highest level of electoral participation in Romania was recorded: 86,19%. In 1992, a fall of almost 10% leads to 76, 29%, a score maintained in 1996 as well (76,01%). After 2000, voter turnout scores for parliamentary elections fall significantly. Thus, in the year 2000, a voter turnout of a mere 65,31% is recorded, 58,51% in the year 2004, while in 2008, the year of electoral change, the lowest participation score from the history of post-communist parliamentary elections is recorded, a mere 39,20%.

However, comparing participation percentages from one year to the other, it may indeed be asserted that voter turnout decreased after the electoral system reform, but the fact that this took place during a single ballot when this electoral system was applied, as compared to other 5 ballots when proportional representation was used somehow limits this conclusion. Moreover, it must also be taken into account that until 2004, parliamentary elections took place at the same time with the first round of the presidential elections, in which Romanians generally take interest. The legislation on which the new electoral system is based also limited participation, as those who were not in their places of residence could not vote, and Romanians abroad could only vote if they were residents of the countries in question and not if they were simply passing through the country.

Electoral participation - Type of election

The official results of all types of ballots from 1990 to 2008, prove a downward trend in electoral participation during all the types of election.

The most dramatic falls in voter turnout were recorded during parliamentary elections, in which case voter turnout in 2008 was almost 50% lower than in 1990.

A fall in voter turnout was recorded in the case of presidential elections as well. The highest score of participation was reached in 1990 (86, 19%), while the lowest score during the first ballot was that of 2009 (54,38%). During all presidential elections, with the exception of those from 2009, voter turnout for the first ballot was superior to that of the second ballot: in 1992, the difference between the first and the second ballot was of about 3 percentages, in 1996 of about 1 percentage, in 2000- a difference of 8 percentages was recorded, and in 2004- one of 3 percentages. However, in 2009, during the first ballot a voter turnout of 54,38% was recorded, while during the second ballot the percentage was of 58,02%. Although voter turnout at this type of elections has been constantly decreasing since 1990, presidential elections are still the ones with the highest participation scores out of all the elections in Romania.

From 1990 to 2008, participation scores during local elections have proved the most constant. Since 1990 and until the latest elections, voter turnout has continuously decreased (with the exception of the elections of 2004 when the electoral participation was 4% higher than in 2000), but the differences in the percentages are significantly lower in the case of other elections, the highest score of participation, recorded in 1990, being of 65% and the lowest in 2009 (50,67%).

Constant participation at this type of elections may be explained by the confidence local and regional authorities enjoy in Romania, confidence that will be further analyzed throughout this chapter.

During European Parliament elections, the lowest participation scores are recorded in Romania (29,46% in 2007, 27,67% in 2009). The reasons why most Romanians do not participate at this type of election may be that voters are poorly informed about this type of election and about the European Union in general and that debates and public information programs received little attention in the mass media's agenda.[4]

Electoral Participation and the trust in political institutions

As for the Romanians' trust in the main political institutions, scores have been rather low throughout the 12 years taken into account for the analysis. However, trust varies from institution to institution.

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[4] http://www.ziare.com/alegeri/alegeri-europarlamentare-2009/europarlamentare-2009-comisarul-orban-romanii-nu-au-devenit-eurosceptici-778907 date of the last access 11.09.2010

Electoral Participation – Trust in political institutions

YEAR	Trust in parties	Trust in Parliament	Trust in Government	Trust in Presidency	Trust in City Hall	Turnout
1998	10,4	18,9	27,6	40,5	-	
1999	7,6	9,2	11.3	21,1	37, 9	
2000	9,2	9,5	13,3	20,8	35, 1	General elections -65,31% Presidential elections 2nd round – 57.50% Local elections - 50.86%
2001	17,2	33,5	43,4	50, 3	54, 1	
2002	13,2	27,4	37,4	46	49	
2003	12,4	18,7	28,6	42, 7	42, 7	
2004	14,9	23,4	33,9	47, 5	46, 3	General elections -58.51% Presidential elections. r. 2 – 55.06% Local elections - 54.23%
2005	12,4	21, 7	30,6	45, 5	43	
2006	8,8	14,6	20,6	47, 7	47, 2	
2007	11	13, 5	17,5	41, 3	47, 9	Elections for the European Parliament. - 29.46%
2008	18	22	25	-	-	Parliamentary elections - 39.20% Local elections - 50.67%
2009	11	-	17	-	-	Elections for the European Parliament. - 27.67% Presidential. r. 1 -54.38% Presidential. r. 2 -54.38%

Note: From 2000 to 2004 the legislative elections and the first round of the presidential ones occurred on the same date.

Romanians seem to have the highest level of trust in the presidency and the lowest in the parliament and the political parties.

Confidence in city halls has resisted change for the longest period, the highest scores in the level of trust being those recorded in 2001 (54,1%) and the lowest in 2000 (35, 1%). In the case of the other institutions as well, the highest scores in the level of trust were recorded in 2001, while the lowest in 1999 or 2006.

Confidence in presidency has followed a path similar to that of the confidence in city halls. A fall from 40,5% in 1998 to 21,1% in 1999 was recorded and in 2000 the lowest score of trust in this institution was reached (20,8%). 2000 was also the year when one of the most controversial post-communist Romanian presidential elections took place. Out of all the years

taken into account, the highest score of trust in an institution (50,3%) was recorded in the year 2001. From the year 2002 to 2007, trust in presidency was rather constant, remaining at a level of about 40%.

In the case of city halls as well as in the case of presidency, levels of trust in institutions during the years 2008 and 2009 could not be included in the analysis as these variables are not part of the Eurobarometer surveys.

Trust in government has been rather constant throughout the years analyzed. The lowest level of trust was attained in the years 1999 and 2000 (11,3% and 13,3% respectively) and the highest level of trust in 2001 (43,3%). After 2001, the level of trust decreased again, varying between 17% (2009) and 37% (2002).

The parliament remained at a low level of trust. The highest level of trust was of 33% in 2001, while the lowest was of 9,2% in 1999 and 9,5% in 2000. Between 2001 and 2009, the confidence varied between 13,5% (2007) and 27, % (2002). For the year 2009, data concerning the trust in parliament could not be accessed.

Out of all the institutions studied, the political parties record the lowest score, the level of confidence they are given being predominantly negative. The highest level of confidence was reached in 1999 (7,6% is the lowest percentage of trust ever recorded by an institution in this analysis). Interest in parties was constant throughout the entire period taken into account, varying between the highest and the lowest percentage of trust.

Out of all the institutions, parties have the lowest scores of trust, which partly accounts for low participation scores during elections, especially during those that imply political parties instead of individuals. The low confidence in parties should cause concern, as parties are structures that have the role of representing individuals and groups in the parliament, of defending and promoting their interest and that is why they should be perceived as the institutions which come in the closest contact with citizens.

Electoral participation and interest in politics

Table 3.

Electoral Participation – Interest in politics

YEAR	Interest in politics- local level	Interest in politics - national level	Interest in politics- general level	Voter Turnout
1998	18,6	32, 4		
2000	-	-	25, 6	General elections -65,31% Presidential elections round 2 – 57.50% Local elections - 50.86%
2001	29, 2	37, 1		

YEAR	Interest in politics- local level	Interest in politics - national level	Interest in politics- general level	Voter Turnout
2004	20, 4	25, 7	19, 5	General elections -58.51% Presidential elections. r. 2 – 55.06% Local elections - 54.23%
2006			27, 6	
2007	19, 5	23, 1	-	Elections for the European Parliament. - 29.46%

Note: From 2000 to 2004 the legislative elections and the first round of the presidential ones occurred on the same date.

When speaking about politics, either local or national, and about politics in general, data shows that Romanians are not very interested in politics.

The percentages of interest vary from 18% to 37%. Romanians' interest in local politics was 14% lower than interest in national politics in 1998, 8% lower in 2001, 5% lower in 2004 and about 4% lower in the year 2007. It is interesting to notice that Romanians take a higher interest in national politics than in local politics, although political participation is higher in the case of local elections than in that of parliamentary elections.

The scores of interest in politics have proved lower than the actual participation at elections, especially in the case of local elections.

In what concerns politics in general, the maximum level of interest is of a mere 27,6%. Low scores of interest are a proof of the fact that Romanians are not very interested in politics, but the fact that a constant decrease in the level of interest in politics was not recorded (by contrary, interest in politics in general increased), makes it difficult to associate low interest in politics with the decrease of electoral participation.

Data interpretation

An analysis of the data presented showed that *it is rather difficult to associate electoral participation in Romania with a certain type of electoral system*, as participation varies preponderantly depending on the type of election, the institution it implies and less on the electoral system; thus the initial assumptions are ruled out. In order to illustrate this statement, it must be noted that electoral participation is higher in the case of presidential elections which imply a two-ballot majority electoral system and that of local elections which imply a proportional system for the election of counsellors as well as a majority electoral system for the election of the mayors, and since 2008, of the county councils chairmen.

The lowest level of participation is recorded during European Parliament elections, which apply a proportional representation system, but it must also be taken into account that only two ballots of the kind were organized, and Romanians' awareness about this type of elections and subjects generally related to the European Union is not high enough, given that Romania has been part of the European Union for only 3 years.

Legislative elections have recorded the most dramatic participation decrease during the 19 years studied, as participation at this type of elections has halved. If the results of participation at parliamentary elections are compared, depending on the electoral system applied, the conclusion that can be drawn is that participation may be positively associated with a PR electoral system, given that participation has decreased since the passage to a less proportional, mixed, single-member voting system has been made. However, as it was already mentioned, it would be difficult to believe that the electoral system reform is the single cause for the decrease in participation at parliamentary elections, especially given that until now there has been only one ballot during which the mixed electoral system was applied and participation is in a continuous downward trend. These results do not thoroughly confirm the hypothesis according to which the electoral system used during the elections influences electoral participation in Romania.

As far as the relationship between electoral participation and the type of election is concerned, the conclusion may be reached that in Romania, certain types of elections are positively associated with participation. Thus, during local elections the most constant electoral participation was recorded, participation which, although not very high, did not significantly vary, nor did it decrease to the point of causing concern. Participation at presidential elections fell significantly as compared to the 90s', but continues to be higher than 50%.

As mentioned before, the most significant decrease in participation scores were recorded during parliamentary elections and participation decreased from year to year. Nor can European Parliament elections be positively associated with participation, given the fact that they record the lowest participation scores out of all the studied election types. These results confirm the hypothesis according to which the type of election influences electoral participation in Romania.

If one also takes trust in the institutions into account, these conclusions are strengthened and the data analysis shows that Romanians have greater confidence in the city hall and in the presidency, that is precisely in the institutions that are implied in the types of elections which record the highest participation scores. Romanians trust much lesser the parties and the parliament, and elections that generally imply these two institutions; parliamentary and European Parliament elections have the lowest participation scores. *Thus the hypothesis according to which the voters' low level of trust in institutions negatively affects the electoral participation in Romania is confirmed.*

Romanians' interest in politics in general, as well as in local or national politics is rather low. It is interesting to notice that interest in politics cannot be associated with participation at different types of elections, given the fact that Romanians claim to be more interested in national politics than in local politics, but local elections still have the most constant participation scores, which are higher than in the case of parliamentary elections. *The hypothesis according to which the voters' low level of interest in politics negatively influences electoral participation in Romania is not confirmed, as low interest in politics has constantly remained low, but no dramatic changes have been recorded; by contrary, in 2006 the general interest in politics was higher than in the other years analyzed.* Therefore, the decrease in electoral participation in recent years cannot be associated with the Romanians' low level of interest in politics. However, one specification should be considered: data referring to interest in politics were few and that is why results cannot be generalized; a more thorough analysis is necessary, based on more complex data.

After revising the literature and presenting the theory, we expected that out of the analyzed factors the electoral system would have the greatest impact on participation, but the results obtained after the analysis invalidate this assumption. It should be noted that this research analyzes the effect of a small number of factors on electoral participation. A more detailed analysis that would take into account the influence of other factors on the Romanian electoral participation as well (for example, economic and cultural factors) could provide a clearer picture of the causes of a lower voter participation in Romania.

Conclusions

The aim of this paper was the identification of the factors that influence voters' decision on whether to take part in elections or not. In short, the aim of this research was to highlight the existence of a relationship between electoral participation in Romania and a series of factors which were grouped in factors of an institutional nature (electoral systems and types of elections) and non-institutional factors (trust in institutions and interest in politics). The motivation for approaching this subject is to be found in the importance that I believe the awareness of the causes leading to the worrying decline of voter participation in Romania has.

By using the method of data analysis, two of the hypotheses on which this research is based were confirmed. Thus, out of the analyzed institutional factors, only the type of election was positively associated with voter participation and out of the non-institutional ones, trust in institutions.

In what concerns the type of election, the hypothesis according to which the type of election influences voter participation in Romania was confirmed, the conclusion being drawn that presidential and local elections in Romania are positively associated with participation and that they have the most constant and the highest scores of voter turnout. Ever since 1990, an obvious participation decline has been recorded during parliamentary elections, with the participation scores halving, while the European Parliament elections have recorded the lowest participation scores out of all the analyzed types of elections.

The hypothesis according to which the voters' low level of trust in institutions negatively influences voter participation in Romania is also confirmed. Data analysis proves that Romanians' confidence has remained at low levels, trust in parliament and political parties recording scores that can be considered dangerously low for a democratic state. Trust in government is also very low, but it has remained the most constant. Trust in presidency and in city halls is somewhat higher and no trust scores below 20% were recorded in any of these years.

Nevertheless, the hypothesis that voters' low level of interest in politics negatively influences voter participation in Romania is not confirmed, as the interest in politics remained constantly low and no dramatic declines were recorded in recent years; by contrary, general interest in politics has even recorded a slight increase in recent years.

As far as electoral systems are concerned, data analysis has shown that it is rather difficult to associate voter participation in Romania with a certain type of electoral system, as participation has decreased for the majority of election types, irrespective of the electoral system applied. However, if the official results are compared, it is to be noted that those types of elections during which no dramatic declines in voter participation scores were recorded, that is presidential and local elections, use different electoral systems. As for the parliamentary elections, we have concluded that the decline of participation cannot be exclusively explained by replacing the proportional representation system with a mixed system with single-member elections, as the analysis of a single ballot of this type is not enough to reach this conclusion.

As already mentioned in this paper, this research is limited by the complexity of the studied phenomenon. It must also be remembered that this paper did not aim to identify all the factors that influence voter turnout, its purpose being more limited. Future researches on the decline of voter participation in Romania could include the analysis of a vaster series of factors, in order to shape an image as clear as possible of this phenomenon which is particularly important for every democratic society.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM ON THE QUALITY OF THE ELECTORAL PREDICTIONS: ROMANIAN ELECTIONS: 1992 - 2009

ANATOLIE COSCIUG*

ABSTRACT. East Europe is a color stain of the „old" Europe. Here, the dynamism in which the changes take place, makes this part of Europe an extremely interesting one for researchers. In the process of modernizing the post communist political systems, states try out a large spectrum of democratic consolidation patterns in a relatively short time, searching for the right one.

In Romania, the ***change*** of the electoral system was the subject of many disputes, starting with the reasons which justify the change and continuing until the final form. An interesting part of this discussion, concerns the polls. It was presumed that simultaneous with the introduction of the majoritarian system, the accuracy of the electoral predictions will decrease due to the complexity of the new reality.

The communist regime in Romania brought significant mutations at society level. After decades of delay, the polls hardly made a place in the Romanian society's mentality and not rarely / infrequently they are in the center of live disputes in Romanian society. Also among the population but also among the elites, the polls were and still are viewed as manipulation instruments. It was hard to understand what a poll is, what it's limits are, how to interpret the data resulted, but maybe the hardest thing was to understand how, by questioning a small percentage of people you could understand what the whole country's opinion was.

Even though 20 years have passed since polls are a part of our public life, the question „Can we trust public polls" echos as often as it did two decades ago. The rule is that immediately after the publication of the poll results waves of criticism appear and the exception are polls very little disputed.

The most recent elections in 2009 were no exception. This time the most disputed results were those from exit-polls in the second round, when 3 out of 4 institutions indicated as winner the candidate who came out second. Charges of manipulation, partisanship or lack of professionalism and ethics were the basis of ample press articles, TV shows or online discussions.

The question that rises is: does the dynamics of electoral predictions performances have anything to do with the type of electoral system? The hypothesis of the study is that, in the case of elections which use a majoritarian system, the accuracy of electoral predictions will be greater than in the case of the elections in a proportional system.

Keywords: prediction, electoral system, exit – poll, accuracy, poll, forecast, methods

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"If numbers don't govern the world, they at least show us how it is being governed"

Johann Wolfgang Goethe

Introduction

After the fall of communist regimes from Eastern Europe, the most important „direction" of political changes in these states was: to import elements of political system which make the modern states functional, like in Western Europe.

This purpose could have been reached through implementation of series of reforms, which have reflected over the all aspects of social life. The necessity of a market economy, rule of law, a political system with free, fair and periodical election, was the first reforms followed (Ishiyama, 1997).

This reality is the ex-communist states from Eastern Europe adopt ideas and mechanisms already functionally in Western Europe. In relatively short period of time, these states have implemented a lot of „reforms" through all levels, which makes it very interesting for a political scientist.

The political regime in Romania has brought obvious mutations. Regarding the polls, these and other social preoccupations were forbidden. The long extinction from public life have aggravated the process of public refamiliarization with these. Because of this situation, the polls have been watched with large reluctance even after their reappearance (Chelcea, 2000).

There have not existed any elections from 1992 to today in which the polls haven't been the subject of a live disputes. The reasons have been various, from underestimation of a candidate to overestimation of a party, from different results of similar polls to discution about the interdiction of polls in electoral campaign (Dâncu, 2009).

Many researchers notice that a lot of politicians, leaders, journalists but also the public can't understand what is a poll, what is the poll purpose, where are the limits of the poll. Anyway, the most difficulty to understand is how, having asked a group of a few thousands of people, you can find the opinion of a group of a few million people (Chelcea, 2000).

The 2009 election complied the rule: each election born a new dispute about the polls. This time, the principal event was the underestimate of a candidate in runoff exit-polls. From 4 exit-polls, 3 indicated it the wrong winner.

This kind of discussion is determining me to think the estimation error is an important topic for the Romanian society. Considering dozens of written, TV and on line disputes, the naturally question is why these prediction errors exist and what kind of political elements are generating them?

The electoral system, like an element of politic system, can be a source of error? Which elements of electoral system can influence more the accuracy of predictions? These questions have led me to the hypothesis of this study.

The hypothesis which I will test in this study is: in elections in which the majoritarian electoral system is used, the accuracy of election polls will be better than the proportional electoral system.

This essay has like principal purpose, through the context of simultaneous existence of both electoral system in Romania, to study the connection between the electoral system and the error of electoral forecast.

To test the hypothesis I will use 78 polls made in all election between 1992 and 2009. To these polls the forecast error will be measure through 2 methods of error calculation, „candidate error" – based on Method 5 from the Mosteller study and the „non contextual error" developed and used by Traught (NCPP, 2008), (Traugot, 2005).

After the I have measured the estimation error, the error will be analyze in comparative manner for parliamentary election (made in proportional electoral system) and for presidential election (made in majoritarian electoral system).

Based on this assumption, we will see if there is a correlation between the electoral systems used for a type of election and the size of prediction error.

Opinion polls are today the principal method which the public opinion are measured. They are a base of scientific public opinion and a base even of entire political spectrum (Igo, 2006).

The disputes over the forecast results, in Romania or anywhere in a democratic context, take a central position in media, then in public opinion also. It was no little accuse that some institutes of public polling are biased for a candidate/party or they use the dates to manipulate public opinion (Rotariu, 2005).

The advantage of this essay is the data will be analyzed are from the same cultural context, and the results from analyze are unbiased of error like the process of translation the question, the political context, the relevance of election, etc.

The limits of this essay are coming from the type of research – a qualitative one. The relevant effect is that the results are valid just for data included in study.

A history of polls

„…to figure out the quality of a soup it is not necessary to eat the whole soup. It is enough to taste a spoon of soup to realize it's quality, if the soup has been well mixed, so that the soup in the spoon becomes representative…"

The entire existence of polls was just within democratic societies, thanks to their nature. They can't exist in the absence of the researcher's freedom (the freedom in select the topic) or respondents' freedom (they must be convincing that any opinion is legitimate and it can't bring any damage) which is possible just in a democratic society.

Below will be presented the base form of polls with a few information about their appearance and development, very important information in process to study the relation electoral system – forecast error.

1. The opinion poll

If we use the minimal definition, the opinion polls have appeared in USA in 1800, when journalists asked in the street people about their vote intention. A different method was used by „Harrisburg Pennsylvanian" in 1824 (Moore, 1992).

They have sent in a nonsystematic mode the questionnaires to the readers, through mail. In those questionnaires they were asked about the vote intention, following that the readers send back them. This kind of poll was named „straw vote" thanks to its features (Igo, 2006).

The scientific opinion poll has appeared with the doctorate thesis of George Gallup, "An Objective Method for Determining Reader Interest in the Content of a Newspaper" in 1928. That essay has put the theoretic base for the opinion polling method (Wheeler, 1976).

In 1935, Gallup created the first opinion polling institute, AIPO (American Institute of Public Opinion). The success of opinion polling is due to the better prediction in 1936 US election (Herbst, 1993). „Literary Digest" magazine, has used 2 millions interviewees to make a prediction in 1936 US election, AIPO have used 5000 interviewees, but the AIPO prediction was much better than the „Literary Digest" forecast. The method used by „Literary Digest" was "Auto-Telephone System", in which many car and telephone owners were asked (Wheeler, 1976). The AIPO poll was created and conducted by G. Gallup, Elmo Roper and Archibal Crossley. The error of this poll was „just" 6,5%, but the trend was clearly in favor of democratic candidate Franklin D. Roosevelt (Igo, 2006).

The forecast errors for Gallup polls have declined constantly, according to Gallup Institute. The average error for the next 8 elections, from 1936 to 1950, declined to 3,2%. For 1952 – 1970, the average error was 1.7% and 1.2% for 1972 – 1984 (Gallup, 1951) (Perry, 1960), (Gallup, 2007).

In Romania, after a short period in which the opinion polls were used, in interwar period, these have been restricted until the '89 „revolution" (Câmpeanu, Cambes şi Berindei, 1991). Immediately after the '89 „revolution" the first opinion polling institute has appeared, IRSOP – Romanian Institute for Opinion Polling. In the next years, the number of institutes has increased, like IMAS, CSOP, ICCV, CURS, MMT, etc (Bulai, Mihăilescu, 1997).

2. The exit-poll

The exit-poll, or „sondajul final", „sondajul la ieşirea de la urne", „sondajul la urne" - other translation in Romanian for exit-poll - is the poll made during the suffrage (Celcea şi Ivan, 2000).

It has a short history, comparative with opinion poll. The base is also from USA where in 1964 accidentally the first exit-poll was made, when the Maryland state authorities allowed the interviewing of the voters even in the place where they voted (Mitofsky, 1991).

The internalization of the exit-polls was made by NBC Television, in 1973. The following year, Warren J. Mitofsky created a special department at the CNN TV post, which principal work was to make this type of poll. The methodology is special and distinct from the „classic" opinion poll, but both are based upon the same principles, theories. The methodology of exit-polls isn't yet crystallized (Mitofsky, 1991).

In Romania, IRSOP was the first institute who made an exit-poll also, in collaboration with Institut für Angewandte Sozialwissennschaft from Bonn. It included 252 locations and 15962 persons, the average error was just 1,38% for all forecast (Celcea, Ivan, 2000).

Even though this paper will insist on the first two and most used forms of polls, other poll types exist, like „deliberative polls" or „internet polls".

Some error in prevision?

In this essay I will discuss the problem of prediction errors, why they appear, how they can be avoided, the impact of error, a classification and how the accuracy can be analyzed.

No matter whether it's about the governance of a society, about the assuming some entrepreneurial risks or taking products of the market, the opinion polls are used like a very useful tool in the decisional process, especially for the argumentative/ decision making part.

I think a good discussion about the forecast error was done for Verba. He affirms that sample research give, with „determinate" approximation a public representation near the moment reality in which the study is made. The preference for this kind of research is due to error reduction from methodology (Verba, 1995).

The scientific sample is characteristic for both poll and exit-poll. The biased error is balking from 2 methods: there is no process for self-selection and the operator is given clear indications about the selection step (King et all., 1994).

Anyway, the respondents aren't perfectly representative. Some are hard to find, other are naturally removed from social life, many don't want to answer when they are found[1], etc. These „ghostly respondents" are always represented in polls results through divers mechanisms, for example the responds statistically weight (Brehm, 1993).

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[1] An average of the last research made by National Opinion Research Center, show a rate of 25-30 % non-respondents (Verba, 1995) in USA

1. The public opinion polls and the prediction for vote behavior

The voting behavior is very hard to forespeak at the individual level. Anyway, when we talk about groups, there is a determination at the statistic level of groups. If we „enclose" the individual into a group through „correct" criteria, the possibility to anticipate the way in which he will vote increases (Chelcea, 2000).

To correctly understand the results of a poll, besides the percentage, the actual situation has to be taken into account and the diachronically part of this interpretation-time evolution in time (trend), campaign dynamism, the period until the elections time, etc (Aldea et all, 2001).

Specific for this type of research is the fact that the final results are reached after a process which includes two parts. Respecting the steps and applying the necessary methodology for respecting the steps is the key factor which determines the accuracy of prediction.

This part is made out of four steps which in general are responsible for sketching at a macro level the results: selecting and correctly wording of the questions sample, choosing and analyzing the data. These are the four step that must be followed in order to get valid predictions at a macro level (Rotariu, Iluț, 1997).
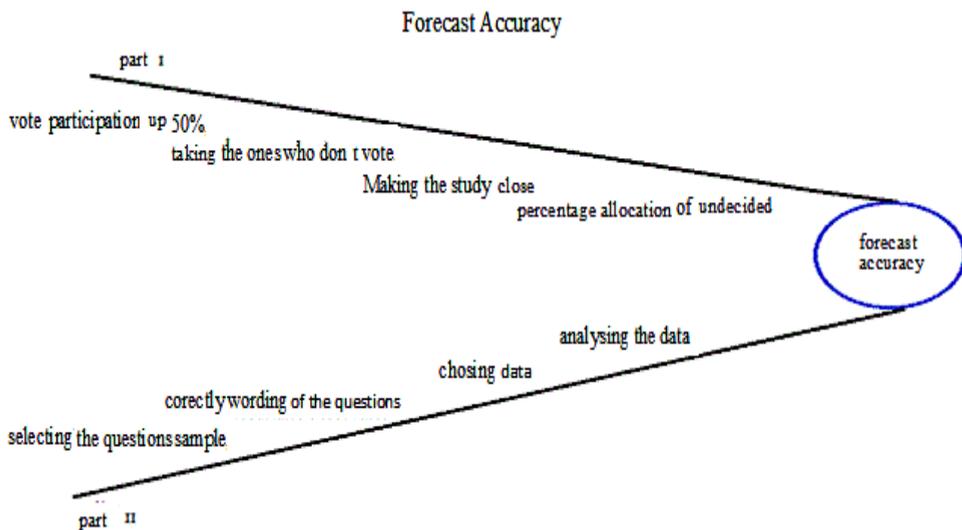
The second part is composed of 4 stages. Making the study as close as to the time of the elections as possible, voter participation bigger than 50%, taking the ones who do not vote, percentage allocation (in different stages) of those who declare themselves undecided (Sandu, 2008).

We must notice the fact that, after a long period of delay, once they have appeared in the public Romanian life, polls have rapidly become the object of public interest but also a debate and dispute theme. Even after 20 years from their entering the public scene, the question «can we trust the polls?» still echoes.

Measuring prediction errors

Prediction errors can certainly be measured. In this part of the paper I will make a short historic of the methods used to measure errors and of studies which had the purpose to analyze the accuracy of electoral predictions.

The methods to analyze electoral accuracy of a prediction are divers, but none is perfect. Many studies bring new methods in the measuring process or better the existing ones (Mitofsky, 1998).

For the elections after 1948, considered to be „boundary stones", series of studies have been made which analyzed the quality of the predictions (Gallup, 2007).

At the beginning, studies were more limiting, including only the polls made for a set of elections, reaching studies with more sets of elections, more types of elections, etc. The next step was to include in the studies elections from other countries, making comparative researches (Igo, 2006).

1. The study of predictions accuracy

In this chapter I will chronologically present the emergence and evolution of the studies about prediction errors, as they are relevant to the study. I wanted to include which create, innovate and better the methods of calculating the errors.

Calculating error methods are divided in two classes, one which appears in 1949 and the other in 1994. A third class was recently created, in 2005 (Mosteller et all, 1949), (Lau, 1994), (Kennedy, Martin and Traugott, 2005).

USA 1948. The first process of evaluating electoral prediction errors took place because of the loud failure of the electoral prediction. The disparity between the predictions and the real results was quickly followed by a group of researchers and statisticians which was intended to be a quick evaluation of the procedures used by polls and the way they can be fixed (Martin et all, 2005).

In just five weeks, the released to publicity a report on the primary 8 ways a poll can be evaluated from the accuracy perspective. The report was published by „Social Science Research Council" (Mosteller et all, 1949).

The weak performance of the election predictions in 1980 brought to the „Panel on Survey Measurement of Subjective Phenomena" commission conclusion of the necessity to establish a commission to evaluate the performances and make a periodic review of the poll method (Turner and Martin, 1985).

The research series is continued through the work of Robert M. Worcester (1983) who includes in his research 96 electoral polls done in Australia, France, Germany, Great Britain, Japan and Holland. The elections taken into account are the ones after 1948 until the moment of the research.

To this step elections from the same period in Canada, New Zeeland, Australia and USA were added. 68 more polls made in those countries were added. For this research, Buchanan (1986) uses 4 methods to analyze the accuracy. The 155 predictions included in the study were analyzed from the perspective of their accuracy (Gelman and King, 1993).

In a study in which 430 polls were included for accuracy analysis, national, state and local polls, Crespi (1988) used methods number 1, 3 and 6 in Monsteller's study to calculate the accuracy (Callegaro and Gasperoni, 2008).

All the studies presented before are part of the first class of error calculating methods (Callegaro şi Gasperoni, 2008). The second estimation quality calculating methods class is based on the Lau Method. This study sets the bases for the second methods class (Lau, 1994).

Other studies at a international level, continuing the chronological order, which used the Mosteller methods are: Jowell et al. (1993) for the 1992 elections in Great Britain; Curtice (1997) who analyzes the UK elections from 1945 to 1997; Crewe (1997) and (2005) who uses methods 1, 3 and 5 for the same elections in the UK.

At a international level, Gibowski (1989) used method number 5 for West Germany, Beltran and Valdivia (1999) for the 1994 elections and the parliamentary ones in 1997; McElroy and Marsh (2003) with the third method for Ireland, for 2003 elections; Magalhaes (2005) methods 3 and 5 for Portugal 1991-2004; Durand, Blais, şi Larochelle (2004) for the presidential elections in France 2002; Callegaro and Gasperoni (2008) analyses the 2006 Italy elections.

The weak accuracy of the predictions for presidential elections in USA 1996, raised the problem if the 1996 predictions weren't worse than the ones in 1848 (Mitofsky, 1998). With this occasion, Mitofsky shows a lack of consensus over the best calculation method for the prediction errors. He uses 4 of the 8 prediction error calculation methods from Monsteller's study, comparing their performance on the same elections sets (Panagakis, 1999). In 2000 a study containing 79 state polls was made for the USA presidential elections. The study used as error calculation method „candidate's error" (Rademacher and Smith, 2001).

Another important study based on Lau's method, even though in another form, was used by Durand (2002).

The necessity of having correct predictions, in the USA, lead to the creation of NCPP. National Council on Public Polls has the role of establishing the professional standards of making public polls. This institution has created

a series of „Electoral Reports" through which all elections are analyzed form the predictions accuracy perspective, from 1936 to 2008 (NCPP, 2008). A new way of measuring prediction accuracy, called method (A) was launched in the study „A Review and Proposal for a New Measure of Poll Accuracy" (Traugot, 2005).

2. Approaches in predictions accuracy calculation

Some of the methods used show the error nature, others show only that the predictions were wrong. Another series of methods reveal candidates errors or the company errors that made the study, when other types show the elections errors. Many methods have been used to analyze the quality of the predictions due to the lack of a perfect one (Traugott, 2001). A series of studies show that of all the methods presented in the Social Science Research Council (SSRC) study, methods 3 and 5 of the eight are the ones which give the best results regarding the electoral estimations accuracy analysis. (Kennedy, Martin and Traugott, 2005).

From these two, method 5 is the one which gets the most support from the scientists. In its support, two primary arguments are brought: a distribution of indecisive respondents is not necessary, which means it not necessary to create hypothesis regarding the undecided from the pre-electoral polls and does not punish the ones who don't do it well (Mitofsky, 1998). All polls that took place 2 weeks before the elections day were included in the studies done by NCPP (NCPP, 2008). Like a measure way they used „ candidate's error" and something more recent„ total error" (Chelcea, Ivan, 2000).

The method„ Candidate's Error" is similar to the fifth method in Mosteller's study, except the fact that the difference between the differences is divided by two. The other method in the NCPP studies, „ total error" is similar to the third method in Mosteller's study (NCPP, 2008).

Besides a rough version of method number 5 in Mosteller's study, Buchanan introduces another two simple methods. „Systematic error" is one of the two (Buchanan 1986). The second one is „ non-systematic error".

The team lead by Traugott has as primary result the measurement method (A). Besides this it proposes a measurement model less specific to a context (Traugott and Wlezien, 2009).

3. Methods selection

For this study I will take into account the 8 calculation methods for prediction errors presented before. Once I've tested them I was able to notice that some act are similar to others or are a proportional part of them, some can' t be applied to the autochthon electoral system and that some are derivatives from others. Due to similarities between method 5 in SSRC study and „candidate's

error" I will use „candidate's error" model in this study. The difference between the two is the fact that the „candidate's error" measure value represents half of Mosteller's[2] „method 5" measurement value.

Total error is close to method 3 in Mosteller's study but I chose not to use any of the two due to criticism to the functioning way (NCPP, 2008), (Mitofsky, 1998). „Systematic error"[3] acts like „non-contextual error" and „non-systematic error" developed by Buchanan is a good calculation method based on probability theory and doesn't take into account the actual performance of estimations (Buchanan, 1986) (Gelman and King, 1993).

Measurement (A) is a distinct method because it was specially built to be applied only to the USA context (Traugot, 2005), which makes is inapplicable to the Romanian context. The other method developed called „non-contextual error" can be applied to the Romanian context.

In the situations of elections with only two candidates (main example - second ballot of the presidential elections), the values of „candidate's error", „non-contextual error" and „systematic error" can be identical[4]. In this study the values are identical just in the casa of the presidential elections in 2000, second ballot.

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[2] Method 5 cand be mathematicaly interpreted as $(RP1\text{-}RP2)\text{-}(RF1\text{-}RF2)$ and candidate's error as $\frac{(RP1\text{-}RP2)\text{-}(RF1\text{-}RF2)}{2}$

[3] Systematic error is defined as the standard deviation of individual errors from the mean error in a series of elections. It shows how the predictions largely fluctuate, based on the systematic error and can be calculated using the formula: $\frac{X1 + X2 + X3 + ...Xn}{n}$, n is the number of polls made for a ballot. X is calculated using the formula X= Y1–Y2, where Y1 means the value of the percentage obtained in a poll and Y2– the value of the percentage obtained in elections. Sign is taken into account.

[4] Let's take the exemple of the 2000 elections: the following table contains results of polls made and percentage obtained by candidates in elections. If we apply the method „candidate's error" we obtain a value of 3,42 of the prediction error. For the „systematic error" I will obtain the same value (2,17 +3,17+3,17+5,17/ 4) for each candidate, and for the „non-contextual error" -3,42 for one candidate and 3,42 for the other (66,83-70,02 şi 33,17-29,75).

Alegeri 2000

	Ion Iliescu	C.V. Tudor
Rezultate Finale	66,83%	33,17%
IRSOP, 3–6 dec	69%	31%
CURS, 5–6 dec	70%	30%
IMAS, 10 dec	70%	30%
INSOMAR, 10 dec	72%	28%

However, the values of the „non-contextual error" and the „systematic error" are identical no matter the context created in the elections. This thing will make me choose just the first one, „ the non-contextual error" to use in the study. The two methods can be used in the process of calculating the predictions accuracy are „non-contextual error" and „candidate's error".

4. Accuracy calculation

Next, starting from the definitions given by authors to these two calculation methods for predictions quality, I will built mathematical formulas based on which I will calculate the predictions accuracy.

The measurement called „candidate's error" [5] is calculated as the difference between two differences $\frac{(RP1-RP2) - (RF1-RF2)}{2}$, where RP1 is the precise result in polls for the first candidate, RP2 the precise result for the second candidate (in the order in which they appear in the polls top), and for the same candidates, in the same order, RF1 is the final result of the first candidate and RF2 the final result obtained by the second candidate, divided by two and without taking into consideration the sign.

The series of studies done by NCPP use „candidate's error" as the primary prediction accuracy measurement. This fact says a lot about the method's possibilities: it can include studies done using many poll methods (interviews, telephone polls, classic polls, etc) it doesn't need assumptions regarding placing the „undecided" category, in the case of pre-electoral polls, and when a assumption is necessary, given according to the existing percentage distribution, it doesn't need assumptions regarding the significance of the concept „ relevant parties" (Mitofsky, 1999).

The disadvantage of this measurement is the fact that it focuses on the results proximity in elections-poll results, which leads to a bad error size value (Martin, Traugott, Kennedy, 2005).

„The non-contextual error" [6] is calculated using the formula **RF-RS**, where **RF** is the value of the candidate's percentage obtained in the elections (final results). **RS** is built as a mean of percentage values obtained by the first

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[5] Shows how far the difference of the predicted results of the first two candidates is of the difference of the final results of the same candidates. Farther more, the resulted value from the diference of the two differences is divided by two to obtain a value that can be applyed to each percentage of the candidate. (Chelcea, Ivan, 2000)

[6] Definet as the vote percentage obtained by the first candidate, of the total of votes obtained by the first two candidates minus the mean of the percentages of the leading candidate, of the total indicated for the first two placed candidates in polls. dintre totalul indicat primilor doi candidați în sondaj - personal translation after „we compute the difference between the leading candidate's vote share of the total vote for the top two candidates and the average of the leading candidate's share of poll support for the top two candidates"

candidate in all the polls included in the study, $RS = \frac{S1+S2+S3...+Sn}{n}$, where S1, S2 ... are the percentage values of the candidate included in the study, and n is the total number of polls included.

It is considered to be a good method because it catches quite exactly the distortions that intervene, but it minimizes the error size because there is a risk that a candidate's overestimate be canceled by the underestimate of the other candidate (Buchanan, 1986).

The electoral system

A system results are directly influenced by the systems rules. This idea has been researched in different studies, in distinctive domains, and the primary conclusion was that system rules really influence its results.

Technical aspects of a system, electoral system for example, influence governance quality, political representation, level of trust that citizens have in institutions, etc.

Even though the number of electoral systems is quite large, there are different ideas of what a electoral system means and what it is made out of, important for this research is just the class of majoritarian electoral systems and the class of proportional systems. Next I will present their primary characteristics, so that I can fit the elections taken into account in one of the two categories.

Participative democracies have as base principle free, correct, periodic elections. Elections are the process through which the governance assures its legitimacy necessary in a democratic governing system (Sorescu, 2006).

The way in which, technically, the number of votes is transformed in places in the politicians choosing process is an electoral system (Farrell, 2001).

The primary electoral system analysis, from the components point of view, are the following elements: electoral formulas-the way in which votes are transformed in leading places, the size/structure of the electorate - criteria which allocates places in the legislative, electoral limit relative to the votes which must be obtained by a party to enter the Parliament and the number of electable seats, which have to be allocated (Lijphart, 2000).

The different weight of these elements, of combinations between them or the greater relevance of one in rapport with the other is the basis of electoral systems classifications. The primary types of electoral systems are the proportional and the majority ones (Farrell, 2001)

In a minimalist sense, when talked about the majority system, we notice the fact that the candidate's performance has a bigger weight than the parties performance in sketching the final results, and in allocating seats in public functions (Lavinia and Vancea, 2009).

The same authors conclude that for the proportional system, the situation is reversed, the proportion of parties gained votes have a larger importance in establishing the results.

1. Majority electoral systems

The majority electoral system is based on the principle that, in sketching the final results, the candidate and not the party has the largest contribution (Sorescu, 2006).

The majoritarian system is different from other types of systems in a series of characteristics. In my opinion, the main characteristic is that it functions on a simple principle, which makes it appreciated by the public, principle defined as „first past the post". Whatever the report between the votes of a candidate and the number of votes at a national level is, a candidate wins if he gets the highest number of votes in an electorate.

The battle is mainly between the candidates and not the parties, and the differences between the first and second place is most of the times a very small one. At a macro level, significant differences appear between the number of votes gained by a party and the number of seats that will be distributed to the party (Norris, 1997).

The majoritarian system functions on the principle of simple majority, 50% +1 of the votes, to designate the winner. Besides the proportional system, the relation between the number of votes and the number of seats obtained is tighter. In the case in which 50%+1 can't be reached, were alternative vote is not used, a second ballot will be necessary (Farrell, 2001).

2. Proportional electoral systems

In the class of the proportional electoral systems, the main characteristic is the fact that parties are chosen and not candidates, and the votes raised by parties have a larger impact in defining the final results (Lavinia and Vancea, 2009).

In the list electoral system, parties establish the candidate's list for each electorate. Especially a party is voted and not a candidate (Norris, 1997).

The electoral system with two votes means that each voter has the right to two votes, one being used to choose the party lists and the other in electing a candidate in an electorate (Lijphart, 2000).

The transferable unique vote has as base principle the Droop formula. This means that for a candidate to be elected it must pass a certain limit, which is calculated using the formula: „number of valid votes/ at the number of votes given to each electorate" everything + 1. Candidates from different parties can be elected (Comșa, 2010).

I chose to define only the majority and the proportional electoral systems because they are the only ones I need for my research, but I remind that mixed electoral systems exist.

The Romanian electoral system

Like in any other democracy, vote is universal, direct, equal, secret and freely expressed. The right to vote belongs to adult people, over 18, and which haven't lost this right (Romanian Constitution, 2003)

The transition from an ex-communist country to a democratic one, determines the state to adopt a large series of politics which regard the electoral system. In Romania, there are three types of elections, depending on their role: parliamentary, presidential and local.

1. Parliament elections

Parliamentary elections take place every four years and were proportional, using lists before 2008. Each party presents a list of candidates for each electorate, in total 42. All the political parties that pass the 5% limit (3 % between 1990 - 1996 or 8% for coalitions) enter the Parliament (Boc and Curt, 2007).

The two chambers have different parliamentary numbers. The representation norm is of 1 to 70000 in the deputy's case and 1 to 160000 for senators (Deleanu, 2004).

Distribution takes place on two levels, a national one and a electorate one. At each electorate, for each Chamber, the coefficient is calculated by dividing the number of valid votes of the parties that have passed the limit to the number of seats allocated to that electorate. The remaining are gathered at a national level and are distributed after the d'Hondt formula (Comsa, 2010).

With the 2008 elections, the change of the electoral system was tried out. So, the parliamentary elections in 2008 took place following a new electoral law. From this reason, in the districtual electorates other electorates were designed where parties could propose a candidate (Târâlă, 2009).

The seat distribution took place based on a mixed proportional system, with a majority vote in the multi-member electorates. If a candidate wins 50%+1 votes, he will automatic enter the Parliament. In the case in which the number of votes doesn't reach this level, votes will be added to parties to create a national distribution (Artimof, 2009).

Changing the electoral system generated some anomalies. One of them is the fact that in a majoritary college in a electorate from Arad two candidates were elected (Cosmin, 2010).

The 2008 parliamentary elections can be considered rather proportional because of a big weight to results obtained by parties compared to the weight of results obtained by candidates (Lavinia and Vancea, 2009).

This aspect determines me to consider all parliamentary elections, as elections with an proportional electoral system. In this study I will use this classification to test my hypothesis.

2. Presidential elections

Any Romanian can run for president, provided that they are 35 and have gathered at least 200000 signatures of citizens with the right to vote (Romanian Constitution, 2003).

Presidential elections take place from 5 to 5 years, after the elections in 2004. Before 2004, presidential elections took place at once with the parliamentary ones.

In the presidential elections a majority system is used, with the possibility of a second ballot. If no candidate is elected with the minimum of 50%+1 of the valid votes, a second ballot will take place.

In the second ballot, only the candidates on the first two places according to the number of votes participate. Excepting the 1990 elections, for all the other ones, the second ballot was necessary.

Because of presidential ballots characteristics, I will qualify all presidential elections as being part of the class of elections that took place in a majority system.

3. Conclusions

From the explanations about the electoral system in general, and the Romanian one in particular, two important conclusions come out. First of all, due to characteristics of the context in which the parliamentary elections take place, they will be considered as taking place following the principles of the proportional system.

Because the candidate is more important in establishing the final result than the party and due tu other characteristics specific for the majority class systems, presidential elections will be considered as being part of this class.

With these conclusions I will test the hypothesis. Parliamentary elections will be analyzed as proportional elections where I expect to find greater errors than in the case of presidential elections, which I will analyze as majority elections.

The electoral system and prediction errors

When discrepancies between the evaluation of poll and the final results appear, the principal explanations given are related to "sampling defects", errors which have appeared due to social desirability, last moment changes in the electorate's preferences (Beltran, Valdivia, 1999).

The hypothesis I'm testing in this paper analyses prediction errors, in terms of the electoral system. Three primary ideas exist, based on which I argue that there must be a correlation between the accuracy of a poll and the electoral system in which the elections take place.

Beyond the structural differences between the two classes of systems, there are also different in the way the public perceives them. The majoritarian system, which is based on the principal „first past the post"[7], is the first system that appeared chronologically speaking.

This type of system, especially the way it functions, is easy to understand, being used beyond the elections, in ordinary life. It is not necessary to be politically sophisticated to understand and apply such a principal when you're in the situation of making a choice (Lijphart, 2000).

What I understand from this difference in seeing the functioning way of the two classes of electoral systems, is that a lot of individuals understand or not , in a bigger or smaller degree, which is the mechanism of voting that they are about to give.

Giovani Sartori classifies the electoral systems according to the character of coercion they have. Considering that electoral systems can exercise influences on the electors, then the class of majoritarian electoral systems is a hard one because of the conditioning of electors' behavior. The proportional systems class is „weak" because of the weak pressures or lack of pressure on electors. The logic it is based on is this one: in the majoritarian system if you don't vote for the winner you will not be represented (Sartori, 1986).

The electoral system has effects on vote participation. A study done by IDEA in 1997 empirically proved that in proportional systems vote participation is 9% bigger than in majoritarian ones. One of the primary factors of predictions is an estimation as correctly as possibly (Mungiu-Pippidi, 2001).

Electoral systems are more than systems. They include historical traditions, cultural aspects, norms - rules. A state's electoral system can transmit more about the state itself than the ways in which elections take place and can be representative for the relation between culture and political structure (Sorescu, 2006).

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[7] or winner-takes-all (winner takes it all/ first past the post)

The link between the one that are being represented and their representatives is better in majoritarian systems. In this case, because electors choose a candidate not a list of party members, physical, ideological and even message proximity, make the quality of this link improve (Ioniță, 1998).

This proximity makes electors have a clearer general image, this aspect beind reflected on they vote. This way, the clarity of the perspective, due to system characteristics will be found in the quality of future vote projections.

Analyzed data

Between 1992 and 2009 many types of elections took place: parliamentary, presidential, for the European Parliament, referendum and local. Concerning data analyzed in this study, I will select all parliamentary elections, for Deputies and Senate Chambers and all presidential elections that took place in this period.

Recalling the conclusions in chapter VII, I consider that all parliamentary elections (including the ones in 2008 for both Chambers) as being done according to the principles of the proportional system, and the presidential elections according to majoritarian system principles.

1. National elections vs. local elections

One of the evolution paths of this study taken in consideration was to include sets of local elections, especially for city halls. The argument of my decision of not taking in consideration this type of elections seemed more important and I decided not to include them.

First of all, the limitation to only this type of elections was a methodological one: the dynamics of national elections, involving the average, sums of money used for publicity, the quantity and quality of the campaign and some other such characteristics, create a significant difference between local and national elections, so that they can't be analyzed as component of the same category (Rademacher and Smith, 2001).

Resembling to Rademacher and Smith's study, Crespi, by statistically analyzing which percentage of a accuracy of a prediction is explained by the election type, found important differences between national elections (60-85% projections of well done results) and local ones (40-45) (Crespi, 1988).

Another cause of limitation to this type of elections is the fact that, even though a two levels study could have been done, one for national and one for local elections, research in the purpose of shaping electoral predictions, were mainly done on national level elections (Chelcea, 2000).

2. Data gathering method

In order to collect data and gather information about polls made in the week before the elections, two categories of information will be used.

The first one refers to information that comes from newspaper. In collecting these information, I used a type of form and the papers that were analyzed, have been selected after research on polls representation quality in press (Chelcea, Jderu, 2004).

The primary source of gathering data were a series of national daily newspapers, selected as source of information after studies that showed the way poll data is taken from media. These journals are: Jurnalul Naţional, Adevărul, Evenimentul Zilei şi România Liberă (sometimes Libertatea until the year 2000 and Zig-Zag in 1992) (Rotariu, 2005).

The second category of data was obtained by collecting data from web sites of Poll Institutes. Similarly to newspapers, I used a form in which I collected data.

Besides form these two categories, in those analyzes, articles, researches where they were used to make studies, vote projections for elections, I used those polls and I included them in this research.

To select eligible data there were a series of criteria. All polls done a week before the elections will be used this being the first and most important criteria. The primary assumption here is that only this type of polls can anticipate as correctly as possibly. I argue that, the electoral campaign makes public opinion more vulnerable during the campaign; one of the first conditions of a accurate prediction is that it is as close as possibly to the moment of the elections (Mosteller et al. 1949), (Mitofsky, 1998), (Crespi, 1988).

Besides the polls done a week before the elections and their results that have been made public, in the study all exit-polls will be included if their data are public.

The information sources which had public results, but not public technical data, like study period, sample, beneficiary or error, haven't been included in this study.

3. Findings

According to the criteria already presented, a number of 78 polls results, done between 1992 and 2009, which will be included in the study. The polls were done for parliamentary and presidential elections, and were done a week before the elections day.
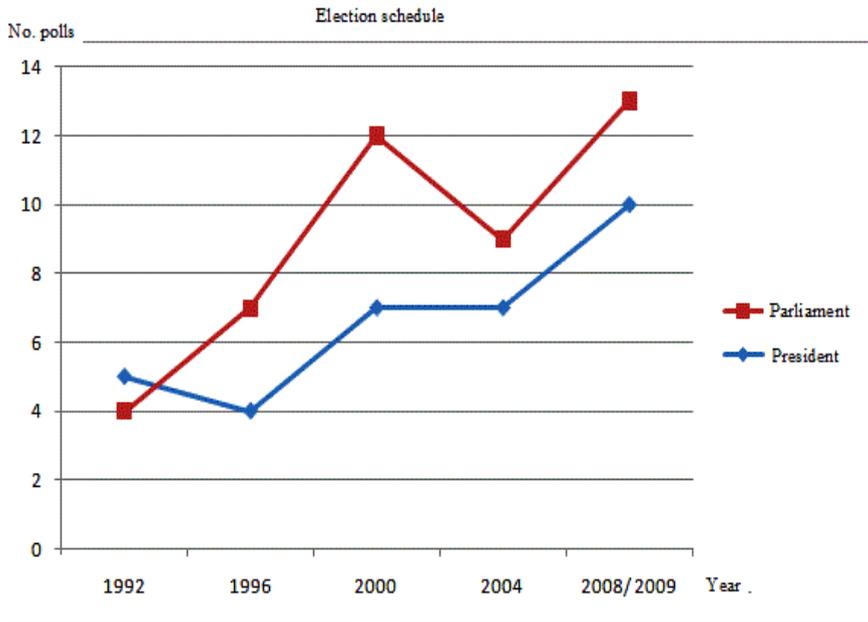
The polls done in one of the seven days before the elections, were taken in consideration. To this I added exit-polls done for those elections, according to the result presented at 11 pm.

The data will be analyzed starting from the elections. The final accuracy calculated will be of the elections sets, for each election and not on poll, firm, candidate/ party.

Data analysis

On the first column, information about the institute which realized the poll and the period in which it was done, are noted. The second row contains information about the final results of candidates/ parties.

In the columns containing the name of the candidates / parties I registered their percentages scored in those elections and in the last column the error value for candidates for each poll is written.

On the penult row it is calculated the mean of „candidate's error", calculated as the arithmetic mean of values obtained by the „candidate's error" for the polls which have been included in the study.

On the last row, it is calculated the mean of the „non-contextual error", calculated like a arithmetic mean of the „non-contextual error" made out of the values of this error for each of the two candidates. The table presented here is an analysis for the 2008 elections, Chamber of Deputies.

	PSD+PC	PD-L	Poll error
Final results	33,09 %	32,36%	
BCS, 23-26 nov	32%	31,1%	0,085
CSOP, 19-23 nov	31%	34%	1,87
CCSB, 22-25 nov	37%	31%	2,64
INSOMAR, 21-23 nov	35%	32%	1,14
CCSB, 30 nov	36,5%	30,6%,	2,58
INSOMAR, 30 nov	36,0%	30,8%	2,24
Average „candidate error"			1,76
Average „non-contextual error"			- 0, 355

The data resulted will be analyzed separately from the perspective of the two error measuring types. For the „non-contextual error" I will analyze for each candidate if the percentage values in polls were over or underestimated, and by how much.

For the method, „candidate error" I will present the errors mean in each poll, and besides that, I will relieve which poll had the smallest error value and which one the biggest value.

1. Parliamentary elections

Chamber of Deputies and Senate Chambers constitute the Romanian Parliament Chambers. A large part of polls are attributed to Chamber of Deputies (CD) because of the assumption: where the chamber for which the polls were made is not clearly indicated (especially in pre-elections polls) I interpreted them as being for Chamber of Deputies.

For parliamentary elections, all five ballots, 33 polls have been made which could have been integrated in this study, according to the criteria shown before.

The accuracy of a poll mustn't be understood only by a number. Behind a good poll prediction lie a series of factors, like a compelling methodology, honesty, the social context in which the campaigns take place, the dynamism of a campaign.

A. Parliamentary elections 2008

The parliamentary elections in 2008 are characterized from the prediction accuracy analysis, by the following: the poll with a better results projection was done by BCS, with a „candidate error" value of 0,085 for CD and 0,44 for Senate, at the opposite pole, the poll with the smallest accuracy done by CCSB for CD 2,64 and for Senate 1,87.

The errors mean, measured after the model of „candidate error" is of 1,26 in the elections for Senate and 1,76 for Chamber of Deputies.

Concerning the non-contextual error", for CD shows an overestimate of the PSD+PC alliance -1,49, and an underestimate of PD-L, with an error of +0,78.

Chamber of Deputies

	PSD+PC	PD-L	Poll error
Final results	33,09 %	32,36%	
BCS, 23-26 nov	32%	31,1%	0,085
CSOP, 19-23 nov	31%	34%	1,87
CCSB, 22-25 nov	37%	31%	2,64
INSOMAR, 21-23 nov	35%	32%	1,14
CCSB, 30 nov	36,5%	30,6%,	2,58
INSOMAR, 30 nov	36,0%	30,8%	2,24
Average „candidate error"			1,76
Average „non-contextual error"			- 0, 355

Senate

	PSD+PC	PD-L	Poll error
Final results	34,16 %	33,57%	
BCS, 23-26 nov	32,2%	31,1%	0,44
INSOMAR, 21-23 nov	34,5%	31,7%	1,07
CCSB, 30 nov	35,7%	31,3%	1,87
INSOMAR, 30 nov	35,7%	31,7%	1,67
Average „candidate error"			1,26
Average „non-contextual error"			0,88

For the elections for CD, in general I obtained the value of -0,355 which indicates a small overestimate. For Senate, the situations follows the trend, PSD+PC in overestimated -0,36 and PD-L is underestimated 2,12, but generally the situation is backwards from CD, underestimate being observed 0,88.

B. Parliamentary elections 2004

In the case of the parliamentary elections in 2004, the method of „candidate's error", the best evaluation was done by the CURS poll for CD 0,19 and by MMT-INSOMAR for Senate 0,42.

The predictions with the lowest quality were done by IRECSON 2,86 and CSOP, with significant differences from the best ones. The means of error values calculated through this method are relatively close for CD and Senate, 1,48 and 1,14.

Chamber of Deputies

	PSD+PUR	PNL-PD	Poll error
Final results	36.64%	31.26%	
IRECSON, 16-21 nov	41,5%	30,4%	2,86
CSOP, 19-21 nov	36,8%	37,2%	2,89
CURS, 21-24 nov	39%	34%	0,19
CURS, 28 nov	38,9%	35,4%	0,94
MMT-INSOMAR, 28 nov	39,9%	33,5%	0,51
Average „candidate error"			1,48
Average „non-contextual error"			-2,71

Senate

	PSD+PUR	PNL-PD	Poll error
Final results	37,16%	31,71%	
CURS, 28 nov	39%	35,4%	1,85
MMT-INSOMAR, 28 nov	40,1%	33,8%	0,42
Average „candidate error"			1,14
Average „non-contextual error"			-2,64

For the „non-contextual error", for CD, the PSD+PUR alliance was overestimated –2,58, as well as the PNL-PD alliance -2,84. For Senate, the situation repeats itself, both parties being overestimated, PSD+PUR with -2,39, and PNL-PD with -2,89.

The mean of these values show a general overestimate of polls for the first two parties that are competing, a general overestimate in Senate elections -2,64 and CD -2,71.

C. Parliamentary elections 2000

The parliamentary elections in 2000 are defined by a significant difference between the error values calculated through the method of "candidate error" for CD. The poll which had the closest results to reality is CURS-CSOP, with a value of 0,41 at a significant distance from the least performant one, done by IMAS 2,43.

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CD

	PDSR	PRM	Poll error
Final results	36,61%	19,48%	
IMAS, 20 nov	40%	18%	2,43
CURS – CSOP, 19- 22 nov	41%	19%	2,44
INSOMAR, 20 – 22 nov	42%	19%	1,47
INSOMAR, 26 nov	38%	22%	0,56
CURS-CSOP, 26 nov	38,6%	22,3%	0,41
IMAS; 26 nov	38%	22%	0,56
Average „candidate error"			1,31
Average „non-contextual error"			-1,94

Senate

	PDSR	PRM	Poll error
Final results	37,2%	21%	
INSOMAR, 26 nov	37,3%	22,7%	0,8
Average „candidate error"			0,8
Average „non-contextual error"			-0,9

In the situation of the "contextual error", CD, we find a overestimate of PDSR -2,99 and a overestimate of PRM by -0,9. In general, for the case of CD, a tendency to overestimate existed -1,94.

The existing data for Senate don't allow me to interpret the results.

D. Parliamentary elections 1996

In 1996, for the parliamentary elections, I did not find any consistent data or data that could be selected according to the criteria explained before in the case of the Senate, so that the data analysis for "non-contextual error" and for the "candidate error" will be done only for CD.

The calculated error mean through the method "candidate error" for the whole election has the value of 1,3 - a value which doesn't distinguish itself from the other sets of elections analyzed before.

The poll with the smallest error value is the one made by IRSOP-IFES, with 0,34, and the one with the biggest value was made by IMAS, 2,16.

CD

	CDR	PDSR	Poll error
Final results	30,2%	21,52%	
CURS, 24-28 nov	32%	26%	1,34
IRSOP, 23-27 nov	30%	24%	1,34
IMAS, 3 nov	38%	25%	2,16
IRSOP–IFES, 3 nov	32%	24%	0,34
Average „candidate error"			1,3
Average „non-contextual error"			-3,01

Senate

	CDR	PDSR	"non-contextual error"	"candidate error"
No data				
Average „candidate error"				
Average „non-contextual error"				

From the perspective of the "non-contextual error" an overestimate takes place for CDR -2,8 and also for PDSR -3,23, therefore a general overestimate of those parliamentary elections -3,01.

E. Parliamentary elections 1992

Chamber of Deputies,1992. IRSOP makes a poll with a good accuracy, regarding that period. The value of the calculated error through "candidate's error" is of 1,86, at the opposite pole, being the poll made by CATHARSIS, 17,72 which is the poll with the worst projections from reality in the whole study. Also, IRSOP makes a better estimation in the elections for Senate, with an error value of 0,31.

CD

	FDSN	CDR	Poll error
Final results	27.72%	20,16%	
CATHARSIS,10-21 sept	16,2%	44,08%	17,72
AISTEDA, 12-20 sept	20,3%	21,2%	4,51
IRSOP, 21-23 sept	25%	24%	3,56
IRSOP, 27 sep	27,4%	23%	1,86
Average „candidate error"			6,91
Average „non-contextual error"			-1,2

Senate

	FDSN	CDR	Poll error
Final results	28,29%	20,16%	
IRSOP, 27 sep	27,8 %	20,3 %	0,31
Average „candidate error"			0,31
Average „non-contextual error"			0,17

Through the non-contextual error the fact that a underestimate of FDSN (5,5) and a overestimate of CDR (-7,91) exist, is accentuated. Again, the data available for Senate don't allow an interpretation of the results.

2. Presidential elections

Party campaigns for these functions are more dynamic, so that a larger number of polls are being realized for this type of elections. Data analysis for this type of elections will be made in the same form as for the parliamentary elections, from the perspective of errors calculated using the methods "non-contextual error" and "candidate error".

A. Presidential elections 2009

Regarding the number of polls made and also the ones made public, and the ones that could have been included in the study, the 2009 presidential elections were the most disputed ones.

For the first and second ballot 13 polls have been made for each of the two. Altogether, for the presidential elections 45 polls were made, which are in conformity to the selection criteria.

These elections are characterized, from the point of view of the calculated error using the "candidate's error", by predictions very close to the final result (0,06 for the second ballot of the elections CSOP) but also by estimations with a much larger error (for the first ballot, CSOP 4,36 and Operation Research 4,86).

At a general level, the first ballot obtains an error mean (2,06) bigger than the second ballot (1,77). More than that, the two ballots contain significant differences between the error values, where polls predicted better and where polls predicted less exact.

Ballot I — 2009	Traian Basescu	Mircea Geoana	Poll error
Final results	32,44%	31,15%	
Operations Research, 15 nov	30%	23%	2,85
CSOP, 15 – 18 nov	37%,	27%	4,36
Operations Research, 19 nov	35,8%	24,8%	4,86
INSOMAR, 22 nov	32,8%	31,7%	0,1
CSOP, 22 nov	33,2%	30,3%	0,8
CURS, 22 nov	33,72%	31,44%	0,49
CCSB, 22 nov	34,1%	30,9%	0,96
Average „candidate error"			2,06
Average „non-contextual error"			0,67

Regarding the „non-contextual error" during the first ballot, candidate Traian Basescu is overestimated (-1,36), while his opponent, Mircea Geoana is underestimated in the polls (2,7). For the first ballot, we can notice a underestimate of poll results (0,67).

For the second ballot, 2,09 is the error mean for both candidates measured as „non-contextual error" and also as the mean for each candidate.

Ballot II — 2009	Traian Basescu	Mircea Geoana	Poll error
Final results	50,34%	49,66%	
INSOMAR, 29 nov	46%	54%	3,66
CCSB, 29-30 nov	46%	54%	3,66
CCSB, 06 nov	49%	51%	0,66
CURS, 06 nov	49,3%	50,7%	1,04
INSOMAR, 06 nov	48,8%	51,2%	1,54
CSOP, 06 nov	50,4%	49,6%	0,06
Average „candidate error"			1,77
Average „non-contextual error"			2,09

B. Presidential elections 2004

Calculated errors using „candidate's error" method for the first ballot in the presidential elections in 2004, have a mean of 1,71 and for the second ballot 2,98. The prediction with the highest accuracy level was done by a CURS poll, with an error degree of 0,01 which is one of the best results projection.

The poll with the lowest accuracy was done by IMAS, with an error value of 5,77.

Ballot II   2004

	Traian Basescu	Adrian Nastase	Poll error
Final results	51.23%	48,77%	
IMAS, 29 nov-5 dec	57%	43%	5,77
CURS, 12 dec	49,3%	50,7%	1,93
INSOMAR - MMT, 12 dec	50%	50%	1,23
Average „candidate error"			2,98
Average „non-contextual error"			0,87

Through the method „ non-contextual error", we find a little underestimate of polls in the first ballot, with a candidate mean of 0,13 for the first ballot and a error mean for the second ballot of 0,87 which also indicates a underestimate of the candidates results.

In the first ballot, Traian Basescu was generally underappreciated by the polls (0,39) and Adrian Nastase was a little overestimated, with an error value of (-0,14).

Ballot I   2004

	Traian Basescu	Adrian Nastase	Poll error
Final results	33,92%	40,94%	
IRSOP, 13 -21 nov	30%	42%	2,49
IRECSON, 16 – 21 nov	27,9%	41,11%	3,01
CSOP, 19 – 21 nov	39,9%	39,5%	3,71
CURS, 21 – 24 nov	33%	40%	0,01
CURS, 28 nov	35,3%	41%	0,66
INSOMAR - MMT, 28 nov	35,1%	42,9%	0,39
Average „candidate error"			1,71
Average „non-contextual error"			0,13

C. Presidential elections 2000

Measuring errors through the „candidate's error" method reveals an error mean of 5,29 for the first ballot and an error mean of 3,77 for the second one.

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Ballot I   2000

	Ion Iliescu	C.V. Tudor	Poll error
Final results	36,35%	28,34%	
DEMOSKOP, 15 – 19 nov	41,6%	13,8%	9,90
IRECSON, 14 – 19 nov	39,4%	14,9%	8,25
IMAS, 20 - 21 nov	40%	19%	6,5
CURS, 22 nov	38%	21%	4,5
CSOP, 22 nov	38%	21%	4,5
INSOMAR, 22 nov	36,3%	22,2%	3,05
IMAS, 26 nov	36,5%	27,9%	0,3
Average „candidate error"			5,29
Average „non-contextual error"			2,3

Regarding the predictions accuracy, they reach record values. The prediction with the smallest performance, according to this method, was done by a DEMOSKOP poll for the first poll and has a value of 9,90.

On the other side, the poll with the best performance was done by IMAS and has an error value of 0,3. Besides the DEMOSKOP poll, with the huge prediction error value of 9,90, there are other polls which have very large error values: IRECSON 8,25, IMAS 6,5, INSOMAR and IMAS 5,17.

The poll done by IMAS for the first ballot is the only one with an error value under 1,00, all the others registering values of over 2,00.

Ballot II   2000

	Ion Iliescu	C.V. Tudor	Poll error
Final results	66,83%	33,17%	
IRSOP, 3-6 dec	69%	31%	2,17
CURS, 5-6 dec	70%	30%	3,17
IMAS, 6-8 dec	72%	28%	5,17
IMAS, 10 dec	70%	30%	3,17
INSOMAR, 10 dec	72%	28%	5,17
Average „candidate error"			3,77
Average „non-contextual error"			3,77

On the other side, also using the „ non-contextual error" method, these elections have a bigger error value. In the first ballot, the mean of 2,3 is made out of a overestimate of the candidate Ion Iliescu (-2,24) an underestimate of candidate Vadim Tudor (8,37).

In the second ballot, the error mean and the errors themselves have a value of 3,77, which means in general a underestimate of candidates values and in particular a underestimate of Vadim Tutor and a overestimate of Ion Iliescu.

D. Presidential elections 1996

In the presidential elections in 1996, the error value is generally smaller than in the 2000 elections. For the first ballot, the mean value of „candidate's error" is 1,35 and for the second ballot 0,69.

Using the same method to calculate the error, the poll that made the best estimation was done by CURS for the first ballot, having a value of 0,015, which is one of the best predictions in this study. For the second tour, it is the IRSOP poll, with the value of 0,05.

Opposite to these two polls, is the IMAS poll, made for the first ballot and having the error value of 3,015. For the second ballot the poll done by CURS has the value of 1,87.

Ballot I   1996

	E. Constantinescu	Ion Iliescu	Poll error
Final results	28,22%	32,25%	
CURS, 24 – 27 nov	28%	32%	0,015
IRSOP – IFES, 3 nov	30%	32%	1,015
IMAS, 3 nov	33%	31%	3,015
Average „candidate error"			1,35
Average „non-contextual error"			-0,75

Using the method of „non-contextual error", the error values are a little different. For the first ballot, candidate Emil Constantinescu was generally overestimated (-2,08) and Ion Iliescu underestimated (0,58).

In the second ballot, the situation is reversed, Emil Constantinescu being generaly underestimated (0,62) and candidate Ion Iliescu, with a value of -0,49, overestimated.

Ballot II   1996

	E. Constantinescu	Ion Iliescu	Poll error
Final results	54,41%	45,59%	
CURS, 6-10 nov	52,28%	47,2%	1,87
Data Network, 6-12 nov	54,63%	45,37%	0,22
IRSOP– IFES, 17 nov	54,46%	45,54%	0,05
IMAS, 17 nov	53,8%	46,2%	0,61
Average „candidate error"			0,69
Average „non-contextual error"			0,13

E. Presidential elections 1992

For these elections, „known to the public" polls were made only for the first ballot. During the first ballot, the medium value of errors calculated using the method of „candidate's error" is 7,87. The exit-poll done by IRSOP, with the value of 0,2 is the poll with the smallest error.

If the IRSOP poll has the value of 0,2, the one made by CATHARSIS has a value of 19,05, calculated through the method „candidate's error".

Errors mean is 4,15 if I exclude the CATHARSIS poll from error analysis using the „candidate's error" method. In many papers on this subject, in Romania, the poll done by CATHARSIS hasn't been included in the studies. The decision was motivated by the unreliability of this institution. I chose to include it because it matched the criteria shown before.

Ballot I   1992

	Ion Iliescu	E. Constantinescu	Poll error
Final results	47,34%	31,24%	
AISTEDA, 12-20 sept	38,3%	37,6%	7,7
IRSOP, 21 – 23 sept	38%	31%	4,55
CATHARSIS,10-21 sept	26%	48%	19,05
IRSOP, 27 sep	47%	31,3%	0,2
Average „candidate error"			7,87
Average „non-contextual error"			2,14

Ballot II   1992

	E. Constantinescu	Ion Iliescu	Poll error
Final results	38,57%	61,43%	
No data			
Average „candidate error"			
Average „non-contextual error"			

Candidate Ion Iliescu is underestimated, 10,02 using the „non-contextual error" method, and candidate Emil Constantinescu is overestimated (-5,73). In general, candidate's results were underestimated, errors mean being of 2,14.

If we exclude from the calculation the poll done by CATHARSIS, we get a mean of „non-contextual error" of -4,15, indicating a overestimate of the results, the mean made out of the error for Ion Iliescu -6,24 and the error for Emil Constantinescu -2,06.

Data analysis interpretation

To be able to draw a conclusion of this paper, I will use a series of error compared analysis for presidential elections-done in an majoritarian

electoral system, and of errors for the parliamentary elections- done in a proportional electoral system.

For this purpose, I will separately analyze each error calculation method which is the mean error of all polls included in the study.

Data in the tables are taken from the analysis for each election, the chapter before.

The data resulted will only be interpreted, conclusions and discussions being part of the next chapter.

1. „Non-contextual error"

In order to test the hypothesis, meaning the variation of error size in elections according to the electoral system, I will use a table in which: on the first column I put the election years, on the first row the type of elections, and on the second row the Chamber for the parliamentary elections or the ballot for the presidential ones.

Bellow each set of elections I put the value of the mean error calculated using „non-contextual error" method, and on the last row the mean error of mean errors for all five sets of elections.

In calculating the error mean I used to approaches. First of all, I used the error's value without taking into consideration the sign like for calculating the mean after a first approach. Because the sign is used to show if the error under or overestimates a candidate/ party, I opted in this situation for a mean calculation without considering the sign.

Another reason for which I opted to calculate the mean in this form is the fact that, because positive and negative values exist, there is the possibility for them to cancel each other.

As we can see in the next table, the election's error's means for the method „non-contextual error" have close values according to the first approach. This thing can be explained by the fact that I wanted to avoid some effects which appear once we take into account the sign of the error's value I calculated the mean in a first form without considering the sign.

„Non-contextual Error"

	parliamentary elections		presidential elections	
	CD	Senate	'Ballot I	'Ballot II
2008/ 2009	-0,355	0,88	0,67	2,09
2004	-2,71	-2,64	0,13	0,87
2000	-1,94	-0,9	2,3	3,77
1996	-3,01	-	-0,75	0,13
1992	-1,2	0,17	2,14	-
Average	1,534		1,428	

The second approach is to calculate the means of errors values like they are (positive or negative) to observe if and which elections were generally over or underestimated.

This approach reveals a general overestimate of the results which the candidates/parties will obtain in the case of parliamentary elections (-1,3) and a underestimate of the results which candidates will obtain in the presidential elections (1,26).

„Non-contextual Error"

	parliamentary elections		presidential elections	
	CD	Senate	'Ballot I	'Ballot II
2008/ 2009	- 0, 355	0,88	0,67	2,09
2004	-2,71	-2,64	0,13	0,87
2000	-1,94	-0,9	2,3	3,77
1996	-3,01	-	-0,75	0,13
1992	-1,2	0,17	2,14	-
Average	1,534		1,428	
Average II	-1, 3		1, 26	

In order to analyze the relationship between the electoral system and the prediction errors we will take into consideration just the second approach in measuring the errors mean. This approach shows the value of the „true mean" because it calculates the mean taking into consideration the sign of the errors value.

2. „Candidate's error"

The clarifications about the way to analyze the data are similar here, except the usage of the sign of errors value, not being necessary in the casa of the „candidate's error".

„Candidate's error"

	parliamentary elections		presidential elections	
	CD	Senate	'Ballot I	'Ballot II
2008/ 2009	1,76	1,26	2,06	1,77
2004	1,48	1,14	1,71	2,98
2000	1,31	0,8	5,29	3,77
1996	1,3	-	1,35	0,69
1992	6,91	0,31	7,87	-
Average	1,80		3,04	

Like in the case of the „non-contextual error" method, here to there is a connection between the electoral system and elections error. The difference between the errors mean, calculated for all the elections that took place in the proportional system and the ones that took place in the majoritarian electoral system is a significant one.

Parliamentary elections have a mean error value for all the polls of 1,80, while the presidential elections have an error mean for all the polls of 3,04.

Conclusions and discussions

This final chapter is made out of two segments. A first part in which the data analysis conclusions are drawn and a second part in which I'm proposing to answer the questions that are raised after the conclusions in the first part.

The conclusions and the discussions based on the analysis done in this study, I prompt, are valid only for those data (those polls) which have been selected, based on the criteria, to be included in this study.

1. Conclusions

Regarding the hypothesis testing I can draw the next conclusions:

(1) the method to calculate the prediction errors „non-contextual error" does not reveal a connection between the electoral system and the size of the error. The mean values of the errors for all the elections polls in both electoral systems are close but opposite in sign, -1,3 for the elections in a proportional electoral system and 1,26 for the majoritarian systems (or according to the first mean the values 1,534 and 1,428).

(2) the method „candidate's error" shows that between the two there is a correlation, a strong one, proportional elections obtaining a mean error value of 1,80 and the majoritarian ones of 3,04.

(3) the correlation between the electoral system and the error size is not how we would have expected, the empirical evidence created during this study showing that a correlation does not exist in the sense of a „larger error in the case of proportional elections", but the other way around, finding a „greater error in the case of the majoritarian elections";

(4) the calculation method of error „non-contextual error" comes to accentuate that besides the fact that in general, in the majoritarian elections great errors are being done, and those errors are primarily due to an underestimate tendency.

Certainly, the discussions about the connection between the electoral system and the error size doesn't stop here. Just one of the calculating methods show a relation between the electoral system and the predictions errors size on one side, and on the other methods and data can change the problems results.

Other conclusions which auxiliary come out of the collected data in this study will be regarded from the errors perspective (the best and the worst predictions) and from the perspective of discussions on the analyzed data.

Very close to final results predictions, using „candidate's error" were done by IRSOP –IFES having a error value of 0,05 (second ballot of the presidential elections in 1996) or CURS, with the value of 0,01 (first presidential elections ballot in 2004).

The projections of the polls results for parliament have bigger errors, the smallest ones being registered for the BCS poll in the 2008 elections for the CD (0,085); for the 2004 elections for CD - the CURS poll (0,19); and the 1996 elections IRSOP-IFES with a value of 0,34, all of them using „candidate's error".

At a big distance concerning the predictions, are the polls done by CATHARSIS (1992 elections, first ballot), with a error value of 19,05; by DEMOSKOP (first ballot in the 2000 elections) with a value of 9,90; and IRECSON with the value of 8,25 (first ballot in the 2000 elections); these polls were done for the presidential elections.

The parliamentary elections differentiate themselves through polls with very high error values, done by CATHARSIS with an error value of 17,72; by AISTEDA 4,51 and IRSOP with 3,56 all of them done for the parliamentary elections , CD 1992.

Generally speaking, the elections with the closest to reality predictions were the ones for Senate in 2004, with an error value of *1,14*[8] and for presidential, 1996 elections, second tour having a mean error value of 0,69.

On the opposite side, the polls done for CD, 1992 elections with the value of *6,91*[9]. For the presidential elections, the ones in 1992 had the polls with the smallest performances, in the first ballot with a error value of 7,87.

Calculating the error by „non-contextual error"[10] allows an over or underestimation trend appreciation of a candidates/ parties results in polls. For the parliamentary elections, the mean error value[11] of (-1,3) shows a general overestimate of candidates values in polls, and the value of 1,26 shows a underestimate or candidate results in the presidential elections[12].

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[8] Taken into consideration only those elections which had minimum two polls
[9] Similary conditions
[10] And of means according to the second approach (real mean)
[11] Calculated after the second approach
[12] For details, chapter XII.Data analysis interpretation 1. Non-contextual error

2. Discussions

The literature review on this theme has constantly drawn my attention on the fact that using different calculation methods for the error size will lead to different results (Mosteller et al. 1949), (Mitofsky, 1998), (Crespi,1988), (NCPP, 2008), (Traugot, 2005).

The expectations based on the literature review were also found in the empirical evidence which contains polls selected to be included in the study. From the two calculation methods for error predictions, one shows a correlation between the electoral system in which the elections take place and the error size, and in the case of the "non-contextual error" the correlation wasn't very clear.

Besides this evidence, the correlation between the electoral system and the error size is reversed, the majoritarian electoral systems being the ones in which polls get larger errors.

The question „why the elections that take place in a majoritarian system have creates errors than the ones that take place in the proportional system?" has put me in a difficulty. The expectations (built on some effects induced by the electoral systems) indicated as a potential system in which the errors are greater the proportional one.

Because data show a reversed situation from the one in the hypothesis, I reanalyzed the calculated errors using the "candidate's error" method and I noticed the following:

(A) from the 10 sets of elections reanalyzed for president 5 were for the first ballot. From these five, in the case of 3 ballots, the candidates had vote proportions close to 50% [13], which constitutes one of the most difficult to estimate situations in a poll (Rotariu, 2005).

„Candidate's error"

	parliamentary elections		presidential elections	
	CD	Senate	'Ballot I	'Ballot II
2008/ 2009	1,76	1,26	2,06	1,77
2004	1,48	1,14	1,71	2,98
2000	1,31	0,8	5,29	3,77
1996	1,3	-	1,35	0,69
1992	6,91	0,31	7,87	-
Average	1,80		3,04	

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[13] Presidential elections, second ballot 2009, 2004 and 1996

(B) another finding is the fact that the error mean for the first ballot (2,6) and the one for the second ballot (2,3) compared to the one for Deputy Chamber (1,45) or the one for Senate (0,87) indicate a large difference between the majoritarian and proportional elections [14].

To these conclusions drawn out of the collected data analysis in the study I add three more possible causes often used to fundament the differences between the poll's quality in the majority elections and the ones in the proportional elections in the Romanian context.

These are: the proportion of canceled votes bigger than in the presidential elections (Herțeliu et al., 2009); the large number of undecided (in pre-electoral polls) and the ones who indicate wrong answers (in exit-polls) in parliamentary elections (Rotariu, 2005); distortions at the level of what respondents declare when they participate at a poll because of a rural-urban dichotomy of a candidate's supporters (Comșa, 2005).

As we can notice, all the explanations have limitations: they are only valid for some election sets or they explain a small part of the error size. I hope that through this paper I will open a debate on the error's theme, on the best calculation method in the Romanian context theme, in error sources and the future papers will add more data, conclusions and even other countries comparisons.

Discussions on error predictions in newspapers, TV or on-line can bring results if we pass from the spectrum of „ common sense analysis" to the spectrum of a compelling, methodic analysis following certain patterns. This paper came to create such a spectrum.

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[14] Calculated for the presidential elections 1996-2009

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THE IMPACT OF THE INTERNET ON YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

DIANA MUNTEANU*

ABSTRACT. The wide diffusion of the Internet has brought significant changes into most aspects of people's daily life. As Internet use grows, especially among youth, people become very concerned about the way virtual channels of communication could shape their social behavior.

Relying on Resource Model developed by Sidney Verba, H. Brady and Lehman Schlozman (1995), this paper tackles civic engagement in terms of motivational resources. In order to examine the civic potential of Internet among Romanian youth, I test, using correlations and bivariate regressions, whether determinants of offline civic participation are positively related to the level of Internet use.

The findings of the present study indicate that Internet use is neutral. It does neither increase, nor reduce teenagers' motivation to get actively involved in the social communities they belong to. Motivational resources for civic participation seem to be independently achieved from the time spent online. In contrast to mobilization theory, time saving services offered by Internet tend more to reinforce those forms of offline civic engagement that are already established.

This paper's results can contribute to a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and to test certain theories of participation in the Romanian area. As many youth development programs promote civic involvement, this research could provide useful information in developing strategies to improve it.

Keywords: civic participation, Internet use, online civic engagement, technologic determinism, resource theory

Since the '90s, the rapid expansion of computer mediated technology has led to a process of redefining old patterns of interaction and interpersonal communication.

Manuel Castells (1996) argues that the world is entering into an "information age", where the digital environment provides the material basis for the development of what he calls "an organized form of networks in each area. According to his ideas, internet facilities, combined in a single system, promise a strong impact on society, creating new forms of identity, inequality and social organization. In this digital world, appear more and more services that enable

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human activities and geography, time or language barriers are no longer obstacles for an effective communication (Negroponte, 1999). Gradually, people adopt new terms to design the relations between a political system and its citizens such as virtual community, e-governance, e-voting and even e-democracy.

Pippa Norris (2001) speaks of the emergence of a "virtual civic society" which brings new advantages like a global dimension ,a wider variety of information, more flexible and efficient communication strategies.

Along with the advantages, it brought a wide range of new challenges and fears about its effects on society.

As one of today's main fear is that online social relations could reduce people's tendency towards trust, cooperation and altruism, this study aims to provide explanations of the impact of the Internet could have on civic engagement. More specifically, I want to know the extent to which online services could help to develop civic awareness among Romanian youth.

Using the theory of resources, developed by Sidney Verba, Lehman Schlozman and Henry Brady (1995), I propose to achieve new information about the relationship between online civic engagement and participatory behavior of young people in the offline environment. In order to obtain rigorous results, I analyze the direction and intensity of the relations between Internet use and motivational resources.

In this work, civic engagement model is discussed in terms of technological determinism and mobilization theories which argue that modern technology shapes society more than vice versa, and that it has the ability to attract those social groups that otherwise would remain civically uninvolved. For this reason, I expect young people, the most exposed social category to the effects of the Internet, to adopt easily participatory values through online services.

The main question seeking to find an answer during the research, is: Can online services stimulate civic competencies/awareness among Romanian youth? In other words, I want to test if young people who regularly use the tools available online, are willing to engage in offline civic activities. This paper reject the opinion which claims that people who use online resources with a civic purpose are those already well-informed and civic interested (Pippa Norris) and tries to examine if Internet has the potential to foster civic awareness.

Although many researchers have tried to speculate about how the Internet might change people's daily lives, their studies has not lead yet to a consensus. To sum up, prior research can be grouped into two opposite perspectives.

On the one hand, many studies claim that Internet use has negative effects upon people's lives. It reduces the time spent with friends, family and soon people become withdrawn from real life. (R.Kraut, Sarah K.2002). Moreover, the Internet encourage people to spend more time alone, replacing face to face interaction with superficial online relationships. An important

finding of Nie and Erbring (2001; 280) is that the more time people spend online, the less hours they spend with real human beings. Robert Putnam considers that online social relationships are weaker than offline social ties

On the other hand, the optimists argue that forums, messenger, emails and virtual communities broaden the existing social networks and lead to a more informed and civic involved society. Internet users also posses a higher level of trust and wider social networks. (Uslaner 1999, Robinson 2005)

With greater access to modern means of communication, the costs of information, movement or getting socially involved, decreased substantially. Today we can speak of a new concept: online civic engagement, which arose recently with the spread of Internet use. As virtual environment has begun to provide faster and efficient services, its effects became visible in social life too.

Online civic participation refers to activities such as: contacting an elected representative (official or candidate), joining a virtual cause or community in order to deal with common problems, forwarding an email with a political/social content, signing an Internet petition or using the Internet to persuade other people about a local or national issue. The Internet provides many services that have the advantage of requiring less time and effort than offline civic activities. Here I refer to blogs, virtual groups, forums focusing on community issues, signing petitions online, etc.

Because it is used mainly for a communication purpose, the Internet could create a strong civic awareness among users. Often, young people become aware of civic values using online services, where they constantly face with new people, ideas and critics It provides the suitable medium where they can notice easily problems within community and express their opinions.

Email services, messaging, known as having a high popularity, can help to disperse mobilizing messages to participate in a meeting, event, flash mob or demonstration. One can say this impact is starting to be realized through development of a growing number of civic campaigns which take place exclusively on the Internet, or using it as the main medium for mobilization. Therefore, the present study expects online civic involvement to have an effect on offline participation and the following hypotheses is advanced: *Young people who spend much time online doing civic activities are likely to be active in offline forms of participation*.

The study's guiding premise is that the effects of the Internet differ between young and adult groups. A recent report made by the European Commission (2008) show that, in contrast to many other EU states, in Romania young people tend to use the Internet more frequently than their parents. (70% vs 58%).

This paper proposes to contribute to a better understanding of this phenomenon and to test several theories of participation in the Romanian area.

As there are many programs that intend to stimulate young people's civic participation, this work could provide useful information in developing and organizing strategies for improving youth participation in public decision

Civic engagement-condition of a democratic society

A wide participation of citizens in designing, making and implementing decisions represents a main condition of a consolidated democracy. Benjamin Barber (1984) believes that within a civic community, "people do not run of responsibility because they understand that freedom is a consequence of their participation in decisions." Civic competence is a concept widely discussed in literature. In their work based on empirical research conducted in five countries with different democratic performance (U.S., UK, Italy, Germany and Mexico), Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba, designate through civic culture, "a combination of attitudes interest of citizens in both the means of influencing the political system and the results of political processes, attitudes and orientations abide by the rules".

Investigating the success of American democracy, Tocqueville (1830) identifies those values considered essential in shaping political culture of American democracy: freedom, equality, individualism, rule of law, the spirit of democracy, civic duty, capitalism, free trade, political tolerance. He claims that cooperation is one of the most important elements of a democratic political culture and speaks of all the associations, as of "the art of track shared object of common desire. Associations are important because they promote collective action and reciprocity, reduce costs of information and negotiation. "In democratic countries the science of association is the parent science, progress depends on its progress to all other." (Tocqueville, 2005, vol.II: 120) . He notes that there is a link between civic and political association, values and outcomes achieved by cooperation can be designed at the level of political action.

Robert Putnam (1993) concludes that civic participation can lead to high levels of economic development and to an effective governance. In the comparative study conducted in Italy, he made an analysis of how democracy works, illustrating the importance of networks in shaping public institutions.

In this paper, civic participation refers to citizens' involvement in community through collective actions aimed at resolving problems of common interest and to change the output of the political system.

Civic culture and democratic values in Romania

It is interesting to analyze the evolution of Romanian civil society, taking into account it was heavily oppressed until 1989 by the totalitarian regime. Several studies have proposed to measure Romanian participatory culture.

According to a survey made by the Gallup Organization in November 2006, the Romanians show a low level of confidence even to people who are in daily close contact. Solidarity is shown mainly among close people and family, without being engaged in any organized form.

It is noted that Romanians who usually involves in civic activities are adults, aged between 36-65 with a high/medium level of education and with an average financial situation. Among the reasons most often cited by respondents to justify their passivity are: lack of interest (7.8%), lack of time (7.1%), older age (3.0%) or lack of desire to get involved (2.5%).

Although data show that the Romanians civic involvement has increased since 1990, the level of civic awareness is still low when compared to other Western states (Badescu, 2001). The 2005 Survey made by ANSIT reveals a low percentage of young people interested in local\national political life. Less than 25% of young people show interest for local\national policy making and only 17% seek information about political life.

Although 10% of youth say they would like to participate in politics and 25% would actively get involved in a youth organization, the percentage of those who are effectively engaged in a social, political or economic association, is much lower (8 7%). Most of these are involved in sport clubs, political, professional or students' organizations. Comparing this situation to other European countries, it appears that young people show a much lower confidence in public institutions and only 16% consider their view could have a real impact for influencing national decisions.

The same poll showed that 0.8% of young Romanians is satisfied about political life in the country and 14% feel understood by the authorities. However, only 11% say it is important to participate in political life, 29.6% to engage in a youth organization, while 35.8% consider volunteering as an important activity

The study conducted by Raluca Popescu and Ana Preoteasa (2004) identifies the main obstacles which arise in youth participation: lack of money, limited access to information, legislation, bureaucracy, lack of youth associations and their lack of support from the media.

Civic engagement and Internet use in Romania

A study conducted by Mercury Research in February 2009, on a sample of 680 people revealed that 62% of urban Romanians use the internet. Young people aged between18-24 used most frequently virtual services and the lowest ratio is registered among people over 55 years old. The study shows also that the main purpose for going online is communication.92% of teenagers use online medium for keeping in touch, 34% for surfing the Internet, 31% for downloading music, films or games.

The research shows that keeping in touch with others represent an important aspect within social relations. As long as online medium facilitate the communication process, it is rapidly adopted by teenagers.

According to data collected by the Gallup Organization Romania (2007), daily computer use is most prevalent in economically developed regions: 40% of young people use the computer daily in West Region and Northwest, 34% in Central, South East 38%, 33-34% in North and South, and only 24% in the South-West. The research also shows that male use the computer (40%) to a greater extent than females (33%) and university graduates (75%) more than people without education.

Pippa Norris (1999) seeks to explain whether virtual activism involves a new form of political participation as mobilizing theories argue, or is just a complementary form that supports conventional political participation (theory of consolidation).

Mobilization theory argues that new technology will attract groups that would otherwise remain not involved in conventional forms of activism, particularly the younger generation with a low interest. As two-way channel, the Internet can enrich the relationship between citizens and various organizations, reducing costs of information and communication.

Consolidation theory, more skeptical, claims that online resources are used frequently by those citizens who are already active and well connected by conventional information channels. And the most motivated to engage on the Internet are all those who are employed in conventional forms of political activism.

Pippa Norris (1999) exemplifies the possible relationship between those two variables (Internet use and civic engagement)in three ways:

a. Previous civic engagement ⟶ Internet use

Previous civic engagement influences Internet use. People who are already interested and engaged in political/civic activities are likely to use frequently resources provided by the virtual medium. They pay attention to the news and civic matters posted on the Internet for the reason of being permanently informed and to maintain contact with others.

b. Internet use ⟶ Civic engagement

People who use the Internet for various reasons, find here important resources to help them become more involved in community life .The virtual environment has the capacity/potential to attract several groups who doesn't show a particular interest for the public life, like teenagers or isolated communities.

c. Theory of circular process
Interest, previous attitudes ⟶ Civic engagement

It argues that the most motivated and active citizens are those who adopt the opportunities offered by Internet. People acquire more information, increase the number of social contacts, develop their civic awareness, which leads to lower costs necessary to continue to be involved in the democratic process Led by their interests, attitudes and resources, people turn to read political news, check web site, coordinate the activities of online communities, etc.

This theory suggests that the less active citizens will be completely excluded from civic messages posted on the Internet, because there is a reduced possibility that this group will seek information on internet.

Prior research

Among the first studies to examine the social impact of digital communication media, is the one made by Daniel Bell (1977), which predicted that impact of the Internet on society can only be the same with the one television had. It separates people and creates a "lonely crowd" (Negroponte, Nicholas, 2003). Sartori (2003) argues that television brought a rupture, "this new phenomenon is transforming the homo sapiens, produced by written culture, into a homo videns for whom image overthrow the word." He even raises questions on whether or not the Internet will produce a cultural increase and argues that the opportunities it offers are substantial. But they will be positive only when it is used as a tool for acquiring knowledge and information. Sartori distinguishes between three possibilities for use: strictly for practice, for entertainment and educational/cultural use.

Kraut's study (1998) first points out the possible negative consequences of using the Internet. Among the most important effects is the phenomenon of isolation, anxiety, depression and low social support. Norman H. Nie and Lutz Erbring (2002) argue the following statement: "The more time people spend online, the less time will be devoted to friends, family, watching TV." Face to face conversations are replaced by virtual interaction and human tendency towards cooperation and altruistic actions, decreases.

On the other hand, it was considered that new digital technology will lead to a better interpersonal communication and to a more informed and engaged public. (Robert Kraut, Sara Kiesler 2002). Angel Iglesias Alonso (2009) presents the term "virtual democracy" (e-democracy) which includes the use of advanced information technologies to mediate the relationship between citizens and government authorities to improve public services and civic participation.

The Internet provides a favorable environment for making new connections between people and then they can easily interact and join those groups possessing similar affinities. For Rheingold (1993;5), virtual communities are "social

aggregations that emerge through the Internet where a number of people show enough interest in those public discussions[...] to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace". In this regard, they represent an ideal space to enhance civic structure of society.

However, studies on the social effects of the Internet have not reached a common conclusion.

The implications of the Internet on forms of civic participation

Civic engagement refers, according to Adler and Goggin (2005), to the way citizens participate in community life in order to improve conditions and opportunities for the others. In the study made by Jennings and Zeitner (2003) the notion of "civic engagement" is treated in detail, to include both behaviors and attitudes on public processes / policy. This is extremely useful for my study to select those indicators that effectively measure the dependent variable. In operationalizing civic engagement I will use the four categories (media attention, political involvement, volunteerism and trust) Their study results show that Internet access contribute very little to reduce civic engagement.According to S. Verba (1971), raising the socio-economic status, income and level of education increase the interest and involvement in civic life.

Analyzing the impact of the Internet on young people, Ellen Quintellier (2008) places great emphasis on the quality of the work completed online. Therefore, the effects of the Internet should be quantified in two ways: the amount of time youth spent online and the variety of activities that young people engage in virtual environment. Conclusions of her study show that those with high socio-economic background use more frequently the internet for information, while people with a low socioeconomic background use the Internet for entertainment.

Gabriel Badescu and Burean Toma (2008) used a two-dimensional view of political participation. The first is conventional participation (which includes contacting politicians / organizations / officials, work for a party / political group, wearing a specific symbol of a candidate, political party and participate in political meetings), and the second dimension, protest participation include: signing a petition, participating in a demonstration, strike, boycott products, buying products for political purposes and participation to illegal protests. Their study analyze the way political participation of young people from three countries (Belgium, Canada and Romania), is influenced by the quantity and quality of Internet use. To do this, they identify two dimensions of participation in those countries and relate them to the amount and purpose of Internet use.

In my study I think it's not necessary to use a bidimensional approach of participation, since it involves both conventional and civic participation. Young people may act for the common good including demonstrations, strikes

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and illegal protests. In some cases, protest participation represent a more effective mean to draw the authorities' attention to their needs and problems.

Pippa Norris (2001) tries to analyze the impact of online civil society on political participation using the theoretical framework of online engagement which suggests that the use of new information technologies can be understood as a product of resources (time and money), motivation (interest, trust) and opportunity structure (the way in which citizens and politicians use the internet).

According to the author Andreina Mandelli (2002), different effects of the Internet can be explained taking into account the interaction between access, social capital, culture and online social trust. The original social network, culture, beliefs and trust influence the way people use the Internet and create new relationships in the digital network. This supports the idea that online and offline socializing are not alternatives but complementary social outcomes.

The resource model of participation

Sidney Verba, H. Brady and Lehman Schlozman (1995) develop a resource model of political participation which is connected to other 2 theories: Stratification and Rational Choice Theory. In contrast to Rational Choice Theory, Resource Theory pays more attention to costs than to benefits and divide all participatory activity in actions that require time, money and civic skills. The model claims that resources aren't equally distributed among people with different socio-economic statuses.

This model is also used by Samuel Best and Brian Krueger (2005) in their attempt to find out who has the characteristics that predict online and offline political participation.

They use the theory of resources and examine the way factors that most influence online participation are distributed in the population. The general hypothesis tested in their study is that online participation requires specific resources. The scale of political participation is built taking into account the following variables: political interest, leisure, civic skills, online and offline mobilization, skills of Internet use, Internet access, connectivity, speed and control variable for demographic characteristics (income, education, gender, race, size of community).

The results show that although individuals need different sets of skills to participate online, those who already possess offline civic skills, tend to possess skills of Internet use.

In this paper, Resource theory is used to deepen the understanding of online civic participation and to test if online civic engagement distributes similarly to offline civic engagement. This model is useful because it offers strong explanations which increase the validity/fidelity of the research. Another argument is that the model has a high degree of flexibility, which enables its

application for deduction of the corresponding resources needed for a specific type of activity.When compared to other approaches used to measure flexible values and attitudes, the measurement of the resources has effectively provided clearer perspectives.

Data Analysis

This paper rejects the idea that people who use online services are part of those already informed and active citizens, (Pippa Norris 2001) and aims to examine whether Internet use has an impact on offline civic engagement.

Relying on Resource Model developed by Sidney Verba, H. Brady and Lehman Schlozman (1995), I expect the Internet to enhance those motivational resources required for offline civic engagement. According to theory, the study's guiding premise is that questioned young people posses different levels of civic engagement caused by a different distribution of resources. Among the possible factors which influence online/offline political participation (Samuel Best, Brian Krueger 2005), I identified and put emphasis on how motivational resources influences offline civic participation. Therefore, I considered the motivational resources represented by: level of trust, interest in politics, level of political information, relational capital and civic skills.

It's interesting to watch during this research, whether the factors predicting civic participation of young people in Romania are positively related to the level of Internet use. I think explaining variation of motivational resources through independent variable (Internet use) helps to test the validity of my hypothesis.

The present study is based on data from the Agency for Governmental Strategies and their collection was performed by applying a number of individual questionnaires to a representative sample of 2317 subjects from all over the country, in November 2009. For this analysis, I've selected only the respondents ranged in age from 15 to 30 (635).Their mean age was 22,61 and the median age was 23. Of the young respondents, 51.3% are male and 48.7% girls.

My analysis begins with the assumption that respondents posses different levels of civic engagement. Similar to prior studies (Badescu, 2002, Best, Krueger, 2005), I measure civic engagement through respondents' willingness to volunteer in nonprofit organizations, to sign a petition, to participate in protest activities, raise /donate money for a social/political cause, buy/refuse certain products for a social/political cause, attend to cultural events with social/political content, present/sustain a political/social cause in public. The research methodology employed for this study is quantitative, using SPSS and the linear regression model.

In addressing civic involvement, the following categories will be used as resources:

a. The level of political knowledge

An important aspect of the "informational capital is the capacity to identify representative figures of local/central public institutions. Therefore, it is measured by an aggregate index (knowledge) built from the following questions:

🗆Do you know who is the chairman of the County's Council?

🗆Can you name a Member of Parliament elected from the district you live in?

b. The level of trust is important because people with a high level of trusty seem to be more tolerant and willing to cooperate with other people and "a high level of trust facilitate a low cost of economic trades and encourages people to invest in public goods." (Badescu 2000)

I examine trust variable using trust in institutions and interpersonal trust. Thus, I created a new aggregate index (trust1) built from the items which measure trust in institutions. More precisely, this variable derives from cumulating answers (coded with 7,8,9,10) to the following question in the questionnaire:

- How much do you trust each of the following Romanian institutions, using a scale from 0 to 10? (where 0 means '"can not be trusted at all" and 10 "can have confidence")

🗆Police	🗆Law Court	🗆Parliament
🗆City Hall	🗆Government	🗆Political parties

Trust2 variable measures the social trust of the respondents having "a lot" and "very much" confidence in the categories of persons specified below:

🗆Close people	🗆First met people	🗆Gypsies
🗆People of other nationalities	🗆People of other religion	

c. Interest in politics refers to how often young people discuss with close friends topics about politics or social problems. Respondents' answers are placed on an increasing scale, ranged from 1 (never) to 4 (always).

The importance of politic sphere in respondents' life is also measured using the following question:

Do you intend to:

🗆candidate for a political office?

🗆become a member of a political organization or political party?

🗆take a leading role in the community?

🗆participate to a public meeting of the Local Council?

These 4 items are cumulated to create the aggregate index called "**interest**" which show the set of "yes" and "may" answers of each respondent.

d. Civic skills refers to the way young people understand the idea of an active citizenship and represent "those communication and organization abilities which are so important for a political participation" (Verba, Brady, 1995). According to the authors, the willingness of civic involvement can be achieved from an early age and developed over the adult life. It can be acquired in different organizations like: youth groups, sportive teams, artistic or hobby groups (choir, theater groups), school clubs (student council, scientific circle), political parties, religious, environmental, cultural organizations, etc Through informal communication and common tasks, these associations contribute to shaping the basic qualities of a good citizen.

The respondents were asked to name each of the formal group in which they were involved and their affiliations within local organizations, was measured by a new index (civic skills1). To analyze the way youth identify civic values, I also created an index (civic_skills2) which show the importance given to the following statements by each respondent.

"It is important for a good citizen to:

 show support for poor people
express their opinion in elections
respect laws
engage in voluntary activities
 engage in political activities or participating in peaceful protests against laws they consider unfair

e. Relational capital" (Badescu 2001) represent another factor that may explain the basis for individuals' civic engagement because it is mainly dominated by altruism and reciprocity. In this paper, it is measured through the cumulative index (social relations) obtained from the following indicators:
In your circle of friends, do you have someone who:

 can help you solve problems in the household ?
can help you in finding a job?
 can lend you money?

Offline civic engagement represents the dependent variable and it is constructed by combining several observable items such as:
In the last 12 months, how often did you:

carry deliberately a patch, sticker, or other accessory for supporting
    a political or social cause
sign a petition
take part in a legal march or protest
collect or donate money for a political/social cause
buy/refuse deliberately certain products for political/social reason
participate in illegal protest activities
write or present a political aspect in public
attend a show or cultural event with political/social content

Volunteering is measured using the participatory frequency to voluntary work in the last 12 months. The respondents ranged their answers on a scale from 1 to 6, where 1 means lack of participation and 6-a daily participation to civic activities.

There are prior studies that put a great emphasis on the quality of the work completed online (Quintellier 2008, Badescu, Burean 2008). They argue that certain types of Internet use will have different effects on civic participation. For example, those who use it for an informational purpose (finding news, read political sites), tend to be more engaged in civic activities than those who usually use the Internet for an entertainment goal (downloading music, movies, games, etc.). Therefore, I created the cumulative index (Internet_use1) which measures both daily time spent online and time spent online for gathering information, news, ideas.

To investigate the importance of the Internet in young people's lives, subjects were asked to place the frequency of their daily Internet use on a scale from 1 (none) to 5 (5 or more hours).I measure online civic engagement through the aggregate index (online_civic_engagement), using the following question:

How often have you forwarded an email with a political/social content, in the last 12 months?,where 1 means "never", 2 "at least once" and 3"often".

The social profile of Internet user can be examined by comparing those who use Internet frequently (5 or more hours)with non-users. Most of Romanian youth spend 1-2 hours online daily and less than an hour per day for gathering information about politics and current events.

To determine whether there is an influence of the Internet on civic behavior, I examine bivariate relations between Internet-use index and those indicators of civic activism early mentioned.Trying to identify the social profile of Internet user, I used crosstabs for the following socio-demographic variables: age, gender, area of residence, family income, ethnicity and religion.

Table 1.

Time spent on the Internet according to gender

			How many hours do you daily spend online?						Total
			none	< 1 hour	1-2 hours	3-4 hours	>=5 hours	DN/DA	
Gender	M	Count	62	32	79	72	78	3	326
		%	19.0%	9.8%	24.2%	22.1%	23.9%	.9%	100.0%
	F	Count	66	40	92	58	48	5	309
		%	21.4%	12.9%	29.8%	18.8%	15.5%	1.6%	100.0%
Total		Count	128	72	171	130	126	8	635
		%	20.2%	11.3%	26.9%	20.5%	19.8%	1.3%	100.0%

Similar percentages of the first two columns show that variables are not associated for those who states that do not use Internet at all (19%, 20.2%, 21.4%) and those who spend less than an hour online. (9,8%, 11,3%, 12,9%). For other categories Internet usage can vary considerably higher:the percentage of boys who spend 5 or more hours online (23,9%) is 8 percentage points higher than girls (15,5%).

Income represents the monthly sum gained by the respondents' family and is illustrated by 6 categories ranged from 1 (less than 500 lei) to 6 (more than 5000 lei). It is positively correlated to Internet use. (Statistical significance of chi-square test Sig.000)

Area of residence is a dichotomous variable, where "1" represents youth from urban area and "2"youth living in rural area. The following table shows clearly that the number of urban youth using the Internet is often higher than in rural areas. 76.3% of young people living in urban areas use the Internet more than one hour per day, compared to 53.6% of rural youth.

Table 2.

Time spent on the Internet according to area of residence

			H How many hours do you spend daily online?						Total
			none	< 1 hour	1-2 hours	3-4 hours	>=5 hours	DN/DA	
Area of residence	Urban	Count	45	42	111	92	93	5	388
		%	11.6%	10.8%	28.6%	23.7%	24.0%	1.3%	100.0%
	Rural	Count	82	30	60	39	34	3	248
		%	33.1%	12.1%	24.2%	15.7%	13.7%	1.2%	100.0%
Total		Count	127	72	171	131	127	8	636
		%	20.0%	11.3%	26.9%	20.6%	20.0%	1.3%	100.0%

Data show that most of the respondents who engage in volunteer activities are youth aged between 15-18 (38,2%), male (23,55), living in urban areas (28,2%).

To compare the social profile of Internet users with the one of civic activists, I have used chi-square test in the analysis of correlations to socio-economic indictors. The level of statistical significance of each correlation can establish the social differences between the two groups of young people considered.

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Table 3.

Results of chi-square test regarding the level of correlation
between socio-economic indicators and Internet use

Socio demographic variables	Internet use
Gender	.058
Area of residence	**.000**
Education	**.000**
Income	**.000**
Religion	.012
Race	.206
Age	**.000**

Table 4.

Results of chi-square testing for engaging in voluntary activities
and socio-economic indicators

Socio demographic variables	Volunteering
Gender	0.24
Area of residence	.031
Education	**.002**
Income	.791
Religion	**.000**
Race	.031
Age	.015

The significance of chi-square test illustrates a strong relationship between Internet use, area of residence, level of education, age and income. Engaging in voluntary work is positively associated with education level and youth's religion. The relation between Internet connection, volunteering and socio-economic indicators is not very different in terms of statistical significance. (With the exception of family income) We notice that education influence both Internet use and volunteering.

Most of the respondents who said they use the Internet to inform themselves about politics and current events (67.7%) spend more than an hour online. Again, the percentage of boys who gather information online (54.1%) is higher than girls (45.9%). To test whether the quality of the time spent online influence the civic engagement of the Internet user, I separately associate time spent online and time spent online gathering information, with the indicators of offline civic engagement.

Table 5.

The results of chi-square test regarding the correlation
between offline civic engagement and time spent online

Off line civic engagement	Length of Internet use	Informational use of the Internet
1. Wear a sticker, patch or T-shirt to sustain a political/social cause	.546	**.000**
2. Sign a petition	**.001**	**.000**
3. Take part to a legal march or protest	.014	.007
4. Raise or donate money for a cause	.198	.042
5. Buy deliberately certain product for an ethical, political or ecological reason	.032	.201
6. Refuse to buy certain products for an ethical, political or ecological reason	.852	.926
7. Forward an email with a political/social content	**.001**	**.000**
8. Participate to illegal protest activities	.511	.205
9. Write or present a political/social cause in public	.700	.351
10. Attend to cultural events with social/political content	.096	.116
11. Volunteering	.384	.042
12. Voting	.038	.060

Time spent on the Internet (without specifying the purpose for which it is used) is positively correlated to petition signing and to forwarding emails with a political/social content. Data show that signing petitions and forwarding emails are positively correlated to both variables. If I restrict the analysis only to those who use the Internet for an informational purpose, it can be seen a stronger correlation to the indicators of civic engagement. More precisely, those who use this medium for acquiring information about social events or political life are more likely to get involved in the community they live in.

Civic engagement and motivational resources

This section aims to test the extent to which motivational variables (level of political knowledge, trust, political interest, civic skills and relational capital) determine the involvement of young people in community's life. For this, it has been used a regression model consisting of motivational resources as independent variables and the cumulative index of offline civic engagement. I chose this tool to test not only the existence of a relationship between variables, but the dependence degree between them.

Therefore, I examined the level of significance of the relationships observed, R square and the value of standardized coefficient Beta which allows a hierarchy of the most important independent variables.

Results of a regression model regarding the impact of motivational
resources on offline civic engagement

	1. Political interest	2. Trust		3. Political knowledge	4. Relational capital	5.Civic skills	
		Trust1	Trust2			civic_skills1	civic_skills2
offline_civic_ engagement	Beta.382 Sig.879	Beta.309 Sig.033	Beta.360 Sig.885	Beta.713 Sig.007	Beta.014 Sig.947	Beta.279 Sig.910	Beta.199 Sig.140

Considering offline civic engagement as a dependent variable, it can be observed that its variation is explained almost significantly by the variables: trust in institutions and political knowledge. (Beta = 0,71, Sig.0,07). Greater knowledge about political facts increases the likelihood of engaging in online civic activities.

The model shows that young people interested in issues related to public policy tend to engage in civic activities (beta = 0.38). Also, a high level of confidence in institutions and interpersonal trust is associated with a intense participation. (beta = 0.30, beta = 0.36 respectively). Trust in institutions (trust1) of 0.309 indicates that the power of regression model is below average, and the level of statistical significance exceeds the threshold of 0.05. Relational capital seems to be poorly correlated with the dependent variable. The risk assumed when null hypothesis is rejected is quite high (0.67 for trust in institutions and 0.93 for information capital). The R square value shows that these motivational resources, taken together, explain variation of offline civic engagement in the proportion of 66.1%. So there are, in addition, other important factors that determine civic activism of Romanian youth.

However, it is interesting to examine if the class of indices that predict in a large extent youth civic participation, are positively associated with the Internet use. Using the aggregate index Internet_use1 as independent variable and controlling respondents age, statistics deny the existence of significant links between Internet and resources.

Results of a linear regression model regarding the impact
of the Internet on motivational resources

	1. Political interest	2. Trust		3. Political knowledge	4. Relational capital	5. Civic skills	
		Trust1	Trust2			Civic_skills1	Civic_skills21
Internet _use1	Beta.-.201 Sig. .707	Beta..024 Sig. .734	Beta.050 Sig. .310	Beta-.079 Sig .452	Beta .043 Sig .416	Beta.083 Sig. .097	Beta .107 Sig .351

Beta coefficient values are low, some negative and do not pass standard thresholds of significance. It seems that young people who spend time online reading news about politics or current events do not have a great trust in others or in Romanian institutions. Also, these users do not have a high level of political interest and political knowledge. Therefore, it can be argued that the use of virtual environment for gathering information has no significant effect on civic motivation.

Further, I analyze the relationship established between online and offline civic engagement. To test whether online civic behavior is translated to offline environment, it was used a regression model between the two variables.

Table 8.

Results of a linear regression model with offline civic engagement as a dependent variable

	Offline civic engagemet (dependent variable)
Online civic engagement (independent variable)	Sig.055 Beta.529 R^2 .265

Table 9.

Results of a linear regression model with online civic engagement as a dependent variable

	Online civic engagemet (dependent variable)
Offline civic engagement (independent variable)	Sig.055 Beta.443 R^2 .384

Standardized beta coefficient describes an intense relationship between the two variables, but statistically insignificant R^2 allows a hierarchy of the variables and show that offline civic engagement explains in a greater proportion the changes of online civic behavior (38.4%).In other words, there is a higher probability for offline civic engagement to be translated into the online environment than vice versa.

Next, I examine whether motivational resources are due to online civic involvement or if they are the factors which determine young people to express their civic behavior online. To do this, there are taken into account two cases: first tests civic engagement as an independent variable, and second, analyzes it as a dependent variable in relation to motivational resources.

Table 10.

Results of a linear regression with online civic engagement
as a dependent variable

			online_civic_engagement (dependent variable)
1. Political interest			
	Beta		.077
	Sig.		.755
2. Trust Trust1	Beta		.199
	Sig.		.322
Trust2	Beta		.101
	Sig.		.489
3. Political knowledge		Beta	-.366
		Sig.	.191
4. Relational capital		Beta	-.181
		Sig.	.236
5. Civic skills Civic_skills1	Beta		.107
	Sig.		.468
Civic_skills2	Beta		.327
	Sig.		.327

Table 11.

Results of a linear regression motivational resources
as a dependent variable

			online_civic_engagement (independent variable)
1. Political interest			
	Beta		.092
	Sig.		.755
2. Trust Trust1	Beta		.214
	Sig.		.296
Trust2	Beta		.118
	Sig.		.569
3. Political knowledge		Beta	-.321
		Sig.	.191
4. Relational capital		Beta	-.179
		Sig.	.236
5. Civic skills Civic_skills1	Beta		.529
	Sig.		.157
Civic_skills2	Beta		.182
	Sig.		.649

The above data show that relationships are not statistically significant in any of the cases. Therefore, it is doubtful that motivational resources act as intermediary factors able to translate online civic activism to offline participation.

Beta standardized coefficient describes a higher intensity (but insignificant) between the independent variable civic civic_skills1 and online civism, which mean that engaging in formal organizations could have a positive effect on virtual civic involvement.

In conclusion, statistical analysis of data shows that Internet use hasn't a significant impact on youth civic engagement in Romania.

Taken together, these results confirm theories in the literature claiming that the Internet is neutral to civic involvement. It seems that it does not develop nor diminishes participatory values of Romanian youth. Those motivational resources explain much of the individuals' civic behavior but seem to be acquired by other means and act independently of the use of the internet.

Therefore, the Internet appears not to foster offline forms of civic involvement. Moreover, online youth activism does not seem to develop those motivational factors (trust, political interest, the level of political information, relational capital, civic skills) that would lead to greater involvement. Data show that there is a higher probability for those working in the offline environment to adopt online forms of civic activism than vice versa. In other words, it is easier for those individuals who volunteer and practice civic values offline to adopt a new communication medium that would facilitate their efforts.

Conclusions

Considering the fact that nowadays many people are alarmed by the negative impacts of virtual services, the central purpose of this work was to monitor whether the Internet, a very familiar and accessible medium, manages to develop a participatory consciousness among youth. I assumed that young people, unlike the adult generation, have been in contact with the virtual environment from an early age, thing which amplifies its effect on their behavior.

This paper contributes to a deeper understanding of this phenomenon and to test certain theories of participation in the Romanian area. The sample included in the study is heterogeneous and representative, including youths aged between 15-30 from all regions of the country. Individual questionnaire applied to a number of 635 young people from Romania have provided rigorous empirical data for the statistical analysis. Unlike other studies, young people were interviewed at home, increasing the chance to get real data, uninfluenced by the environment, time or entourage. However, the fact that the Internet has been linked only to five indicators of motivational resources, creates a number of limitations. For example, it could have been neglected other important resources for explaining variation in civic engagement. (like

financial resources, leisure time, mobilization ability etc).Maybe a longitudinal approach could clarify the changes that appear gradually in the social behavior of Internet users.

The final results invalidate mobilization theory which claims that new technology will attract especially the young generation and groups that otherwise would remain not engaged in any form of civic activism. So, although Internet provides new tools to involve the youth, it has no potential to influence their motivation to engage in civic actions. Moreover, young people who devote much of the time spent on the Internet for educational purposes (forward messages with a political or social content, mobilize, collect information about politics or current events), not necessarily adopt the same attitude in the offline environment. An interesting thing is that young people active in conventional environment, have a higher probability to adopt forms of online civic engagement. Contrary to common fears, in Romania, Internet services appear to facilitate those existing forms of civic consciousness. All in all, the final results of this study confirm the tendency of the Internet to reinforce offline forms of participation that are already established (Pippa Norris, 1999).

As many aspects of youth civic participation remain unsolved, this theme deserves attention in future research projects, where findings of this study could be verified and supplemented by qualitative methods.

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THE EFFECTS OF THE ELECTORAL SYSTEM CHANGE ON THE POLITICAL REPRESENTATION IN ROMANIA

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ABSTRACT. The present research is a part of the wider study of electoral systems and aims to follow the consequences of electoral reform in 2008 on the quality of political representation in Romania. The implications of the Romanian electoral system change and the transition from a proportional electoral system to a mixed system (single-member district and proportional distribution of seats) are analyzed by developing an original research design and by introducing indicators like standards for quality assessment of what a "good representative" means. The comparative study deals with representatives as individual entities and focuses on two particularly periods of time: the first as part of the 2004-2008 legislature, and the second as part of the 2008-2012 legislature. Moreover, it takes into consideration socio-demographic characteristics such as gender and age as well as frequency of specific activities carried out in Parliament by representative, speaking in plenary, legislative proposals initiated and signed motions. By analyzing the acquired data from the official website of the Parliament and by applying analysis techniques specific for quantitative variables (tables of association, regression analysis), it concludes that the electoral system change has improved, on some levels, the quality of political representation in Romania.

Keywords: electoral reforms, political representation, proportional electoral system, mixed electoral system

Introduction

The issue of electoral systems is a controversial one and the choice of a system over another is always an open question depending on the context. This issue became more stringent once with the end of the communist period which left almost the entire world on the brink of an imminent democratization process which required a complete rebuilding of the institutional design. This involved developing a favorable framework for certain conditions which then have to generate varied sources and prerequisites for democracy. So, as well as economic, political and social issues, institutional issues have played a decisive

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role in the development of a good quality democracy. In that conditions where democracy is considered to be the only regime in which the institutional rules of competition between candidates who aspire to exercise power, induce them to adopt a responsible and responsive behavior to citizens' political preferences (Kitschelt, 2000) – the first major controversy which has arisen in almost all new post-communist regimes was that of political representation. As these arrangements have developed into modern democracies, the need of direct, free and fair elections became the core of political representation.

Based on these aspects, the present research deals with the extent that those elected in Parliament fail to remain accountable to the voters who have voted, according to the favorable conditions offered by the design of the adopted electoral system, namely if the quality of political representation in Romania has been improved after electoral reform. The main objective is to pursue if, along with the electoral system change, representatives indeed appear to be more responsible and more responsive toward the citizens who voted for them. The model is applied especially in conditions which a large number of electoral systems theorists agreed the idea that a change from a proportional system to a majority system is in most cases more likely than one from proportional to a system with uninominal vote (Lijphart and Grofman, 1984, p. 8), as happened in Romania. However, the results cannot be fully considered some invariable consequences because, as well as other changes in any other area, the full effects of this new mixed electoral system will not be really appreciated until they have passed several election cycles.

Taking into account the very well-known fact that the adoption of an electoral system or another isn't in essence just a technical decision, but on the contrary there is a high probability to have important consequences for the performance of the political system as a whole, the great expectations is that Romanian electoral reform to generate some visible and easily identifiable effects on the representative device level.

If before the 90s are enough cases to prove that there is a trend in accordance with the electoral systems are characterized by stability – including the well-known case of U.S. or Canada – after this period can be identified major cases of electoral reform in countries like New Zealand, Japan or Italy. There are many studies focused at the electoral systems effects, but since my issue is limited to the parliamentarians' behavior, it must be noted that from this perspective – analysis the changing in the parliamentarians' behavior once with the electoral system reform – there are only a few conclusive studies.

This study aims to investigate to what extent, after the Romanian electoral system changes, members of Parliament (MP) look different and if they can be considered much better representatives then before the electoral reform. MPs characteristics will be analyzed during two similar periods of time, one before

and one after the electoral system change. Their variation is measured in terms of a few indicators considered attributes of a good representative. The main differences between electoral systems have been briefly and traditionally studied according to their defining elements – electoral formula, the magnitude and structure of the vote, with emphasis on the last two.

The validity of the hypothesis is studied by the variation attributes of a good representative on each of the two time periods chosen – for 2004-2008 legislature the time period chosen is 2004-2005, and for 2008-2012 legislature the period 2008-2009. This paper can be considered a starting point to carry out more extensive studies on this theme. Because of the lack of research on this topic in Romania, I chose to create my own research design. Age, gender and work in Parliament plenary were introduced as representative indicators of good quality, the main purpose being to find if the dimensions the electoral system change has improved the skills of representation of MPs.

For gathering data which will allow testing the hypothesis, I considered appropriate to use quantitative method, using secondary data collected from the Parliament's website; once analyzed data will provide information about changes produced at the level of representation component, and more specifically, to what extent it can be considered that parliamentarians have become better representatives, more responsible and responsive towards citizens along with the electoral system change.

Electoral systems and political representation in theory

The literature about topics related to electoral systems is quite rich, and I chose to examine more closely issues related to the typology of these systems and the consequences involved at the mechanisms of voting level, the way in which are allocated and distributed seats in parliament or how is influenced the number of parties that reach the governance. This is because, as I mentioned above, in the world, the period preceding the fall of Communism was characterized by stable electoral systems, so that no empirical data has provided researchers an opportunity to approach such a phenomenon. Moreover, several countries including France and Greece have varied between majority and proportional systems, returning from time to time to one system or another. For this reason there are no detailed studies about the practical consequences that electoral systems have had at the representation component level, more specifically the extent in which parliamentarians are proving more accountable and responsive elected according to the chosen electoral system. Although there are few cases of complete electoral reform, they don't treat entirely the same issue dealt here, and the electoral system change hasn't been made in the same direction. Given the context, in the following I will refer to those aspects that I have found to be more useful for the present paper.

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However, before to extend the state of the art of this field, I considered appropriate and even necessary a brief overview of terminology which underlies this research, not only to make an idea about the key concepts used during the entire research, but also to create a first theoretical basis which will be further developed and deepened.

Key concepts in the study of electoral systems consequences

Probably the widely accepted definition of the electoral system in the political science literature is that it represents a mechanism for conversion of the votes cast by voters in public offices (Blais and Massicotte, 2002, p. 40). In this paper I chose to use a minimalist definition of the electoral system as it was formulated by Douglas Rae in his book "Political Consequences of Electoral Laws" (1967); thus the electoral system was defined as referring only to those elements "which govern the processes by which electoral preferences are articulated as votes and by which these votes are translated into distributions of governmental authority (typically parliamentary seats) among competing political parties". In more general terms, "electoral structures provide the crucial link in a representative democracy between the preferences of the citizenry and decisions made by their representatives" (Bertelli and Richardson, 2008, p. 365).

Given that understanding, the consequences of a particular electoral system necessarily requires a good knowledge of all available alternatives, the above definition allows us to introduce other key elements in the study of electoral systems such as: electoral formula, the magnitude and the ballot structure. Electoral formula determines how votes are to be counted in order to allocate seats, district magnitude refers to the number of seats per district and the ballot structure defines how voters express their choice (Blais and Massicotte, 2002, p. 41). This is very important for the present research because "taken together, these factors have been hypothesized to influence the behavior (the "style") of elected representatives" (Farrel, 2007, p. 3). Following the classic trend of the electoral systems typology, based on the items listed above, electoral systems are divided into: majority systems, proportional systems and mixed systems. We talk about plurality when a candidate gets more votes than each individual opponent, while we talk about *majority* when the winner muster more than half of the vote. *Proportional representation* involves that political parties should be represented in parliament in proportion to the vote they polled. *Mixed systems* combine majority formulas with proportional representation (Blais and Massicotte, 2002, p. 41). Another concept used throughout this paper is the *political representation*. Pitkin (1967) defines it as "acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them" (Eulau and Karps, 1977, p. 237). The concept of representation introduced two other elements of

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maximum interest for the present research - responsiveness and accountability of the MPs. Although these two features of representation have no generally accepted definition, are usually tackled as a bridge between representatives and those they represent. Involves on the one hand responsiveness of representatives in relations with all citizens needs and interests and action in accordance with (Eulau and Karps, 1977, pp. 238-240), and on the other hand responsible behavior towards the electorate and commitments. This implies also the possibility to apply sanctions for those elected. Parliamentary accountability has many meanings, but the proximate for the present study means that those who exercise power, whether as appointed officials, as governments, or in this case as elected representatives, "must be able to show that they have exercised their powers and discharged their duties properly" (Robertson, 1993, p. 3). These two concepts appeared in connection one with the other: accountability is a property of the institutional structures – in this case the electoral system – whereas responsiveness is the consequence. In other words, responsiveness is a measure of how much accountability can generate such a structure (Ferejohn, 1999, p. 131). So, one way in which can be measured the accountability degree of MPs is the measure in which they prove to be more responsive and representative of the people (Markowski, 2005, p. 9).

Developments of electoral systems and representation studies

The issues related to electoral systems are quite old. In the years between the appearance of the first electoral systems (since the beginning of the 1800s) and those who have marked a further development it must be mentioned the name of Condorcet, probably one of the first theoreticians of voting systems which widely approached the issues related to electoral systems representativeness.

Period before the fall of Communism was characterized in a great measure by stability. Although there were several cases of electoral reform, contextual constraints imposed by its own interests, values and ideology, the history of the country, its sociological structure, or some elements of foreign influences (Pilet and Waele, 2007, pp. 64-65) have led most countries to adopt more proportional than majoritarian formulas.

After a long time when electoral systems issue was treated with indifference, after 1990, the electoral system returned in the headlines as a vexed question in many countries. So, the first big challenge for the authors, as it appears in a complex study of Lijphart (1984), was to explore those factors which are necessarily to be taken into account when a political entity, be it a supranational organization or a local government, makes a choose regarding the appropriate electoral system. Obviously, there is no single ideal electoral system. So, at the time of the change/adoption of a certain electoral system, proportional representation of all citizens or the accountable government must

be gave up to some extent one for another (Carey and Hix, 2009, p. 2; Rae, 2003, pp. 343-346). However, it is often mentioned that the majority formulas, on the ground that they usually involved single-member district elections tend to generate two-party systems. Although these governments aggregate less interests (Grumm, 1958, pp. 357-358), these are better represented and involve a higher degree of accountability and responsiveness.

Directions in electoral reform

Hermens (1941) notes that any adoption of a proportional system at a national level tends to be irreversible, so that the literature in the field confirms one of the fears: when we look at practical situations in specific cases, it can be observed that the pressure for the electoral reform is much powerful in majoritarian systems, especially those using plurality than in proportional or mixed systems. The testing of the theories about electoral systems and the implications that those have on representation can be found in systematic and comprehensive studies. The empirical testing showed that there is a number of European democracies that have experienced the major types of electoral systems. It was observed that in each case the change has occurred at one time or another from a majority system or even a mixed system in certain forms of proportional representation. This is the case of some countries like Denmark, Belgium, Switzerland, Norway or Germany (Grumm, 1958, pp. 358-360).

Moreover, since the beginning of the 1970s there have been several major changes in electoral systems all over the world, changes which confirm these assumptions. It is about the case of Northern Ireland, where in 1973 a proportional formula replaced plurality. Also, in 1979, France introduced proportional representation for the election of its representatives in the European Parliament and in 1982 for the regional elections in Corsica. Japan adopted in 1982 the proportional representation list for the election of two-fifths of its upper house. In other Western democracies like Great Britain, New Zealand or Canada, the practice of majoritarian formulas generated a strong debate, so the adoption of this new electoral system in our country is more interesting (Lijphart and Grofman, 1984, p. 11).

Another very well-known case of an electoral reform is Italy which tried a change in almost the same direction and with the same purpose as Romania, among others also the issue of the representatives' electoral accountability towards citizens. Adopted by a referendum, just like our country, the new system adopted in Italy in 1994 involved a complex mix of plurality and proportionality, with significant differences between the two rooms (Bartolini, 2002, pp. 4-5). Although complicated and difficult to understand, Italy is an eloquent case which has proved that there are electoral systems which successfully combine

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proportional representation with the single member-district elections. The system was used in Italy between 1994 and 2005, when it took place another electoral reform. Being very well acknowledged the failure of the electoral system adopted in 1994, the system whose consequences have not achieved the expectations, the 2005 reform, in contrast to the former was entirely driven by politicians and distinguished by a nearly pure proportional formula (Renwick, 2009, pp. 437-439). Another case of electoral reform is, as I mentioned above, New Zealand which took the decision of replacing its plurality electoral system with mixed member proportional representation. At the same time, a few of other countries have also adopted similar mixed systems, including South Korea, Russia, Japan and the Ukraine (Karp, 2006, p. 715)

Causes and effects of electoral reform

André Blais and Louis Massicotte (1996, 2002) examine the majority-proportional debate in terms of the three particular dimensions of electoral systems – ballot, constituency and electoral formula, aspects also considered in this paper. They assert that the basic argument in favor of plurality is that produce stable single party governments and government stability is seen as increasing political stability. A second argument for this system is accountability. As argued, among others, also Powell (1989) and Strom (1990), the choice is decisive when it has a direct and immediate impact on government formation. Thus it is easier for voters in such a system to remove a government that does not meet their expectations. In a proportional system, the electors' decision is an indirect one, so this increases the possibility that a party that has lost the support of voters still remain in a governmental coalition. For supporters of proportional systems instead, another two elements are central: fairness and proportional representation of all interests.

But these are, as they were conceptualized by Duverger (1951), mechanical effects of the electoral systems while for the present study the so-called psychological effects of electoral systems appear to be more important. This is because it concerns how parties and voters react to these rules. Moreover, it is assumed that it has influence on political actors' behavior – party leaders, candidates and representatives respond to the incentives created by electoral rules. The result will be, among others, greater or less responsibility and responsiveness towards citizens (Blais and Massicotte, 2002, pp. 56-57).

And moreover, the interest in the psychological effects are manifested especially since they occur as a consequence of mechanical effects, as a response to the constraints imposed by the electoral rules(Benoit, 2006, p. 72), so it can be said that improving the quality of representation appears as an implication of the electoral system change. These side effects occur as expected consequences of the political actors regarding the operation of a particular electoral system -

in this case the single-member district and proportional distribution - these expectations being those which form the future conduct of the political elites (Blais and Carty, 1991, p. 92), and also of the representatives in Parliament.

It is often said that "there is still no substantial body of theoretically driven, comparative work to explain why one electoral system is chosen over another. In reality, however, political experience clearly demonstrates that while actors do maximize their goals by adapting their strategies to institutions, they also adapt by changing the institutional setting they transform their strategies into outcomes" (Benoit, 2006, p. 78). This is also the case of Romania who resorted to change the election system in order to provide, among others, incentives to improve the quality of the political representation and thus to enhance the responsible and the responsive behavior of the MPs against the citizens who have chosen.

The electoral systems and the relations between citizens and politicians

There are various strategies for achieving the links between politicians and citizens, ties that can be viewed from several perspectives. For the present research it's considered that the institutional rules of the competition between candidates, aspiring to exercise political authority, are the only that make rulers accountable and responsive to the political preferences distribution among all citizens. Thus, in the discussions about the possibility of manifestation of a certain type of representatives' behavior towards electorate, it is mentioned that the key research problem is to identify the grounds on which representatives are accountable and responsive to citizens (Kitschelt, 2000, p. 845). The author makes an interesting distinction and argues that there are visible differences in the patterns of relationships between constituents and politicians. So, there are policies which are supposed to generate a higher level of political commitment, including a higher degree of responsibility because both representatives, as well as voters know their interests well enough. Moreover, those politicians who are not open to the needs of their constituents, can be kept responsible by citizens, following that to the future elections the parliamentarians no longer receive their vote and no other incentives. Although it shouldn't be considered an essential characteristic, the personalization of electoral competition between candidates favors this type of relationship. Instead, the rules that focus on electoral competition among politicians as members of a particular political party don't. A logical inference would be that single-member district electoral systems have a higher probability to develop more personal relationships between politicians and voters. This also involves a high degree of representatives' responsibility, but only to those who elected him, as well as mechanisms through which voters can maintain it on the responsible choice (Kitschelt, 2000, pp. 850, 855, 859). But this assumption is not verified in all cases because that part of the electorate who didn't vote with the winner is in the situation to remain unrepresented.

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Unfortunately, as Kitschelt (2000) also mentioned in his study, the literature in the field is quite poor in research that use a rigorous operationalization mechanisms to establish probable links between politicians and citizens but representative behavior towards those who elected varies according to the incentives imposed by the electoral system.

Obviously, the electoral systems have significant political consequences. They shape the nature of the political parties and the party systems, influence the strategies of voter, and more important for this research, they affect the behavior of politicians. "Once instituted, electoral systems shape politicians' behavior" (Mainwaring, 1991, p. 21). Contrary to Kitschelt (2000), Mainwaring points out that in general the electoral systems which include also majoritarian formulae, by the fact that they grant a high degree of autonomy and independence for politicians, tend to generate a personalized, clientelistic and individualistic style of representation. Moreover, in addition to representing interests of their constituencies, politicians have their own interests and goals. This is the reason why sometimes politicians tend to favor some kinds of electoral arrangements over the others. In many cases "electoral reforms may not produce the results that were intend when they were drawn up" (Mainwaring, 1991, p.34), so it remains that, after data collection, to see if the electoral system change in Romania indeed have the expected results.

The degree of responsibility/responsiveness involved by electoral systems

As a general rule, the best electoral system and the election laws for voters are considered to be those that provide incentives for candidates to respect and fulfill the wishes of voters. So, for this research it is important to find which of the electoral systems allow a personal vote and encourage candidates to appear in front of the citizens as an individual subject and which is based on party characteristics. It is expected that the ballot structure and the district magnitude have a direct influence on who is elected and based on what principles.

In terms of opportunities for a personal vote and electoral responsibility, the electoral system can be arranged "on a continuum from party-centered systems (which provide little or no incentive to seek personal votes), to intermediate systems (clearer mixture of individual and party incentives) to candidate-centered systems (where personal voting is effective)" (Mitchell, 2002, p. 341). In party-centered systems, especially in systems with closed lists, the candidate's chances depend entirely on the party popularity and the position on the list determined by the party. Thus, low responsibility of candidates in relations to voters is justified by the fact that the former are protected by a high position on the party list. Regarding the intermediate systems, the mixed one, as it is in Romania after the electoral reform, most of them focus on the candidate rather than a closed list.

In this way members of parliament are easily identifiable and can be sanctioned directly by the voters; more, they cannot be judge by the performance of the party colleagues in other districts. As for candidate-centered systems, is clear that they provide strong incentives to cultivate a personal vote (Mitchell, 2002, pp. 338-341). However, we cannot generalize this statement because in certain contexts, studies on the political consequences of the electoral systems have shown that proportional systems may prove to be more effective both in terms of representativeness, and also in ensuring responsible governance (Lindberg, 2005, pp. 59-61).

In view of these facts is even more justified the attempt to follow if the effects of the electoral system change in Romania are consistent with the expectations imposed by theory. In the context in which after the electoral system changes representatives should mainly to represent the interests of those who elected they, the MPs are expected to maintain an active political base and to be in frequent contact with individual citizens (Farrell and Scully, 2007, p. 17); so the representatives should prove more interested in initiating various legislative projects and to take the word in plenary session claiming the citizens causes in their constituency, because they are less.

The implication of political representation

This paper finds its main foundation in the theory about political representation. "Political representation is the activity of making citizens' voices, opinions, and perspectives "present" in the public policy making processes" (Pitkin, 1967, p. 209).

The dimension presented in this study is the formal representation. According to one of the first vision on formal representation, this representation is dictated exclusively through to those arrangements that determine the pattern in which representative is chosen (Pitkin, 1964, p. 902), namely the electoral system. The central concept here revolves around those incentives which induce the elected officials to maintain responsible against their acts. So, the representatives ought to be responsive to the wishes of his constituents, and the constituents ought to have some method of sanctioning the representative because this improves the quality of the representation (Brunell, 2008, p. 17). In terms of quality representation is true that MPs cannot be forced to keep their promises. However, the electoral system can provide certain conditions for the improvement of the quality of a good representative. This especially if one takes into account that when we talk about a personal vote, the representative is more easily identifiable and thus it can be impose sanctions at the time of re-election (Manin, Przeworski and Stokes, 1999, pp. 29-31).

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The methodology

The present research follows the consequences of the electoral system change at the representation component level. In this context, it was chosen the treatment of the electoral system to be the independent variable, while a better representation translated into more responsible and accountable conduct of MPs, is the dependent variable.

The research question of the present is: *The Romanian electoral system change brought at the same time also a change in MPs behavior – are they more responsible, accountable or better representatives?*

The main hypothesis that will be tested through an analysis of the secondary data collected and centralized is:

H: *The passage from a proportional electoral system and the introduction of the uninominal vote improve the quality of the political representation in Romania.*

MPs in Romania have become better representatives and are more representative once with the electoral system change.

More precisely, the main expectation is that MPs from Romania to be better representatives (responsible/responsive) than they were before the electoral system change, being that now the vote is a more personally one, and the emphasis goes more on each MPs as an individual entity.

The justification of the research instrument

The present paper is a quantitative research in which the main instrument was based on secondary data taken from existing documents and from official records. This secondary information represents a series of data collected and posted earlier which were taken from the official database of the Romanian Parliament. It is updated periodically so that reflects the situation and the real work of representatives. Even if it have been used secondary data investigation and also some official data already available, the originality of this research is the fact that presents an original approach of the way in which it is assessed the representativeness of MPs. In addition, in the attempt to check the validity of the hypothesis has been built a single database through which have been centralized all available information about each individual MP.

I chose the quantitative research because it is a research method that in social sciences generates results with a high degree of generality. Also allow the study of a large number of subjects, so the obtained data can be easily statistically analyzed, and the results may have a conclusive character. More important, there are obtained data that are statistically representative.

The decision to use secondary data to the detriment of primary data can be justified on the basis of some well-defined considerations. First of all, the validity and the fact that the official information reflects the real situation

of the parliamentary activity are considered. Using primary data we could obtain data that is likely to move away from reality. Using primary data, the main risk was the obtaining of some data that get us away from reality. Raw data are clearly the best, but also secondary data are useful in forming opinions about how the MPs behavior. Furthermore, the work with secondary data allowed the inclusion in study of the MPs at national level, while using other tools would limited the research on a sample.

The obtaining of the data

All the data used in the present research have been collected from the official website of the Romanian Parliament (www.parlament.ro), but also its official web pages (www.senat.ro and www.cdep.ro). Given that this is a comparative study that follows the effects of the electoral system change in Romania on the quality of a good representative. The data was collected from the last mandate in which MPs were elected on party list (the 2004-2008 period), but also the current mandate in which the MPs have been elected according to the rules of a mixed system with uninominal vote (the 2008-2012 period). The current legislature taken into account is still in office, so for the obtaining of data balanced data it has chosen gathering information from the same finite period of time, namely a year of each mandate studied. In short, data analyses MPs take into account activity carried out during the 2004-2005 period, respectively 2008-2009.

There were analyzed 922 subjects of the two legislatures taken into account under the analysis. From every MPs was collected prime data related to the work in the Parliament as representative of the citizens interests, but also some data about their socio-demographic characteristics. In a second phase, each of the variables, by which have been operationalizate the main concepts, have been encoded into a series of indicators so as to include into one of the predetermined categories. Data centralized in this manner, was then analyzed in order to check the validity of the hypothesis.

The operationalization of the main concepts

For the most part the main concepts used in this study – electoral system and political representation – were treated in the first part of the research. Thus, at this point will be only mentioned those concepts features that are useful in data analysis stage.

If in the first part of the study the concept of electoral system was broadly defined, in this part is considered a mechanism for converting votes into public office (Fisichella, 2007, p. 232), and more relevant for the present study, the main bridge between the preferences of ordinary citizens and the decisions of their representatives (Bertelli and Richardson, 2008, p. 365).

During the study there were used the three levels of an electoral system analysis: the electoral formula, the magnitude and the vote structure for distinguishing between the two electoral systems considered. The main conclusion we reached is that the new electoral system should produce better representatives, given that we are talking about a vote personally. Emphasis is placed on candidates/ MPs individually and they represent a lower group of citizens – those who elected them. Moreover, citizens have an opportunity to penalize representatives because they can be identify more easily; under these conditions is expected to have younger MPs, more active, better representatives, that is more responsible and more responsive.

Regarding the political representation, the present research it refers only to parliamentary accountability. This includes the fact that MPs are responsible and active in fulfilling the commitments that they have made to voters because these are essential components of the representatives' output (Ágh, Ilonszki and Lánczi, 2005, p. 16). The institutional arrangements effects are predictable, and this component of accountability allows us to measure whether the changes have the desired effect. In this context we can measure if the electoral system change in Romania brought us better representatives. Thus, I defined the political representation by what means a responsible and responsive behavior of parliamentarians, and which were considered attributes of a good representative.

Based on those aspects I chose to operate with the concept of "good representative" by the following variables:

I.   Three variables which refers strictly to the activity of the every MP in part:

- *Sessions in which took the word in plenary;*
- *Legislative proposals initiated;*
- *Motions signed.*

II. Three variables relating to the socio-demographic characteristics of MPs considered as an attempt to see if after the electoral system change MPs shows a higher degree of representativeness for the citizens:

- *Age;*
- *Gender;*
- *Region.*

III. A variable to indicate whether and how the distribution of parliamentary mandates is change and if we have better MPs according to their political affiliation:

- *Political faction.*

The operationalisations of variables in indicators

Given the large number of subjects analyzed, I operationalized each variable that required this by indicators. On this basis I built some categories much easier to handle, according to the minimum and maximum value that arise. So, the variables have been operationalized in the following indicators:

I. Variables which refer to the activity of each member of parliament, *sessions in which took the word in plenary* and *legislative proposal initiated*, have been by operationalize by next indicators: "less active", "medium activity" and "active". Since the motions signed involve a more complex political process I considered this variable a measure of the interest shown by MPs for improving and amend the legislation that aimed directly the citizens and which can nominate them as better representatives. So, the variable motion signed was operationalized by the following indicators: "low interest", "medium interest" and "high interest".

Regarding the variable *sessions (taking the word in plenary),* those who took the word in a range between 1-20 have been included in the category "less active". MPs who took the word in a range between 21-50 were considered as having "medium activity"; those who were situated in a range of 51-132 were included in the last category, "active".

The variable *legislative proposals initiated* was operationalized by the same indicators in certain intervals, as follows: 0-20 of legislative proposals initiated fit an MP in the category "less active"; the range 21-50 means an MP with "medium activity" and those who had a number of legislative proposals initiated between 51-95 were included in the category "active".

Motions signed were clearly in a small number, such as those who participated at the signing of a number of motion, indifferent of their nature, ranging between 0-3 were included in the category of those who expressed a "low interest". The MPs who have signed between 4-6 motions were considered as showing a "medium interest", and those who have signed a number of motions in the range 7-9 I considered that showed "high interest".

II. The next two variables, *age* and *gender*, were operationalized by indicators like: "young", "middle age", "old age" for the first variable, respectively "female", "male" for the second variable. For variable *region* I divided the MPs constituencies according to four regions: Transylvania, Moldavia, Walachia & Oltenia, and the Dobrudja.

Regarding the variable *age* I considered MPs between 27-45 years as "young", those aged between 46-60 years I included in the category of "middle age", and for MPs who had an "old age" I set the interval 61-88 years.

Variable *region* was introduced with the idea to see which areas are represented by the most active, young and responsible MPs.

III.   For the variable *political faction* I chose to take into account the most relevant parties of the Romanian political area, the Democratic Liberal Party (PD-L), the Social Democratic Party (PSD), the National Liberal Party (PNL), the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania (UDMR). The Greater Romania Party (PRM) was omitted from the analysis since it is present only in one of the two legislature analyzed (2004-2008), as well as Conservative Party (PC) because the number of representatives from this party is very small so that a comparison would have irrelevant results. In the same time were also omitted the minority parties (the e.g Turkish Union of Romania, etc.) because generally have only one representative.

To note here is that the results about the variable political faction cannot be assigned as a result of the electoral system, but I considered that the type of political party can affect the extent in which MPs appear or not as good representatives. Members of each party will be analyzed in terms of their parliamentary activity – motions, legislative proposals and speaking in plenary, and will discuss about them in terms of "apathetic", "moderate" and "active".

To be mentioned, I chose to use at all these categories because it allows me to observe some changes in relations between variables on certain categories, depending on each mandate and according to the electoral system by which the MPs were elected.

The stages of data analysis

The testing of the hypothesis research will take into account the following:

1.   At first it would be analyzed the global situation to see if there is a distinction between the two legislatures, taking into account the correlations established between the independent and dependent variable. It will first take into account the socio-demographic variables which will indicate the extent in which the new electoral system brought MPs more representatives for the citizens, and then those variables strictly related with the activity of a "good representative".
2.   For the identification of the correlations between variables will be used the association tables on which I will compare the two legislatures between them depending on the operationalization of variables in indicators.
3.   Using the descriptive analysis will be then analyzed the variable frequencies on different categories, depending on the period taking into account, 2004-2005 respectively 2008-2009; this will be useful to notice the differences on the categories, differences generated by the new electoral system.

4. In the final stage I will discuss about the appreciations of the values that are taken by certain variables depending on the values of other variables, using the regression analysis. This allows not only the only to study and to measure the relationship between these variables, but also to shape the relationship between them.

The data analysis and results

To be mentioned, the analyze will be referred to the 2004-2008 legislature by taking into account the period 2004-2005, and the 2008-2012 legislature by analyzing the period 2008-2009.

Table 1

The age distribution of the MPs in the 2 mandates

	2004-2005 %	2008-2009 %
Young	23,9	**36,9**
Middle age	49,3	50,1
Old age	24,9	12,6

A first observation to be made is that, as can be seen from the table attached above, the new electoral system brought us younger parliamentarians. Their number has increased in the second term with 13% against the previous period, while the number of older MPs has dropped by almost half in 2008-2009 compared to 2004-2005. Regarding the middle age MPs, the differences between the two terms are almost insignificant. In these circumstances, we can say that at the level of the whole Romanian parliament, the new electoral system has provided for the young, incentives and favorable conditions for the join in the electoral race. Given the fact that we have a greater number of younger MPs it can be said that at level of this category we have a better representation.

Another main issue which has been intensely debated over time was the inclusion of women in political life; in Romania this category is often underrepresented. In this context I thought it would be interesting to observe also the measure in which the electoral reform has improved or not the level at which women are represented.

Table 2

The distribution of the MPs gender in the 2 mandates

	2004-2005 %	2008-2009 %
Female	10,2	9,5
Male	89,8	90,5

Contrary to expectations, the uninominal vote has not improved the situation of women in terms of political representation. But, this can be translated by the lack of women interest to involve actively in politics, but also by the fact that the new electoral system did not provide incentives for inclusion in the electoral race of female candidates. In these conditions, it can be said that after the electoral reform social representation has not suffered any changes.

As was mentioned, the variable political faction was introduced in order to observe the MPs in the period 2004-2005 according to their party affiliation, and what happened with them in the period 2008-2009. Although it cannot be attributed as a direct consequence of the electoral system change, one result is that after the introduction of the uninominal vote, the centre-right political party (PD-L) had increased considerably his number of the seats obtained. What about the other three parties considered, there are no obvious changes, the MPs distribution according to political affiliation is approximately the same as before the electoral system change. (See annex 1).

Although it has not studied the extent to which the legislative proposals, motions signed or plenary speech aimed directly the citizens of a constituency that a MP represents, I considered that each of them activated for the representation of their electorate. Very interesting, at the global level, the activity of the representatives in parliament has not improved very much. The current Parliament doesn't appear as a good representative to the extent to which its members develop only a low activity in to speak and initiate various legislative proposals. But the interest shown for the signing motions increased considerably (see annex 2).

If until now I have accomplished an overall analysis regarding the changes brought by the new electoral system, below it will be analyzed which the variables frequencies on different categories, depending on the period are considered, 2004-2005 respectively, 2008-2009.

It seems that in terms of the MPs ages, as it can be seen from the table attached below (table 3), the electoral system change has brought improvements in the quality of representation; so, it can be said that the new electoral system has created favorable conditions for the formation of younger and more active parliamentarians that to be some better representatives for the category in question. The trend is that young MPs to become moderate-actives on all the three indicators of parliamentary activity. Instead, the category "old age" tends to become moderate-apathetic. Significant differences exist mainly in the high interest shown by the young MPs regarding to some major legislative changes – namely the signed motions.

Table 3

The frequencies distribution of the sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary, legislative proposal initiated and motions signed according to age

Mandate	Age	Sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary %			Legislative proposal initiated %			Motions signed %		
		Less active	Medium activity	Active	Less active	Medium activity	Active	Low interest	Medium interest	High interest
2004-2005	Young	87,5	13,4	0,9	98,2	1,8	0,0	73,2	25,9	0,9
	Middle age	70,6	24,7	4,8	98,3	0,9	0,9	74,0	24,7	1,3
	Old age	57,3	35,9	6,8	89,7	8,5	1,7	74,4	22,2	3,4
2008-2009	Young	83,8	15,0	1,2	93,4	6,0	0,6	76,0	4,8	19,2
	Middle age	79,7	16,7	3,5	95,6	4,0	0,4	83,3	5,3	11,5
	Old age	80,7	15,8	3,5	94,7	5,3	0,0	87,7	7,0	5,3

Regarding the second socio-demographic variable, the *gender* has almost no influence on the MPs representation competences. So, it can be said that the electoral system change hasn't brought some obvious changes in the MPs behavior dependent on their gender. The tendency is that women to be somewhat active in the second mandate compared to men, but both genders maintain the same moderate activity both before and after the electoral system reform (see annex 3).

There are a quite small changes in the way in which showed the parties before and after the Romanian electoral system reform. Interestingly, although the number of MPs from the PD-L party increased, they tend to become more apathetic in the second period. Considering the results, it can be said that type of party affect the extent to which parliamentarians are more responsible and more responsive, depending on each mandate in part; the Democrat Liberals and the Liberals have improved visibly their work in parliament, once with the electoral system change (see annex 4).

The variable *region* was introduced in order to study which of the constituencies are best represented. Results show that overall, some changes in the quality of a good representative occurred at the level of the MPs elected in Transylvania and Moldavia (see annex 5).

Regression analysis

The main purpose in which regression analysis is used is that it can answer to an important question, namely: "this factor contributes to the development of the dependent variable, given that we statistically controlled

the influence of other factors on it?" (Sava, 2004, p. 186). Using regression analysis I will try to observe which of the factors contributed most to the improvement of the representation competences of MPs from Romania, after the electoral system change.

At first will be considered as dependent variable each of the three indicator variables for the activity of the representatives. Then it will be analyzed the multiple determination coefficient – coefficient of relationship – of the entire model proposed; this for each of the three dependent variables and for each of the two periods analyzed. It will be made a direct comparison of the weight of each independent variables in explaining the dependent variable; this for to assess the effect that each independent variable have in explaining the dependent variable. I will then analyze the statistical significance of the each proposed models.

Table 4.

Regression indicators MP's activities for the 2008-2009 period

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.340[a]	.116	.110	15.290

a. Predictors: (Constant), Motions signed, Legislative proposal initiated, Age
b. source = mandate 2004-2005

Coefficients[a,b]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	1.465	3.842		.381	.703
	Age	.229	.071	.144	3.233	.001
	Legislative proposal initiated	.515	.081	.283	6.358	.000
	Motions signed	.301	.312	.043	.966	.335

a. source = mandate 2004-2005
b. Dependent Variable: Sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary

It may be noted that during 2004-2005, the coefficient of determination of the entire model proposed is able to explain, in its adjusted form, 11% of the variation of the sessions in which was took the floor in plenary. Since the value of this coefficient is closer to 0 than 1, the correlation is not very strong one, but it still exists and is significant for a variable at individual level. The most powerful

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predictor for the dependent variable variation appears to be legislative proposals initiated. Thus, as an MP had several legislative proposals initiated, with the same increased both the sessions' number in which he took the word. The next predictor as importance is age. When age increases, MPs tend to take the word in several sessions and be more active. The motions signed did not explain and have only a little importance on the variations of the dependent variable considered. Statistically, the most significant relation appears to be between the dependent variable and the predictors legislative proposals initiated and age. When increasing age and the number of legislative proposals initiated, tends to increase also the number of the sessions in which MPs took the word.

Table 5.

Regression indicators MP's activities for the 2008-2009 period

Model Summary[b]

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.470[a]	.221	.216	11.223

a. Predictors: (Constant), Motions signed, Legislative proposal initiated, Age

b. source = mandate 2008-2009

Coefficients[a,b]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	T	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.871	2.848		-.306	.760
	Age	.140	.054	.110	2.602	.010
	Legislative proposal initiated	.716	.067	.449	10.746	.000
	Motions signed	.517	.193	.113	2.685	.008

a. source = mandate 2008-2009

b. Dependent Variable: Sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary

It is observed that in the second period the coefficient of determination of the entire model proposed have a double value in comparison with the first period analyzed. It increases also the importance of motions signed; those who sign them are in a large number and tend to be more active in plenary session. Statistically significant remain legislative proposals initiated and age. This means that increased the number of young MP who are more active and in the time, increased number of old age MPs who are less active; they tend to become more apathetic.

Table 6.

Regression model number of legislative proposals that
were initiated for the 2004-2005 period

Model Summaryᵇ

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.315ᵃ	.099	.094	8.468

a. Predictors: (Constant), Motions signed, Sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary, Age

b. source = mandate 2004-2005

Coefficientsᵃ,ᵇ

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-2.911	2.124		-1.370	.171
	Age	.072	.040	.083	1.822	.069
	Sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary	.158	.025	.288	6.358	.000
	Motions signed	.052	.173	.014	.303	.762

a. source = mandate 2004-2005

b. Dependent Variable: Legislative proposal initiated

In the situation in which the dependent variable is legislative proposal initiate, the coefficient of determination of the entire model proposed is able to explain, in its adjusted form, approximately 10% of the dependent variable variation. Excepted the predictor "session in which took the word" which has influence on the dependent variable and is statistically significant, the weight of the other predictors in estimating the evolution of the legislative proposals initiated is irrelevant in the 2004-2005 mandate.

Table 7.

Regression model number of legislative proposals
that were initiated for the 2008-2009 period

Model Summaryᵇ

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.457ᵃ	.209	.203	7.099

a. Predictors: (Constant), Motions signed, Sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary, Age

b. source = mandate 2008-2009

Coefficients[a,b]

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.878	1.752		5.066	.000
	Age	-.079	.034	-.098	-2.312	.021
	Sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary	.286	.027	.456	10.746	.000
	Motions signed	-.087	.123	-.030	-.705	.481

a. source = mandate 2008-2009

b. Dependent Variable: Legislative proposal initiated

After the electoral system change, the situation is another. The coefficient of determination of the entire model proposed is able to explain, in it's adjusted form, more than 20% of the dependent variable variation. Sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary have the greatest influence; so in 2008-2009, as an MP has taken several times the word in plenary sessions, as it increased the number of the legislative proposals initiated. Interesting is what happened with the predictor "age". Between him and criterion is established an inverse relationship; when age increases, the amount of the legislative proposals initiated drops. So after the electoral reform the tendency is that, as MPs are more aged, the more they become less active and hence, more apathetic. These two predictors have also statistical significance. Instead, motions signed have no relevance.

Being that the motions have no influence on the MPs behavior, neither before nor after the electoral system change, the model in which the dependent variable is "motions signed" has been excluded from this paper.

After the analyzing of all these data it can be said that, unlike the previous electoral system change, MPs are now more influenced by the age they have, but also by the other activities undertaken in Parliament.

Conclusions

Elections held on November 20, 2008 for the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate were a novelty for Romania: we voted in uninominal colleges, mandates being then proportionally distributed. In this context, I considered that one of the main effects of the electoral reform should be the improvement of political representation in Romania.

After an extensive analysis I found that the electoral system change has not brought a net improvement of the political representation quality in Romania, but an analysis of the MPs at individual level reveals that the attribute of a "good representative" was improved on certain aspects, such as age and the extent to which each MP maintain an active base in the Parliament of Romania. Moreover, an interesting fact is that, after the electoral system change, the trend is that on the extent to which the age falls, to grow the MPs activity, and on the extent to which age increases, the activity to achieve more and more low levels.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1.

The distribution of the seats obtained by each party in the 2 mandates

	2004-2005 %	2008-2009 %
PD-L	14,7	36,9
PSD	34,5	34,7
PNL	19,8	20,5
UDMR	6,2	6,8

Annex 2.

The distribution of the sessions in which the MPs took the word in the 2 mandates

	2004-2005 %	2008-2009 %
Less active	70,8	81,5
Medium activity	24,7	15,9
Active	4,5	2,6

The distribution of the legislative proposal initiated in the 2 mandates

	2004-2005 %	2008-2009 %
Less active	95,7	94,7
Medium activity	3,2	4,9
Active	1,1	0,4

The distribution of the motions signed in the 2 mandates

	2004-2005 %	2008-2009 %
Low interest	73,8	81,2
Medium interest	24,5	5,3
High interest	1,7	13,5

Annex 3.

The frequencies distribution of the sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary, legislative proposal initiated and motions signed according to gender

Mandate	Gender	Sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary %			Legislative proposal initiated %			Motions signed %		
		Less active	Medium activity	Active	Less active	Medium activity	Active	Low interest	Medium interest	High interest
2004-2005	Female	75,0	20,8	4,2	93,8	4,2	2,1	70,8	25,0	4,2
	Male	70,3	25,2	4,5	96,0	3,1	1,0	74,1	24,5	1,4
2008-2009	Female	86,0	9,3	4,7	95,3	4,7	0,0	79,1	7,0	14,0
	Male	81,2	16,6	2,4	94,6	4,9	0,5	81,5	5,1	13,4

Annex 4.

The frequencies distribution of the sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary, legislative proposal initiated and motions signed according to their political affiliation.

Mandate	Political faction	Sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary %			Legislative proposal initiated %			Motions signed %		
		Less active	Medium activity	Active	Less active	Medium activity	Active	Low interest	Medium interest	High interest
2004-2005	PD-L	82,6	13,0	4,3	100,0	-	-	100,0	-	-
	PSD	64,2	32,1	3,7	100,0	-	-	26,5	69,1	4,3
	PNL	73,1	24,7	2,2	100,0		-	98,9	1,1	0,0
	UDMR	72,4	17,2	10,3	100,0	-	-	100,0	-	-
2008-2009	PD-L	80,8	15,6	3,6	91,0	7,8	1,2	100,0	-	-
	PSD	87,9	11,5	0,6	97,5	2,5	0,0	100,0	-	-
	PNL	72,0	24,7	3,2	94,6	5,4	0,0	30,1	4,3	65,6
	UDMR	83,9	9,7	6,5	100,0	-	-	35,5	64,5	0,0

Annex 5.

The frequencies distribution of the sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary, legislative proposal initiated and motions signed according to the region where were elected.

Mandate	Region	Sessions in which the MPs took the word in plenary %			Legislative proposal initiated %			Motions signed %		
		Less active	Medium activity	Active	Less active	Medium activity	Active	Low interest	Medium interest	High interest
2004-2005	Transylvania	67,3	27,0	5,7	93,7	4,4	1,9	78,0	22,0	0,0
	Moldavia	70,3	26,7	3,0	96,0	4,0	0,0	66,3	30,7	3,0
	Walachia&Oltenia	72,0	23,7	4,3	97,3	1,6	1,1	73,1	24,2	2,7
	Dobrudja	87,0	8,7	4,3	95,7	4,3	0,0	82,6	17,4	0,0
2008-2009	Transylvania	79,5	17,2	3,3	93,4	6,0	0,7	74,2	13,2	12,6
	Moldavia	83,3	14,6	2,1	93,8	6,3	0,0	84,4	3,1	12,5
	Walachia&Oltenia	81,7	16,1	2,2	96,1	3,3	0,6	85,0	15,0	0,0
	Dobrudja	80,0	15,0	5,0	95,0	5,0	0,0	85,0	15,0	0,0

SUDETEN GERMANS IN THE CZECH PRESS (1995-2010)[*]

PŘEMYSL ROSŮLEK[**]

ABSTRACT. The end of the Second World War was marked by the forced expulsion of the Sudeten Germans from Central and Eastern European countries. The year 1989 and the fall of the Iron Curtain represented a new era of Czechoslovak-German and, after the break-up of Czechoslovakia, of Czech-German relations. This article presents findings based on a both qualitative and quantitative content analysis of the daily press focusing on the four most important events directly or indirectly related to the Sudeten Germans: a) *Reconciliation '95 initiative and the consequent Way to Reconciliation in 1996, b)* Czech-German declaration signed in Prague in 1997, c) The approval of the **unchangeability of** Beneš decrees by the Chamber of Deputies of the *Czech* Parliament in 2002, d) the *decision made by the Czech President Vaclav Klaus not to sign Lisbon treaty because it could undermine the post-war Benes decrees in 2009. Data presentation is followed by analysis and possible verification of the main assumptions of the text, focusing on the possible shift in values and reflections (if any) in society with regards to the Sudeten German question.*

Key words: Sudeten Germans, Czechoslovakia, Czech Republic, transfer, expulsion, apology, compensation, prosecution, daily press, content analysis

Introduction

The aim of the following text is to analyze the Sudeten-German question in the Czech daily press during the period 1995-2010. To this respect, I have formulated two main assumptions for the analysis:

Firstly, the Czechs insist on the collective guilt of the Sudeten Germans as a *legitimate* explanation of the causes of the occupation of the Sudeten territories in the Czech Republic. The post-war solutions are viewed as a necessary transfer (*Abschiebung*), not as an expulsion (*Vertreibung*). Czechs cannot be morally blamed or legally prosecuted.

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Secondly, the principle of the Sudeten-German collective guilt is supported by *legal* arguments as Beneš decrees were approved by the World Powers in the city of Potsdam.

In the following text, I will introduce the content analysis methodology with focus both on its qualitative and qualitative aspects. Further, I will reveal in brief development of relations between the Czechs and Sudeten Germans on the Czech territory. Afterwards, I will focus on basic characteristics of media system in the Czech Republic emphasizing a daily press. In a practical part I will research the Sudeten German issue in relation to most important events reflected in the in selected Czech daily press between the years 1995-2009.

1. Theory & Methodology

The field of communication research is occupied by a number of theoretical perspectives that influence research questions defined by the scholars and their method used to answer those questions. The focus of their research has often been communication content (Riffe - Laco- Fico 2005: 22).[1]

The first use of content analysis (that time called quantitative newspaper analyses) goes back to the USA at the beginning of 20th century for which the mass production of newspapers was typical. Researchers started to study objectivity and ethical standards of the periodicals.[2] Second wave of content analysis started in 30's and 40's. Rising interests in content analysis methodology was connected with a) economic crisis after 1929 for which media were blamed, b) expansion of radio and TV media network undermining dominance of the printed periodicals, c) emergence and success of fascism related with the propaganda through radio network, d) and most importantly, emergence of behavioural and social science which were increasingly accompanied by rising interest of researchers in theoretical framework and empirical methods. Sociologists started to use an extensively survey research and polling in 30's.[3] After the WWII the use of content analysis „spread to numerous disciplines" inclusive the political science.[4] With the stagnation in 70's the content analysis approach – the term casual introduction goes back to 1941 – is widely recognized and used also in electronic area.

Content analysis could be understood as a „research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts to the contexts of their use"[5] or as a „research method that uses a set of procedures to make valid inferences

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[1] Daniel Riffe - Stephen Laco- Frederick G. Fico, Analyzing Media Messages. Using Quantitative Content Analysis in Research (New Jersey – London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publishers, 2005), 22.

[2] Klaus Krippendorff, Content analysis: an introduction to its methodology (London – New Delhi: Sage, 2004),

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 11-12.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 17-18.

from text."[6] Krippendorff introduced influential definition that a "content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context".[7]

Content analysis is used in a field of mass communication „to describe content and to test theory-derived hypotheses" where „the variety of applications may be limited only by the analyst's imagination, theory, and resources"[8] Content analysis applies for any theory focused on the impact of mass media and it is hardly possible to study mass communication without the content. Content analysis is useful or even necessary in case of a problem with data accessibility and if the research depends on documentary evidence. Secondly, content analysis is needed if the communicator's language use and its structure is critical, and finally, when the amount of material exceeds the investigator's individual capability to examine it.[9]

Content analysis is a method for which „data are more important than citations or paraphrases."[10] There is a clear that quantitative content analysis is based on indirect observation with reductionist tendencies. The methodological procedures limit „communication phenomena to manageable data from which inferences may be drawn about the phenomena themselves."[11] Holsti recommended using both quantitative and qualitative methods "to supplement each other."[12] Therefore a qualitative approach is important and successful within the content analysis in political analysis in particular.[13]

Qualitative Research Approaches and Methods[14]

The Relationships Between Sources, Examples and Study Methods		
SOURCE	EXAMPLE	ANALYSIS METHODS
Written text	Proffesional literature	Hermeneutics
	Mass Media	Content Analysis[15]
	Narratives	Narrative Analysis
	Books and stories	Meta-analysis Literature review

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[6] Robert Philip Weber (ed.), Basic Content Analysis. Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences (London – New Delhi: 1990), 9.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 82.

[8] Riffe – Laco – Fico, *Op. Cit.*, 22.

[9] *Ibid.*, p. 39.

[10] Paul Pennings – Hans Keman – Jan Kleinnijenhuis: Doing research in political science (London – New Delhi: 2006), 58.

[11] Riffe – Laco – Fico, *Op. Cit.*, 23.

[12] Ole R. Holsti, Content Analysis for the Social Sciences and Humanities (Reading, MA: Addison Wesley, 1969), 11.

[13] Krippendorff, *Op. Cit.*, 19.

[14] David McNabb, Research methods for political science: quantitative and qualitative approaches (New York: M. E. Sharpe), p. 304.

[15] Content analysis is also useful for „Informal documents and other written records" „Governmental reports". McNabb, *Op. Cit.*, 304.

Advantages of a qualitative approach resides in a) a more careful reading of small number of texts requirements, b) an interpretation of the texts into „analytical, critical, deconstructive, or emancipatory narratives accepted within certainly scholar community sometimes in opposition to positivist approach, c) working with hermeneutic circles in which their own socially or culturally acknowledge constructed understanding constitutively participate.[16]

For the case study of this text focused on Sudeten Germans in the Czech daily Press between 1995-2010 both qualitative and quantitative aspects of media content analysis will be used.

After a careful study of the issue I identified several events as crucial for the Sudeten-German question coverage in the Czech media:

1) Reconciliation '95 initiative and the consequent Way to Reconciliation signed by Czechs and German influential intellectuals.
2) The Czech-German declaration signed in Prague (1997) by Czech and German Prime Ministers Václav Klaus and Helmut Kohl and ratified by the German Bundestag and the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament.[17]
3) The Resolution of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament (2002) justifying the Beneš decrees. Deputies refused to apologize for the decrees.
4) The decision made by the Czech President Václav Klaus not to sign the Lisbon Treaty because it could undermine the post-war Beneš decrees (2009).

There are three major reasons for choosing those four events. Firstly, it is for their relevance in the Czech-German relations since the 1993 foundation of the Czech Republic. Second reason resides in a reflection of above mentioned events in the Czech daily press, and the third one in the time interval between those events (1995, 1997, 2002, 2009) which could reveal different narratives within the Czech press in various periods of time. The main focus on the Sudeten German issue will be on the phrases containing the words „transfer“, „expulsion“, „apology“, „compensation“ and „prosecution“.

There are 4981 texts in which the phrase „the Sudeten Germans“ appeared in a national regional and local daily press – and 1144 texts in the national press only – during a period from the 1st of January 1995 until the 31rd of December 2010 as revealed by the electronic databases IT Newton Mediaresearch. I assume that approximately 60 texts present a sufficient sample from the overall amount for the analysis of the issue.

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[16] Krippendorff, *Op. Cit.*, 17.
[17] The Senate, the upper-chamber, has far less competences as the lower chamber in the Czech political system.

dates	events	number of texts with the "Sudeten Germans" phrase& Czech national dailies
28. 3. 1995	Reconciliation '95 (joint petition of Czech-German intellectuals)	60 texts from 29.3.1995-28.1.1998[18]
21. 1. 1997[19]	The Czech-German declaration	101 texts between 22.1.1997-15.2.1997
24. 4. 2002	Resolution of the Czech Chamber of Deputies justifying the decrees of president Beneš	87 texts between 20.4.2002-30.4.2002
autumn 2009	Czech President Klaus blocks the Lisbon Treaty using the Sudeten German issue	112 texts between 1.10.2009-31.12.2009[20]

For research I chose frequent and nationwide daily newspapers for the study, namely the second most popular daily MF Dnes, daily for liberal intellectuals Lidové noviny, left-oriented Právo, most readable tabloid Blesk (selectively also Super), pro-communist Haló noviny and numerous regional newspapers network known under the umbrella name Deníky Bohemia. Free daily press (E15) was also included.

2. Evolution of the Czech German Relations and Sudeten Germans

Habsburg monarchy

The question of Sudeten Germans had not appeared overnight but has organically resulted from the development of conflicts among communities gaining strength from the second half of the 19th century. Mutual trust was seriously disturbed in that period which, if we simplify it, indirectly led to the post-war expulsion.[21] The Czech society went through significant changes. The aristocratic ideology of land patriotism, *Bohemism*, based on cosmopolitism regardless of ethnicity, faded away[22] and was replaced by nationalism. The dominant Czech nationalist discourse in the 19th century was democratic, bourgeois and crypto-Protestant and in direct opposition to German authoritarian, aristocratic and sometimes also to Catholic attitudes. The feelings of disappointment among Germans separated from *Deutsches Reich* after 1866 contributed to the

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[18] For this case Langer period was chosen as Czech-German intellectuals issued another initiative „Way towards Reconciliation" in February 1996.

[19] Declaration was signed in Prague by the Czech and German Prime Ministers Václav Klaus and Helmut Kohl and the both ministers of Foreign Affairs Josef Zieleniec and Klaus Kinkel. The Czech Chamber of Deputies approved the declaration at 14th of February 1997 and the German Bundestag at 30th of January 1995.

[20] In this case the search was reduced to the phrases „Sudeten Germans" and Vaclav Klaus combined.

[21] Václav Houžvička, Návraty sudetské otázky (Praha: Karolinum, 2005), 5-6.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 17.

rise of the pan-German ideology.[23] Czech intellectuals, on their part, formulated a mythological narrative based on the idea of historical rights of Czechs in the pre-1620 period. The year 1620 marks the defeat of Czech Protestants in the battle on the White Mountain followed by executions and exiles of native Czech nobles as well as seizing property. The 19th century Czech nationalists interpreted the battle as an example illustrating Germans as attackers and conquerors. The battle was followed by the period of Germanization which lasted for next three hundred years.[24] The Czech National Awakening was mostly based on linguistic demands against Germans who reacted angrily on any concessions made by Habsburgs in favor of Czechs. Language became the main criterion of difference.[25]

Interwar period

The break-up of the Habsburg monarchy in 1918 was accompanied by the foundation of Czechoslovakia as a nation-state based on the ideology of Czechoslovakism promoting a common origin of Czechs and Slovaks "with a stream of symbolic, verbal, and legal attacks on the legacy of the White Mountain" (*Bílá hora*) battle in 1620[26]. After the foundation of Czechoslovakia,[27] politicians sought to compensate the injustice made in the post-White-Mountain period and launched a land reform aimed against aristocracy and Catholics. Germans complained against the reform seen as a discriminatory act.[28] Germans inhabiting territories under the new Czechoslovak state separated immediately and formed four provinces: *Deutschböhmen* (north, northwest), *Sudetenland* (northeast), *Böhmerwaldgau* (southwest, south) and *Deutschsüdmähren* (southern Moravia). German enclaves in the cities as Brno, Jihlava and Olomouc were to become parts of *Deutschsüdmähren*. All four "self-declared" German provinces were occupied by the Czechoslovakian army before the end of 1918.[29]

Although Czechoslovakian policy on minorities was one of the most liberal in Europe and Germans had the right to autonomous schools and to run business in their own language, over half of the Sudeten Germans shifted from simple "negativism" to "activist" policy in the middle of 1920s mostly for

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[23] *Ibid.*, p. 62.

[24] Eagle, Glassheim, „National Mythologies and Ethnic Cleansing: The Expulsion of Czechoslovak Germans in 1945," Central European History, Vol. 33, No. 4 ((2000), pp. 487-487, here p. 463-486.

[25] Houžvička, *Op. Cit.*, 11.

[26] Eagle Glassheim, *Op. Cit.*, 468.

[27] The founder and first president of Czechoslovakia, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was against all atributes contained in Prussian ideology: a) German expansion, b) monarchism, c) kingdom, d) dynasty, e) cult of militarism, f) military byrocratism. In: Houžvička, *Op. Cit.*, 64.

[28] Glassheim, *Op. Cit.*, 469.

[29] Ladislav Cabada, Politický systém první Československé republiky. In: Karel, Vodička, Ladislav, Cabada, Politický systém České republiky (Praha: Portál, 2003), 20.

pragmatic reasons.[30] In the late 1920s, the majority (two-thirds) of the Sudeten Germans voted for „activist" German parties who participated in governmental coalitions. The remaining part voted for the „negativistic" front.

Sudeten Germans felt discriminated both on a symbolical level and in various domains of constitutional, political and public life in Czechoslovakia. Mutual relations with the majority in Czechoslovakia deteriorated mainly after Hitler's rise to power in 1933. For being geographically concentrated and close to Germany, the Sudeten Germans of Czechoslovakia became a welcomed tool of Hitler's expansionism.[31]

Hitler's NSDAP helped to found nationalistic Sudeten German Party (SdP) in Czechoslovakia which enjoyed an overwhelming support of the Sudeten Germans. The SdP collected over two-thirds of all Sudeten German votes and celebrated victory in the 1935 parliamentary elections. Three years later, the pro-NAZI SdP even increased its position enjoying the support of more than 85 % of voting Germans.[32]

Sudeten Germans in Czechoslovakia pointed at discrimination in many domains of political and public life and argued that they have right to self-determination according to the principles proclaimed at Paris Peace Conference and that these rights should not be denied to them. Others argued that the state violated the provisions of the Treaty of St. German: „All Czechoslovak citizens without difference of race, language or religion shall be equal before the law and shall enjoy the same civil and political rights."[33]

In the meanwhile, the anti-German resentment in Czechoslovakia reached a new peak.

Majority of the Czechs felt as a huge humiliation the Munich treaty signed in September 1938 and the subsequent Sudetenland takeover by the Nazi forces and the incorporation of the territory into the Third Reich. Moreover, many Czechs were expelled from Sudetenland with the exception of those who took German citizenship. After student demonstrations against the occupation and the death of student Jan Opletal, Nazi forces decided to close Czech universities. Many Czech Jews and anti-fascist activists were sent to concentration camps and any sing of opposition against Nazi protectorate met with a harsh reaction of Hitler's machinery. After the Czech paratroopers successfully assassinated the *Reichsprotektor* Reinhard Heydrich, Nazi violence in Czechoslovakia escalated in the so-called *Heydrichiada*. Most of the inhabitants of

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[30] Volker Zimmermann, Sudetští Němci v nacistickém státě. Politika a nálady v říšské župě Sudety (1938-1945), (Praha: Prostor, 1999), 35.

[31] Houžvička, *Op. Cit.*, 167.

[32] Glassheim, *Op. Cit.*, 470.

[33] *Ibid.*, 462. Summary on Sudeten German complains see: Konrad Henlein, „The German minority in Czechoslovakia", International Affairs, Vol. 15, No.4 (Jul. – Aug. 1936), 561-572.

the village Lidice were exterminated and the village destructed. Czech society perceived the Lidice case as the most obvious evidence of German cruelty exerted on innocent inhabitants.[34]

Electoral results of the pro-Hitler party SdP in Czechoslovakia (in both parliamentary and municipal elections held in 1935 and 1938) contributed to the destruction of the Czechoslovak state. But the idea of the separation of borderlands from the Czech lands did not originate in 1918 or in 1938, but it was a concept shared by the Germans in the region over a long period.[35]

WWII and transfer of Sudeten Germans

The Czech exile government in London chaired by Edvard Beneš perceived the secessionist policy of the SdP as a clear evidence of disloyalty to the interwar Czechoslovakia which constituted the ground for blaming the Sudeten Germans collectively. Consequently and most importantly, inspired by the Greek-Turkish exchange of inhabitants after the First World War, Edvard Beneš initiated an idea of post-war expulsion of Germans and started to negotiate the issue actively in London, Washington and Moscow. He based the legitimacy of the plan on three major points:[36]

1) The disloyalty of the Sudeten Germans destroyed the Czechoslovakia
2) Germans should be transferred in their own interest and for security reasons as there is much hatred towards them on the Czech part
3) Once the Sudeten Germans are transferred from the state territory, German revisionism will no longer constitute real threat.

The general approval of the transfer was shared by Stalin, Roosevelt and Churchill as early as in 1943, nevertheless the expulsion was formally legalized two years later in 1945.

After the war, the Sudeten Germans inhabiting borderlands were threatened by several groups seeking revenge. Paramilitary forces, Revolutionary Guards, the Czechoslovak army and a newly established Committee of National Security[37] all came to keep order in the borderlands where Sudeten Germans lived. Additionally, in most parts of the country, Red Army remained present as well.[38]

Without attempting to examine the real purpose of these groups (whether it was to keep order or disorder), the fact is that instead security chaos and anarchy prevailed in the areas in the initial post-war period. The

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[34] Glassheim, *Op. Cit.*, 470.
[35] Houžvička, *Op. Cit.*, 11.
[36] Glassheim, *Op. Cit.*, 472.
[37] The Czech abbreviation SNB refers to detrimentally security forces during communism.
[38] *Ibid.*, 473.

most striking „spontaneous" violent acts against the Sudeten Germans took place in Brno and Ústí nad Labem. Around twenty thousand[39] Germans were violently expelled from the Moravian city of Brno in May 1945 and sent to the „Death March" southwards to Austria. Eagle Glassheim claimed that between 50 and 100 people died after attacks in the northern Czech city of Ústí nad Labem. Historical evidence showed that 80 people were killed by guards and groups of people who came to the city just prior to the incidents.[40] In total, 700 000 Germans were expelled, over quarter of million fled and around thirty thousand died in the period of the „wild transfer" in 1945.[41]

In 1990s, a joint Czech-German commission of historians conducted research and revealed more exact data on the number of expelled Germans and those who died during the wild transfer. The Czech side of the commission headed by historian Jan Křen published the following results: during the post-war transfer maximum of thirty thousand expelled Germans died contrary to the 360.000 Czechoslovakian citizens during the war.[42] During the wild transfer, 560.000 Germans left the country. One day after the Postdam conference the Czech government decided to transfer another 2,5 million Sudeten Germans within a period of one year.[43]

The Czechoslovak President Eduard Beneš issued several decrees as laws which came to be known simply as „Beneš decrees" between 1940 and 1946. From the point of view of the Sudeten Germans, among the most controversial decrees announced by Beneš were, the decree ordering confiscation of all property of those who identified themselves as Germans or Hungarians in any census since 1929 and the decree requiring the expulsion of all Germans and Hungarians from Czechoslovakia immediately. The key decree 12 issued in June 1945 stated that:

„*with immediate effect and without compensation and for the purpose of the land reform such rural property shall be confiscated as is owned by: a) all persons of German or Magyar nationality, without regard to their citizenship, (...) c) corporations, partnerships and other associations, the management of which knowingly and intentionally supported the Germans in carrying on the war or which served fascist or Nazi aims*" (§ 1). [44]

Confiscation applied also to traitors of the republic between 1937-1945 regardless of their nationality. The expulsion of the Sudeten Germans from Central and Eastern Europe received official approval from the four powers represented at the Potsdam Conference.

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[39] Rozumět dějinám. Vývoj česko-německých vztahů na našem území v letech 1848-1948 (Praha: Gallery 2002), 208.

[40] *Ibid.*, 209.

[41] Glassheim, *Op. Cit.*, 475.

[42] „Česko-německá deklarace neřeší vše", daily Rovnost (Brno), 13.2.1997.

[43] Rozumět dějinám, *Op. Cit.*, 211.

[44] The Beneš decrees from the view of Sudeten Germans see: http://www.mies-pilsen.de/beseitigung.htm.

Exemption from the confiscation process was formally accorded to those Sudeten Germans who were able to prove their loyalty to Czechoslovakia during the Nazi occupation[45] and those who engaged in activities against the Nazi protectorate and for the integrity of Czechoslovakia. However, Václav Žák states that no regulation or official definition of such an anti-Nazi category existed and that the Czech political parties jointly wished that *all* Germans leave the country without exception. Žák claimed that allmost 70 thousand German anti-Nazi individuals left the country.[46]

The Potsdam conference approved the transfer of the Sudeten Germans from Czechoslovakia in August 1945. The act of expulsion of Germans from the Sudeten territories in Czechoslovakia to Western Germany was considered by the Czechoslovak society as an act of retaliation for the takeover of Sudetenland by Hitler, which was highly approved by the Sudeten Germans who supported the Sudeten Germans Peoples Party *en masse*.

During the Cold War

The majority of all expelled Sudeten Germans settled in Bavaria and in Austria. Several publishing houses based in Munich and the Bavarian political party Christian Social Union (CSU) became official advocates for their interests in the decades after the Second World War. Throughout the Cold War, the Federal Republic of Germany turned down the legality of the Beneš decrees on several occasions, however, the Czechoslovak governments kept refusing the idea that their interests could be seriously represented on the federal level of the pro-U.S. West Germany.

Diplomatic relations between Czechoslovakia and the Federal Republic of Germany were established within the framework of *Ostpolitik* enforced by Willy Brandt. A mutual diplomatic treaty (the Treaty of Prague) was signed in Prague in 1973.[47]

The Czechoslovakian diplomats failed to include into the inter-state agreement formula „invalid from the beginning" in relations to Munich treaty. The Treaty of Prague reflected the Munich Treaty as "null" (Article 1). Germans were afraid from possible further legal demands which could be formulated from the part of Czechoslovakia and their citizens. Any material claims from the Czechoslovakian side are explicitly rejected by the treaty (see Article II/3) which further denies any territorial claims on both sides (Article III). The Sudeten Germans are not mentioned in the 1973 treaty.

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[45] Emil Nagengast, „The Beneš decrees and EU enlargement", European Integration, , Vol. 25(4), (2003), 335-350.

[46] Václav Žák, „Ostrá slova nenahradí argumenty", daily Rudé Právo (Prague), 20.7.1995.

[47] Vertrag über die gegenseitigen Beziehungen zwischen der Tschechoslowakischen Sozialistischen Republik und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Smlouva o vzájemných vztazích mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Spolkovou republikou Německa).

During the communist period (1948-1989) the question of the Sudeten Germans and their fate after the Second World War was made taboo in official historiography as in school textbooks in Czechoslovakia.

At the end of the Cold War and the break-up of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, the umbrella organization for expelled Sudeten Germans – the Sudeten Germans League (*Landsmannschaft*) – and the CSU intensified their lobbying pressure to legitimate their long lasting demands at the federal German level and in the Czechoslovakian government and society.

After the end of real socialism

In December 1989, shortly after the fall of the communist regime in Czechoslovakia, Bavarian Prime Minister Max Streibl pressed the first post-communist government in Prague to apologize to the Sudeten Germans for the forced expulsion.[48] Independently and as a part of his personal initiative, the Czechoslovakian president Vaclav Havel apologized to the Sudeten Germans in several public speeches delivered between December 1989 and March 1990.

The Sudeten German organizations in Germany and Austria frequently attracted the attention of the Czech media to the issue and demanded that Czech politicians not only apologize but also proclaim Beneš decrees nullified. Further, though inconsistently, they also demanded their „right to a homeland" (*Recht auf Heimat*).

In the following period, the question of the Sudeten Germans expulsion gradually became one of the major topics among politicians and historians, which was further fuelled by the media, particularly in the Czech part of Czechoslovakia.

However, as the issue was made taboo in the socialist Czechoslovakia and as the communist propaganda disseminated an image of West Germany as an aggressive imperialist country, the majority of people in Czechoslovakia were not prepared for an open discussion and adopted intolerant attitude towards „revanchist" and „non-democratic" demands of the Sudeten Germans. The Czech society also condemned the apology made by President Václav Havel as absolutely inadequate. In 1990, only one political party in the Czech part of the federation approved Havel's apology – a small and non-relevant Party of the Friends of Beer.[49]

Both Czechs and the Sudeten Germans expected that the inter-state Treaty of Good Neighbours and Friendly Collaboration signed between united Germany and Czechoslovakia in 1992 could resolve all existing problems between the both sides. However, the Sudeten Germans demanded the treaty

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[48] Nagengast, *Op. Cit.*, 336.
[49] Nagengast, *Op. Cit.*, 337.

support their rights to restitution or resettlement in Czechoslovakia, while the Czechs wanted to secure the post-war legal framework and their interests against the „unacceptable" demands formulated by the descendants of transferred Germans.

A moral victory was reached by the Sudeten Germans as the word „expulsion" (*Vertreibung*) found its way to the treaty[50] instead of the softer term „transfer" enforced by the Czechs.[51] In return, the Sudeten Germans were disappointed that the government in Boon made a commitment to support Czechoslovakia in its effort to enter the European Community.[52]

In the appendix to the treaty, Jiří Dienstbier promised that with the integration of Czechoslovakia into the European community, the Czech side would take an effort to enable citizens of Germany to settle in Czechoslovakia. This act was considered as a concession of the ruling CDU to its coalition partner the CSU from Bavaria. Further, the appendix stated that it does not deal with property issues. This postponed potential demands for material claims.[53]

Nevertheless it must be noted that Bavaria was the only of the sixteen German *Bundeslandern* that rejected the treaty in the *Bundesrat*.[54]

After the break-up of Czechoslovakia in 1992 and the foundation of the Czech Republic, the Sudeten Germans topic remained important in the press. In the following years, the relationships between Germany and the Czech Republic deteriorated as the German government intensified the pressure on the Czech representatives to open a dialogue with the Sudeten Germans. But the government in Prague did not accept the Sudeten Germans or the Bavarian government to be their direct partner for mutual dialogue and insisted the German government to be the key and only partner.

Other initiatives followed, for example the mutual petition of Czech and German intellectuals entitled Reconciliation '95 (*Smíření 95*) and The Way towards Reconciliation (*Cesta ke smíření*) in 1997 suggesting that the Czech government open talks with the Sudeten Germans. Around one hundred intellectuals demanded that all questions should remain open to discussion unless jointly resolved. The initiative further demanded jointly formulated statements and the return of those had been expelled.[55]

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[50] Although it was used only once in its preamble.

[51] Nagengast, *Op. Cit.*, 337.

[52] Art. 10 (2) of the Treaty.

[53] J. Pauer, „Moral Political Dissent in German-Czech Relations", Czech Sociological Review (1998). Online: http://sreview.soc.cas.cz/uploads/994bffa1ff9e5183d3af6a411c0036237b7233ad_416_173PAUER.pdf.
    Compare to the Czech German Declaratio Treaty of Good Neighbours and Friendly Collaboration. Online: http://www.prag.diplo.de/Vertretung/prag/cs/03/Deutsch__tscheschiche_Beziehungen_/seite_vetrag_gute_nachbarschaft_cz.html.

[54] Nagengast, *Op. Cit.*, 338.

[55] Rudé právo, 29.3.1995.

The first important document for mutual relations after the break-up of Czechoslovakia came out two years later. *The Czech-German Declaration on Mutual Relations and their Future Development* was signed in 1997. The document was considered as a declaration not a treaty. The Declaration does not evaluate or denounce legal act but expresses regrets about the fate of innocent people who had to suffer injustice. The Declaration also fully acknowledges the post-war order and respects the continuity of the legal order of the Czech citizens as well as their ownership and property rights. The Czech side also expressed regrets for the expulsion and the forced transfer. The notion was sensitively put in a Declaration counterweighted by reference to the Munich treaty and WWII atrocities committed by Nazi Germans. Most importantly, both sides committed that they will not burden future relations with any political and legal questions coming from the past.[56]

The Czech German declaration resulted in an inter-state institution entitled the *Czech-German Fund For the Future* established in the second half of the 1990s. The purpose of the declaration was to „support the understanding between Czechs and Germans in various ways, increase the number of bilateral meetings and expand co-operation through support of joint projects". Further, the project concentrated on humanitarian assistance to the victims of Nazi violence, on Czech-German projects and on scholarships for Czech and German students.[57]

Some Sudeten Germans wished that the pressure on the Czech side be intensified so that financial compensation for the expulsion and confiscation of their property would start in return.

In the following years, the question of the Sudeten Germans and their demands enjoyed significant media publicity in the Czech and German press, although the Sudeten Germans lost their official advocates by the victory of the SPD and their coalition with the Green Party in 1998.

The topic was found attractive by Miloš Zeman, former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic (1998-2002), who used the Sudeten German issue on several occasions. First, during the NATO bombing campaign against Slobodan Milošević in 1999, he compared the Sudeten Germans in the interwar Czechoslovakia to Albanians subverting Yugoslavia. Second, in giving interview to the Austrian periodical *Profil*, Zeman stated that it should not be forgotten that the Sudeten Germans were „Hitler's fifth column that destroyed Czechoslovakia as the only island of democracy in Central Europe".[58] Zeman made this statement at the fifth anniversary of the Declaration. Finally, during his official visit in Israel, he compared the Sudeten Germans to Palestinians.

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[56]http://www.mzv.cz/jnp/cz/zahranicni_vztahy/neverejne/druha_svetova_valka_a_jeji_dusled ky/dokumenty/cesko_nemecka_deklarace_o_vzajemnych.html.
Compare „Projev premiéra Václava Klause v úvodu rozpravy v dolní komoře parlamentu ČR" in the Hospodářské noviny, 12.2.1997.

[57] Online at http://www.fondbudoucnosti.cz/Defaulten.aspx?lang=en.

[58] Nagengast, *Op. Cit.*, 340.

On the other hand, due to the ongoing process of EU enlargement, growing lobbyism was organized by the Sudeten Germans from Austria and Germany with the aim to nullify Beneš decrees. Their success was only partial as the German government, the key player, remained largely unexcited about the demands. Among the most active politicians in promoting abolition of the decrees were Bavarian politicians from CSU as Edmund Stoiber and Austrian politicians as Jörg Haider and regional council presidents (Hauptmann) from *Horní Rakousy* and *Dolní Rakousy* neighbouring with the Czech Republic.

Several electoral campaigns before parliamentary superelections in 2002 through the Central and Eastern Europe added fuel to the Sudeten Germans issue. The populist card was used by the CSU in Bavaria. Strong opposition to Czech membership in the EU before the resolution of the decrees emerged mainly in Austria and Hungary where Jörg Haider or Prime Minister Viktor Orbán respectively used populist rhetoric. The issue became an important topic also in Slovakia. In 2002, with perspective of the Czech entry in the EU within a few years, the question of the Beneš decrees became a major issue in the Czech electoral campaign which turned into national-populistic style. Both the social-democratic Prime Minister Miloš Zeman and Václav Klaus, the leader of the right-wing Civic Democratic Party, promoted the strategy of defending national interests and attacking the demands formulated by the Sudeten Germans, which were presented as threatening the very core of the Czech legal order and disseminating concerns claiming that restitutions favouring the Sudeten Germans at the expense of Czech citizens' assets would be a pre-condition for EU membership. The hysteria surrounding the Beneš decree question resulted in a resolution adopted by the lower chamber of the Czech parliament in 2002. As a united block, all Czech political parties approved the declaration condemning any attempt to revise the status quo resulting from the end of World War II. Interestingly enough, the unprecedented percentage of voters in the Czech parliamentary elections gained the Communist party of the Bohemia and Moravia, which was constantly anti-German and therefore was able to utilize *Sudetofobia* in the electoral campaign.

The shift from moral to legal platform was reflected in Germany and in the EU. The European Commission, European Parliament and German government asked for legal opinion on Beneš decrees. The blackmail potential of the issue disappeared at the end of 2002, when the European Parliament adopted a resolution stating that the Beneš decrees present no obstacle for the Czech accession to the EU.

President Edvard Beneš became the symbol of the illegal and immoral post-war expulsion for the Sudeten Germans. On the contrary, Czech politicians viewed him – alongside with the great powers decision at the Postdam conference – as a symbol of legality and continuity of the Czech post-war legal order. Its importance increased during the political disputes with the Sudeten

Germans; at least as far as the Czech discourse was concerned. Several months before the EU enlargement, the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament awarded Edvard Beneš for his contribution to the state. Beneš became an official nation-state builder. His significance was enhanced a year later again: his statue – as a symbolic shield against the Sudeten German demand – was erected in May in front of the building of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Prague. Both occasions were considered as highly controversial.

After losing the juridical battle disputing the legality of Beneš decrees around 2002, the Sudeten Germans League lost another battle three years later. The European Court for Human Rights turned down a joint complaint of the Sudeten Germans who demanded compensations for confiscation of their property on the basis of the Beneš decrees. The court rejected their demands as not compatible with the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights, the reason being that the Sudeten Germans had lost their property before the convention entered into force.

In 2009 the Sudeten Germans issue came to the agenda again. The Lisbon Treaty ratification process was without controversy in both chambers of the Czech Parliament but the President refused to ratify the treaty suggesting it would open the doors for the Sudeten German property claims. The discussion on the issue was two-sided. Klaus, who is well-known for holding euro-skeptic attitudes and for being a good "chess player" on the political scene,[59] argued that the Charter of Fundamental Rights – which would be incorporated into the EU law by the Lisbon Treaty – would pave the way for Sudeten German claims. Although Klaus was backed by some, many experts on the EU law insisted that the charter would not affect the Sudeten Germans property demands.

Several other events provoked intense emotions in the Czech Republic as for example the ratification process in the *Bundestag* dealing with the Czech Republic accession to the EU at the beginning of July 2003 or the annual meetings *Pfingsttreffen* of the Sudeten Germans on Whitsunday in Nurnberg which was usually accompanied with radical speeches condemning post-war expulsion from Czechoslovakia and requiring compensations. Massive resistance followed the decision made by German "expellees" to open their "embassy" in Prague on March 2003, which is the month when Czechs commemorate the Nazi occupation.

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[59] See interview with Jiří Pehe. Rosie Johnston, "Klaus knows Sudeten German property issue "emotional", says pundit Pehe", 13.10.2009. In: http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/klaus-knows-sudeten-german-property-issue-emotional-says-pundit-pehe.

Czech daily press landscape and the (Sudeten) German issue

The current Czech media system developed after 1989. The media system is liberal and pluralistic. Regulation is very limited with respect to ownership and the content. Barbara Köpplová and Jan Jirák compare the system to the so-called "democratic corporatist model" based on Hallin and Mancini. The system is typical for both horizontal and vertical concentration of ownership with a significant share of foreign owners and a powerful commercialization process. As far as public-service media are concerned, the dominant position belongs to the Czechoslovak Press Agency (ČTK) as the Czech Radio and TV remain weaker and politically dependent. Internet news, mostly linked to certain dailies, emerged since the middle of the 1990s and consolidated by the turn of 21st century.[60]

The Czech liberal and pluralistic newspapers spectre developed in a hectic way after the fall of communism in which pluralism existed only formally due to the leading position of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and its daily Rudé Právo.

During the years 1991-1993 the wild or, in more moderate words, „spontaneous" privatization passed through the Czech press. In several cases, the privatization lacked transparency, ethical and legal standards. Foreign investments gained majority of ownership especially in regional press. The majority share in Mladá fronta was sold to the French Hersant Group in 1993 and the year later the Rheinisch-Bergische Druckerei and Verlagsgesellschaft (RBVG) from Germany became majority owner. The majority share in Lidové noviny was bought by the Switzerland based group Ringier, co-owned by the German Axel Springer AG since 1996. But in 2000, dailies MF Dnes also Lidové noviny were included into the RBVG portfolilo. Foreign capital reached majority share in the regional press as early as in the beginning of the 1990s. The Neue Presse Verlags-GmbH monopolized regional dailies in the Czech part except from Prague and the surrounding region. The French holding Groupe Hersant has invested in Moravia and Silesia into regional press network and sold its share to German RBVG group in 1995. Two years later, the German group Neue Presse Verlags-GmbH bought popular Prager evening press Večerník Praha from one Czech businessman. In December 1995, the company Mittelrhein-Verlag GmbH sold its share of Moravian network periodicals to Neue Presse Verlags-GmbH (in 2000 renamed to Verlagsgruppe Passau GmbH). In 2001 RBVG sold its share to Verlagsgruppe Passau GmbH which gained almost ownership monopoly over regional press in the Czech Republic. The German share in the Czech press market declined slightly in 2008 as the

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[60] The International Encyclopedia of Communication Edited by: Wolfgang Donsbach Barbara Köpplová / Jan Jirák: Czech Republic: Media System.

Czech businessman Zdeněk Bakala bought the publishing house Economia a. s. (owing for example the prestigious daily Hospodářské noviny) from the German-U.S. group Handelsblatt – Dow Jones Investements B. V.[61]

Foreign investment activities from the German speaking countries led to concerns with regard to the objectiveness of the Czech press. Particularly communists and right-populist republicans headed by Miroslav Sládek criticized the influx of foreign, mainly German, capital into the network of the Czech print press.

After the fall of communism numerous newspapers appeared, mainly at the right side of the political spectrum (Telegraf, Občanský deník) and on the tabloids scene (Blesk, Špígl, later Super, Šíp, A-ha). Some of traditional dailies either disappeared (e. g. the agrarian Zemské noviny) or were renamed, as in the case of the most influential right-wing MF Dnes (before Mladá fronta) or the moderately left-oriented Právo (before communist Rudé Právo). One newspaper was renewed after communism, entitled Lidové noviny. It used to be a successful liberal daily during the interwar period which belonged to the prestigious illegal periodical coming from intellectual dissident circles in the last phase of communist regime.

Due to the success of the daily Blesk, MF Dnes shifted towards tabloidization during the 1990s and could be considered as right-wing focused and containing both tabloid and prestige coverage. A similar strategy was followed by Právo and Lidové Noviny. On the contrary, Hospodářské noviny, dealing primarily with economic issues, shifted into prestigious press during the late 1990s. The efforts of established political parties in publishing and distributing periodicals across the country were not successful with only one exemption – Haló noviny, daily paper linked to the communist party.

3. The daily press and the relevant events

a) Initiative Reconciliation '95 and The Way to Reconciliation in 1996

Initiative Reconciliation '95 (*Smíření 95*) was signed by over hundred intellectuals from both the Czech Republic[62] and Germany as well as the consequent initiative *Way to Reconciliation* (*Cesta ke smíření*) published in February 1996. The Initiative criticizes the Czech government for its passivity

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[61] Petr Šafařík, Veřejná diskuse o vlivu vlastnických poměrů českého tisku na mediální obraz česko-německých vztahů. Prague Social Science Studies, Fakulta sociálních věd UK Praha, Edice pracovních sešitů PSSS, Teritoriální řada, TER 052, 50 p., here p. 5-6.

[62] Among those who signed the document was former Czech Prime minister Petr Pithart and former minister of foreign affairs of Czechoslovakia Jiří Dientsbier. Among the intellectuals for Reconciliation who were than often in the left oriented press considered as traitors of Czech interests were Bohumil Doležal, Petr Příhoda, Emanuel Mandler and Rudolf Kučera.

and calls for a dialogue with the Sudeten Germans and for public apology for expulsion.[63] In daily press coverage, both initiatives are mostly reflected in 1995 and 1996, but have been echoed as late as in the first years of the 21st century.

The joint declaration of Czech-German intellectuals aimed at reconciliation and discussion with the Sudeten Germans faces strong resistance in Czech society and among Czech politicians.[64] Politicians and a majority of the Czech society responded with strong aversion to the recommendation of the initiative Reconciliation '95 to open talks with the Sudeten Germans on „all questions which at least one of the sides considers as open".[65]

Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded to the initiative of intellectuals publishing a statement stressing that the Czech government consider its German counterpart as the only partner in the dialogue on the Sudeten German issue.[66]

In a sarcastic way, formulating his recommendations for intellectuals,[67] the Prime Minister Václav Klaus protested against a dialogue held on the asymmetrical level of the Czech government and the Sudeten Germans League. Other political parties in the ruling coalition and the leftist parties in opposition protested against any dialogue with *Landsmanschaft* on the governmental level as well. The Czech Social Democratic Party, in the words of its leader Miloš Zeman, satirized the suggestion by comparing it with potential talks held between the German government and the Club of Czech Borderland.[68] The Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia condemned the initiative with the pejorative expression „dissident intellectuals" and accused the intellectuals of being financially supported by the Sudeten Germans during the communist era.[69]

Hospodářské noviny entitled the initiative „The group of intellectuals is protesting"[70] making a gap between the isolated group and the majority.

Both governmental and oppositional politicians were continuously promoting the term final point[71] pretending there were no open questions[72] or that it was worthy ignoring them by referring to the legality of the Potsdam conference. In fact, the Reconciliation '95 initiative demanded *Schlussstrich* as well, but only after a proper discussion and after finding reasonable solution on *all* open questions.

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[63] „Nová petice za smíření se sudetskými Němci", daily Zemské noviny (Prague), 9.2.1996.

[64] „Čeští a sudetští intelektuálové vyzvali vládu ČR k jednání s odsunutými Němci", Rudé Právo, 29.3.1995.

[65] Rudé právo, 29.3.1995. „Koalice i opozice odmítají výzvu, aby vláda jednala se sudetskými Němci", Rudé právo, 30.3.1995. „Společenské organizace proti výzvě Smíření 95", Rudé právo, 4.4.1995.

[66] Rudé právo, ČTK agency, 29.3.1995.

[67] Rudé právo, 29.3.1995.

[68] Rudé právo, 30.3.1995.

[69] Rudé právo, 30.3.1995

[70] „Skupina intelektuálů protestuje", Hospodářské noviny, 9.2.1996,

[71] In the Czech language „tlustá čára za minulostí", in German language is used Schlussstrich.

[72] „Měli bychom s Němci udělat za minulostí tlustou čáru", Rudé Právo, 3.5.1995. Petice: Cesta ke smíření, daily Svobodné slovo, 24.2.1996.

Schlussstrich found its way to the dailies in the German press also pointing at „Prague mentality of *Schlussstrich*" which from the German perspective symbolizes the reluctance of the Czech politicians to the reconciliation necessities.[73]

Apart from the phrase „final point", also the „political suicide" term was used frequently in that period. The petition Reconciliation '95 was described as a „political suicide" by Christian Democratic Politician Michal Lobkowicz, the head of office of Ministry of Foreign Affairs.[74]

Pavel Dostál criticized Petr Pithart, who used to be the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, for signing the initiative Reconciliation '95 which demands the Czech government to launch dialogue with the Sudeten Germans while Pithart in his former position of the Prime Minister never started such a talks being aware of that he would commit political suicide.[75]

The issue became a welcomed topic for the right-populist Republican Party and its leader Miroslav Sládek and for the communist party. Its daily Haló noviny formulated a most critical attitude against any concession to the Sudeten Germans[76] and fully defended the opinion on the legality of „transfer".[77]

In general, the question of apology was not reflected in the press, there are few cases met with strong rejection in the press[78] or were directly related to Václav Havel's earlier suggestion. In the daily Právo, Jaroslav Šabata suggested that after the fall of communism the dispute over the Sudeten Germans turned to discussion on the sense of Havel's apology either in neutral sense[79] or with strong criticism.[80]

Václav Havel was regarded as a strong personality who broke a taboo on the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans and launched discussion on the issue.[81]

In 1995-96, intellectuals were considered as traitors of the Czech interests and the main attitude formulated was aimed against any concession to the issue as the main deal of transfer was resolved and legalized in the 1945 Potsdam conference.

The initiative Reconciliation '95 had its wide effect on further discussion and fear from the complications for joining the EU in the near future. Paradoxically,

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[73] Die Welt a konečná čára in: daily Právo, 13.2.1996. Setzt sich Prag mit "Schlußstrich"durch? 30.5.1996, Gernot Facius, Welt Online, http://www.welt.de/print-welt/article648792/ Setzt_sich_Prag_mit_Schlussstrich_durch.html.

[74] „Petice Smíření 95 je politickou sebevraždou, soudí Lobkowicz", Rudé Právo 7.4.1995.

[75] „Pavel Dostál: Nemám rád rány pod pás", Rudé Právo, 31.3.1995.

[76] „Meditování o zradě a zklamání", daily Haló noviny (Prague), 31.7.1996.

[77] „Poválečný odsun Němců z Československa byl nezbytný," Haló noviny, 20.11.1996.

[78] „KČP k 50. výročí poválečného odsunu Němců z Československa", Haló noviny, 20.11.1996.

[79] „Deklarace: Čas lámání chleba", Právo, 13. 1. 1997.

[80] Haló noviny, 11.9.1996 (letters from readers).

[81] „Projev Václava Havla a jeho důsledky", Rudé Právo, 17.4.1995.

expert on German issues Rudolf Kučera warned that the Beneš decrees were not in compliance with the EU law and therefore there it is in our interest to conduct a dialogue with those German organizations which are involved.[82]

But in the middle of the 1990s, the Czech society was not yet concerned that Beneš decrees could once pose a problem in the Czech EU accession.

At that time, the compensation of the Sudeten Germans was mentioned only rarely in the Czech press, mainly suggested by some signatories of the Reconciliation '95 initiative and was strongly criticized at the time.[83]

The compensation was more frequent in the press but for the case of seeking the mode for compensating anti-fascists rather than for expelled Germans. There was no mention on any attempts of potential prosecution process from the Sudeten Germans side for compensation.

b) 1997 Czech-German declaration

The Czech-German Declaration occurs altogether in 101 texts of the daily press between the 22nd of January 1997 and 15th of February 1997.

Though approved in the lower chamber of the Czech Parliament with the votes of democratic parties across the right-left ideological affiliation,[84] the declaration did not apparently meet a desire of politicians for making the final point in relations with (Sudeten) Germans. Controversial and disputable headlines in the Czech press reflected the concern which arose when the declaration was published: „Česko-německá deklarace neřeší vše" [The Czech-German declaration is not solution for everything][85], „Deklarace chybně hodnotí minulost" [The declaration wrongly judges the past][86], „Usmíření dostalo zelenou"[87][The way open for reconciliation], „Hájíme budoucnost národa" [We are defending the future of the nation][88], „Minulosti by mělo být učiněno zadost" [The past should be resolved] [89].

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[82] „Češi se přou o Němcích", Slovo, 30.9.1998.

[83] Plzeňský deník, 16.9.1997.

[84] The Chairman of the republican party Miroslav Sládek declared provocatively: „There is a necessity that the Germans are subject to re-education and the history is proved that there were too little dead Germans in the war" In: Hospodářské noviny. The communist party protested against discriminatory nature of the Declaration by the petitions in Prague pointing at rightful historical and moral mistakes contained in the text.

Haló noviny published the text of arguments against declaration written by the social democratic deputy Miloš Melčák. „Jsem kategoricky proti!", Haló noviny, 18.2.1997. Further texts e. g. „Hájíme budoucnost národa", Haló noviny, 15.2.1997 reveals the speech of the communist deputy in the lower chamber of the Czech Parliament Hana Škorpilová (KSČM).

[85] Rovnost, 13.2.1997.

[86] Zemské noviny, 13.2.1997.

[87] Daily Blesk (Prague), 15.2.1997.

[88] Haló noviny, 15.2.1997.

[89] Daily Lidové noviny (Prague), 12.2.1997.

The negative debate was further encouraged by different interpretation of the declaration which appeared even on the governmental level between Prague and Berlin. Chancellor Helmut Kohl stated that „The question of property rights bounded to transfer are remaining open despite of declaration being signed"[90]. On the contrary, the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Josef Zieleniec said that „the questions of the property settlement with Germany are for the Czech Republic resolved for good[91]." The Czech President Václav Havel emphasized the importance of the Declaration for the Czechs as the German government would not give any political support to the property demands of Sudeten Germans though we may could expect that the expelled Germans would be further demanding their property rights individually.[92] Similarly, the Prime Minister Václav Klaus stressed that the post-war legal order should remain intact and therefore also all the fundamental certainties of our citizens in the field of morality, property and ownership. Klaus further emphasized the importance of the Czech expression of sorrow over the suffering and „wild transfer" of Sudeten Germans.[93]

The „transfer" remained important after the declaration as well. The Czech press emphasizes that the transfer used to be in compliance with the valid law order of the Czechoslovakia and was further approved by the Potsdam conference and the world powers. The press uses the word transfer even in titles related to Sudeten Germans from Austria protesting against declaration.[94]

The deputy of the Chairman of the Senate Jaroslava Moserová (ODA) favours the Declaration but in the interview for Slovo she used only the term transfer not expulsion.[95]

Even in the text related to the joint commission of Czech and German historians revealing the proper number of post-war dead Germans who were expelled, the word „transfer" was used.[96]

The Prime Minister Václav Klaus used the phrase „would-be wild transfer" but he avoided the notion of expulsion.[97]

Social democratic deputy Lubomír Zaorálek also used the term transfer only.[98] The world „expulsion" became a target in communist press which also blamed the first Czechoslovakian president Václav Havel for importing the word

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[90] Daily Svoboda (Brno), 22.1.1997.

[91] Svoboda, 22.1.1997.

[92] Daily MF Dnes (Prague), 23.1.1997.

[93] „Projev premiéra Václava Klause v úvodu rozpravy v dolní komoře parlamentu ČR", Hospodářské noviny, 12.2.1997.

[94] „Odsunutí Němci v Rakousku odmítají deklaraci ČR-SRN", Právo, 5.2.1997.

[95] „Deklaraci je třeba pouze schválit", Slovo, 15.2.1997.

[96] „Česko-německá deklarace neřeší vše", Rovnost, 13.2.1997.

[97] „Projev premiéra Václava Klause v úvodu rozpravy v dolní komoře parlamentu ČR", Hospodářské noviny, 12.2.1997.

[98] „ODS zkomplikovala situaci, říká Gross", MF DNES, 12.2.1997.

„expulsion" to the political language in the Czech republic and in relations with Germany[99] or by the national association related to the WWII: The one of the representative of the Czech freedom fighters' Union said: Today there seems to be forgotten that after the war everything developed from the Potsdam conference which clearly deals with the transfer of Sudeten Germans not with the expulsion.[100] The Club of Czech Borderland rejected even the principle of apology for expulsion and forced *Aussiedling* as the act was logical consequence for the behaviour of Sudeten Germans prior to and during the whole war.[101]

Social democrat Slavomír Klaban used only the word „transfer". He warned against the use of the word expulsion which is understood not only as illegitimate by Germans but also unlawful and could potentially open the door for further demands (property rights or compensation).[102]

On the contrary, the world expulsion was used by the catholic priest and intellectual Tomáš Halík who further warned in the liberal Lidové noviny that the declaration should not be understood only as the final point, but that Czechs should more sensitively reflect their own past and cruelty of the post-war order, launched by Beneš who proclaimed that the Germans are to be liquidated and that post-war ad hoc anti-German tribunals prepared the way for the totalitarian communism in 1950s. He turned the attention from the Czech-German dialogue to the necessity of the Czech-Czech debate.[103]

Compensation is not mentioned in relation to the Sudeten Germans but only in discussing the Czech victims of Nazi and those who had to be in the *Einsatz*. But after the „final point" phrase another nightmare was opened by the Czech press: the „prosecution" issue. The influential tabloid press Blesk warned that Helmut Kohl's statement that the topic of Sudeten German material demands remain open means opening the door for „prosecution" of cases related to their property rights.[104]

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[99] e. g. „Hájíme budoucnost národa", Haló noviny, 15.2.1997.

[100] Karel Jenčík, „Bojovníci za svobodu nesouhlasí s textem deklarace", Zemské noviny, 25.1.1997.

[101] „Česko-německá deklarace společenským dalekohledem?", Ústecký deník, 28.1.1997. Also the Haló noviny rejected apology for „transfer" because it was not a matter of the Czechs but result of Postdam agreement. „Hájíme budoucnost národa", Haló noviny, 15.2.1997.

[102] Slavomír Klaban, „Sociální demokracie a česko-německá demokracie", Právo, 31.1.1997. Similarly, the expulsion is condemned in: »Naivita« české diplomacie, Haló noviny, 14.2.1997 with definition of expulsion according to the dictionary of Brothaus Waren Deutsches Wörterbuch sressing the word „one-sided" that it was the strategy of German diplomacy to cut off the Czechs from legal ground in Postdam conference.

[103] Tomáš Halík, „Křesťané a česko-německá deklarace", Lidové noviny, 8.2.1997. Later, paralel to thesis of historian Václav Černý was done, that contemporary theft and tunneling (removing assets through an underground tunnel – the word first discovered in the Czech Republic during wild privatization process) has its roots in post-war period when the assets after 3,5 millions of expelled Sudeten Germans was available to the moob which took advantage of the situation. Jan Hrudka, „Sudetští Němci mohou být naším mostem", říká Wonka, MF Dnes, 29.4.2002.

[104] „A teď co řeknou čeští poslanci", Blesk, 24.1.1997. Compare with „Česko-německá deklarace se stala zbraní proti nám", Haló noviny, 23.1.1997.

c) Resolution of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Parliament in justifying the Beneš decrees in 2002

There were 87 texts containing the phrase the Sudeten Germans in the period from 20th of April to 30th of April 2002.

The resolution was in fact approved in the pre-election period within the context of

a) Wider discussion on the Sudeten German issue and the pre-accession period of the Czech Republic (since 1998); process in which there were chapters negotiated and discussions led on possible opt-outs.

b) The Super Election year 2002 in Central Europe and populist campaigns in Germany, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic as the Beneš decrees became the major card of almost all political parties

c) During pre-election period the nervousness increased because several institutions asked for the law expert's opinion on the Beneš decrees – The European Parliament, European Commission and the German Bundestag.[105]

The resolution was approved with one voice across all the political parties (with majority all of the 169 present deputies).[106]

The Prime Minister Miloš Zeman even criticized the Christian Democratic Party (KDU-ČSL) for its reluctance to defend the Czech national interests because the party was originally against the Beneš decrees to be discussed in parliament.[107] For this reason Miloš Zeman also questioned the ability of smaller parties to participate in the government after parliamentary elections and he supported rumours on further continuance of the grand left-right coalition.[108]

The politicians criticized those who rationally argued against mythologization of Beneš decrees within the Czech society.

The Minister of Culture Pavel Dostál raised a concern over the link between the share of investors from German speaking countries in the Czech press and political interests of the Sudeten Germans. He blamed the press for one-sided information on the Sudeten Germans issue for the content being involved by the investment money[109].

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[105] Hospodářské noviny, 29.4.2002.

[106] Jiří Kouda, „Poslanci se shodli:Benešovy dekrety jsou neměnné!", daily Super (Prague), 25.4.2002.

[107] Daily Olomoucký den (Olomouc), 30.4.2002.

[108] Jindřich Šídlo, „Zeman - Klaus: smíření", MF Dnes, 29.4.2002. Jakub Pokorný, „Malé strany: Velké subjekty si hrají na majitele demokracie", MF Dnes, Severní Čechy (Ústí nad Labem), 30.4.2002.

[109] Petr Šafařík, Veřejná diskuse o vlivu vlastnických poměrů českého tisku na mediální obraz česko-německých vztahů (Prague Social Science Studies, Fakulta sociálních věd UK Praha, Edice pracovních sešitů PSSS, Teritoriální řada, TER 052, 50 p.) 20. The opinion of Minister of culture coincides with the book on „expansion of foreign (german) capital" over the Czech press published in book defending the Czech national interests and „we" form, in: Bořivoj Čelovský, Konec českého tisku (Šenov u Ostravy: Tilia, 2002).

The shadow minister of transport Martin Říman marked those activities as „the fifth column", the shadow minister of Foregin Affairs Jan Zahradil verbally attacked the signatories of the new initiative Stop nationalism.[110] In the petition signed by almost four hundred intellectuals the politicians were criticized for attempting to misuse nationalistic emotions for manifestation of the false national unity in order to gain political profit in electoral campaign.[111] The numerous intellectuals continued extending the gap with politicians criticizing both nationalistic campaign and unequivocal attitude of deputies against the contesting Beneš decrees.[112]

The main message of the daily press headlines was optimistic voice that the Beneš decrees are not to be cancelled in the future and further, that they could be considered as „politically dead."[113]

The communist paper Haló noviny and occasionally tabloid press were still making an appeal to national pride[114] and articles on Sudeten German issue often stressing unchangeability of Beneš decrees for their connection to post-war order of the Potsdam conference.

But on the other hand, national interests were put into the question.[115] Also the MP's decision on the unchangeability of Beneš decrees was critically reviewed.[116]

Unlike the period examined in the middle of 90's, where the only difference from the main anti-Sudeten German discourse had been represented by handful of intellectuals, newly a numerous articles were revealing the situation far from the black-and-white perspectives.

To introduce several examples, firstly, the story was published describing a family which lost property due to the Beneš decrees though having received official confirmation on being loyal to the state during the war.[117] Secondly, the activities of the Christian Ackermann Gemeinde favoring reconciliation were reflected as well as its attitude to the Beneš decrees.[118] Thirdly, the other texts published warned from one sided discussion and mythologization of Beneš decrees.[119]

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[110] http://bohumildolezal.lidovky.cz/texty/vyzva.htm.
[111] Jiří Pehe, „Pátá kolona a Národní fronta nacionalismu", MF Dnes, 20.4.2002.
[112] Milan Znoj, „Mít tak optimismus politiků", Lidové noviny. 24.4.2002. Ondřej Neff, „Hlavou proti zpochybňování", Lidové noviny, 22.4.2002. Marek Kerles, „Z debat o dekretech těží extrémisté" (interview with Tomáš Halík), Lidové noviny, 30.4.2002.
[113] Luděk Navara, „Žaloby sudetských Němců nemají šanci, říká soudce", MF Dnes, 20.4.2002.
[114] Čestmír Bára, „Ještě máme národní HRDOST", Super, 28.4.2002. „Ach, ta paměť!" (from Letters to the editor), Haló noviny,) 27.4.2002.
[115] Ivan Hoffman, „O národních zájmech", daily Metro (Prague), 26.4.2002.
[116] Martin Komárek, „Zapálili hromničku", MF Dnes, 25.4.2002.
[117] Jan Hrudka, „Wonka chce majetek po předcích", MF Dnes, 29.4.2002.
[118] „Horizont: Benešovy dekrety z druhé strany", MF DNES Plzeňský kraj (Plzeň), 27.4.2002.
[119] Josef Pravec, „Dekrety se stávají novými mýty", Hospodářské noviny, 26.4.2002.

The debate on „transfer" reflects variability of opinions. From stating that the transfer was just and approved by the Potsdam and Nurnberg conferences and from stating that the Sudeten Germans were the fifth column of Hitler going to the entirely opposite opinion eroding the previous discourse and suggesting instead a) the necessity of having plural opinions in society, b) oversimplification of the past, and c) condemnation of the unjust transfer („The Czechs transferred many children not guilty for anything"[120].

The word „expulsion" is not frequented as much as transfer in the press, but if used than without emotion („Why the expulsion of the Sudeten Germans was not condemned?"[121]).

The Czech Press continued to quote from the German press and the word expulsion (*vyhnání*) translated and used properly without any emotionally colored comments.

The term apology is very rarely used in the press.[122]

The debate on compensation is focuses on anti-fascists and Czech-German Fund for The Future. Debate has been shifted to the rational level and the texts warn from collective reflections.

The prosecution cases are mentioned in the press occasionally mostly focusing on individual prosecution cases passing to the courts by the Sudeten Germans but the press mostly stressed out that such a prosecution is pointless with no chance for being victorious.[123]

d) The Lisbon Treaty ratification and Václav Klaus ratification in 2009

During the fall of 2009, the Czech President Václav Klaus decided to sign the Lisbon Treaty only conditionally because of his fear from the demands of the Sudeten Germans. The government responded that the treaty could not abolish the presidential decrees.[124]

Klaus has been known for his euro-sceptic attitudes since the second half of 1990s and for being successful in promoting agenda-setting[125] in the media network in the Czech Republic, thus smart enough to know „which topics are important for media to be part of their news and if the occurrence

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[120] Jakub Pokorný, „Malé strany: Velké subjekty si hrají na majitele demokracie", MF Dnes Severní Čechy (Ústí nad Labem), 30.4.2002.

[121] Jan Hrudka, „Sudetští Němci mohou být naším mostem, říká Wonka", MF Dnes, 29.4.2002. Exemption is the daily Haló noviny insisting on using trasfer and its legality and is remining on expulsion on the Czechs by the Sudeten Germans from borderland in 1938. „Co vlastně čekali od porobených národů?" Haló noviny, 24.4.2002.

[122] In communist Haló noviny is apology frequented but only in a very pejorative sense.

[123] Luděk Navara, „Žaloby sudetských Němců nemají šanci, říká soudce", MF Dnes, 20.4.2002.

[124] „Klaus vytáhl proti Lisabonu sudetskou kartu", MF Dnes, 10.10.2009.

[125] E. g. his scepticism to a) climate warming, b) the euro currency, c) political integration of the EU.

also leads to changes in attitudes of the public.“[126] His arguments against the ratification of the Lisbon treaty is grounded in his opinion that the treaty „will increase its democratic deficit, worsen the standing of our country and expose it to new risks“. But the main reason for halting the ratification process, as Klaus stated, lies in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union which is an integral part of the Lisbon Treaty. „On its basis, the Luxembourg Court of Justice of the EU will assess whether the legal provisions, customs and practices of the EU member countries comply with those of the Charter. That will make it possible to bypass Czech courts and to raise property claims e.g. of those displaced after Second World War directly before the Court of Justice of the EU. The Charter makes it possible to re-examine even those decisions of the Czech courts that are legally binding“.[127]

Václav Klaus's arguments are based on article no. 21 of the treaty according to which any discrimination on the grounds of nationality shall be prohibited. In fact, during debates on the Lisbon Treaty, the Czech President never seriously raised the Sudeten German issue. Klaus formulated his demand for the Czech opt-out from the ratification process was already approved by the Czech Parliament.[128]

Unlike the previous three topics, this event enjoyed coverage not only in the Czech Republic and Germany but also across Europe. There were 112 entries on the „Sudeten Germans“ and „Václav Klaus“ in the examined phrases within the period from 1st of October till the 31st of December 2009 in the Czech daily press. Václav Klaus is regarded as a strategic player enjoying his leading position. He got a chance to keep in tension 26 states to wait for his signature of the treaty to become valid.[129] Klaus played with the concern from possible demands from the Sudeten German in the future. However, as expected, his rhetoric of protecting national interests and against Sudeten German claims, won him favour among

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[126] Magdalena Leichtová, „Agenda-setting v masových médiích v globalizovaném světě“ (Rosůlek, Přemysl a kol. Média a politika, Plzeň: ZČU, 2009) 116. Agenda-setting also in František, Kalvas, Nastolování agendy. Role masové a interpersonální komunikace, osobní zkušenosti a genderu (Plzeň: ZČU, 2009).

[127] Online: http://www.hrad.cz/en/president-of-the-cr/current-president-of-the-cr-vaclav-klaus/ selected-speeches-and-interviews/96.shtml.

[128] Opt-out has received London and Warsaw. Britain was afraid of rising competencies for organizing a strike and Poland's concern was related to the fact that Charter would force Poland to permit marriage of the persons of the same gender. But in the Czech republic ratification process went on softly and the treaty was not seriously questioned in the parliament. According to the constitution the president has only limited role in the political system. The asymmetry was given by the fact that presidents in the Czechoslovakia and the Czech Republic traditionally enjoy more manoeuvre space than given by the constitution and, moreover, by the time were in in functions only ministers of provisional government headed by the Prime Minister Jan Fišer.

[129] Václav Dolejší, „Říkejte mi eurodisident, prosím“. Weekly Magazín Víkend DNES (Prague), 12.12.2009, 20.

communists[130] who paid attention to his speeches criticizing the Lisbon Treaty: „You all know well my own opinion, which gains a wide support among the Czech citizens"[131]. The communist support to Klaus was full of paradox, as the Charter of the Fundamental Rights of the European Union was strengthening the position of employees and trade unions and its removing from the Lisbon treaty rather supports libertarian policies. Trade unions condemned Klaus for rising concerns over removing social rights to Czech citizen.[132]

Jiří Paroubek reluctantly supported Klaus as a protector of national interests while attacking the Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg for sharing opinions with Sudeten Germans *Landsmanschaft*.[133]

By halting the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty, Klaus triggered the least ambivalent or sharply negative reactions within the society. But the debate was influenced by the fact that the government of Jan Fischer was a preliminary government and the parties were preparing for next elections and frustrated about the expenses given in campaign to elections which were abolished by the court. Jan Fischer adopted a strategy of advocate between Klaus and Brussels.[134]

In the society, Klaus could rely on the support of journalists only partly[135] but he proved his ability to mobilize the society by the Sudeten-German card as was revealed by the pools conducted by Median agency. The policy of Václav Klaus towards the EU with regard to the Lisbon Treaty met strong approval of 33,5% of population, rather approval gave 32,3% of the population, while those who rather disagreed were 17,6% and figure of strongly disagreed was on 11,5%. On the question whether you are afraid that the Lisbon treaty could breach the Beneš decrees similar attitudes were recorded within the population. As certainly convinced were 31,3% of population, rather yes 32,2% of population, while rather no 21,2% and certainly no 11,3% of population.[136]

Klaus faced strong criticism[137] while some writers feared the declining reputation of the country abroad and distanced themselves from Klaus or were quoting from the foreign press.[138]

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[130] Pavel and Marie Lattnerovi, „Klausovy oprávněné obavy z landsmanšaftu", Haló noviny, 16.10.2009. „Opletalova odkazu vzpomněli komunisté a Klaus", Haló noviny, 18.11.2009.

[131] „Státní svátek ve znamení kritiky", Haló noviny, 29.10.2009.

[132] Jana Havligerová, „Štěch: S populismem se těžko bojuje", E15, 30.9.2009.

[133] Jiří Paroubek, „Schwarzenberg, nebo Klaus?", Právo, 14.10.2009.

[134] Vladimír Kučera, „Jestli vůbec jde o Lisabonskou smlouvu", MF Dnes, 29.10.2009. Petruška Šustrová, „Smutný příběh", Lidové noviny, 16.10.2009.

[135] „TÉMA: Chceme být svobodní?" Příbramský deník (Příbram), 19.12.2009. „Klausovy oprávněné obavy z landsmanšaftu", From letters to the editor, Haló noviny, 16.10.2009.

[136] Results of the Agency Median. In: Lukáš Dolanský, „Národní zájmy: Klausovo téma". Lidové noviny, 16.10.2009.

[137] Václav Dolejší, „Říkejte mi eurodisident, prosím". Magazín Víkend DNES, 12.12.2009.

[138] „Co na to cizina", Lidové noviny, 5.11.2009. Jana Havligerová, „Kvůli Česku stoupá nervozita v celé Evropě", E15, 29.10.2009.

Many commentators stated that the president's struggle against Lisbon Treaty is absurd because the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union does not relate by any means to the Beneš decrees and that it is only courts on various levels that can make decisions on the claims of the Sudeten Germans.[139]

The world transfer is frequently used but mostly without emotions. Even the phrase „forced transfer" has been used in a neutral way while discussing president's concern over Lisbon treaty.[140]

In an interview with the head of the Sudeten German League Bernd Posselt, he uses the term expulsion.[141] The use of frequent in the German press as well, and Petruška Šustrová has also used it on various occasions.[142]

A sharp distinction between the words transfer and expulsion was made by Jiří Paroubek by having mobilized social democratic electorate and pointing at Minister of Foreign Affairs Schwarzenberg who used the word expulsion instead of transfer while answering the questions to Berliner Zeitung.[143]

Apart from one question put to Posselt in Lidové noviny, the word apology is not an issue any more.[144]

Similarly, the word „compensation" was not used at all. Only Bernd Posselt stated in the above mentioned interview that though not having any material value, Hungarians issued certificates as a form of compensation on a symbolical level.

But the word prosecution has been used several times. Experts on the communitarian law of the EU are often quoted stating that the decision of the international courts would leave Beneš decrees intact and juridical demands of Sudeten Germans for properties would not meet success.[145]

Petruška Šustrová does not believe the president is motivated by the concern over the prosecutions being passed to the court by the Sudeten Germans.

5. Conclusion

In the examined period, the Czech-German relations were very much reduced to the debate on the Sudeten Germans and, even more narrowly, to the decrees of the Czechoslovakian president Beneš. Czech nationalism has remained active and the issue has been used as a tool for mobilizing electorate,

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[139] Václav Dolejší, Ondřej Šťastný, „Klausovo „vítězství" - Listina platí". MF Dnes, 31.10.2009. Věra Řiháčková, Lukáš Pachta, „O dekrety není důvod se bát", Hospodářské noviny, 13.10.2009. Kateřina Koubová, Ondřej Šťastný, „Ale už žádné ale, pane prezidente", MF Dnes, 13.10.2009.

[140] Václav Dolejší, „Klaus - a zase ta výjimka". MF Dnes, 30.10.2009.

[141] Marek Kerles, „Je na každém, bude-li usilovat o majetek". Lidové noviny, 17.10.2009.

[142] Petruška Šustrová, „Smutný příběh", Lidové noviny, 16.10.2009.

[143] Jiří Paroubek, „Schwarzenberg, nebo Klaus?", Právo, 14.10.2009.

[144] Marek Kerles, „Je na každém, bude-li usilovat o majetek". Lidové noviny, 17.10.2009.

[145] Václav Dolejší, Ondřej Šťastný, „Klausovo „vítězství" - Listina platí", MF Dnes, 31.10.2009.

particularly during the escalated atmosphere before the parliamentary elections in 2002. The Czech communist party has been continuously taking advantage from the issue, especially in the 2002 elections. The *Sudetofobia* from the Czech side, supported partly by the daily press, contrasts with the attitudes in Germany where the chairmen of *Sudetenlandsmanschaft* – whether the former Franz Neubauer or the contemporary Bernd Posselt – are un-known persons to the public and the *Sudetendeutsche Frage* is also an unknown subject for many scholars.

However, the Czech-German debate got through an interesting development. Starting during the Christmas, Václav Havel and his apology to the Sudeten Germans caused shock reactions in the Czech society. When the initiatives Reconciliation '95 and 96 were published, the small number of the Czech intellectuals calling for rapprochement was either condemned or at least not understood within the majority of politicians and population. In the middle of the 1990s, the debate on possible compensation or prosecution from the side of the Sudeten Germans was not an issue in the Czech press. The society was still unaware of pre-conditions to the EU as the Prime Minister Václav Klaus submitted the application to the EU in January 1996. The main struggle of politicians was to reach the „final point" with Germans, which was perceived as the will for finding solution without formulating apology and without reflecting the dark part of history.

The joint Czech-German declaration from 1997 was a compromise. Instead of appreciating the important commitment given by the German government not to support demands formulated by the Sudeten Germans, Czechs felt very uneasy about „apology" for „wild transfer" as well as for the word „expulsion". Nevertheless, the worries had not gained juridical connotations at that time.

The nationalist-populist propaganda in the Czech Republic reached its peak in 2002. Czech-German relations were reduced to a legal debate on Beneš decrees. From the perspective of experts, the debate was rather confusing ranging from marking them as "politically dead" or „faded".[146] On the other hand, many sought guarantee of the unchangeability of the decrees linking them to the post-war order and the Potsdam conference. This kind of chauvinism promoted by political parties did not correspond with the opinion of a significant and influential part of the society. The petition Stop nationalism had more signatures than the initiatives from the middle of the 1990s. Despite some verbal attacks from various politicians, anti-populist intellectuals were not isolated as in the previous decade. Though not regularly used, the word "to expel" has not spurred emotions any more. Lastly and surprisingly, the Sudeten Germans

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[146] Luděk Navara, Žaloby sudetských Němců nemají šanci, říká soudce", MF Dnes, 20.4.2002.

card was used by the president Václav Klaus in 2009. As observed from the Median pools, Klaus was able to mobilize society to receive a tight majority backing his opinion. Expulsion could be used without emotion but the Czech political language started to use the phrase „wild transfer".

The two theses presented at the beginning could be confirmed only partly. It is true that the majority of Czechs conceives of the transfer as legitimate, but is not against using the word „to expel". Also the concern over legality of Beneš decrees linked to the Potsdam conference has lost much of its importance and appeal as there is no reason to be afraid from it.

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