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**SOCIAL CAPITAL BRIDGING THROUGH SOCIOPOLITICAL AND
RELIGIOUS REFERENCING IN COMPUTER MEDIATED
COMMUNICATION. A STUDY CASE OF A MEDIATED LOCAL DRAMA**

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Abstract: The paper takes a Critical Discourse Analysis angle and joins Social Media Studies and Religious Studies perspectives of Computer Mediated Communication material to examine such strategies of online interpersonal communication as may foster civic solidarity on social networks sites over local incidents with national and international media coverage. Computer mediated discourse is often underpinned by ideological antagonism especially when tackling social, political, cultural and even religious issues. Our topic choice was occasioned by an infelicitous episode - a fire in a local venue hosting a rock concert that resulted in a high number of casualties and fatalities. The tragic episode triggered some polarized and highly opinionated positioning in the social media, both independent of and/or in retaliation to media sourced accounts and personal posts. We analyzed qualitatively authentic CMC material as well as edited media inputs in order to establish if and how the networked, yet generationally diverse, public achieve symbolic solidarity through reactive and correlated digi-participation where sociocultural identities become tangent to such ecclesiastic issues as became salient and were up-cycled (by some) in the local political conjecture.

Key words: online interpersonal communication, ideological affiliation, social network sites, reactive digi-participation, social capital bridging, networked public, sociocultural identities, religious positioning.

1. Introduction

Our paper explores the linguistic displays in the Social Media Networks contingent on the national drama of October 30, 2015, at the *Colectiv* club in Bucharest, Romania. The staging of the *Good-bye to Gravity* rock band concert launching their last (indeed) album made use of pyrotechnics. The sparks ignited the club's flammable acoustic foam and caused 64 fatalities and 147 casualties. The dramatic incident triggered differentiated reactions on the social media platforms by varied local sociocultural segments, members of the diasporic community, and inter-nauts from around the world. The infelicitous occurrence occasioned a “semiotic encounter” (Agha 2007, 10) of the communicative process in which the event was ardently discussed, and conflict or, alternately, solidarity over the mishap was expressed through posts and comments typically displaying multimodal discourse. Our incursion into the social media users' contributions intends to identify the emotive build-up over the ensuing conflicting mentalities and church-related issues, as underscored by a re-quintessentialized rock-(subculture)-versus-religion-versus-dominant-ideology conflict, widely circulated during the Eastern European countries prior to the 1990's, and now up-cycled by young adults into a debate transgressing the classical rational/spiritual and marginal/mainstream divides. And while in retrospect, the intense social media opinionated engagement occasioned by the event can be seen to refract an already existing sociopolitical discontent, we wish to diagnose the polarized online positionings vis-à-vis the incident as correlating with two particular social demographics, much of it incurring meta-religious and sociopolitical comments across two types of online interpersonal communication: comments posted to mass media reports and church officialdom mediated statements, and posts in peer online groups / communities of interests, as accommodated by the convergent and hyper-connected New Media.

2. Interpersonal Communication on Social Network Sites

It has been noted that the networked technologies reorganize how information flows and how people interact with information *and* each other. What has previously been defined as audiences (mere receptors and/or consumers) of the broadcast media has now been replaced by the *Networked publics* especially in regard to the convergent Social Media. According to Boyd (2011), the *Networked public* is formed of digital natives that have been transformed by the properties and the potential of the networked media and by their own growing engagement with the latter.

One could appreciate this as an evolutionary leap rather than just a linear, gradual transformation of the traditional audiences, the members of which now could be called digi-mutants. As it has been claimed elsewhere, the ritualistic engagement with the social media has turned the members of the networked public into simultaneous “reactors, (re)makers and (re)distributors, engaged in shared culture and knowledge through discourse and social exchange as well as through acts of media reception” (Mizuko Ito cf. Boyd 2011, 41). The Social Network Sites (SNSs) are, then, more than mere sites of discourse and opinion, but rather “arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities” (Nancy Fraser cf. Boyd 2011, 41). Such syncretism goes on to engender complex forms of online social engagement and participation (Johnson 2011, 185), and attitudes and behaviors may radicalize around common goals and particular causes, and, eventually, reconfigure beliefs and attitudes with the potential to influence offline social practice itself. Indeed, studies have found social network use to be linked to civic participation (such as volunteering for local causes) given the social nature of such sites, while some more recent studies (Johnson 2011, 186) have evidenced that the political uses of SNSs can even predict offline political activity. This is far removed from the early Media Effects contentions that the mass media kept the public captive, given that the former had “considerable discretion in interpreting and reporting the events they cover[ed]” (Ginsberg 1986), and subject-positioned the latter into accepting the preferred messages.

Our focal interest lies with how the social identification and deindividuation effect (SIDE), a socio-psychological phenomenon that is evident in Computer Mediated Communication (Spears 2017), can produce either social capital bridging or polarized stances. The SIDE effect is, indeed, facilitated by the convergence and affordances of the New Media (Walther *et alia* 2011), which join visitors and the original authors in the act of co-creating content. The *prosumers* (simultaneous producers and consumers) (Fuchs 2011), in a medium allowing for a more direct democracy (Jan van Dijk 2006, 95) as well as for anonymity will often take sides over ostensible issues by associating themselves with the positions of the seminal others. To this we must add that the digital affordances have also been conducive to a radical shift from private opinion to public opinion, and the SNSs “reinforce the social affordances of online environments by fostering interaction that is primarily interpersonal ... enabling both identity expression and community building” (Papacharissi 2011, 305). Users will often enact networked opinions from the ‘safe’ confinement provided by online communities with which they identify temporarily or permanently and thus their digital social performativity will bear the signs of one subduing one’s identity in favour of that of the community.

Given the nature of the local drama under study, and its particular sociopolitical context, as well as the prominently divergent positions

coagulating from a critical number of online posts, we have opted to focus onto two categories of SNSs users. The two form the ideological divide between the Millennials – young adults within the 20-30 year range with a consistent socio-psychological and cultural profile due to their tendencies and attitudes towards technology, the workplace and culture (Myers and Sadaghiani), and a more mature social segment (roughly 50-to-mid-60 years of age). While theirs certainly do not cover the whole range of emotions and attitudes towards the *Colectiv* episode manifested on- and off-line, they do constitute ostensibly opposite stances. And since ours may be a rough two-generational classification, we added a further criterion subject to the local geopolitical specifics: those who experienced the former communist regime as (pre)adults, and those born around the year 1989 (the demise of the communist regime in Romania).

Our primary epistemic interest lay with finding possible interaction patterns across the online comments to authentic posts or edited media accounts of the *Colectiv* fire, and whether they correlated with the two prefigured sociocultural profiles. And while we expected to find some attitudinal antagonism over particular themes brought to the fore by the tragic incident, our general expectation was also to detect some patterns of ‘discussion’ overriding the age-gap conflict potential as cloaked in particular communication styles (Coates, 1998). The reason for our assumption is that online, people concerned with civic causes are likely, on the one hand, to orient towards cooperative positive resolutions (Smith and Williamson, 1985), which are generally achieved through conflict-annihilating interaction strategies, and, on the other hand, by way of social deindividuation, associate with forceful group opinions which often may display hostility to other groups/communities. We subdivided our presumption into four hypotheses, and expected to identify the following simultaneously occurring elements across the sociopolitical and religious-related discourse touching on issues that were upcycled in the context of the *Colectiv* drama:

1. Language of solidarity, non-conflicting linguistic interaction, language indexing intersubjectivity.
2. Linguistic displays underscoring the social identification and deindividuation model of digital communication.
3. Conflicting discourse patterns in interpersonal communication between users with different points of view, possibly involved in many and various SNSs.
4. Differentiated reactive comments to joint sociopolitical and religious issues as triggered by the institutional mass media, posts in the social media, and interpersonal communication in online groups.

Since much of our analytical material was sourced from Facebook as a Social Network Site, we took into account the fact that the *Profiles* and *Walls* are *loci* of interaction and social dynamics with the *Friends* constituting the imagined intended audience, where one is likely to adjust

one's communicative behavior to comply with the intended norms of a collective. And while many of the FB posts constitute mundane interaction or social grooming, they may also lodge emphatic statements about what is going on online or offline. Thus, posting on *Friends' Walls* and the *Status* updates on one's own *Wall* are forms of social performance, which, under specific circumstances, can cogenerate solidarity over a mutual concern as well as encouraging opinionated stances, and, lastly, functioning as a *pro forma* indulger in anti-normative behavior (see SIDE). Quite often overt or covert encouragement to civic unrest underlies the content of such FB interpersonal communication, and one can only note how empowering such SNSs are when compared to the (old) traditional media. Many early studies contended that where reportorial or editorial content was concerned "the more personal the media, the more effective it is in converting opinions ... [and t]he greater the amount of "personalism" the communication act contains, the more effective it presumably is." (Berelson 1968, 162) Apparently, as a factor in affecting public opinion, as unlikely as it may seem, the reportorial is more effective than the editorial or interpretive content in converting opinion (Berelson). We are making a special note of this aspect, because many of the FB posts and comments we have analyzed embed reactions to some reportorial content, and interactive comments to electronic media articles are subject to registering through one's FB account (courtesy to media convergence).

3. Specificity of Corpus Gathering

Our corpus collecting instrument was *hashtag* or #, an instrument also used by SNS users to create hyper-multimodal discourses. *Hashtag* allows for easy multimodal content retrieval from the infinite data available on the Net. When running a query, one can also choose to add several lexical items to the original one, which will help retrieve a semantic network around a specific topic. Conversely, users have the possibility to create multiple *hashtags* for a single post/comment: e.g. *#incendiul#Colectiv#tragedia* [*#fire#Colectiv#tragedy*], which permits the narrowing down of the topic of interest as well as culling the retrieval results.

Running the query *#Colectiv* provided us with the posts and threads indexed with the corresponding tag. The posts were either individual texts displaying personal opinions and attitudes, or items of news with hyperlinks to other sites or social network sites. One of the drawbacks, however, was that as a corpus gathering instrument *hashtag* offered a panachronic perspective on the events (Crystal 2011, 119). For instance, one comment dating back directly after the incident displayed reactions posted in different waves (6 months later, 4 months later, etc.), which were difficult to disentangle in terms of interaction logic and turntaking, an analytic issue also found in scrutinizing asynchronic discourse.

We should also note that the corpus we retrieved was representative for displaying multimodality mainly through the ‘immediate’ affordances of the medium: adding emoticons and emojis, and sharing posts. Yet, while it did provide some concrete cues, especially by benefitting from the newly *augmented Like button “Reactions,”* we opted to focus exclusively on the linguistic framing of emotion and attitude in our study case.

4. Analysis of Findings

Our longitudinal corpus originally spanned one month: October 31 to November 30, 2015, to which later instantiations that were found to be relevant were selectively added. We opted to analyze two categories of comments and posts in relation to the information sources aforementioned: (a). reactions to electronic mass-media news items and authentic public posts; (b). peer communication - comments and posts within online groups. Our research objective was to identify patterns of reactive discourse to distinct types of information sources, discourse forms as markers of deindividuation, and their correlation with a growing sense of civic engagement across two themes and issues that had become salient against the backdrop of the national tragic episode: sociopolitical and religious-related discontent. The corpora gathered are both in Romanian and English, as some of the information was sourced from the international news agencies, and some reactive posts were in English even when contributed by Romanian natives. (The examples of comments were anonymized, and the English syntactic translations of the original Romanian texts are given in square brackets. Emoticons, emojis, gifs, etc. were omitted, for the reason given above.)

4.1. Reactive posts to the reportorial mass-media

Most comments posted by users directly (31 October - 30 November, 2015) after the mass-media announcement and accounts of the *Colectiv* fire, display lexical items in the semantic field of enhanced negative emotions and are structured as discourses expressing shock, grief, denial, confusion, and sympathy for the aggrieved. A spot by *sputniknews.com* is followed by a string of comments attuned to the general consternation over the high death toll.

(1) *Wow! Shocking news! There are so many bad people out here! My prayers go out to the victims of this senseless crime!*

(2) *I heard about...i dont want to see nothing !!! R.I.P*

(3) *RIP my condolences to the families*

We directly noted the reiterative use of RIP (acronym for the English *Rest in peace*, Latin *Requiescat in pace*). If in the cases above it is ‘natural’, as the comments are posted by native English speakers, there are instantiations that lend themselves to different interpretations. Several posts by Romanians contain the iconic acronym, which, as ascertained elsewhere, could be accounted for as a case of ‘homogenizing human condition, and interpreting it through the conceptual vocabulary of English’ (Wierzbicka 2014, 61). Less subtly, it could also be taken to be an exemplification of the preferential use of Anglocentric terms and phrases registered with young Romanian (and not only) Netizens (Trandabăț *et alia*, Zafiu). Either way, associating the use of *RIP* primarily with young, rather than mature, Romanian adults apparently contradicts the former’s self-claimed distance from ecclesiastical matters. In a country that is traditional in regards to religion, (with only 0.16 of the population self-declared as atheistic or without faith, cf. 2011 National Census), the high incidence of the use of *RIP*, albeit mainly online, indicates an inordinate usage by an age group that is apparently dissociated from religion. Indeed, a local Romanian Facebook page bearing an iconic name: *R.I.P. Colectiv* that has been created this year (2018) shows that while the choice of name page may primarily point to its functionality for Google searchers, it could also be interpreted as a confirmation that humankind shares some deep moral intuitions on which a global ethic builds (Schweder 2012, cf. Wierzbicka 2014). And, while the FB page content is in Romanian, and thus related to a particular group of speakers’ conceptual world, the wording of the page title is an attempt at sharing that common core without which there could be no genuine cross-cultural understanding (Wierzbicka 2014).

On a local level, some stark dissent is expressed through the virtual comments tangent on the aforementioned generational divide. A particular comment (4) to a national news post by a local Romanian TV channel: *#Colectiv | Noaptea cea mai lungă* [The longest night], some two weeks after the fire, triggered a highly antagonistic thread. The message of the comment is reinforced a few posts on (8), and can be linked to an inconsiderate attempt (14) at *otherization* by suggesting that *they* (young people) who cannot stop thinking about *Colectiv* are being inordinately unrealistic.

(4) *Nu mai faceți nimic visați numai la colectiv tot timpul...*[You are not doing anything anymore you are dreaming of Colectiv all the time]

(5) *Dumnezeu să-i odihnească în liniște și pace.* [May God rest them in quiet and peace]

(6) *Vă folosiți și de creier atunci când citiți?* [Are you also using your brains when you read?]

(7) *Și mâine o să fie 2 săptămâni și o zi.*[And tomorrow it’s going to be two weeks and a day ...]

(8) *Iarăși. Colectiv???* [Again. Colectiv???

(9) *Iti dai seama cât de ciudat ar fi să nu mai zică nimeni nimic* [Do you realize how strange it would be if nobody said anything anymore?]

(10) *Ne scuzati ca va plictisim cu tragediile noastre* [Excuse us for bothering you with our tragedies]

(11) *Da, iar! Nu uitam si nu avem voie sa uitam!* [Yes, again! We don't forget and we are not allowed to forget!]

(12) *E bine la tine acolo in Suceava? Ramai acolo cel mai bine.* [Is it fine with you in Suceava? It's best you stay there]

(13) [xxx], *te rog respectuos sa ai decenta de a nu mai posta comentarii de genul acesta, acolo au murit multi oameni iar altii vor suferi toata viata, daca articolele nu sunt pe placul tau nu citi.* [I am respectfully asking you to have the decency to no longer post comments of this this type, people have died there and others will be suffering for the rest of their lives, if the columns are not to your liking don't read]

(14) *repetand la infinit acelasi lucru credeti ca rezolvati ceva... tara asta mai are si alte probleme. sa fim realisti* [by repeating infinitely the same thing do you think you can solve anything... this country has other problems as well. Let's be realistic]

The reactions to the post, most of which are targeting comment (4) rather than the content of the news spot, lexicalize a range of opposing emotions distributed between the two sociocultural segments, thus reinforcing the generational divide. The ones attributable to young adults are prevalently structured as linguistic strategies for pooling hostility against the uncompassionate comments (4), (8) and (14): candid surprise at the suggestion that the topic has lost its newsworthiness (9), feigned apology for one's continued grief (10), supplanted by determination to continue it (11), rejection of the unsympathetic comments by the *other* party (mature citizens), and hints that the physical distance between Bucharest - the city of the fire and, most possibly, of the authors of the posts reacting negatively to comments (4) and (8), and Suceava (city in NE Romania) - the location of the possible authors of the instigating comments, is tantamount to a gulf between the ethics and values of the spontaneously formed parties, (13) polite but firm request to abstain from reading and posting comments if one cannot relate. Permeating these comments is the deictic use of *us* versus *you* underlying the ideological divorce of Romanian youth from the mature citizens.

An interesting example is provided by a local radio station post on its own Facebook Page. Claiming a leadership role, as conveyed by the half rhetorical question, half civic engagement motto (15), the youth-directed niche radio is appropriating the grass-roots public protest (16). While fulfilling its main function of informing people, it is concomitantly inviting its averred 2 million Facebook followers to join the offline actions of protest, rekindling the negative reactions to the administrative

mismanagement of the *Colectiv* drama and the initially purely dogmatic attitude of the Romanian Orthodox Church towards the same.

(15) *Noi suntem colectiv! Tu?* [We are colectiv! You?]

(16) *Am ieșit în fiecare seară și nu ne oprim. Punem poze ca să vadă 2 milioane de oameni, câți ne urmăresc pe Facebook, ce se întâmplă în București. Poate până la urmă vor ieși toți.* [We are out in the street every night and we won't stop. We are posting photos for our 2 million Facebook followers to see what is happening in Bucharest. Perhaps eventually everybody will come out]

Often running parallel to the rallying discourse there are the instigating threads. The reactions to the possibly trolling comments reflect the subsidiary solidarities coalescing people around particular political leanings and ethical ideals, as well as providing further opportunities for the local station to reaffirm its ideological affinities. The generational divide is again hinted at in comment (18), where the author of a provoking post is addressed with the polite form of the second person pronoun: *dvs* [you]. The immediately following comment (19) does not, however, follow suit, displaying a blatant disrespect for someone (despite their seemingly mature age) who is apparently incapable of empathizing with the 'general' feeling and who is negatively stereotyped by the young Romanian people as a middle-aged person clinging on to the past communist times. Conversation asymmetry occurs, and later comments use increasingly stronger language, expletives and deriding comparisons hinting at the sub-human condition of the provocateur for desecrating the public upheaval, and accusations for choosing to criticize the protests in the streets from the safety of one's home (25). However, an invitation at solidarity and unity over what is conceded a *national* tragedy is ritually reinforced through the *toți pentru #colectiv* [all for #colectiv] slogan (25).

(17) *Acasa, ma uit la prostii aia care protesteaza pe strazi si opresc circulatia* [Home, watching the fools protesting in the street and blocking the traffic]

(18) *Ei macar fac cv pt tara asta! Nu ca Dvs* [At least they are doing something for this country! Not like you]

(19) *Dar de ce nu iesi sa le spui tu in fata ?* [Why don't you go out and say so to their face]

(20) *Big Like. bine spus* [Big Like. well said]

(21) *Cu mn vb?* [Are you talking to me]

(22) *(xxx) o să le mulțumești într-o bună zi* [one day you will thank them]

(23) *(xxx), esti dobitoc ?* [are you dumb?]

(24) *Presupun ca tu esti un nevertebrat [I suppose you are an invertebrate]*

(25) *cat mai vrei sa doarma Romania?? Pana ne vom autodistruge?? Daca nu esti in stare sa faci ceva pentru tara ta, macar taci din gura si nu ii critica pe cei care vor o schimbare!! Toti pentru #colectiv [how much longer do you want Romania to slumber?? Until we self-destroy?? If you are not capable of doing anything for your country, at least shut up and don't criticise those who want a change!! All for #colectiv]*

The ritualistic employment of #colectiv, and of its longer variant *Toti pentru #colectiv* [All for #colectiv] is emblematic of a sense of solidarity building up proportionally. It is paradigmatic of a constellation of attitudes, feelings and emotions referencing not just the tragic *Colectiv* fire but all the problematic issues underlying national governance, social perception of local ecclesiasticism and public expectations. Our scrutiny has identified the semantics and syntax of the posts to be substantiated by formulas of passing judgement, playing ironical, making allegations, challenging truth values (27), and expressing bias (26). Solidarity is achieved through an overarching tone favorable of the street movement. In contrast, however, we also noted a didactic nuance in regarding the young people as the gullible victims of some conspiracy, and their on- and off-line social performance as non-conducive to social capital bridging.

(26) *Nu vă mai folosiți de „colectiv”...ceea ce faceți acum o faceți pentru viitorul României...se pregătește o lovitură de stat pe „spatele” victimelor de la colectiv [Stop using colectiv to your own ends... what you are doing now is for the future of Romania ... a coup is being staged using the victims of colectiv.]*

(27) *...e limpede ca e un plan politic ,si ca de obicei tinerii si populatia romaniei sunt victime colaterale [... it is clearly a political plot and as usual the young people and the population of Romania are the collateral victims]*

Interestingly, across the 'conflict' talk interspersed with labeling of the presumed generational mentalities, partial consensus is reached over criticizing the top Romanian Orthodox clergy (29). Associating a luxury car with the head of the said church is a condemnation of the lifestyle seen by some as being paraded by the clergy and an attack on the initial (later amended) position of the church vis-à-vis the *Colectiv* incident. The initially misplaced dogmatic condemnation by the church of the subcultural subjectivity associated with the victims of the fire was regarded by many as a dated demonizing of youth focal activities. Later statements by varied church officials amended and disambiguated the univocal anachronism of the original position.

Generational solidarity is manifest in aggravating comments directed generically at the mature social segment. The mention of *Dacia* (28), the staple Romanian car, alludes to the self-defeating attitude adopted by some (now mature citizens) during the communist regime in exchange for minor compensations, and shows young people's disenchantment with such choice. The juxtaposition between the Romanian trademark vehicle and *Mercedes*, an iconic Western car (29), epitomizes the disillusionment with the rather utilitarian turn that marked the shift from totalitarianism to democracy, and the apparent mercantile orientation of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

(28) *Daca stati cuminti si obedienti, statul va da o Dacia la fiecare.* [If you stay quiet and obedient, the State will give you each a Dacia]

(29) *Jos Din Mercedes, Daniel, preanefericitul!* [step out of your Mercedes, Daniel, alunhappy]

The disparaging comments vis-à-vis the revolutionary momentum, the ironical promise of unrealistic rewards for renouncing the street protest, and the ridicule of the top clergy may be difficult to definitely attribute to either one or the other of the social categories we have targeted. Our age-differential presumption, however, is confirmed by post (30), which presages that the disillusion experienced by the people engaged some 25 years ago in the Romanian revolution will replace the young people's current enthusiasm. Refusal to re-experience the disappointment is given as an excuse for the majority of the mature citizens' anticipated absence from the street protests. However, compensation comes through expressions of well-wishing for the young generation to now succeed where the mature adults have failed before.

(30) *Bine zis ca nu mai avem nimic cu ce si cu cine vreti sa faceti a doua revolutie. V-ati gandit. Bine de unde ancepsti. Si unde o sa ajungeti eu am fost la un pas de moarte cand a cazut ceausescu. Am fost la fel ca voi manipulata si cu iluzii de o viata mai usoara si ce am castigat. Nimic. Acum urmati voi* [well said because we have nothing left what and whom with do you want to start a second revolution. Did you think. Well where do you start. And where will you arrive I was one step away from death when ceausescu fell. I was as manipulated as you are feeding on the illusion of a better life and what did I gain. Nothing. Now you are next...]

(31) *Oricum multi si au pierdut speranta dupa 25 de ani de hotie a clasei politice, si nu mai ies la proteste.* [Anyway many have lost all hope after 25 years of theft by politicians, and they no longer go out to protests]

The disappointment experienced by the one party, and anticipated for the other, points to social capital bridging, as the two different generational categories are joint by a predictably mutual emotion

separated by some 25 critical years from the Romanian change of regime of 1989.

Symbolic solidarity is also achieved through cross-referencing and trans-genre posting. A cover for one of the songs played by the band at *Colectiv* on the night of the tragedy was uploaded on Facebook and indexed with the following text and hashtags: “*The day we give in is the day we die.*” - *Goodbye to gravity #colectiv #suntemcolectiv*. The second hashtag (*#suntemcolectiv* [we are *colectiv*]) is an intertext to the viral logo *Je suis Charlie* created by French art director Joachim Roncin and adopted by supporters of freedom of speech and of the press after the earlier (January 7, 2015) shooting at the offices of *Charlie Hebdo*, the French satirical weekly.

4.2. Peer communication

Online groups generally nourish a strong sense of community and intersubjectivity. The in-group interactions reflect a self-perceived sense of a close-knit community where uniplexity (Milroy and Milroy) may be a defining trait. On Facebook, for instance, *friends* are in fact a list of digital connections, and groups can form around common interests, concerns, goals amongst people who are ‘strangers’ offline. In such groups the language of consensus and resolution is generally expected to be the norm. Such conflicts as might arise are usually defused by the group administrator or by etiquette.

We identified a Facebook group created with the singular intent of transferring civic engagement to offline militancy: the repetitive use of the inclusive *we* is a token of a burgeoning sense of solidarity. The elation of the moment is relayed by the motivational and inspirational lexis and rhetoric. A sense of urgency for acting out the newly found civic spirit is conveyed through a string of imperatives prompting offline political involvement.

(32) *Propun sa ne vedem deseara in piata universitatii (cati dintre noi putem ajunge si sa stam putin de vorba pe tema grupului* [I propose that we meet at the university square this evening (those of us who can come and talk a little bit about the topic of the group)]

(33) *iata, o noua revolutie de data asta suntem noi tinerii, care tre sa facem ceva, sa schimbam macar un guvern* [there, a new revolution this time it is us, the young people, who have to do something, to change one government at least]

(34) *Maine iesim cu totii pe strazi, si poimaine!* [Tomorrow we are all going out on the streets, the day after tomorrow as well]

(35) *Mergem la a doua revolutie.* [We are going to the second revolution]

(36) *Maine avem intalnire cu istoria.* [Tomorrow we have an appointment with history]

A discourse recycling revolutionary clichés is conventionalized within the group. Direct statements are made as to the social category of people meant to embrace offline militancy as well (33): [us, the young people]. Uplifting comments liken the current social momentum to the landmark year of 1989 (35). The then heroic atmosphere is reenacted through emulating invitations at street protest (34), (36), and a more liberal fashion of dismantling the local corrupt institutions. The topic, rhetoric, and semantics, all index a high degree of engagement, social identification and readiness to act offline as well.

5. Conclusions

The posts on SNSs referencing the *Colectiv* fire are varied yet correlated with the sociocultural profile of the two local demographics we have targeted: Romanian young adults and mature citizens. The correlation is fairly straightforward, with few cases where the religious and social themed comments could not be disambiguated in terms of their authors. The two highly polarized group statuses are built by some age-differentiated attitudinal discourse, underpinned by the parallel semantics of the fire episode and the recall of the 1989 anti-totalitarian revolution in Romania. Such topics as were foregrounded by the *Colectiv* drama circumstances: the need for a shift in mentalities and reformation of ecclesiastic positions and attitudes, are prioritized on the online agendas. National dramas often cause fermenting societal conflict to surface, but also function as the catalyst for social capital bridging, even if temporary, across apparent sociocultural fractures. This is effected through consensual discourse, other-inclusive invitations at action, revolutionary-boosting slogans, and innovative or reclaimed (intertextual) clichés. Paradoxically, as in this case, the online attempts at solidarity index a segregated set of perceptions over societal issues. In our case, the opposing mindsets and attitudinal dichotomy are evidenced by the reactive digi-comments vis-à-vis the mediated statements of the political and ecclesiastic officialdoms.

The offline export of the solidarity discourse and of the preference for some event-related topics over others (e.g. professionalization of governance and church emancipation) is made possible by the New Media affordances and convergence, and the heightened social dynamics and performativity afforded by the Social Media. The proof lies in the fact that several of the religious and political related slogans circulated online were translated onto the street protest placards, testifying to their virtual and 'real world' pertinence. As scholars, we can only wish to further scrutinize

the issue 'in reverse', as many of the participants in the street protests across Romania in the aftermath of *Colectiv* contributed Net live-streaming thereof.

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