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INTRODUCTION

Women, Power, Discourses

Daniela Roventă-Frumușani¹

From the end of the past millennium, two profound revolutions began: the gender revolution (Froideveaux-Metterie 2015; Macé 2015) and the digital revolution (Jenkins 2004; Proulx, et al, 2014; Cardon 2010) in the context of the globalized world. The first revolution implies not only an anthropological rupture signaled by a certain tendency towards the feminization of the world and the “convergence of genres” (Froideveaux-Metterie 2015, 364), but also a “contemporary tension between a principle of authentic equality shared and the collective fabric of inequalities” (Macé 2015, 8). It is from the supremacy of the male model that we will discuss the visibility of women politicians who, like women in general, experienced a long-lasting symbolic annihilation (Tuchman 1978).

The second revolution in the network society (Castells 1996) is characterized by the democratization of Internet access, the massive appropriation of new communication technologies, the appearance of new actors in the public space in search of immediate visibility. The use by political actors and parties of information and communication technologies and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) encourages researchers to question the new discourses and practices of political communication. This progressive appropriation leads to paradigmatic changes, new research, and the renewal of the salient issues. Studies show in particular that social media have become powerful vectors of social and political mobilization.

However, the arrival of Corona (Covid-19) changed everything: two years of a global pandemic that locked down many countries and has killed more than one million people. As the United Nations and many other international organizations have highlighted, “the pandemic both illuminates and amplifies all existing inequalities – including gender inequalities. In many societies, we have seen an escalation of gender-based violence during the lockdown, as for some women and children the home is not a safe place. The pandemic has also led to financial insecurity striking many workers, especially in service work and in the informal sector” (Djerf-Pierre and Edström 2020).

Identity and communication are essential for the constitution and consolidation of individuals, groups and organizations. In the second half of the twentieth century, identity becomes the unifying theme of the social sciences (Jenkins 2004), because psychologists and sociologists, philosophers and political scientists have their say in the matter. The complexity and breadth of the term “identity” refers to the manner in which individuals and communities differ in their social relationships from other people or within communities (Jenkins 2004, 4).

Given technological and social changes, professional and geographic mobility, the reconceptualization of identity (with a specific emphasis on cultural, ethnic, gender identity) has become an essential issue. If, in the past, religious, national or class identity played the role of a structuring pole, we can affirm that today we are witnessing restructuring around the poles of gender, profession, culture (Roventă-Frumușani 2009, 48).

The presentation and staging (performance) of particular identities is seen less as an expression of the “me”, but rather as “a construction that takes into account both the objectives

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of interactional practices and the constraints of the institutional structures” at stake when people communicate with each other (De Fina, Schiffrin, and Bamberg, 2006: 9).

Given that gender has become one of the first “languages of politics” (Coulomb-Gully 2016), it seems crucial to analyze the presence, roles, responsibilities, as well as the representations of women in society and in the media discourse, their ethos (textual and iconic on legacy and social media), as well as the dynamics of the gender divide.

The second pillar in media and communication studies is represented by the deep mediatization of contemporary societies. Theoretical and empirical research in the field of the media and communication highlight the unprecedented extension of the influence of the media in all spheres of society, having as consequence the “mediatization” of society (Couldry and Hepp 2013; Deacon and Stanyer 2014; Hjarvard 2008; Krotz 2009). From technical means, media have become an integral part of our daily life in a *media oversaturated society*: “In our present media-saturated society, media are inside society, part of the very fabric of culture; they have become ‘the cultural air we breathe’” (Hepp, Hjarvard, and Lundby, 2010, 223).

Mediatization is conceived as a paradigmatic ontological and epistemological turning point, as a metaprocess (Tudor and Bratosin 2021, 15) that highlights the interdependence between media change and societal and cultural change (Hjarvard 2013; Deacon and Stanyer 2014; Krotz 2009). According to Hjarvard, *mediatization* is understood as “the process by which culture and society become increasingly dependent on the media and its logic” (2008, 107).

Current debates on mediatization and their contributions to the study of contemporary society and culture underline the importance of mediatization as a transformative force (Livingstone 2009). In this new perspective, we propose to analyze the history of the relationship between gender identity-mediatization and journalism practices as a long way from symbolic annihilation and underrepresentation to new forms of feminine visibility as evoked by 25 years of monitoring through the longest global longitudinal project GMMP

The use by elected officials, political leaders and parties of information and communication technologies and social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, etc.) encourages researchers to question the discourse and strategies of political communication. This progressive appropriation marks new research and the renewal of relevant issues (Dolbeau-Bandin and Donzelle 2018). Studies show in particular that social media have become powerful vectors of social and political mobilization.

For a long time, political science has addressed the question of gender (Coulomb-Gully and Rennes 2010; Coulomb-Gully 2016, Ross 2017). While studies on women politicians and their communication follow one another, the relationship between politicians and mediatization is not extensively investigated. We wish to contribute to the field of media and gender studies research represented by Ross 2010, Ross 2020, Ross & Padovani 2017, Ross et al.2020) by proposing, in this issue, to address the following question: What is the specific use made of information and communication technologies, as well as discourse strategies by women politicians, journalists, academics, and teachers? We address this issue by bringing together quantitative and qualitative research.

This thematic issue project aims to reflect, on the one hand, on the representation of women “with their supposed qualities and [...] their roles which then remain so many stigmas” (Dulong and Matonti 2005, 2), “with their handicaps, their fears, their difficulties in establishing themselves in a world widely perceived as masculine” (Bonnafous 2002, 119) and, on the other hand, on their vulnerability concerning their strategies, their image, their reputation, their speeches, whether or not this vulnerability is the result of slippages or resistant stereotypes. It is a question of crossing women politicians’ identity with the presence and use of strategic media and political discourses in public space and digital public space. This dossier aims to provide an overview of the participation, place, practices and vulnerability of women

politicians, journalists, professionals in the digital age and in the pandemic context. From the perspective of information and communication sciences, and more specifically of political and media communication, it is a question here of measuring and evaluating the changes introduced by new media and new contexts (pandemics) in our lives and practices.

The three gender-based concerns – representation, identity, and agency (Ross 2010) –, which become more and more prominent, will constitute the pillars of our understanding and proposed challenges. Thus, the final aim of the volume is to explore some of the ways in which we take control of media and of our life, through our production activities and especially our involvement in new information and communication technologies, emblem of the network society.

Daniela Roventă-Frumușani and Theodora-Eliza Văcărescu, authors of the article “One Step Forward, One Step Back. Women in the Media: GMMP, 1995–2020” propose twenty-five years of media history, more precisely the long and windy way to women’s (in)equality in media world through the most ambitious, generous and long-lasting global monitoring project. In the present-day context of increased mediatization or deep mediatization, augmented by paradigmatic socio-economic and cultural changes (digitization, globalization, delegitimizing of power sources), the authors aim to retrace the history of the GMMP – Global Media Monitoring Project, one of the most relevant longitudinal analysis that reunites the teaching and research perspectives with the activist approach of NGOs on all continents and which fights for women’s emancipation and the elimination of gender inequalities and violence.

The history of this global initiative and the development of the analysis with respect to good practices, public awareness, has been the witness of slow changes in the real world as well as in the media world (Ross et al. 2020) incorporated also in the academic curricula. GMMP started with the mandate from the conference *Women Empowering Communication*, which aimed to “organize one day at the start of 1995 for the monitoring of all media and use the data as the basis for an analysis of where women [were]” (Bangkok Declaration, 1994). The Bangkok conference was the successful outcome of efforts by women’s and feminist organizations and by WACC – World Association for Christian Communication, that “proposed a global women’s conference to reassess the communication developments and strategies of the last decade and plan new lines of action for the future.”

The results of the first GMMP were published in the report *Global Media Monitoring: Women’s Participation in the News* (MediaWatch, 1995), launched at the NGO Forum in Beijing, in September 1995, at the United Nations’ Fourth International Conference on Women. Not only that the media became a recognized critical field of interest for the final document BPfA (Beijing Platform for Action), but gender media monitoring became an immediate and urgent task of governments, NGOs, professional media organizations, and universities.

Since 1995, every five years, women’s presence in global news media continued to be monitored and explored from both a quantitative perspective (in all media: print, radio, TV, websites, social media), and from a qualitative perspective, with the more recent introduction of new categories of stereotypes, correlations and indicators. It was and it is essential to highlight the slow (r)evolution of women’s presence and centrality in the news, as well as in media organizations. It is worth noting that the authors took part in all five monitoring endeavors undertaken so far and were interested in studying women’s and gender representation in Romania, in Eastern and Western Europe, as well as in postcolonial settings. The latest monitoring took place in September 2020, when a large portion of global news coverage were dominated by COVID-19; however, GMMP data shows that women’s voices are still largely absent from all media, on almost all topics in virtually all countries in the world.

Simona Rodat’s and Silvia Branea’s „Multimodality, Identities and Gender (In)equality in the context of the 2019 European Parliament Elections” aims to analyze the gender

dimension in the European Parliament elections in May 2019, based on the extensive research carried out at the level of the entire European Union (Platform Europe 2019). The main objective of the article was to identify the extent to which there are gender differences in the multimodal content included in the documents and items used during the election campaign for the 2019 European Parliament in all EU countries at the time. Beside identifying the types of items in the campaign and the gender of politicians, the analysis was focused on similarities and differences by gender dimension in terms of the main message of the content conveyed, the emotion used by the documents as leverage, the rationality called for by the documents, as well as some nonverbal codes, such as the main expression and the outfit of politicians. According to these indicators much less analyzed: dress-code, emotional nonverbal signs analysis, we are witnessing a new phase of 'hybridization', that is, in terms of messages transmitted and attitudes adopted, a two-way process has been identified: not only do female politicians adopt attitudes and behaviors regarded as masculine, but also male politicians take on attributes considered feminine, such as displaying emotionality.

During the campaign for the 2019 European Parliamentary elections, 9,751 documents – such as print (posters and press advertising), political commercials and social content – were analyzed in all 28 countries of the European Union at that time. Most of the items analyzed were web cards, videos, photos, and posters. The analysis highlighted some significant findings: first, the main content of the message conveyed (verbal and/or nonverbal) was emotional or neutral and, in the third place, rational, regardless of the gender of the politician. A second finding concerns the messages of the contents of the items in which only women politicians appeared: these messages were more often rational than those in which only men politicians appeared; on the contrary, men showed more emotional signs and messages than women, marking again that the repertoire of legitimacy is wider for men than for women, constrained to adopt, in a masculine world, men's discourses and attitudes.

Valentina Marinescu and Anda Anca Rodideal, in the article "Emergent Issues of Online Teaching: The Perspective of Romanian Women Teachers," discuss the issues associated with online teaching as they were seen by Romanian women teachers. Using a qualitative methodology based on online focus groups and interviews, this research offers a brief overview about the main difficulties of the sudden move to online learning, as a response to Covid-19 pandemic situation. Based on a rich international literature, it concludes that, in Romania, women teachers face similar issues as their colleagues around the world, such as the existence of inequalities between urban and rural areas, and the teachers' need to redefine educational methods. Other problematic areas related to the online education were the new models of teacher-pupil interactions and the use of specific channels for interaction during classroom, on the one hand, and, on the other, the level of pupils confidence and motivation during the courses. The COVID-19 pandemic has also increased the burden associated with domestic work and childcare for women, creating a gender gap in job satisfaction, work involvement, and work efficiency. Recent research show that the gender gap amplified by the Covid-19 pandemic is likely to persist for a very long time.

Based on online interviews and focus groups (due to telework and mobility restrictions), the data collected have indicated that teachers stressed the existence of a number of impediments in the conduct of online teaching hours, among which the most important were: lack of direct communication (65%); special support for students with special needs (63.80%); monitoring the learning process (51.70%); immediate feedback from teachers (45.30%); explanation of concepts, relationships and phenomena (45.10%); individual counseling (36.30%). International reports (as well as national and regional) showed how the pandemic has affected women's life as well as work in education, where all over the world women represent a significant majority. As the existing literature pointed out, teachers – most of whom are women – have had to switch to online teaching overnight, which has significantly increased

their workload, especially for those who are less accustomed to teaching with digital tools. The article concludes with the necessity of a more refined approach to the study of women teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, which could offer solutions both for the improvement of their daily lives, for a balance between personal and professional life and for the future advancements in the educational system.

Lavinia Enache, author of “Ecotourism, Feminine Entrepreneurship, Local Development”, discusses the relationships between a new form of entrepreneurship (the feminine one), a new tourism (ecotourism), and sustainable development. Despite the growing number of studies on tourism and women’s empowerment, important gaps remain in the political and socio-economic conditions of countries where tourism is a strategy for economic development, but where the status of women in politics and policymaking is marginalized. In addition, little research attention has been paid to gender implications in tourism career choices and the relationship to women’s empowerment, with the existing literature largely gender-neutral. Recent studies also reflect the under-researched role of gender in the global economy (Seyfi et al., 2020) in the case of tourism studies. Although the area of gender is recognized as “a critical arena action to achieve sustainable development” (Boluk et al. 2019, 852) there are still many under-explored avenues. Tourism can function as an instrument of economic empowerment by opening new markets for small and medium enterprises. In its report, which aims at empowering women through tourism (Ateljevic 2008), the researchers demonstrate the fact that tourism can be used as a sector where women from all classes can be trained and educated to acquire skills in tourism industry. They can engage in different forms of creative entrepreneurship that give them a whole range of skills, and, most importantly, more power and control over what happens to them and their community.

The present research proposes to focus on female entrepreneurship, tourism, and local development. The main objective of the research is to collect success stories on the empowerment of women through creative entrepreneurship in the field of tourism in Romania, in order to show the link between tourism and the socio-economic development of women. Empowerment is a multidimensional social process intended to help individuals take control of the factors that affect their lives. The concepts of empowerment in general and the empowerment of women in particular lie at the heart of understanding sustainability. The interviews with ten women entrepreneurs from different regions of Romania highlighted important themes, such as socio-professional trajectory; work environment; entrepreneurial motivation; assigned or assumed gender roles; impact of small businesses on local communities; personal and professional life balance; gender discrimination; effects of the pandemic on business; networking. The paper argues that the concept of empowerment of women lies at the heart of understanding and achieving sustainability.

At the end of the volume Ana Maria Munteanu signs the book review of Content Creation and Mobility in the network society, authored by Valentin Vanghelescu. The book *Crearea și mobilitatea conținutului în societatea-rețea. Convergență Coliziune Transformare / Content Creation and Mobility in the Network Society. Convergence, Collision, Transformation* is the doctoral thesis of Valentin Vanghelescu, at the University of Bucharest - Doctoral School of Sociology. The research took place in a period of change resulting from the technological leap from web 2.0 to web 3.0, against a background of reframing sustainability in a new global context of interconnected risks, of democracy crisis, and of multiplication of the structural effects of social and epistemic inequity.

The orientation towards efficiency models of institutional communication including norms, values, expectations of social justice, ethical codes led the author to a case study devoted to the development of a collaborative platform and a network of active users, development based on the distribution of knowledge controlled by civic objectives. Observation and rigorous analysis have enabled the recording of the mobility and transformation of cultural and social

capital into communication capacities, organization, and civic action - the Edgeryders platform, „Spot the Future Bucharest” group.

The research succeeded in identifying a type of platform whose design reflects the challenge of training citizens (actors) capable of understanding the reform of institutions and of participating in it through the intermediary of the platform. This participation in political and civic projects is essential in the new public sphere (cf. Castells 1996, 2008 inter alii) since system or technical capacities are necessary but not sufficient conditions for generating participatory behavior.

The creation and mobility of content taken together model understanding and form active members of networks and communities for the knowledge society and economy; this approach allows the construction of connections between shared meaning and shared knowledge or tacit knowledge.

The network society is coherently and pertinently approached in this book from the perspective of reflexive sociology and the concern for the sustainability of institutions to consolidate the social tissue through public education projects, transparency of power structures, and cognitive investment in the citizen.

Content Creation and Mobility in the Network Society represent an important step for understanding the complementarities between networks, collaborative culture, and institutions / organizations by working to recover the complexity of the social in the digital culture.

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ONE STEP FORWARD, ONE STEP BACK. WOMEN IN THE MEDIA: GMMP, 1995-2020

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Abstract: *In this article, we retrace the history of GMMP – Global Media Monitoring Project, one of the longest lasting longitudinal analyses that reunites the teaching and research perspectives with the activist approach of NGOs on all continents and which fights for women's emancipation and the elimination of gender inequalities and violence. GMMP started with the mandate from the conference Women Empowering Communication, which aimed to “organize one day at the start of 1995 for the monitoring of all media and use data as the basis for an analysis of where women [were]” (Bangkok Declaration, 1994). The results of the first GMMP were published in the report Global Media Monitoring: Women's Participation in the News (MediaWatch, 1995), launched at the NGO Forum in Beijing in September 1995, at the United Nations' Fourth International Conference on Women. Not only that the media became a recognized critical field of interest for the final document BPfA (Beijing Platform for Action), but gender media monitoring became an immediate and urgent task of governments, NGOs, professional media organizations, and universities. Since 1995, every five years, women's presence in global news media continued to be monitored and explored from both a quantitative perspective (in all media: print, radio, TV, websites, social media), and from a qualitative perspective, with the more recent introduction of new categories of stereotypes, correlations, and indicators.*

Keywords: *Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP); women in the media; gender representation; violence against women; underrepresentation of women; marginalization; objectification of women; real world vs. media world; stereotyping.*

Introduction

Since the last decades of the 20th century, when the first studies of the relationship between gender and news were published, the underrepresentation of women as both news subjects and news producers has been regularly noted (Tuchman et al. 1978; Van Zoonen 1998; Chambers et al. 2004). Although more women than men graduate from media and journalism education programs and women enter media professions at virtually the same rate as men, they do not reach the same hierarchical positions as men, and they leave the industry earlier (Robinson 2005; North 2009; Ross 2016). This means that the news is mostly constructed and produced by men and is mostly about men and men's actions: where women do act in the news agenda is in their roles as wives, mothers, and victims, and only occasionally as politicians and professionals.

The Global Media Monitoring Project (GMMP), on which this paper draws, is an international investigation of news media that monitors how women and men are present as subjects, sources, and authors of the news around the world. Since the first report published in

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1995, GMMP became the broadest and lengthiest running longitudinal gender-oriented media analysis that has been producing a one-day snapshot study every five years.

The results of the first GMMP were published in the report *Global Media Monitoring Project: Women's Participation in the News* (MediaWatch, 1995), launched at the NGO Forum in Beijing, in September 1995, as part of the Fourth United Nations World Conference on Women, where 192 nations committed themselves to the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (BPfA, 1995). The Platform recognized “women and the media” as one of the twelve critical areas of concern, stating two strategic objectives:

- J.1: Increase the participation and access of women to expression and decision-making in and through the media and new technologies of communication;
- J.2: Promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media.

The Canadian NGO MediaWatch coordinated the first three iterations of the project (1995, 2000, 2005) and the World Association for Christian Communication (WACC) coordinated the three more recent ones (2010, 2015, and 2020). The original aims of the GMMP were the following: to map the portrayal of women in the world's news media; to develop an adequate gender in media research instrument; to build solidarity and to create media awareness; and to develop media monitoring skills on an international level. GMMP elaborated maps of women's news visibility at a global level in order to identify trends of representation and mediatization across time and space.

The similarities of findings across the twenty-five years of the GMMP's existence suggest that what we see, hear, and read in the news is not the result of editorial decision-making, but something altogether more structural and systemic, which transcends nation and time (Ross et al. 2016). Relating to news production, there is a long history of scholarship which identifies the ways in which newsrooms and journalists' socialization within them are deeply gendered (North 2016; Ross and Carter 2011). In the UK, women now make up the majority of journalism students, but senior roles and positions remain largely occupied by men, the pay gap in the profession is still wide, and there remains a gendered segregation in the types of news which women are employed to produce (Franks 2013). Only some of the Nordic and East European countries employ more women than men overall (Byerly 2013, 12), but what does remain consistent is the manifestation of “male superiority,” even in situations where women have been promoted into decision-making roles (Byerly 2013, 18).

GMMP's history in figures

The history of GMMP was constantly linked to numerous global summits and documents, such as the *The Beijing Platform for Action*, *17 Goals for People, for Planet*. *The Sustainable Development Goals*, as global calls to action to end poverty, to protect the planet and to improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 17 goals were adopted by all United Nations Member States in 2015, as part of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, which set out a fifteen-year plan to achieve the goals.

Figure 1. 17 Goals for People, for Planet



For instance, the last monitoring project – the sixth GMMP, which took place on the 29th of September 2020 – coincided with the twenty-fifth anniversary of the 4th World Conference on Women and the adoption of the *Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action* (1995), and also with the fifth year of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.

For the first report, which was released in 1995, 71 countries examined radio, TV, and print news on the same day: 50,000 pieces of news in total, but only 17% of all news subjects were women and no debates about the equal representation of women and men in the world news took place. Five years later, in 2000, 70 countries and thousands of volunteers from NGOs, the academia and media organizations participated at the global monitoring project which showed only 1% increase of women's presence in the news: 18% of news about women were recorded.

In 2005, 76 countries collected 12,893 news with 25,671 subjects. A very small progress was recorded: 21% women *in the news*, but only 10% of the *news focused specifically on women*. The third GMMP also showed an interesting correlation between journalists' gender and women's presence in the news: 25% of the news written by women journalists had women as subjects, compared to 20% of news stories written by men.

From the first to the fourth monitoring, the information world is a *male world*. This world continues to use gender stereotypes instead of challenging them. There are twice as many news that reinforce gender stereotypes as those that challenge them. News on gender equality/inequality is practically non-existent. The important areas (politics, governance, finance) are men's game; even in news reporting on violence against women, 64% are male voices.

In 2010, 108 countries participated at the global project, 1,365 media outlets were coded with 17,795 news and 38,253 people in news. This edition covered 55% of the countries in the world and 82% of the world population, including most of Africa, Asia, Caribbean, Europe, Latin America, Middle East, North America, and the Pacific.

The figures provided by this report are more encouraging: more news subjects are women – 24%, but only 13% of the news focus on women and 6% challenge gender stereotypes. Women are frequently presented as victims: 18% women compared to 8% men. However, women report less gender stereotyped news: 25% women vs. 42% men. Furthermore, women in politics are better represented 19% in 2010 vs. 7% in 1995. Women journalists reached 37% in 2010, whereas fifteen years earlier they represented only 28%. In addition, they present and interview more female characters than their male counterparts (28% compared to 22%).

The GMMP global coordinator, Sarah Macharia, stressed that the 2015 report found a sexism in the media that has endured across decades and geographical boundaries, adapting to and thriving in emerging media forms. Hence, GMMP 2015 showed a decade of stagnation (GMMP 2015): the presence of women in news remains the same, i.e., 24%, even if this report

included 114 countries. Thus, 2,030 media outlets were monitored, comprising 22,136 stories reported by 26,010 journalists and concerning 45,402 news subjects.

The overall proportion of stories focusing on women has held relatively steady at 10% since 2000. But it is worth mentioning that 14% of stories by female reporters focus centrally on women, in contrast to 9% of stories by their male counterparts. Only 4% of stories clearly challenge gender stereotypes, amounting to only 1% increase since 2005.

The report notes some improvements over the previous twenty years: 24% of people who feature in the news are women, which represents an increase of 7% since 1995, although this percentage was the same in 2010. As in previous studies, the biggest gender gap is in political news reporting, where only 16% of people who feature are women, a decrease by 3% compared to 2010. The smallest gaps are in the areas of science and health, where 35% of those who feature are women, although this is also the smallest category of news, occupying barely 8% of the total news agenda. Women are thus doubly marginalized, both in terms of quantity/presence in the news and in terms of the quality/segregation in news category, featuring more frequently in stories which are seen as less important or prestigious in news value (Gans 1979).

In 2015, women presenters (in radio and television) are more numerous than women reporters in all three media. There are more women TV presenters than men, but this can also be seen as a result of the bias that associates women with body image and young age, and men with expertise. Along these lines, presenters are often referred to as “talking heads,” emphasizing the low regard towards this position in newsrooms. A positive change can be noticed with respect to women reporters in print media, where the increase is almost 10% from 1995 to 2015. Yet, the overall progress in the number of women reporters is only 6% from 1995 to 2015.

The fifth GMMP included online news as well. The staggering result was that women’s relative invisibility in traditional news media has crossed over into digital media and there is a global glass ceiling for women journalists, with 37% of stories reported by women, the same as a decade before.

Methodological aspects

For the last three editions, the GMMP has been using a double methodology – a quantitative analysis completed by a qualitative one. The teams of volunteers received a set of coding sheets for each type of medium sampled (television, radio, newspapers, online news sites and Twitter), together with a code book. Each country was given a media density score on the basis of which national teams were asked to collect data from a specified number of each type of media, with a preference for media which had the largest reach and audience share. The density score was determined by the number of media outlets, the reach and the population in each participating country. The inclusion of online news sites and Twitter feeds was at the discretion of national teams.

In addition to the collection of quantitative data, national teams were also asked to undertake some qualitative analyses. In this respect, the gender and media (GEM) classification system developed by Gender Links for the Southern African Gender and Media Baseline Study was suggested as a useful framework which categorized stories as: blatant stereotyping, subtle stereotyping, missed opportunity, and gender aware. Although such categories are subjective and porous, the monitors identified and analyzed newspaper, television, radio and online stories for qualitative analyses, paradigmatic examples aiming to complete and illustrate the quantitative analysis.

There is always a risk with a methodology using a single news day, because even if the choice has been made to eliminate religious and secular holidays and other global anniversaries

or commemorations, unforeseen reasons can turn that particular day into an atypical one at the local or even regional and global level. For instance, on the GMMP monitoring day in 2015, the Germanwings Airbus 320 plane crash accounted for a high percentage of all news stories coded.

In Romania, September 29, 2020 was the day when the results from the local elections came out, so most of the news casts included information about local candidates. Although there are some variations in terms of topic across the five media we monitored, there is also a large degree of consistency, suggesting that there is a shared understanding of what counts as news and how it is presented.

Quantitative analysis: global results GMMP 2020

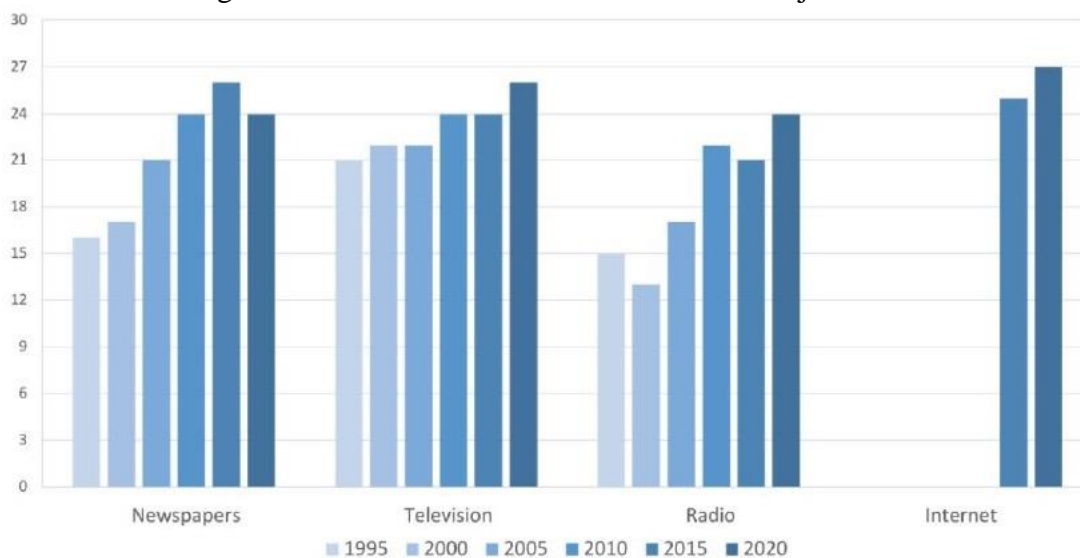
The results presented and discussed in this paper are grounded on the GMMP 2020 report, which emphasizes that the relationship between women (subjects of news and authors of news) and media continues to be complex and complicated, sometimes showing advances and sometimes a retrenchment due to a multitude of factors (organizational, contextual, political): male leadership, male newsroom culture, gendered sources, journalists’ biased relationship with the sources etc. (Ross, Boyle, Carter, and Ging 2016, 16).

In 2020, the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic coincided with the usual GMMP monitoring period, therefore the monitoring day was postponed to the end of September, instead of February or March, as in previous editions. Slightly more countries were included in the report, resulting in more media outlets and more news stories monitored: over 30,000 news stories (an increase by 25%), 2,251 media outlets, and 35,600 journalists (20% increase).

One of the major conclusions of the report was that if the rate of change stays the same, it will take at least a further 67 years to close the average gender equality gap in traditional news media. However, full gender equality at the quantitative level – the coordinators contend – is not enough without an improvement in the quality of journalism from a gender perspective (GMMP 2020).

GMMP 2020 revealed that women were only 27% of health specialists appearing in coronavirus news, far fewer than the 46% world average, given in labor force global statistics.

Figure 2. 1995–2020: % of women as news subjects and sources



Source: GMMP 2020

Figure 2 presents the progress (or regress, in a few instances) of women subjects and sources over a twenty-five-year period. Is there an increase in women’s presence in the news during the quarter of a century of media monitoring and after Beijing 1995? Globally, less than one in three subjects is a woman – under 27% in all news on all channels. However, there is a general increase, albeit not steady, nor continuous: for instance, in 2020, women subjects in newspapers are less present than in 2015; furthermore, in radio news there were setbacks in 2000 and 2015.

Figure 3. 1995–2020: % women and men by medium and major topic

	1995		2000		2005		2010		2015		2020		%Change		ΔYRs
	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	
A. People in the news															
by Medium															
Newspaper, Television, Radio (NRT)															
Newspapers	16	84	17	83	21	79	24	76	26	74	26	74	+10		Δ25 yrs
Television	21	79	22	78	22	78	24	76	24	76	26	74	+5		
Radio	15	85	13	87	17	83	22	78	21	79	23	77	+8		
News websites and news media tweets															
News websites							23 (pilot)	77 (pilot)	26	74	27	73	+1		Δ5 yrs
News tweets									25	75	28	72	+3		
By Major topic. NRT															
Science & Health	27	73	21	79	22	78	32	68	35	65	30	70	+3		Δ25 yrs
Social & Legal	19	81	21	79	28	72	30	70	28	72	32	68	+13		
Crime & Violence	21	79	18	82	22	78	24	76	28	72	24	76	+3		
Celebrity, Arts & Sport	24	76	23	77	28	72	26	74	23	77	25	75	+1		
Economy	10	90	18	82	20	80	20	80	21	79	24	76	+14		
Politics & Government	7	93	12	88	14	86	19	81	16	84	20	80	+13		

Source: GMMP 2020

On an optimist note, rather than seeking a “revolution” in the results – the GMMP coordinators argue –, we should highlight the significance of incremental change. For the first time since 2010, there appears to be a slight upward movement in the proportion of women as sources and subjects in the news, notably in broadcast media (GMMP 2020).

As shown in Figure 3, there is an overwhelming majority of science and/or health news related to Covid-19. Along with this topic’s increase of news space (more than doubling since 2015), men’s visibility in this set of stories rose as well. Thus, there is a general setback in women’s presence in the news, as can be observed from the category politics and government in 2020 compared to 2015.

Figure 4. 1995–2020: % women and men by function and occupation

	1995		2000		2005		2010		2015		2020		%Change		ΔYRs
	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	%F	%M	
by Function in Story. NRT															
Personal Experience					31	69	36	64	38	62	42	58	+11		Δ15 yrs
Popular Opinion					34	66	44	56	37	63	38	62	+4		
Eye Witness					30	70	29	71	30	70	30	70	0		
Subject					23	77	23	77	26	74	24	76	+1		
Spokesperson					14	86	19	81	20	80	22	78	+8		
Expert					17	83	20	80	19	81	24	76	+7		
by Occupation. NRT															
Homemaker, parent (no other occupation is given)			81	19	75	25	72	28	67	33	68	32	(-7)		Δ15 yrs
Health worker, social worker, childcare worker			n/a		n/a		n/a		47	53	47	53			
Office or service worker, non-management worker			35	65	40	60	45	55	35	65	42	58	+2		
Unemployed no other occupation given			33	67	19	81	35	65	34	66	42	58	+23		
Activist or worker in civil society org., NGO, trade union			24	76	23	77	34	66	33	67	35	65	+12		
Doctor, dentist, health specialist			n/a		n/a		n/a		30	70	29	71			
Academic expert, lecturer, teacher			n/a		n/a		n/a		23	77	29	71			
Lawyer, judge, magistrate, legal advocate, etc.			n/a		18	82	17	83	22	78	25	75	+7		
Media professional, journalist, film-maker, etc.			n/a		36	64	29	71	21	79	29	71	(-7)		
Tradesperson, artisan, labourer, truck driver, etc.			15	85	23	77	22	78	21	79	21	79	(-2)		
Government employee, public servant, etc.			12	88	17	83	17	83	20	80	22	78	+5		
Government, politician, minister, spokesperson...			10	90	12	88	17	83	18	82	18	82	+6		
Business person, exec, manager, stock broker...					12	88	14	86	16	84	20	80	+8		
Agriculture, mining, fishing, forestry			15	85	13	87	13	87	14	86	24	76	+11		
Science/ technology professional, engineer, etc.			12	88	10	90	10	90	10	90	20	80	+10		
Police, military, para-military, militia, fire officer			4	96	5	95	7	93	8	92	12	88	+7		
Sportsperson, athlete, player, coach, referee			9	91	16	84	11	89	7	93	14	86	(-2)		

Source: GMMP 2020

Worldwide, women’s functions in the news are overwhelmingly situated in the “private space,” as personal experience providers and popular opinion givers, with an unfortunate definite and steady increase (by 11%) since 2005. Almost three in four experts and spokespersons are still men, although there is a minor increase in women’s expertise in the media (see Figure 4). Women are almost seven in ten news subjects and sources portrayed as homemakers, similar to the 2015, and their unemployment rate (as reflected in the news, not in life) has increased by about 8 points in the past five to twenty years. As shown in Figure 4, another worrisome result is that the proportion of women as media professionals and journalists is also lower by 7 points.

Figure 5. 1995-2020: % women and men reporting and presenting the news

B. Reporting and Presenting the News														
% Stories presented	51	49	49	51	53	47	49	51	49	51	51	49	+2	Δ20 yrs
Television			56	44	57	43	52	48	57	43	55	45	(-1)	
Radio			41	59	49	51	45	55	41	59	46	54	+5	
% Stories reported	28	72	31	69	37	63	37	63	37	63	40	60	+9	
Television			36	64	42	58	44	56	38	62	45	55	+9	
Radio			28	72	45	55	37	63	41	59	37	63	+9	
Newspapers			26	74	29	71	35	67	35	65	37	63	+11	
% Stories reported in digital news											42	58		
News websites											42	58		
News media Twitter feeds											43	57		
% Stories Reported By Major Topic. NRT														Δ20 yrs
Celebrity, Arts & Sport			27	73	35	65	38	62	33	67	40	60	+13	
Social & Legal			39	61	40	60	43	57	39	61	44	56	+5	
Crime & Violence			29	71	33	67	35	65	33	67	33	67	+4	
Science & Health			46	54	38	62	44	56	50	50	49	51	+3	
Economy			35	65	43	57	40	60	39	61	41	59	+6	
Politics & Government			26	74	32	68	33	67	31	69	35	65	+9	
% Female news subjects and sources, by sex of reporter. NRT			24	18	25	20	28	22	29	26	31	24	+7	

Source: GMMP 2020

An example of positive development revealed by the GMMP 2020 is that more women report the news and presenters are almost equally women and men.

Following stagnation between 2005 and 2015, women’s visibility as reporters has increased by 3 points across print and broadcast news. Currently, four out of ten stories in traditional news media are reported by women, compared to 37% in 2005. In the past two decades, women’s newspaper byline credits have increased by 11 points, their visibility in newscasts has increased by 9%, while in online news, 42% of journalists named in articles, seen, or heard in videos are women. A comparison between print and digital newspapers reveals that stories by women reporters are distributed virtually evenly across the major topics online and offline, while those by men are skewed towards the category of politics and government.

Another important conclusion of the report is that the sex of the reporter matters for the gender dimensions of the story. GMMP findings across time indicate that women reporters are more likely than men to turn to women subjects and sources. In 2015, the results suggested that the gender source selection gap was narrowing; in 2020, the gap has more than doubled to reach 7 points. Currently, 31% of the people in traditional news covered by women reporters are female, in contrast to 24% of subjects and sources in stories by men reporters.

Even if gender should refer to both women and men, in journalism and in the media generally, women have been regarded as the intruder, the exception, the problem. “Without this being explicitly theorized, the most typical axes for such gender differences are topics, story angles, sources, as well as professional orientation and ethics. That is, men report hard news, focus on facts, and require detached ‘objective’ journalism. In contrast, it is alleged, women focus on features and news about or important to women, highlight backgrounds and consequences, privilege audience needs, and approach ethical dilemmas contextually. Women publishers and especially editors are said to cultivate more family-friendly newsroom cultures, hire more women, and be less rule-bound” (Steiner 2012, 202).

Figure 6. Women subjects and sources in print, radio and television news, by major topic, by region

	Africa	Asia	Caribbean	Europe	Latin America	Middle East	North America	Pacific	OVERALL
Politics and Government	18%	15%	21%	22%	20%	12%	26%	32%	20%
Economy	19%	21%	23%	29%	24%	12%	36%	27%	24%
Science and Health	30%	25%	28%	35%	28%	15%	36%	33%	30%
Social and Legal	23%	24%	42%	34%	34%	23%	45%	40%	31%
Crime and Violence	24%	22%	26%	26%	24%	19%	29%	30%	24%
Gender & Related	66%	31%	67%	58%	51%	75%	50%	58%	*47%
Celebrity, Arts and Media, Sports	17%	25%	20%	30%	21%	24%	26%	21%	25%
OVERALL	22%	21%	27%	28%	26%	17%	33%	31%	25%

Source: GMMP 2020

Women's overall presence in the news in North America and the Pacific has surpassed the critical 30% threshold in both digital and traditional media (Figure 6). On this indicator, Africa falls below the global averages across all media types monitored, as do Asia and the Middle East in print and broadcast news.

In traditional media, women are more likely to appear as sources and subjects in social/legal, science/health and crime/violence major topics. There are no more than two women for every ten people in political stories in traditional and digital news in the Middle East, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Women's presence in this genre of stories across all media is highest in the Pacific region and lowest in the Middle East. Voice and visibility in economic stories are just as depressing in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa across traditional and digital delivery platforms. However, as shown in Figure 6, Europe does not fare much better.

The only region and topic in which gender parity in subjects and sources has been attained is in North American digital social and legal news. Online, social/legal news is among the top three major topics in which women are most likely to be present, except for Africa and the Pacific; in Africa, women are more likely to be seen, heard, and read about in crime and violence news, next to the science/health major topic. One in three persons in African crime news is a woman, although this level of visibility is common to many regions: 33% in the Pacific, Caribbean (32%), North America (31%), with the lowest in the Middle East – 23%. Crime and violence stories here include those on topics such as theft, drugs, corruption, murder, and war.

Figure 7. 2005-2020: % women. AGE of news subjects in newspapers

	2005	2010	2015	2020
12 and under	21%	41%	41%	55%
13-18	58%	38%	53%	54%
19-34	44%	36%	45%	41%
35-49	42%	33%	45%	37%
50-64	37%	22%	23%	20%
65-79*	24%	43%	42%	17%
80 years or more	**	**	**	40%

* Age group '65 and over' in the 2005-2015 GMMPs

**New category added in 2020. In prior waves persons aged 80 years or more were coded under '65 years or more'

Source: GMMP 2020

In 2020, women are still *seen* more, and their physical attributes are *shown* more than their voices are *heard* or *read* in the news. In the GMMP 2020 sample, 37% of women compared to 33% of men appeared in multimedia videos in online news, and 27% of women in contrast to 24% of men were photographed in print news.

Karen Ross, Karen Boyle, Cynthia Carter, and Debbie Ging showed that there was an “inverse relationship between sex, age and visibility so that as a woman’s age increases, her visibility in the news decreases” (2016, 9). Their earlier conclusion is confirmed by the last GMMP results: in print news, men who are 50 years and older are very likely to be in the news, 42% of all people in the news belong to this category. The largest age group for women in the news is 35-49 years, whereas men’s top visibility is from 50 to 64 years. Men retain media attention until they reach 79 years, while women above 50 have become virtually invisible (figure7). In 2020, the age group 50–64 was only 20% women in newspapers and 19% on television.

The results from the GMMP 2020 thus confirms the ongoing gendered ageism in news media. Only 3% of all women in the news are found in the age group 65–79, compared to 15% men.

Figure 8. 2005-2020: Stories that clearly challenge gender stereotypes, by major topic

Topic	2005	2010	2015	2020			Δ 15 yrs
	Print, radio, television	Print, radio, television	Print, radio, television	Print, radio, television	News websites	News tweets	
Politics and Government	3%	5%	3%	2%	4%	2%	-1%
Economy	1%	4%	3%	2%	2%	2%	+1%
Science and Health	1%	5%	5%	1%	3%	1%	0
Social and Legal	6%	8%	4%	5%	5%	5%	-1%
Crime and Violence	2%	5%	4%	3%	3%	2%	+1%
Gender & Related				19%	15%	15%	n/a
Celebrity, Arts and Media, Sports	2%	6%	3%	4%	7%	5%	+2%
Other	5%	2%	1%	5%	7%	3%	0
OVERALL	3%	6%	4%	3%	4%	3%	0

Source: GMMP 2020

News stories are as (un)likely to clearly challenge gender stereotypes today as they were fifteen years ago (see Figure 8). Change across the one and a half decades hovers between –1 and +1 point within the major topics except for celebrity, arts, media, and sport stories, that are likely to challenge gender stereotypes two points more today than in 2005.

This poor performance is encountered in both legacy and online news, across all regions, with some variations in major topics. Looking at social/legal news, the topic most likely to challenge gender stereotypes, Pacific news media are the top performers, followed by the Middle East, Latin and North America regions. At the global level, only 3% of stories challenge gender stereotypes, the same as in 2005. This is obvious especially in Europe and in Africa.

Figure 9. 2005-2020: Stories that clearly challenge gender stereotypes, by region

Region	2005	2010	2015	2020	Δ 15yrs
Africa	3%	5%	5%	3%	0
Asia	2%	5%	3%	3%	+1%
Caribbean	3%	5%	8%	2%	-1%
Europe	2%	4%	3%	2%	0
Latin America	3%	13%	5%	4%	+1%
Middle East	3%	4%	2%	4%	+1%
North America	5%	9%	9%	3%	-2%
Pacific	1%	2%	1%	5%	+4%
GLOBAL AVERAGE	3%	6%	4%	3%	0

Source: GMMP 2020

Across fifteen years, news media in the Pacific region have made the greatest improvement, as North American media have moved two points behind the 2005 performance (see Figure 9). At the worldwide average level, the status quo is maintained; globally, only 3% of stories clearly challenge gender stereotypes, the same proportion found in 2005.

Figure 10. 2000-2020: women’s centrality in the news, by major topic

	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	News websites	Δ 20 yrs
	Print, radio, television	Print, radio, television	Print, radio, television	Print, radio, television	Print, radio, television		Print, radio, television
Politics and Government	7%	8%	13%	7%	5%	9%	-2%
Economy	4%	3%	4%	5%	2%	3%	-2%
Science and Health	11%	6%	11%	14%	2%	5%	-9%
Social and Legal	19%	17%	17%	8%	8%	9%	-11%
Crime and Violence	10%	16%	16%	17%	8%	12%	-2%
Celebrity, Arts and Media, Sports	16%	17%	16%	14%	7%	16%	-9%
OVERALL	10%	10%	13%	10%	6%	9%	-4%

Source: GMMP 2020

Figure 11. 2005-2020: stories where issues of gender equality or inequality are raised, by region

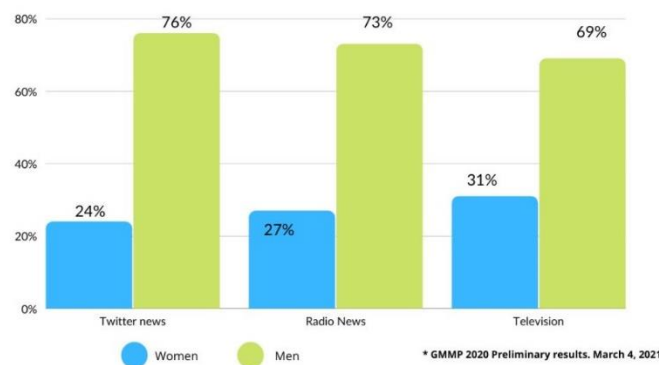
Region	2005	2010	2015	2020
Africa	4%	5%	20%	7%
Asia	3%	3%	8%	4%
Caribbean	5%	9%	18%	6%
Europe	3%	3%	5%	2%
Latin America	4%	12%	7%	4%
Middle East	1%	4%	6%	3%
North America	5%	10%	17%	7%
Pacific	3%	1%	1%	5%
GLOBAL AVERAGE	4%	6%	9%	7%

Source: GMMP 2020

As shown in Figure 10, GMMP has been monitoring the extent to which women make the news in significant ways, as the main characters in the story, since 2000. The latest results reveal that women are less likely to feature centrally in the story now than twenty years ago. Only 6% of stories have women as a central focus, compared to 10% in 2000. Of the four GMMP gender news quality indicators, “women’s centrality in the news” has declined most sharply across time. The results imply that today, more than ever, women are marginal in stories at the core of the news agenda.

Today, more stories raise gender (in)equality issues than fifteen years ago, but the rate is lower by 2 points than five years ago. The proportion of such stories has fallen in Europe by 1 point and is higher in the rest of the world. Africa was the top performer in 2015, but has now decreased by 13% (Figure 11).

Figure 12. People in news related to Covid-19



Source: GMMP 2020

Covid-19 was an opportunity to investigate the gender dimensions of news during a global pandemic (figure 12). A quarter of all news stories is related to the pandemic. Globally, online media presents less women than broadcast media in news related to Covid-19. Glory Dharmaraj, the US GMMP coordinator, emphasized that the pandemic showed systemic disparities that impacted women and people of color and highlighted the gap in the presence of female experts in the media.

Figure 13. % Women: comparing Covid-19 and non-Covid-19 stories

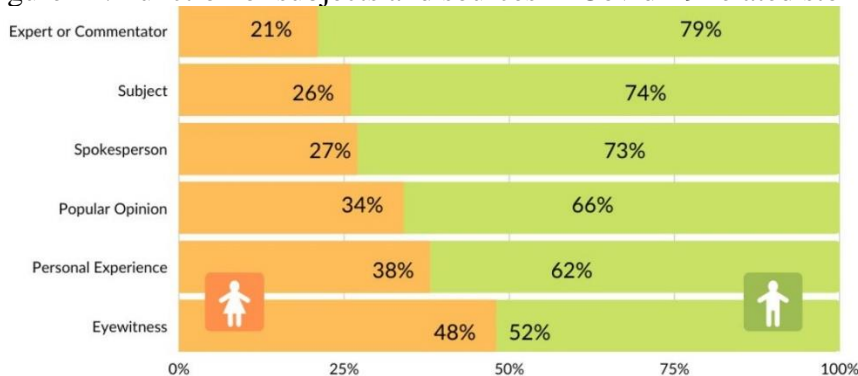
	Stories related to Covid-19	Non-Covid
Traditional news, subjects & sources. %W	28%	25%
Digital news, subjects & sources. %W	28%	27%
Reporters in print and online news	44%	37%
TV Stories in which women are central	2%	6%
TV Stories that raise issues of gender (in)equality	2%	4%
TV Stories that raise clearly challenge gender stereotypes	2%	3%

Source: GMMP 2020

Women’s presence as subjects, sources and journalists in stories related to the pandemic may be higher than in stories that are not about the pandemic (figure 13), but the quality of content from a gender perspective is poorer. Stories about or regarding a dimension of the coronavirus focus on women four points less, they are less likely to raise gender equality or inequality issues, or to clearly challenge gender stereotypes.

Except the small sample included in the topic gender and related issues, women are more likely to appear in pandemic stories concerning social and legal issues, particularly on television, where they comprise 38% of subjects and sources. The possibilities that a story will be about a woman or will carry a woman’s voice are far less likely in Covid-19 stories which are about politics and government.

Figure 14. Function of subjects and sources in Covid-19 related stories



Source: GMMP 2020

Almost one in five experts is a woman and one in four subjects is a woman in Covid-19 news stories. Yet, women appear to be almost as good eyewitnesses as men and slightly less trustworthy to provide personal experience (Figure 14). Therefore, despite the colorful drawing, the gender imbalance in this respect is depressing.

Qualitative Analysis

Guidelines provided by WACC (GMMP 2015b) for the qualitative, textual analysis of selected news stories from the GMMP data set provided “generalized criteria” drawn from a classification system developed by the Southern Africa Gender and Media Baseline Study, as we pointed in the first part of the article. Volunteer researchers within the GMMP framework were asked to identify stories that fit the following categories:

- (1) blatant stereotyping;

- (2) subtle stereotyping;
- (3) missed opportunity/gender blind reporting;
- (4) mainstreaming gender in the media/gender aware reporting.

The purpose of the qualitative analysis was to provide case studies to support findings from the quantitative data and “build gender and media literacy within the public (media consumers), media advocates, and among those who work within the media” (MISA and Gender Links 2003). Thus, the quantitative analyses of media messages, supplemented by qualitative ones, “stand as public records and timely reminders of the ways in which gender stereotypes are discursively normalized, recycled and recirculated” (Ross, Boyle, Carter, and Ging 2016, 17).

Since “women are more seen than heard” (Martinson and Bawdon 2012; Jia Sen et al. 2016), their presence is predominantly a corporal one: women, even parts of women’s bodies (“woman in pieces”, see Rocha 2013), sell everything – from cars, perfumes and beers to brands and stories. Generally, in all media products – news, TV shows, advertising etc. –, women are objectified and dehumanized in order to be made accessible and readily available to the supposedly male gaze of the public (Goffman 1979; Van Zoonen 1994; Kilbourne 2010; Cortese 2016; Gill 2003).

1. Blatant stereotype

The first category we illustrate with a piece from the print version of the *Irish Daily Mirror*. The headline reads “Sin the mood” and the article covers most of the third page, including a large image and a small amount of text (Figure 15). It resembles an advertorial for the brand Ann Summers, which sells various adult products, in this case focusing on sexy lingerie. The story is about Ann Summers’ new “Halloween at home” campaign and it features two reality TV stars, Maura Higgins and Chloe Ross.

Figure 15. *Irish Daily Mirror*, “Sin the Mood”



Source: GMMP England, Northern Ireland, Scotland, Wales and the Republic of Ireland 2020

There are eight semi-naked women in the photo, with the main focus on Maura Higgins, who is presented in the center of the image and also in the separate picture in the top left corner of the page. Their stance is provocative and appealing, with an attitude that could be read as empowering – they appear self-confident, with the bodies taking up more space by having their

arms and legs at some distance from the body. However, the fact that the women are dressed only in sexy lingerie, with most of their bodies exposed and with heavy make-up, alluring looks and pouting lips, amounts to an exhibition of merchandise to be appraised by the consuming male gaze of the public.

The placement of the article/image is also relevant: the third page became famous for featuring naked women since the British newspaper *Sun* has been routinely running such photos – a tactic taken up and used in many other tabloids from various countries (see *Libertatea* from Romania, for instance).

There are two aspects that, at first glance, could be interpreted as positive: the diversity of ethnicities and body shapes and the apparently playful and almost defiant tone of the text. Yet, both approaches can also be seen as strategies to obscure the objectification and sexualization of women, by presenting them in a light and supposedly fun manner: the catchphrase “Trick or treat” is printed with big characters and the customers are advised to stay safe (reference to Covid-19) and sexy.

2. Subtle stereotype

An instance of subtle stereotyping is an article from the print version of the Romanian newspaper *Libertatea*. The story covers the entire twelfth page and half of the next page, it includes two large images, and has a short descriptive title: “The ‘Deposit’ Method.” Briefly, the news presents a case of car-rental fraud that took place in Bucharest and in which (at least) three women and one man were charged large amounts of money for the supposedly damaged cars they returned. The victims of the fraud complained to the Authority for Consumer Protection, arguing that the cars rented were returned in perfect condition and that they were all given photographs of the same car with the same damages. Interviews with the victims and the two male experts from consumer protection are included in the story. At the end, the male journalist mentions that the newspaper tried to get a comment first from the local branch of the car rental company, but did not receive any answer, and later from their international offices, but only received a standard reply ensuring them that they were doing everything to provide customers with a solution.

Figure 16. *Libertatea*, “The ‘Deposit’ Method”





Source: *Libertatea*, September 29, 2020 (print)

This article is a clear instance of subtle stereotyping. Of the four victims of fraud, three are women. Both experts who are interviewed about consumer protection are men. Moreover, both photographs used to illustrate the story are of male actors: one is an anonymous men shown taking a photo of a car with his smartphone and the other is a large picture of one of the experts who is posing very seriously and professionally for the camera (see Figure 16). Thus, although women’s and men’s voices are heard in the story, the mechanism of subtle stereotyping is at work in the obvious unbalance of male and female actors: there are mostly women victims, and all experts are male.

As the GMMP global report has been showing for the last two and a half decades, in all media and on all continents, women are reliable as personal opinion providers, while men are entrusted with the expert comments and advice. The article cited here is a good such example, with the text depicting women as victims offering personal opinion and testimony, while the men are presented as authorities and ‘saviors.’ Along these lines, the photographs reinforce the stereotype of men as experts, with one of the men using technology and the other presented in a professional stance.

3. Missed opportunity

An example of this category is the article written in Serbian and titled “The most fertile woman in the world is 39 years old, has 38 CHILDREN and a horrible confession: She was 13 years old when she was sold to a man 27 years older, since then she HAS BEEN SUFFERING HUMILIATION”, which was published on the news website blic.rs. The story is about a Ugandan woman, Miriam Nabatanzi, who was sold as a child-bride when she was 13 years old to a man who was 40 and who forced her to have 38 children. She was beaten regularly, denied access to birth control, and forced to raise the children by herself. The photograph (video) accompanying the article depicts the mother surrounded by many young children dressed in loose clothes that appear too big to fit most of them (see Figure 17).

Figure 17. blic.rs, “The most fertile woman in the world is 39 years old, has 38 CHILDREN...”



Source: GMMP Serbia 2020

The article fails to highlight and critically discuss the various aspects and forms of violence against women raised by the Ugandan woman's story: child marriage, wife-beating, reproductive coercion, economic violence, lack of institutional concern towards the widespread phenomenon of violence against women. The official data from Uganda shows that more than one million women and girls experience sexual violence every year and violence against women is perceived as justifiable in some circumstances by 80% of the people. Uganda has the fourteenth highest number in the world of women married or in a union before the age of 18.

Media relies heavily of sensationalism, stereotyping and objectification of women to attract readers and/or viewers (Van Zoonen 1994, Cortese 2016). Consequently, in this particular case, it only emphasizes information and aspects that offer shocking/spectacular value to the story and misses the salient point of showing that violence against women, child marriages, lack of access to birth control, and social and gender injustice are systemic in Uganda. These issues are not only something that happened to one woman, they are not an exception – as the story seems to suggest –, but the pervasive situation of women across the continent and indeed the globe. Furthermore, a subtle perspective of victim-blaming can be perceived in the rendering of the story. Along these lines, the explanation provided to the fact that Miriam Nabatanzi has 38 children is linked to a health condition called hyper-ovulation, and not to the fact that she does not have access to birth control and her husband's support to use it.

The sensationalist framing of the story and the lack of a sensitive analysis of the physical, sexual, emotional, reproductive, and economic violence suffered by Miriam should be read as a symptom of a broader socio-cultural problem. Thus, the article misses the opportunity to raise awareness about the different aspects and facets of the phenomenon of violence against women and to educate the public about its forms and negative and traumatic impact on women's and girls' lives.

4. Gender-aware/mainstreaming gender in the media

A good example of a gender-aware article is the one published in *The Wire Hindi*, Jharkhand, and titled in Hindi: “Uttar Pradesh: After gangrape in Hathras, Dalit girl dies in a hospital in Delhi”.

The story is from the Hathras district in Uttar Pradesh and reports about four upper caste young men who raped a 19-year-old Dalit woman, beat her brutally, cut her tongue and damaged her spinal cord. She was treated in an Aligarh hospital for ten days, then she was brought to Delhi’s Safdarjung Hospital, where she could not be saved and soon died.

Figure 18. The Wire Hindi, “Uttar Pradesh: After gangrape in Hathras, Dalit girl dies in a hospital in Delhi”



Source: GMMP India 2020

At first glance, the title of the article could be considered problematic, since it uses the passive voice, thus almost evacuating the perpetrators of the horrid crime from the account. However, the piece in question is an update of an unfolding story that received extensive coverage for two weeks and presents the latest developments related to the young victim’s death.

In the text, the caste of the alleged perpetrators of the crime – four upper caste men who gangraped the Dalit girl – is clearly identified and each of them is named. The text also asserts that the four accused men were arrested, and cases were made against them. Since it is a hard-news story, as the GMMP team from India observed, it could not be discussed directly from the perspective of gender and violence, the intersection of gender and caste-based violence, which associates “family honor” with women’s bodies and thus articulates the widespread victim-blaming mechanism. However, the article clearly presents all these elements in the detailed back story given for perspective.

Consequently, the young woman’s brother testimony is included, revealing an older incident which created a rift between the two families – the accused’s (upper caste) family and the victim’s (Dalit) family – of past caste-based harassment, and the recent attempts to kidnap the Dalit woman. The news story thus ensures that the discerning reader understands the dynamics of caste and gender in that location. Furthermore, the news piece includes tweets

from two women politicians – Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, Congress Uttar Pradesh in-charge, and Mayawati, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, although some aspects in this part of the story may be considered problematic, since they shift the focus from the brutal rape and murder to the almost stereotypical political outcries of “strict punishment for the rapists” and the “safety and security of our daughters and sisters”. Overall, the article is professional, rights-based and ensures that the people involved are given space and voice.

Conclusions

Gender equality in the world represented in the news still lags behind gender equality in the real world. While acknowledgement of women’s contributions has grown in the lived world, the same is not true for news media. A paradigmatic example is provided in pandemic news stories: women are 27% of the health specialists appearing in Covid-19 stories, far fewer than the 46% world average given in labor force statistics (GMMP 2020).

In general terms, the visibility of women as both subjects of news and reporters of news, has not significantly changed over the past five years and neither over the twenty-five years of the GMMP. The growth in women’s visibility and contribution to the news agenda has increased by a handful of percentage points but does not reflect women’s contributions to the construction of the modern European society, culture, arts and politics. Women continue to be marginalized in the news agenda, mostly not even reaching one-third of the news, a figure that does not assure gender equality if quantitative changes are not accompanied by qualitative ones.

In this paper we argue, in line with previous research, that “despite the number of women in the media, there is insufficient diversity, so we need to see more complex, diverse, empowering images of women of all ages and statuses represented throughout all media channels and able to offer real role models for the public” (Roventă-Frumușani, Milewski, Surugiu, and Văcărescu 2016, 182). Women continue to be overrepresented in the categories of homemaker, parent, child, young person, health worker, social worker, and childcare worker, suggesting that women are being situated in the domestic sphere or aligned chiefly with feminized occupations. At the same time, women are underrepresented in almost all specialist, professional, academic, governmental, finance, sports, and religious occupations.

In line with many other studies, we argue that the underrepresentation of women is twofold: “one issue is women’s news media marginalization in relation to their *actual* presence as political actors on the national and international stage; the other is *how* they are reported when they do receive airtime and column inches” (Ross, Jansen, and Burger 2020, 235). To overcome stereotypes and barriers of a largely androcentric world, both from the point of view of the subjects represented (men are 70% of news subjects) and the point of view of the journalists, numerous actors (politicians, activists, researchers, and journalists, joined by the public, should work together in order to accomplish a gender (r)evolution in education and society. As Linda Steiner succinctly pointed out, “instead of asking about critical mass, we can ask about ‘critical actors’ and critical action, which would allow for a more fair, diverse, and democratic communication, in other words, for a critical journalism” (2012, 220).

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MULTIMODALITY, IDENTITIES AND GENDER (IN)EQUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF THE 2019 EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT ELECTIONS

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Abstract: *This study aims to analyse the gender dimension in the European Parliament elections in May 2019 based on the extensive research carried out at the level of the entire European Union (Platform Europe 2019). Our main objective was to identify the extent to which there are gender differences in the multimodal content included in the documents and items used during the election campaign for the 2019 European Parliament in all EU countries at the time. Besides identifying the types of items in the campaign and the gender of politicians, in our analysis we focused on similarities and differences by gender dimension in terms of the main message of the content conveyed, the emotion used by the documents as leverage, the rationality called for by the documents, as well as some nonverbal codes, such as the facial expression and the outfit of politicians. According to our analysis, we are witnessing a new phase of ‘hybridization’, that is, in terms of messages transmitted and attitudes adopted, a two-way process has been identified: not only do female politicians adopt attitudes and behaviours regarded as masculine, but also male politicians take on attributes considered feminine, such as displaying emotionality.*

Key words: *election campaign; European Parliament; gender differences; female politicians; male politicians; nonverbal codes in politics; hybridization process; multimodality; socio-semiotic; media; social media; visual methodologies.*

Introduction

After the domination of logocentrism or “linguistic turn” (Rorty, 1967) during the 20th century, in line with the digital and gender (r)evolution, a new paradigm emerged, labeled as the *pictorial turn* (Mitchell, 1995), which reevaluates the images in history, semiotics, media studies, cultural studies and, more generally, in the digital world. In this framework we witness the developing of *visual methodologies* (Rose, 2012), *visual culture* (Jay, 2008; Jenks, 1995; Mirzoeff, 2009) and *multimodality* (Bateman et al., 2017; Jewitt, 2012; Jewitt, 2014; Kress, 2010; Kress, 2011).

A second important change and challenge concerns the exit of the shadow cone of half of humanity (women’s entering in the field of work and politics). The approach in terms of gender represents a paradigm shift in the sense of Kuhn (1962), since it involves the radical transformation of social representations and collective values and norms, transformation correlated with the democratization of societies and promotion of the equality principle.

That is why we intend to show that new practices and discourses constitute a “reflexive ethics of contextualization, challenging and participation” (Jenkins, 2006) and that construction/ deconstruction/ reconstruction of women politicians’ identity is elaborated with verbal and nonverbal multimodal resources.

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In this paper we present an analysis of the gender dimension in the context of European Parliament elections in May 2019. Our main objective was to identify the extent to which there are gender differences in the multimodal content included in the documents and items used in all EU countries during the electoral campaign for the 2019 European Parliament elections.

Theoretical framework: The multimodality ‘turn’

In discourse studies, the multimodality ‘turn’ is associated with the works on systemic functional linguistics (SFL) of Halliday (1978), and Halliday and Hasan (1985). However, according to Jewitt (2009), in addition to the systemic functional linguistics (SFL), there are two more main approaches to multimodal analysis: multimodal (inter)actional analysis (Norris, 2004) and the social semiotics (Van Leeuwen, 2005). The common denominator of disciplines studying the means ‘for making meaning’ is the concept of ‘modality’, or ‘mode’, which combined with multiple kinds of ‘meaning making’ creates an “integrated multimodal whole” (Jewitt et al., 2016: 2). Thus, multimodal concepts are used to expand the focus of interaction, “moving away from a focus on language to encompass how people deploy gesture, gaze, posture, movement, as well as how space and artifacts mediate interaction” (ibid.). As an “inherently and intrinsically interdisciplinary cooperative enterprise” (Bateman et al., 2017), multimodality deriving essentially from social semiotics can, at least in part, be understood as a response to the demands *to look beyond language in a rapidly changing social and technological landscape* (Jewitt, 2012).

In the age of new orality, with its mixture of formal and informal, text and image, public and private, “multimodality matters”. It is “not just an add on, a matter of style. It partakes meaningfully in the representational as well as in the interpersonal and textual functions of communication” (Van Leeuwen, 2016: ix). A multimodal social semiotic approach provides a richer perspective on the multiple means involved in meaning making and communicating; in the (self-)making of identity and in the production/ dissemination/ interpretation of images and discourses.

In terms of textual organization, Martin and Rose (2008: 174) propose a network diagram, based on Kress and Van Leeuwen’s work (1996; 2006), illustrating *how* images are arranged to produce meaning: i) *relevance*: central vs. marginal; ii) *information*: given vs. new; iii) *substance*: ideal vs. real; iv) *classification*: strong vs. weak; v) *salience*: high vs. neutral vs. low. Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) consider that these five types of structures can contribute to the textual organization of images, and form the basis of the framework. Firstly, the *center-margin* axis indicates the relative relevance of elements: the more central the image, the more relevant it may be to the text as a whole. Secondly, the *left-right* axis of an image may indicate whether the information it presents is given or new, where given means that some aspect of the image is presumed from the preceding text or the context, and new means the information may be unknown to the reader. Given information tends to appear on the left of an image, followed by new information to the right in the Theme/Rheme pattern. Thirdly, the *top-bottom* axis may indicate whether the substance of an image is more ideal or more real, where the ideal can mean a generalized ‘essence’, while real is more specific, down-to-earth or practical. Fourthly, the strength of boundaries between image and text may indicate *stronger or weaker* classification of meanings. And fifthly, the relative *salience of images* on a page, that draws readers’ attention to one image before another, may be indicated by a number of factors, including size, colour intensity, the strength of vectors, as well as center-margin, left -right, top-down positions.

Gender equality in politics: Towards a new pattern?

Gender underlies all the components of the social (Chabaud-Rychter et al., 2010), while a gendered approach provides a “surplus for understanding any social fact” (Neveu, 2000: 211). If the difficulties and resistance to the cause of women have been rightly underlined, it is also important to reveal other devices such as “forced mimicry on male models, the capture of skills and specificities of women for the purposes rarely feminist of institutions where women invest” (ibid.).

In order to be perceived as valid and reliable actors in politics, women typically must perform the so-called “male script”, which is a disadvantage no matter whatever position is adopted: if it is too assertive, then it does not suit a woman, if it is too feminine, then it does not suit a politician (Lünenborg & Maier, 2014; Rodat, 2018; Rodat, 2019a; Ross et al., 2020; Roventă-Frumușani & Irimescu, 2018).

The evolution of socio-semiotic perspectives in relation to what is important/significant and centrally versus not importantly/insignificant or marginal has happened in parallel with the political transformations that have brought more and more women to the national parliaments and the European Parliament. A brief foray into the recent past illustrates the following situation with regard to the parliamentary and MEP (Member of the European Parliament): representation of women shows that they continue to be underrepresented in the European Parliament, in relation to their proportion in the population. However, the trend of their representation is increasing: while at the first elections that took place on 7 and 10 June 1979 (European Parliament, 2021) the proportion of women elected was 15%, this was more than 30% in 2007 (Stockemer, 2008: 464). After the 2014 EP elections, the proportion of women reached up to 35.8%. The latest statistics (2019) on gender balance in the European Parliament show that the percentage of women MEPs has increased slightly since the 2014 elections and currently stands at 36.1% (European Parliament, 2019: 2). Moreover, there are more men than women in the national parliament of each EU Member State. As regards the members of the national governments of the Member States, Spain, Sweden and France lead the way in meeting equality standards, with 52.4%, 52.2% and 48.6% of women respectively. Hungary and Malta are trailing with a mere 7.1% and 12% of women each. Cyprus and Italy also have very low numbers of women in government, 16.7%, followed closely by Poland with 17% (European Parliament, 2019: 3).

Analytical framework and research questions

The aim pursued in our study was to identify the extent to which there are gender differences in the multimodal content included in the documents and items used during the 2019 election campaign for the European Parliament. Within this objective, we were interested in the following research questions:

(a) whether gender differences can be identified in the neutrality, emotionality and rationality of the messages conveyed by the content of the documents and items, and, if there are gender differences in the emotionality and rationality of the messages, what emotions or types of rationality prevailed according to the gender of the political actors?

b) to what extent there are similar or different gendered patterns when it comes to nonverbal codes displayed, such as facial expressions, as well as some artefacts, like clothing outfits.

Research results³

During the campaign for the 2019 European Parliamentary elections, 9751 documents such as print (posters and press advertising), political commercials and social content were analyzed in all 28 countries of the European Union at that time. Most of the items analyzed were web cards, videos, photos and posters (see Table 1).

Typology of the analyzed items				
	<i>Specific type</i>	<i>Frequency (N)</i>		<i>%</i>
Printed documents	<i>Poster (free or paid announcement published in public areas: street billboards, train stations etc.)</i>	663	742	7.6
	<i>Press advertising (paid announcement published on the two most read national newspapers broadsheets/ tabloids)</i>	79		
Political commercials	<i>Animation/Cartoon/Computer graphics</i>	21	293	3.0
	<i>Documentary (historical images)</i>	13		
	<i>Fiction (a story or a comedy sketch played by actors, background actors, politicians or common people)</i>	52		
	<i>Graphic texts animated</i>	40		
	<i>Real life (speeches or contemporary general images)</i>	83		
	<i>Talking Head – Speeches</i>	71		
	<i>Other</i>	13		
Social media content (e.g., Facebook)	<i>Web card (images plus text)</i>	3395	8716	89.4
	<i>Video</i>	3347		
	<i>Text (without images)</i>	328		
	<i>Photo (image without graphic and textual elements on)</i>	1646		
Total			9751	100

Table 1. Typology of the analysed items during the 2019 EU election campaign
Source: EEMC dataset 2019

In all these types of materials, apart from the texts, the extent to which one or more politicians were present was analysed, as well as various characteristics of the politicians and aspects related to them, including gender, how they were dressed, the emotions displayed, but also the themes and topics addressed, the message conveyed by the content of the items, etc. As one can see in Table 2, out of a total of 9751 posters, press pathways, political commercials, photos, videos, web cards, in 6593 (i.e., in 67.6%) one or more politicians were present, in 2249 materials (23.1%) no politician(s) was/were present, while in 909 cases (9.3%) the presence or absence of one or more politicians was not identified. Furthermore, in 6332 out of 9751 items analysed, the gender of the politician or politicians could be delimited, i.e., in about two thirds of the documents.

³ In this paper there are analysed the data obtained in the international research project ‘Platform Europe’ 2019 (European Elections Monitoring Center – EEMC). This project was led by Roma Tre University, Italy, and funded by the European Parliament. Project website: <https://www.electionsmonitoringcenter.eu/it/page/15e6a41b-718d-43ca-825c-e8a172a788b5>. The authors of this article have been members of the research team in Romania (<https://www.electionsmonitoringcenter.eu/it/page/6d421016-87cc-461c-8f58-bb8cdab022c0>).

In posters, press pathways, political commercials, photos, videos, web cards:		
	<i>Frequency (N)</i>	<i>Percent (%)</i>
The politician/s is/are present	6593	67.6
The politician/s is/are not present	2249	23.1
<i>Total</i>	8842	90.7
Missing/ not mentioned	909	9.3
Total	9751	100

Table 2. The presence of politicians in the analysed items during the 2019 EU election campaign

Source: EEMC dataset 2019

Regarding the message transmitted by the content of the document or item, a first finding is that the messages of the content conveyed in the materials were, regardless of gender, in order: emotional, neutral, and only in the third place rational (see Table 3). The differences here are also related to the actual proportion of certain messages in the case of men and women politicians. Thus, a second finding is that the messages of the contents of the items in which only women politicians appeared were more often rational than those in which only men politicians appeared (21.1% compared to 19.9%).

At the same time, more of the messages of the contents conveyed by documents featuring exclusively male politicians were emotional, compared to the messages of documents featuring exclusively female politicians (42.1% versus 39.8%). This shows us that we are witnessing a two-way process: not only do female politicians adopt attitudes and behaviours considered masculine, but male politicians also take on characteristics considered feminine, such as displaying emotionality.

Gender of the politician/s	The message of the content was mainly:							
	Emotional		Rational		Neutral		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Male	1496	42.1	707	19.9	1348	38.0	3551	100
Female	553	39.8	293	21.1	542	39.0	1388	100
Other gender identity	3		0		2		5	
Gender mixed group of politicians	631	45.4	237	17.1	519	37.4	1387	100
Total	N	2683		1237		2411		6331
	%	42.4		19.6		38.1		100

Table 3. The main message of the content by gender during the 2019 EU election campaign

Source: EEMC dataset 2019

The research also reveals that the neutral messages of the content transmitted were in relatively similar proportions in the materials that included men and women, respectively, as in those with mixed gender groups of politicians (see Table 3). It is also worth noting that emotional messages were most often conveyed by the content of items in which mixed groups of politicians appeared (in 45.4% of cases), and of the five cases in which a 'different gender identity' was featured, three had emotional messages and two had neutral messages.

In the 2683 cases where the main message of the content was an emotional one, the emotions used by the document as leverage were further analysed. As shown in Table 4, the predominant emotion used by the document as leverage was 'pride/ membership/ ambition'. It is noteworthy that this emotion was more present (albeit with a rather small difference) in the case of women than men politicians (40.9% versus 40.3%), as compared to the items in which

gender mixed groups of politicians appeared (here this emotion was used as leverage in 37.7%). Also, items/documents in which mixed genders were featured used significantly more often as leverage ‘amusement/ feeling good/ enthusiasm’ (in 31.7% of cases), compared to materials in which only male politicians appeared (17% of them had this emotion as leverage), as well as with the items in which exclusively female politicians appeared (19.7% of them having this emotion as leverage).

The emotion used by the document as leverage	Gender of the politician/s										
	Male		Female		Other gender identity		Gender mixed group of politicians		Total		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Amusement – Feeling good – Enthusiasm	254	17.0	109	19.7	2	-	200	31.7	565	21.1	
Empathy – Compassion – Solidarity	180	12.0	109	19.7	0	-	86	13.6	375	14.0	
Pride – Membership – Ambition	603	40.3	226	40.9	1	-	238	37.7	1068	39.8	
Fear – Threat – Insecurity	249	16.6	68	12.2	0	-	62	9.8	379	14.1	
Anger – Disgust – Hate	210	14.0	41	7.4	0	-	45	7.1	296	11.0	
Total	N	1496	100	553	100	3	-	631	100	2683	100
	%	55.8		20.6		0.1		23.5		100	

Table 4. The emotion used by the document as leverage by gender during the 2019 EU election campaign

Source: EEMC dataset 2019

Therefore, more documents that featured exclusively women politicians, compared to the documents that presented only men politicians, had as leverage the emotion that expresses ‘amusement/ feeling good/ enthusiasm’. An even clearer distinction between genders emerges when analysing the presence as leverage of emotion that expresses ‘empathy, compassion and solidarity’. Thus, while almost 20% of the items with emotional content that included only female politicians used these emotions as leverage, this was the case for only 12% of the materials with emotional content that included only male politicians. This finding shows that, in the 2019 European Parliament campaign, female politicians were more empathetic or at least presented themselves in a more empathetic manner than male politicians.

In contrast, men politicians expressed clearly more frequently than women politicians and mixed gender groups ‘fear, threat and insecurity’ (in 16.6% of cases, compared to 12.2% for women and 9.8% for mixed gender groups). Moreover, a clear differentiation can be noticed in the case of another type of emotion, namely ‘anger, disgust and hate’. The proportion of male politicians who expressed these emotions was double the proportion of women politicians expressing this type of emotion, as well as the proportion of mixed gender groups in which such an emotion could be identified. In other words, at least in the context analysed, i.e., the campaign for the 2019 European elections, women politicians more often expressed positive emotions, while men politicians more often showed negative emotions.

As in the case of emotional messages, also in the case of rational messages the type of rationality called for by the document was further analysed. As can be seen in Table 3, 1237 documents had a content with a rational message (see also Table 5).

The rationality called for by the document	Gender of the politician/s										
	Male		Female		Other gender identity		Gender mixed group of politicians		Total		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	
Competence – Knowledge – Reliability	390	55.2	182	62.1	0	-	127	53.6	699	56.5	
Justice – Honesty	105	14.9	57	19.4	0	-	45	19.0	207	16.7	
Concrete data – Statistic	212	30.0	54	18.4	0	-	65	27.4	331	26.8	
Total	N	707	100	293	100	0	-	237	100	1237	100
	%	57.2		23.7		0		19.2		100	

Table 5. The rationality called for by the document by gender during the 2019 EU election campaign

Source: EEMC dataset 2019

The possible types of rationality identified in the analysis were ‘competence/knowledge/ reliability’, ‘justice/ honesty’, and ‘concrete data/ statistics’ (see Table 5). Analysing these types of rationality by gender, we observe interesting results: female politicians convey more frequently than male politicians both ‘competence, knowledge and reliability’ (62.1% versus 55.2%), and ‘justice and honesty’ (19.4% versus 14.9%).

The percentages of these types of rationality associated with women politicians are also higher than the percentages of the same types of rationality expressed by mixed gender groups of politicians. On the other hand, men politicians may be associated to a significantly greater extent with the type of rationality based on ‘concrete data’, that is, evidence-based and statistically based types of rationality. Thus, 30% of the rational messages of the contents of the materials featuring exclusively male politicians conveyed this type of rationality, while just 18.4% of items featuring only female politicians did the same.

As regards the gendered patterns when it comes to nonverbal codes displayed, the facial expressions of politicians could be identified in our research in 3325 items analysed, and some significant differences could be ascertained between men and women politicians in this respect. Although the most frequently expression displayed by both male politicians and female politicians, as well as by the mixed gender groups of politicians, was the ‘smiling/friendly’ expression, our research reveals that, while women politicians displayed a smiling/friendly facial expression in 66% of cases, men politicians displayed such an expression only in 51% of cases. This means that female political actors smiled more and have been friendlier than male ones with about 15%. On the other hand, men politicians had more often a ‘blank/neutral’ expression: while almost 32% of them displayed such an expression, only 22.6% of women politicians and 13.4% of mixed gender groups were shown as blank or neutral. Moreover, more male politicians as the female ones, as well as the mixed gender groups, were displayed having a worried and/or angry facial expression. All this shows a reinforcing of some gendered patterns, namely women are more smiling and more friendly, while masculinity is associated with seriousness and concern.

Another aspect of interest regarding the nonverbal codes displayed was that of clothing outfits of the politicians and the gender differences in this respect. According to our analysis, most politicians, regardless of gender, were displayed in posters, press pathways, political commercials, photos, videos, and web cards in the 2019 EU election campaign in formal (almost 43%) and semi-formal (about 33%) outfits. However, we could notice some significant

differences between genders in this regard, too. Thus, female politicians preferred to a greater extent a semi-formal outfit than a formal one: 39.3% of women politicians wore semi-formal clothing during the campaign, while 32% chose a formal attire (office wear). In contrast, more than half of the male politicians (51.2%) wore formal clothing, that is, business suit, including jacket and tie, while only a third of men political actors chose a semi-formal outfit (jacket or tie). An interesting gender differentiation could be observed when it comes to the preference for a casual outfit. If we compare the percentages of women and men politicians who opted for a casual attire, we notice that the proportion of women who appeared in such an outfit is more than double compared to that of men who dressed this way (26.4% versus 12.6%). Therefore, more than a quarter of women politicians displayed a totally informal outfit, while just slightly more than a tenth of male politicians did so.

Discussions and conclusion

Discourses, attitudes, behaviours, identities of a pluri-semiotic nature make ideologies appear as naturalized and “part of the hegemonic order” (Machin, 2013: 351). Women in the position of power are trying to gain and maintain legitimacy and recognition (Fraser, 2011; Macé, 2015) playing in the professional and political world the normative role (Butler, 1990).

As an important part of this affordance-led approach – multimodality in the socio-semiotic framework – it is essential “to have something to say about each particular kind of semiotic material, how it is used and what is special about it” (Machin et al., 2016: 305). All the meaning making elements analysed (dress code, gestures, facial expressions, discourse strategies) pointed out what is central, salient. At the same time, we noticed “what was *not* communicated”, and hence revealed the gains and losses (Kress, 2010; Machin & Van Leeuwen, 2016). According to Roderick (2016: 396) it is important to analyse not only how the actors are represented, but also those significant absences, which “equally underwrite the homogeneity/ solidarity being produced through categorization in the visual text” (in our analysis press advertising, posters, web cards, videos, photographs etc.).

Formerly seen as unsuitable for the higher spheres of power, not only because of their ‘subalternity’, but also because of the retrograde connotation of forced emancipation, especially in post-communist European countries, female politicians in today Europe are changing their condition. They usually gained legitimacy by becoming ‘one of the boys’ in the race for the highest political positions (Rodat, 2019b; Roventă-Frumușani, 2015), that is, by applying the ‘strategy of adaptation’ (Djerf-Pierre, 2007) to the male model. If women first adopted the “master’s” model, that is, the “male” model, we can expect a new phase of hybridization. This means a combination of assertiveness, courage, but also empathy, friendly nonverbal codes, ‘feminine’ style. In the reputed insoluble tension between representation of the feminine and representation of power (Coulomb-Gully & Rennes, 2010), the use of the masculine model induces the connotation of legitimacy and potential success. This is the solution adopted for the moment by certain Eastern European women politicians, with modulations induced by the ideology of the party and the *persona* of the candidate (Branea, 2017; Cmeciu & Pătruț, 2014; Rodat, 2020; Roventă-Frumușani, 2015). In our corpus of analysis, we found out that, in terms of messages transmitted, female politicians tend to adopt attitudes and behaviours considered masculine, such as that of conveying rational and neutral messages, even to a greater extent than male politicians. Moreover, when analysing the rationality called for by the documents, we could notice that female politicians transmitted more frequently than male politicians both competence, knowledge and reliability, and justice and honesty. At the same time, women politicians continue to be more empathetic or at least presented themselves in a more empathetic manner than male politicians during the election campaign analysed. Also, they displayed to a greater extent than men politicians friendly facial

expressions, which shows that female politicians are not afraid to behave amiable, smiling, adopting a less official dress code. However, they continue to be much less numerous than male politicians, and their influence as role models has not yet gained in intensity and mobilization.

It is worth noting, however, another phenomenon, although less pronounced and lower in intensity, namely that men politicians (at least some of them) began to adopt some attitudes and behaviors considered until not so long ago feminine, such as transmitting emotional content messages, displaying emotional facial expressions, and, to a lesser extent, wearing less formal outfits. Therefore, we are witnessing a two-way process: not only do female politicians adopt attitudes and behaviours regarded as masculine, but also male politicians take on attributes considered feminine, such as displaying emotionality. This is too a component of the hybridization process mentioned above. That is, more and more politicians, regardless of gender, resort to combinations of rationality and emotionality, assertiveness, courage, competence, reliability, but also empathy, friendly nonverbal codes, less formal outfits, a 'feminine' style.

Following previous approaches (Hiippala, 2017; Martin & Rose, 2008; Taylor, 2017, etc.) we argue that, by introducing the central theoretical concepts of *medium* (print, video etc.) and *mode* (semiotic and discourse resources based on centrality, salience etc.), the multimodality framework provides a "corpus-driven approach" for describing multimodal documents (Hiippala, 2017: 281), and enabling "descriptive and empirical capabilities" (ibid.). Furthermore, we suggest that the analysis presented here should be completed by some comparative textual-visual studies, based on the structural pillars: centrality, salience, substance, information, completing the gesture and dress code, as well as by a longitudinal approach, that is, addressing the next European Parliament elections.

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EMERGENT ISSUES OF ONLINE TEACHING: THE PERSPECTIVE OF ROMANIAN WOMEN TEACHERS

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Abstract: *This article discusses the issues associated with online teaching as they were seen by Romanian women teachers. Using a qualitative methodology based on online focus groups and interviews this research offers a brief overview about the main difficulties of the sudden move to online learning, as a response to COVID 19 pandemic situation. Based on a rich international literature reviews it concludes that in Romania women teachers face similar issues as their colleagues around the world.*

Keywords: *Women; Teachers; Online education; Digital skills; Gender gap at work; Care; COVID-19 pandemics.*

Introduction

Referring to the pandemic caused by COVID-19 virus, the World Health Organization (2020) considered that its main negative effect is the current unprecedented global crisis, which has disrupted the lives of millions of people and has undermined worldwide the population living standard.

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, governments around the world took similar set of measures to prevent the spread of the virus including closing of educational institutions and moving of the educational process online. As of March 2020, official data indicated that more than 859 million children, young people and adolescents have been affected, and the percentage represented a total of 49.1% of the total world school population (UNESCO, 2021). In 2021, UNESCO reported almost 145 million children, adolescents and young people (8.3% of the total school population) affected by the closure of physical schools and courses, the educational process being moved online in many parts of the world (UNESCO, 2021).

In Romania, on 11th of March 2020 (when the COVID-19 pandemic was declared), the Ministry of Education suspended the physical courses in all schools, and 2.8 million pupils switched to "online school" (Holotescu et al., 2020). Teachers had to adapt to different scenarios in education, the main variables which influenced the quality of the educational act being: the access to internet, the level and quality of teachers and pupils personal digital skills, the urge to adapt the curriculum to virtual education and to choose the appropriate content that could be used for online learning, the existence or shortages of devices needed for this new type of educational process (tablets, phones, laptops, webcams, microphones, etc.). At the beginning of the new school year 2020-2021, the Ministry of Education decided to return to face-to-face courses based on three epidemiological scenarios (Ministerul Educatiei, 2020), the situation being repeated in the school year 2021-2022 (Ministerul Educatiei, 2021).

However, as the existing literature pointed out (Al Kurdi, Alshurideh and Salloum, 2020; Jain, Lall and Singh, 2020; José Sá and Serpa, 2020; Juárez Santiago et al., 2020; Khan et al., 2021; Sahu, 2020; Wahab, 2020), the simple application of some administrative measures did not have the power to increase the quality of the educational act. A number of studies

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conducted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted that these measures were especially beneficial for students and higher education institutions (Juárez Santiago, Olivares Ramírez, Rodríguez-Reséndiz et al., 2020; Sahu, 2020), while the online learning with primary and secondary school pupils had some limitations, mainly on a psychological and technological level. Among the factors that have contributed to the success of education in the virtual environment, age, sex, previous knowledge about computer literacy and learning styles of an individual were mentioned as relevant (Khan et al., 2021; Al Kurdi, Alshurideh and Salloum, 2020). At the same time, discussing the main barriers for the success of online education Jain, Lall and Singh (2020) had identified the existence of inequalities between urban and rural areas, and the teachers' need to redefine educational methods. Other problematic areas related to the online education were the new models of teacher-pupil interactions and the use of some specific channels for interaction during classroom (José Sá and Serpa, 2020), on the one hand, and, on the other, the level of pupils confidence and motivation during the courses (Wahab, 2020).

As Lassibille and Navarro Gómez (2020) observed, the feminization of teaching as an occupation is a process that began many decades ago and has become extremely evident in recent years (Cortina and San Roman, 2006; Kelleher, 2011). Moreover, as the same authors noticed, the trend of feminization of the teaching profession will continue in the same directions in the future (Lassibille and Navarro Gómez, 2020), this being true especially in the case of economically advanced countries (OECD 2019).

The COVID-19 pandemic has also increased the burden associated with domestic work and childcare for women, creating a gender gap in job satisfaction, work involvement, and work efficiency (Rožman et al., 2021). In the same vein, Rožman et al. (2021) show that the gender gap amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to persist for a very long time. The present article aimed at understanding the challenges faced by Romanian women teachers during the last two years (2020 and 2021) and the ways in which they are adapting to the COVID-19 pandemics realities.

General economic and social background

In Romania, recent data indicate the existence of an imbalance between male and female teachers in the primary and secondary education system (OECD, 2018a). Thus, in 2018 in our countries in the vast majority of Romanian schools' teachers were mainly women (60.7%) while almost a quarter of the schools had their teaching staff composed exclusively by women (24.1%) (OECD, 2018a).

In 2021 the percentage of women working in education sector in Romania was of 73.2% (Institutul National de Statistica, 2021a), the highest percentage recorded in all economic sector with the exception of health and social work (where the percentage of women employed reached 79.5% of the total work-force) (Institutul National de Statistica, 2021a).

The highest average net monthly earnings in 2020, higher than the average for the economy, were recorded in the following economic activities: information and communications (+ 92.4%), financial intermediation and insurance (+ 65.2%), public administration (+ 62.0%), production and supply of electricity and heat, gas, hot water and air conditioning (+ 50.2%), extractive industry (+ 41.5%), professional, scientific and technical activities (+ 28.8%), health and social assistance (+ 24.4%), respectively education (+ 11.1%). (Institutul National de Statistica, 2021a) Also, in Romania, in 2021, female employees earned on average, in gross terms, 1.2% less than male employees. Thus a female teacher in primary and secondary education system has an average gross salary of 5179 lei (compared to 5244 lei of male employees). In net terms, Romanian female employees earned 4.2%, respectively 139

lei per month less than Romanian male employees (3144 lei average salary net of female employees compared to 3283 lei of male employees) (Institutul National de Statistica, 2021a). Recent studies show that during the COVID-19 a gender gap within the labor market in terms of work-life balance and family life had developed (Feng and Savani 2020). In the case of women, it has been found that in the last two years there has been a greater impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, women being less optimistic about their professional future than men, and, much more, this gap widened over time (Țălnar-Naghi, 2021). Also, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the work-life balance was more affected in the case of women (compared to men), this being especially evident in terms of reduced working time, possibly due to the burden of care responsibilities for other family members (children, elderly, relatives) those being mainly the responsibility of women (Eurofound, 2020).

In 2021, about 8 out of 10 households in Romania (80.8%) had access to the Internet. In urban areas, 86.9% of households were connected to the Internet, and in rural areas this was the situation for only 73.1% of households (Institutul National de Statistica, 2021b). In the same year (2021), out of the total number of people aged between 16 and 74, the proportion of those who have ever used the Internet was 88.6%, up 2.7 percentage points from the previous year (88.6% compared to 85.9%), of which 94.3% in the last 3 months, increasing by 3 percentage points compared to 2020 (94.3% compared to 91.3%). Among current users, 82.3% of them used the Internet on a daily or near daily basis, an increase of 3.2 percentage points compared to the previous year (82.3% compared to 79.1%) (Institutul National de Statistica, 2021b).

In 2018, at the level of the 28 member states of the European Union, only 5% of the workforce worked “usually” from home and about 10% did so “sometimes” (Eurostat, 2018). For Romania, the total of those who worked from home in 2018 was below 1%. At the end of the first lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Eurofound estimates in the spring of 2020 that almost 40% of EU workers started working from home, with Romania reaching 24% of the total workforce working online (Țălnar-Naghi, 2021).

Several studies on the problem of gender differences in the use of technology show that male subjects have a more positive attitude towards technology than women (Comber et al, 1997; Kadijevich, 2000). At the same time, men are also more confident in their abilities to use technology in learning (Yau and Cheng, 2012) and more interested in information technology (Houtz and Gupta, 2001). Meantime, other studies have found no significant relationship between age and gender, and teachers' attitudes towards computer exploitation (Teo, 2008).

Methodology

The present article used a mixed qualitative methodology, namely focus-groups and individual interviews. Due to the specific situation of physical restrictions from 2020 and 2021 the data were collected exclusively online.

The four focus-groups (FG1 - FG4) made in September 2021 were part of the Erasmus+ Project “DigiTeaL” (2020-1-UK01-KA226-SCH-094429 for 2021-2022) and the data from the interviews were collected in 2020 and 2021 from teachers working in a primary school from Bucharest.

The sample of individual interviews comprised 10 respondents in 2020 and five in 2021, while the sample for focus-groups was made of 18 teachers from different Romanian (not strictly Bucharest-based) primary and secondary school who participated to four groups organized online.

Due to the exploratory nature of the paper there are no causal hypothesis for testing the data and the presentation of the results is descriptive.

Analysis of the results

The changes produced by COVID-19 pandemics in Romanian primary and secondary educational system were characterized by women teachers as “dramatic”, “unexpected” and “abrupt” (discussions from FG1 and FG3).

When asked to assess the ways in which the online education took place in the last two years, the women we have interviewed had declared in 2020 that the online teaching is more difficult, it produces a lot of damages at the level of educational process and pupils:

“[...] it is much more difficult than face-to-face learning”. (T3)

“I don't feel that it would be a progress, we would rather step on the spot and unfortunately, many students lost their interest in school. I believe that these generations will have much to lose in the long run.” (T1)

One year later (in 2021) the women teachers' opinions became more positive and nuanced, some of them accepting the blended or hybrid solutions for education process as necessary within the context of COVID-19 pandemics:

“My opinion is that online learning could be effective in a perfect world, where the pupil has a sense of responsibility, and the teacher has all the resources and means he needs, but the world we live in is not perfect ...” (T5)

“It is suitable for small groups of pupils, maximum 5-6, if they are over 10 years old. It is also advantageous when, for example, we do not find the right teacher near us or in the same city. It helps us to save time because the subject of the course is taught faster and everything is just at a click away. On the other hand, our brains do not process online interaction as in the human face-to-face interactions, relations between classmates became cooler and broken down, and the time spent in front of the screens decreases motivation and increases the sedentary lifestyle.” (T4)

Due to this sudden shift from face-to-face teaching to online education (as in 2020), or to a mixed, hybrid system (as in 2021) women teachers told us, both in focus groups and in individual interviews, that they felt the need to improve their skills and abilities related to the online environment. In this context, it was revealed the existence of a unique educational “loop”, which went from students to teachers, in adapting the educational process to the requirements of the new technologies.

“I learned a lot from students in 2020 and less from my classmates.” (FG1)

“Some children have done better with new technologies and have even become teachers.” (FG2)

“Online learning is just one of the many ways to learn. For online learning to be effective, it is necessary for both teachers and students to have skills related to this type of learning and, in addition, to be used together with classical learning methods, which are based on the natural interactions between teacher and students.” (T1-2021)

A special issue discussed within the focus groups from 2021 was the additional expenses that women teachers had to incur during the COVID-19 pandemic to purchase new devices or high-performance software:

“During this time, I can say that teachers spent a lot of money on the equipment from their family's pockets. Everything was very expensive, we bought new devices if they broke down...we also had to buy some software for the classes.” (FG5)

Conclusions

The crisis brought by the COVID-19 pandemic increased the psychological stress in the education system, the teachers having to deal with considerable changes in the teaching process and in the organization of the educational process. The fact that schools in the physical presence have been frequently closed and education was transformed into online education without prior training was merged with the existence of a number of mandatory restrictions. Together the above-mentioned factors lead to the increase of the psychological stress for teachers. In the context of important changes, teachers in Romania have had to face the challenge of fully transferring all lessons to the online system and finding appropriate coping strategies (Obrad, 2020; Pânișoară et al., 2020).

At the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the data collected have indicated that teachers stressed out the existence of a number of impediments in the conduct of online teaching hours, between the most important were: lack of direct communication (65%); special support for students with special needs (63.80%); monitoring the learning process (51.70%); immediate feedback from teachers (45.30%); explanation of concepts, relationships and phenomena (45.10%); individual counseling (36.30%) (Statista, 2020).

The research carried out by Sârbu et al. (2021) highlighted the extra effort in the educational activities carried out by the teachers in the last two years, with negative effects on their neuropsychic demand; significant differences in the degree of acceptance as an advantage of the wide range of teaching tools and methods; assessing students' progress was the main impediment to online teaching. Sârbu et al. (2021) pointed out that teleworking among teachers has led to an increase in the level of stress and effort, with classical teaching methods having to be combined with interactive ones, which has led to a rethinking of techniques and finding new tools to capture and maintain pupils' interest.

Our results showed that the Romanian women teachers declared the existence of stressful situations due, on the one hand, to the lack of necessary abilities and skills for online teaching, and, on the other, to the financial constraints imposed by the COVID-19 pandemics – e.g. the imperative of buying the necessary devices or software.

At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that education systems which do not take gender into account both in school and in the community at large cannot successfully adapt to rapid change. Preliminary reports (PLAN International UK, 2020) on how the pandemic has affected women show changes in gender and education. As the existing literature pointed out (PLAN International UK, 2020; European Trade Union Committee for Education, 2020; Rédei, 2021), teachers - most of whom are women - have had to switch to online teaching overnight, which has significantly increased their workload, especially those who are less accustomed to teaching with digital tools. Also, data collected before the COVID-19 pandemic suggested that the gender gap in digital skills was greater among the elderly and narrowing by age group (OECD, 2018b). However, according to Martínez-Cantos (2017), the size of the gender gap does not differ only by age, but must take into account the intersection between age, gender and the level of digital skills: “when it comes to higher levels of digital skills, [...] Gender disparities usually become greater, not only especially among [...] people with higher education, but also among middle-aged and younger strata” (Martínez-Cantos, 2017). In addition, women are more exposed to cyberbullying than men (OECD, 2018b), so the risk of gender-based violence may increase for girls (PLAN International UK 2020) and for teachers: “[w]hile cyberbullying and online harassment is already a real concern for

teachers and education staff, it is a real concern that quarantine measures and online teaching could expose women to new risks of gender-based violence at work” (European Trade Union Committee for Education, 2020).

Our data did not show the existence of the cyberbullying at the level of women teachers but there are mentions of its existence at the level of girls involved in the educational process (as shown in our focus-groups).

Meantime, as Rédai (2021) points out, teachers who are also parents have to deal simultaneously with homework and the education and care of their own children at home. In the case of single parents (most of whom are mothers) the situation is even more difficult to manage. Paid care work is hard to afford for low-paid women, and teachers are among them, and in a pandemic, even for those who could afford it, care work may be unavailable due to restrictions on free movement. Teachers who work from home and care for their children have been in a similar situation to other people who have had to move to a home office and at the same time take care of and help their children with online schooling. Related to this, Fodor and Balogh (2020) found that among people with secondary or tertiary education and good access to the Internet, men took on more childcare, care for the elderly and household chores than before the pandemic, but five times more women than men in Hungary said they would need more help with such tasks from their partners.

The focus-groups and interviews we made did not allow us to affirm the existence of such burdens in the case of Romanian women teachers and we can only assume that the results of Rédai (2021) and Fodor and Balogh (2020) could also exist in their case.

The present article has some limitation, the most important being the exploratory character of it and the inexistence of a clear set of hypothesis to be tested with the help of empirical data.

Despite that we can conclude that at present there is a clear need for a more refined approach to the study of women teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic, which could offer solutions both for the improvement of their daily lives and for the future advancements in the educational system.

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ECOTOURISM, FEMININE ENTREPRENEURSHIP, LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *In recent years, the trends in tourism industry have been those of returning to nature and (re) discovering authentic cultural values. Of all the forms of tourism, ecotourism is distinguished by the strongest link with the natural and cultural environment, representing the sustainable tourism with the highest growth rate in the world. Our research focuses on women's entrepreneurship, ecotourism, and local development. The main objective of our research is to collect success stories on the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship in the field of tourism in Romania in order to show the link between tourism and the socio-economic development of women. The interviews with 10 women entrepreneurs from different regions of Romania highlighted important themes such as the socio-professional trajectory; the work environment; the entrepreneurial motivation; the assigned or assumed gender roles; the impact of small businesses on local communities; the personal and professional life balance; the gender discrimination; the effect of the pandemic on business; the networking. We noticed interferences and overlaps such as the complementarity of small business entrepreneurship and the duplication and management of one's tourism business. We also noticed that the pandemic has helped women entrepreneurs maintain their projects because restrictive measures have affected more mass tourism than ecotourism. The entrepreneurs have shown the desire to develop and promote the ecotourism sector in Romania, while remaining independent in the labor market.*

Keywords: *Feminine entrepreneurship; success stories; ecotourism; local economy; Romania.*

Introduction

The contraction of the primary sector in the 1960s reduced women's participation and increased their unemployment rates, but the expansion of the tertiary sector in the 1990s provided women with many employment opportunities and increased their level of employment and social empowerment. Some forms of employment are abusive, underpaid, and encourage stereotypical female work, but employment offers women a real opportunity to improve the quality of their lives (UNWTO, 2019). The participation of women in the labor market is an indicator of the economic development of a country.

Tourism can be an important sector that contributes to economic growth, social changes, privatization, and the development of infrastructure in general and in particular for economies in transition (Apostolopoulos, Yiorgos, Sevil Sönmez, and Dallen J. Timothy, 2001). Tourism can function as an instrument of economic empowerment by opening up new markets for small and medium enterprises. In its report which aims at empowering women through tourism (Ateljevic, I. 2008), the researchers demonstrate the fact that tourism can be used as a sector where women from all hierarchies of society can be trained and educated to acquire skills in the tourism industry. They

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can engage in different forms of creative entrepreneurship that give them a whole range of skills, and most importantly, more power and control over what happens to them and their community.

Statistics show that women represent more than a third of those employed in the non-financial commercial economy and almost two-thirds in basic tourism activities. However, the gross hourly earnings of women in accommodation and food services are lower than those of men across the European Union. Women in the tourism industry are still overrepresented in lower-status jobs with fewer opportunities for career advancement and are often treated unequally.

Tourism, integration of women and *empowerment*

Despite the growing number of studies on tourism and women's empowerment (Scheyvens, Regina, 1999, Cole, Stroma, 2006; Farahani & Dabbaghi, 2018; Alarcón, Daniela Moreno, and Stroma Cole, 2019; Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2020), a significant gap remains in the political and socio-economic conditions of countries where tourism is a strategy for economic development. There is also a gap in the often-marginalized status of women in politics and policymaking. In addition, little research attention has been paid to gender implications in tourism career choices and the relationship to women's empowerment, with the existing literature largely gender-neutral. Arguably, these questions also reflect the under-researched role of gender in the global economy (Seyfi et al., 2020) in the case of tourism studies, although the area of gender is recognized as "a critical arena action to achieve sustainable development" (Boluk et al., 2019, p.852) there are still many under-explored avenues.

Empowerment is a multidimensional social process intended to help individuals take control of the factors that affect their lives (Scheyvens, Regina, 1999; Eger et al., 2018). The concept of women's empowerment lies at the heart of understanding sustainability. In large part, this is due to the fact that the framework for sustainability has shifted from a focus on intergenerational justice, as in the Brundtland report, to a more comprehensive concept that seeks to uphold human freedoms, rather than the mere ability to respond to felt needs. As Sen (2013, p. 6) observes, "human freedoms include the satisfaction of needs, but also the freedom to define and pursue our own goals, objectives and commitments, regardless of their connection to our own particular needs." This shift in focus meant that the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) were explicitly resolved by promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women as effective means to fight poverty, hunger and disease and to stimulate truly sustainable development (UNDP - United Nations Development Programme, 2015). The review of the MDGs and the preparatory work for the SDGs have placed greater emphasis on human rights and empowerment as central to development (Nanda Ved P., 2016).

The specific elements of women's empowerment in the SDGs (Goal 5) (UN Women, 2020), highlight how the concept has been mainstreamed into development thinking, including tourism (Cole, 2018; Boluk et al., 2019). By generating income in SMEs and large related businesses (OMT, 2019), it is argued that tourism can empower all individuals in a community and especially marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as women (Ferguson, Lucy, 2011). Stefan, Daniel, et al (2021) also mention the need of female entrepreneurship in the context of sustainable business creation but they also admit there is gap research in the literature dealing with the interconnections between gender and sustainable business creation.

Cole (2018) has criticized the discussion of empowerment in the development literature and calls for a reconceptualization of tourism entrepreneurship for women beyond its artificial economic and masculinist frameworks (Figueroa-Domecq et al., 2020). For Cole (2018, p.2), "empowerment, as it is so often conceptualized, concerns only productive and non-reproductive

work, and fails to address the structural inequalities that underlie societies built on symbolic and normative patriarchal codes". Indeed, the focus on women's entrepreneurship and access to microfinance as potential empowerment only reinforce existing gender-specific structural inequalities in global and national economic and financial systems (Robinson et al., 2019).

Research design

Our research focuses on female entrepreneurship, tourism and local development. The main objective of our research is to collect success stories on the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship in the field of tourism in Romania in order to show the link between tourism and the socio-economic development of women.

We are therefore going to meet women who have launched their own projects and who, in addition to creating their own jobs and becoming financially independent, have succeeded in promoting local tourism, thereby contributing to the local economy.

Given the lack of clear statistical data on the number of women employed in the sector, a snowball sampling technique was adopted to explore the research questions. Thus, we made progress in building the corpus either through audio-recorded face-to-face interviews or through recorded online meetings. We believe that the main emphasis will fall on empowerment but also on the difficulties of women (given the barriers in bank lending, the slowness in the development of support provisions for small and medium-sized enterprises).

Qualitative research tends to target a relatively small sample; this focused character makes it possible to understand the individuality of the phenomenon studied and the uniqueness of its circumstances (Maxwell, Joseph A., 2012). This research will follow the concept of 'data saturation', where additional interviews added little or no additional information (Creswell, John W., and Cheryl N. Poth, 2018). A pilot study was conducted with three interviewees to test the interview questions, as well as the interview style and approach (Kim, 2011). A semi-structured in-depth interview process was used to gather in-depth accounts of respondents' experiences. The questions were formulated according to the research objective and were selected from related studies (Scheyvens, Regina, 1999, 2000) and modified to be applicable to the Romanian context. Interviews were open-ended in order to elicit more spontaneous opinions and avoid the potential bias associated with restricting responses to the researcher's own fixed categories (Creswell, John W., and Cheryl N. Poth, 2018). The interview guide asked questions about the characteristics of the female workforce, the involvement of women in tourism, and perceptions of the role and empowerment of women in the family, community, etc.

The data collected will be interpreted by a thematic analysis which represents the qualitative approach most widely used to analyze the interviews (Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke, 2006); which is important for working within social science paradigms and for seeking a richer understanding of empirical material (Braun, Virginia, and Victoria Clarke, 2006; Nowell et al., 2017).

As Atkinson (1998: 8) explains, "a life story is a fairly comprehensive account of the whole life experience, highlighting the most important aspects". What was most important to us was to view each interviewee as an "expert and authority in their own life" (ibid.: 59). The women were selected based on a reasoned sampling strategy and with the help of the Localm company, itself founded by a woman, whose aim is to promote ecotourism in Romania. As explained by Ritchie et al. (2003: 107), "the sampling units are chosen on purpose" for their ability to provide a detailed understanding.

The pandemic has upset our economic, social, cultural life, etc., we wanted to study whether in a fairly feminized field (derived from care) such as tourism, but on a micro-scale, the pandemic has led to predictable effects of stagnation, bankruptcy, and impoverishment of women.

RQ 1 How did women take the initiative to engage in entrepreneurship?

RQ 2 How has this change affected their professional and personal life?

RQ 3 How has the pandemic affected family and business life?

The projects selected for analysis are: The old house (entrepreneur A.A.); The house under the valley (entrepreneur A.M.); The house under the mountain (entrepreneur A.S.); The garden house (entrepreneur B.G.); Chalet Busuioc (entrepreneur C.B.); Localm - online platform for promoting ecotourism in Romania (entrepreneur C.A.) which also owns a tourist house called At the village; The lavender garden (entrepreneur C. M.); Holidays with views - online platform for promoting tourism in Romania (M.A. entrepreneur); Le stone mill (entrepreneur O.S.); The old man's house (entrepreneur S.P.) which at the same time launched an embroidery workshop in the village of Fundata.

The analysis will be organized into five sections as follows: after the introduction, the following section presents the objective and methodology of the research. The third part is a review of the literature which is divided into three main parts, analyzing the characteristics of ecotourism, the characteristics of the labor market in this field, and the gender stereotypes and counter-stereotypes in the field. Some concluding observations and avenues for future research will be provided at the end of the article.

We estimate that future research on gender and ecotourism should also focus on comparative studies with other countries with similar backgrounds to explore factors that promote or hinder women's empowerment.

Research analysis

Following the interviews conducted with these 10 entrepreneurs, we arrived at the following fundamental themes:

- (1) the socio-professional trajectory (experiences, academic background, career profile, etc.);
- (2) overview of daily tasks and work (hours of work, number of hours worked per week and weekends, worries, concerns, dedication to work, difficulties, challenges, etc.)
- (3) the work environment (constraints, demands, difficulties, responsiveness, challenges, concerns, etc.).
- (4) highlighting the reasons, motivation for launching into entrepreneurship;
- (5) assigned or assumed gender roles;
- (6) the impact of small businesses and entrepreneurship on local communities and regional development;
- (7) the personal / professional life balance;
- (8) the existence / non-existence of gender discrimination;
- (9) the effect of the pandemic on business;
- (10) networking

	Age	Studies	Level of experience	Professional Status	Family status	Location of the interview
F1 – A.A.	35	Tourism and Journalism	1 year	Entrepreneur	Married	Zoom
F2 – A.C.	33	Economic	5 years	Entrepreneur / banking employee	Married	At the village, Bertea
F3 – A.S.	33	Economic	1 year	Entrepreneur / banking employee	Married	The house under the mountain, Fundata
F4 – B.G.	39	Psychology and pedagogy	1 year	Entrepreneur	Married	Zoom
F5 – C.B.	48	-	1 year	Entrepreneur tourism/entrepreneur commerce	Married	Telephone
F6 – C.M.	45	Informatics	7 years	Entrepreneur / IT consultant	Married	The lavender garden, Tiparesti
F7 – M.A.	35	Marketing and communication	4 years	Entrepreneur	Married	Telephone
F8 – M.AD.	31	Communication sciences	2 years	Entrepreneur	Single	Telephone
F9 – O.S.	29	Arts and Social Sciences	1 year	Entrepreneur	Single	Telephone
F10 – S.P.	39	Economic	11 years	Entrepreneur	Single	The old man's house - Fundata

Jean Claude Kaufmann *Corps de femmes regards d'hommes. La sociologie des seins nus*, Paris, Nathan 1995

We interviewed 10 women entrepreneurs from different regions of Romania and of different age and experience in the field of tourism. Women entrepreneurs are between 29 and 48 years old.

Entrepreneurship and socio-professional trajectory

Regarding studies, only one entrepreneur A.A. (The old house) followed a master's degree in Tourism and Journalism in Romania but also in Holland where she proposed to her current business partner who has also become her husband (who at the time was already the head of an incoming tourism company), an offer to promote villages in Romania for foreigners. The other women entrepreneurs took courses at specialized faculties on Communication and Marketing;

Economy; Psychology and Pedagogy; Arts and Sciences or Computer Science. Only one entrepreneur did not mention having a higher education.

The level of experience also depends from one entrepreneur to another because we have 5 out of 10 entrepreneurs who have a level of experience in tourism only one year, a single entrepreneur who started in tourism 2 years ago, another entrepreneur who started her business 4 years ago, but we had also entrepreneurs with more experience in the field, with 5, 7 and 11 years being active in the tourism sector. C.B. (Chalet Busuioc) testified to us the fact that she was honest with her first tourists to say that she has just launched this activity and that she does not necessarily have experience and she asked for detailed feedback on how to improve its services. Thus, after the departure of each tourist, she made small improvements and she remained open to the ideas of new tourists.

6 out of 10 women entrepreneurs have given up their professional activities to become full-time entrepreneurs in tourism, 2 entrepreneurs work in the meantime in the banking sector, one of them is also an entrepreneur in commerce (in a grocery store started within her family) and another entrepreneur is still a consultant in the IT field. Regarding their family status, 3 entrepreneurs are single, and 7 entrepreneurs are married.

Ecotourism, small businesses, family projects

In order to answer the theme which aims at the overview of daily tasks and work, we noticed that only 2 out of 10 entrepreneurs carry out the projects on their own, the others mentioned that it is a family business started with their husbands whose tasks have been shared: the husband, therefore, becomes the support of the wife, he mainly takes care of the building of tourist houses or he manages the team of specialists in the field of construction and all that concerns repairs, installation, electricity, while the woman is the image of the business, she takes care of communication and business development, relations with partners and customers, reception, check-in and check-out of tourists as well as cleaning, furniture, and interior decoration. We can observe that women have more feminine tasks than men, yet entrepreneurs have communicated to us the fact that when they started this business with their husbands, they agreed to share everything, even if it this means to accomplish a masculine task: A.S. (The House under the Mountain): “I helped my husband build the wooden terrace and the internal staircase”; C.M. (The lavender garden): “I have a whole team of women who help me work the land every year and a good man who comes from times to times to do the more difficult jobs. We all work in the same way; we must not leave the weight on the shoulders of the men”.

Regarding the work environment and the challenges faced by women entrepreneurs, we noted 3 main difficulties, namely financial difficulties, lack of experience, and lack of staff. At the same time, women entrepreneurs describe entrepreneurship as "a race against time". The entrepreneurs also mentioned the pandemic as a challenge because they had no visibility concerning the development of their tourism businesses and for some, the challenge has been to change the usual environment, shifting from urban to rural life and adapting to the new climate. A.M. (The house under the valley); A.S. (The house under the mountain) encountered the same problem: “Due to the lack of infrastructure, since we are in a rather isolated village, we fought to build everything here: the road, the running water, the electricity, the Internet, the heating, etc.”. For C.A. (At the village/Localm) on the other hand, the main challenge was to stand out against its competition: “We are new to the market and we have many competitors, so our challenge was to gain visibility, but we did it through storytelling”.

Entrepreneurial motivation

To overcome these challenges, they found solutions thanks to their entrepreneurial motivation. It is interesting to see the starting point of each of them, especially when we can summarize their entrepreneurial desires into 3 categories: *the heritage* that has turned into a means of subsistence for C.B. (Chalet Busuioc); M.A. (The house under the valley); O.S. (The stone mill); *the chance or the necessity*, or the need for additional income for B.G. (The garden house) S.P. (The old man's house) and the desire to undertake what has been called the business plan or the desire to keep the traditions and promote rural life in Romania which goes hand in hand with *the need to be independent on the market work* for A.A. (The Old House); A.S. (The house under the mountain); C.A. (At the village /Localm); C.M. (The lavender garden) and M.A. (Holidays with views).

For those who mentioned inheritance as entrepreneurial motivation, they either inherit a house or a piece of land which represents the fundamental basis of their tourism business: C.B. (Chalet Busuioc): “We inherited a piece of land and we did not want to let it destroy itself, we agreed to build a house without thinking that we are going to become entrepreneurs and that we are going to earn money from it” either they inherit the family business for which they took responsibility to develop it well: O.S. (The stone mill): “I took control of the family business because they no longer wanted to take care of it and I am in charge now to manage this project”.

For B.G. (The garden house) it was the chance that made her launch her business in tourism: “First of all, it is my childhood home and I wanted to make repairs to come here and spend time with my children, but then we realized that we cannot maintain two houses and this one we rented it and we were very surprised to see that there are strong demands for accommodation in this area”. While for S.P. (The old man's house), the economic crisis was the event that hijacked her career: “At the beginning, I presented myself as a real estate entrepreneur, I had a partner, we built houses and then we sold them, but due to the economic crisis we faced in 2008, there was no more interest in this sector, my partner had given up on the business and I found myself keeping a house and renting it out on weekends. Then I built a second house and launched my embroidery workshop”.

A.A. (The old house) searched for a partner during her studies in Holland: “I contacted a company in charge of incoming tourism and the boss (who is now my husband) liked my proposal to promote Romania together”. C.M. (The lavender garden) found her entrepreneurial motivation after a sad event in her life: “My cousin stressed a lot about the fact that he was fired, and he found himself at the age of 50 without a job and with two girls in college. Unfortunately, his body could not fight off cancer and he lost the battle very quickly to the disease. We built this project with the idea of ensuring us long working life and being independent of employers.”

Entrepreneurship and local development

Knowing that a few of them have vast experience in the field of tourism, the question which aimed at their contribution concerning regional development caused them some concerns until they understood that their insignificant contribution, as they saw it, was really important to the region. Through their individual entrepreneurial projects, they have succeeded in promoting the region where they started their projects, creating jobs and selling local products. A.C. (The village/ Localm) created the platform for the promotion of ecotourism in Romania in an ideology of sustainable development: “We promote all rural areas of Romania because first of all, we want our children, as well as all those who live in the urban environment, to manage to live authentic experiences as we did and that they preserve these places as our ancestors did for us”. Following the same ideology, B.G. (The garden house) advise tourists to consume organic food from their neighbors' own production: “We advise tourists to go and buy food products from our neighbors:

milk, eggs, meat, fruits and vegetables both to benefit from a healthy diet, but also to help the community”. And finally, to better help the community, the entrepreneurs created jobs, more precisely, they asked for help for the construction of the houses, for various repairs, for the furniture, for the maintenance of houses, etc. For example, as A.A. (The old house) is developing her project, she needs more employees: “We did the construction of the houses with the workers from here and today we made a contract on a year for a man who will help us grow our project”.

The line between professional life and personal life

The question of the reconciliation of professional and personal life is very recurrent in academic research. Regarding our study, only 2 in 10 entrepreneurs mentioned that they do not have a personal life and that they are totally dedicated to their project. It should be mentioned that these 2 entrepreneurs are also single. For others, personal and professional life becomes complementary, because they hardly distinguish between the two of them, knowing that the whole family is involved in the business and that they spend a lot of time together: A.A. (The old house): “We have a rule, after 7 PM we don't talk about work anymore”; B.G. (The garden house): “We have different priorities: my husband is the boss in the tailor shop that we have had for a long time and I am the boss in our tourism business, so everyone knows their responsibilities and we manage to work well together. Our kids are helping us also.”; C.M. (The lavender garden): “I think the most important thing is that we work together, this project brought us together as a family, our daughter helps us with the communication part and then in the evening when we return home, we are all tired and we want to eat, to take a bath and sleep, so we understand each other needs”.

We insisted on the issue of discrimination or non-discrimination of women as entrepreneurs in tourism and all the women interviewed called themselves lucky not to have situations of gender discrimination to tell us, nor insurmountable situations. They still felt a slight difference in mentality between the urban community and the rural community which wants to deal more with a man than a woman when it comes to business. S.P. (The old man's house) encountered difficulties in gaining the trust of the rural community because of the 2 major factors, first of all, she was very young when she started the business, and also she was a single woman managing the project: “When I arrived in this village, I was only 23 years old and I had difficulty winning the trust of the workers and especially of the suppliers who tried to deceive me and sell me the material at a superior price thinking that I am a woman who does not know the market. Once I was also asked if my parents know that I am building a house”. Apart from these small differences in credibility with the community, workers and suppliers, they did not have any concerns with partners and tourists, and they did not feel any differences with their male partners.

Even in networking, despite the existence of associations such as the Association of Women Entrepreneurs in Romania or the Association of Women for Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development, only C.M. (The lavender garden) participated in events dedicated to women organized by Business Women Forum Romania in the section “She did it” where she told the story of her project and she was a participant in the “Female Entrepreneur” program whose goal was to improve entrepreneurial education. The others entrepreneurs are more active in groups of entrepreneurs in tourism (without mentioning the gender of the entrepreneur). They were not involved in activities aimed at empowerment for women, but they showed the interest in participating in events dedicated to women entrepreneurs and they even gave advice to future women entrepreneurs: A.A. (The old house): “Do not hesitate, with patience we can do anything!”; A.S. (The house under the mountain): “It is important to find your place in the community and to believe in your project”; A.C. (At the village/Localm): “This is an area that fills you with energy

and makes you grow personally and professionally"; C.B. (Chalet Busuioc): "Be honest and transparent and you won't lose anything".

The context of the pandemic and the change in tourist destinations

Contrary to what we were thinking, the pandemic has helped women entrepreneurs maintain their projects because restrictive measures have affected more mass tourism (city breaks, hotels, swimming pools, etc.) and less ecotourism. In addition, the impossibility of international travel has favored regional tourism. The measures that our entrepreneurs have put in place for the safety of tourists were the self-check-in (all instructions were given via phone to greet tourists); online payment; additional cleaning and 24h between bookings. The privacy of the tourists was also an important factor in their choice. Following the pandemic experiences, they even had ideas and initiatives to improve their projects: C.M. (The lavender garden): "We have had many tourists during this pandemic and this made us think that we must buy more land to be able to respect the needs of our tourists because they come here to relax and we don't want this garden to become a crowded place"; A.A. (The Old House): "We have understood that the needs of Romanian tourists have changed and suddenly we are building two more small houses and a Glamping where tourists will be able to connect with nature".

Conclusions

In conclusion, we noticed interferences and overlaps such as the complementarity of small business entrepreneurship and the duplication and management of one's tourism business (for example accountant, consultant etc. and manager of his tourism business). We can mention following the concept of "plural tourist" (Guibert Christophe, 2016) the "plural entrepreneur" active in the area of marketing, trading with organic products and hospitality services in campsites and residences. All the projects mentioned show a life story unfolding at the crossroads of an emotional choice (inherited heritage with symbolic value, passion for nature) and pressure (family drama, financial crisis of 2009, pandemic of 2020). In addition to financial and cultural difficulties (patriarchal mentality in rural Romania), there are technological changes involving new challenges to be managed (online tourist services, virtual concierge).

In the future, it would be interesting to continue research on the interface between marketing and entrepreneurship, with an emphasis on marketing and new methods of communication in small businesses, on entrepreneurial networks, and internationalization.

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**KNOWLEDGE SHARING, A NEW BREATH IN A PRODUCTIVE CYCLE
CONTENT CREATION AND MOBILITY IN THE NETWORK SOCIETY BY VALENTIN
VANGHELESCU - A REVIEW**

Ana Maria Munteanu¹

The study “Content creation and mobility in the network society. Convergence. Collision. Transformation” is the author's doctoral thesis developed within the Doctoral School of Sociology, at the University of Bucharest. The doctoral research was carried out in a period characterized by ambivalent relationships between social paradigms; the very theory of networks has been confronted with successive re-thematizations, as a result of the technological leap from web 2.0 to web 3.0 - the semantic web -, on the background of concerns related to rethinking the sustainability in contexts marked by the interconnection of risk – the competition for Internet control, the non-transparent use of personal data by IT giants, the deepening crisis of democracy by increasing misinformation, manipulation of information and emotions, the structural effects of epistemic inequities, etc. - and the growing expectations from institutions and the quality of governance during crises that have tested global cooperation capabilities.

The approach of sustainability through interconnected multiple circularities - politics, economics, ecology, technology, culture, education - has imprinted a trend of progressive abstraction of epistemology, but also the emphasis on connecting epistemology to ethics, to differentiate between necessity and possibility (modal epistemology), or to identify and substantiate collective aspects of knowledge production - for example, collaborative science, spaces for innovation based on advanced knowledge sharing, the role of communities of practice - researchers, engineers, planners, developers, communicators, so on.

According to the sociology of networks studies, the Internet is a technical system that develops social assignments very close to the roles and identifications of real structures, functionally and systemically oriented, which preceded and coexist with the Internet, and to which the Internet is a global context of communication.

According to Dee Pratt², it difficult to analyse it because “the elements of the structure do not appear to be satisfactorily separated from the contextual elements”. The methodological solution suggested by this researcher is to develop systemic models that do not limit themselves to addressing applications – i.e., technologies, devices, software, and intelligent algorithms - but to include theories of social structure, to generate means, respectively ways to investigate and describe open-ended processes as if one or more players were creating the communication process model for other players and users.

Applications, the setting, and artificial intelligence (AI) entities are approached in an integrated way based on complex reasoning models, defining techno-social systems. The latter, although optimized through uses and communicative acts - micro-processes in which social structure elements are blurred by the abundance and insecurity of information in the digital

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² Dee Pratt, *The Internet as Social System: Applying Margaret Archer's Theory of Morphogenesis to Hypermedia Communication*, Journal of Systemics, Cybernetics and Information, Volume 12, Number 1, 2014.

environment - are largely shaped by the competition between high-tech giants, the development of artificial intelligence and the quality of design. AI networks are a technology that supports industry and marketing by accelerating innovative processes as advanced knowledge applications and, at the same time, take over and develop social assembly models mainly through the open game strategy doubled by the operating rules of the setting.

The orientation towards the efficiency models of institutional communication - which include norms, values, ethics, expectations of social and spatial justice, etc. - led the author, a teacher in the Communication Sciences program at the “Ovidius” University of Constanța, to a case study focused on the development of a collaborative platform and a network of users (agency), based on the distribution of the controlled knowledge of civic stakes (structure); during the observation and analysis stages, this allowed the registration of mobility and the transformation of cultural and social capital in communication, organization and civic action capabilities – the Edgeryders platform, “Spot the Future Bucharest” group.

In the research on the collaborative culture in the digital context, the author faced the difficulty of distinguishing marks of differentiation through cognitive elements that can be attributed either to institutional communication or to civic projects, in content creation, a(n) (informal) subjective and inter-subjective manifestation largely modelled on the categories of digital content, in this case, the User Generated Content (UGC).

On the other hand, the study was able to identify through case analysis a platform whose design reflects the stakes of forming networks of citizens - stakeholders – i.e., agents able to understand and contribute to the reform of institutions, to join political and civic projects. The platform is a tool for the transfer, organization, and application of social knowledge and for the formation of skills and participatory behaviours in the “new public sphere” of networks theorized by Manuel Castells³.

Defining a theoretical strategy that is sufficiently comprehensive (open) in order to develop a systemic model and to take into account the link between a reality projected by a structure - organization or institution, network of institutional actors, non-governmental actors, and / or companies of public interest - and the context shaped by the collaborative culture as a type of behaviour valued in the digital ecosystem, involved defining ways for it to be described by “the set of theoretical ideas and hypotheses regarding the relationships between institutional characteristics and political, civic action, performance and change”. At the same time, this also implied the maintenance of a critical margin of reflection on the institutions and digital democratic experimentalism, and thereby opportunities and solutions to challenges, risks, emerging processes and the escalation of the crisis of democracy in the context of the 4th industrial revolution according to the Global Risk Report from 2017, 2018, 2019.

March and Olsen⁴ argue that most political systems can be interpreted as operating through a “combination of organizing principles” that should leave recognizable traces in the network of interactions and messages, as paths of the democratic process. The three perspectives for approaching functional democracies theorized by them are: institutional (1), rational actors (2) and

³ Manuel Castells, *The New Public Sphere, Global Civil Society, Communication Network and Global Governance*, The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, Volume: 616 issue: 1, page(s): 78-93

⁴ James March, Johann Olsen, (2005:1998), *The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Order*, Published online by Cambridge University Press, 04 April 2005.

cultural community (3). These perspectives are not exclusive, but rather delimit intervals in which developers - social entrepreneurs, researchers, networks of institutional partners, networks of non-governmental organisations, public interest companies - act according to legitimate communication protocols with the public, opt for one or the other perspective in their strategies, co-creating science and technology (applications) with the society. Thus, although the culture and collaborative devices favoured by Internet micro-politics are globally attributed to the volatility of opinion flows and to the difficulty of adjustments based on the shared meaning identified by Habermas⁵ as a destabilizing factor for the public rationality system (opinion - speech / deliberation - legislation), precisely the management of the knowledge gap (advanced knowledge / common sense knowledge) and epistemic inequities as structural factors require redefining the structure in order to respond effectively to technological acceleration, challenges and uncertainty. Taken together, content creation and mobility, in this study, generate an open and cyber formative circularity. They shape the understanding and train the actors in the knowledge society and knowledge economy, generating only a “new breath in a productive cycle”⁶. This approach allows the construction of a connection between the “mutual sharing of meanings” in the theory of communicative action and the “sharing of knowledge”, or tacit knowledge⁷, which, intuitively, seems to exclude the structure (explicit, clear, systematic, falsifiable knowledge); however, this coexists in another dimension with the new type of space⁸.

In the research approach, in addition to the theoretical “antennas”, it was also necessary to dissociate, to release principles, schemes and operators from digital uses and assemblages, with the purpose of integrating them into structures of public rationality and introducing a design observation plan. The design is a product of advanced knowledge, both technical and social, the latter being concentrated on the principle according to which “knowledge is a learning experience”. Thus, the author assigned to the concepts a role of reagents in the various phases of the exploratory approach, in order to differentiate this architecture (program - platform - group / network) from other platforms, media content or hybrid articulations of digital content of bloggers and vloggers.

Even theoretically, perspectives are not always easy to differentiate. March and Olsen warn against the risk according to which the adherents of any of the three paradigms - institutional, rational actor, cultural community - may end up reducing the discussion on the delineation, in the case of this study, of a digital object, having in addition to the technological layer, a cultural layer, as well as reflections, traces, bookmarks of the social structure. They say that there is always the temptation to reduce the discussion to only one of the terms of only one paradigm, as a “special case” of the preferred alternative. Pragmatically, however, the three perspectives are different. They focus distinctively on different aspects of political and public life, on various explanatory

⁵ Jürgen Habermas, (1996:1992), *Between Facts and Norms Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, MIT Press.

⁶ Ikujiro Nonaka, Hirotaka Takeuchi, 1995, *The Knowledge-Creating Company: How Japanese Companies Create the Dynamics of Innovation*, Oxford University Press.

⁷ William F.Hanks, Sachiko Ide, Yasuhiro Katagiri, Scott Saft, Yoko Fujii, Kishiko Ueno, 2019, *Communicative interaction in terms of ba theory: Towards an innovative approach to language practice*, Journal of Pragmatics, Volume 145, May 2019, Pages 63-71

⁸ Derek Thurber, *Designing Learning Experiences for the Future of Learning in the Digital Age: A Proposed Framework*, Current Issues in Education, 22(1), January, 2021.

factors and on different strategies for improving social and political systems. Hence, a responsibility for the researcher to correctly identify the disappearance point in which the inter-subjective aspects of the digital ontology, i.e., those of the setting (architecture) and those of the social structure, can fade or even cancel each other out. This is a situation mentioned by Félix Guattari in his posthumous text “Lignes de Fuites Pour un autre monde de possible”⁹. Hence the need to follow the evolution of the various lines that make up the multiple conceptual networks, to create charts, to capture intersections and escape lines.

The case study can be broadly included in the category of grounded theory, avoiding the contradiction in favour of the horizon line and the ontological re-thematization of the digital object by the analytical dissociation and reassembly of its layers. In this regard, the author did not limit himself to an analysis of conversational interactions, or to a network analysis, but viewed them as layers of the same complex and, above all, dynamic, an interactive object, which can accommodate the emergence of a change in the level of understanding and the communicative action around a reality-project. This stake led him to analyse the set of objectives, ideas, and methods of the project, presented in the manual of the platform designed as a tool of public pedagogy, as well as to analyse the feedback. Moreover, it required an extension of the analysis horizon in order to include the design of the application as an efficiency testing step (according to the same manual), so that collaborative interactions can be considered, to a certain extent, analogous to specific operations of testing a prototype.

On the other hand, there was a need for a sufficiently broad and relevant theoretical approach around the core of reflection and conceptualization of the agent-structure relationship, in the context of accelerated changes, challenges and impacts of technology on the structure, assuming that agent rationality depends largely on knowledge, and knowledge “if it is performative, it is spatial”¹⁰. At the same time, the learning experience cannot be reduced to the calculation of communication facilities or device performance, a basic criterion in considering the Internet as a type of service for millions of users. Thus, the network society is approached from the perspective of reflexive sociology and of the concern for the sustainability of institutions, precisely in order to strengthen the stabilizing factors for the social fabric - public education projects, alternatives, transparency of power and influence structures, cognitive investment in citizens and so on.

The methodological design reflects a research strategy that structures tools for approaching a collaborative platform, both as a digital object - in terms of the promises displayed by the setting -, and by theoretically justified analytical filtering, in relation to sets of concepts; some of them precede the network, either in the form of network vs. structure, either in terms of flexible uses of concepts such as “system”, “agency”, etc.

Although the creation of a systemic model cannot be identified as the explicit stake of this research, it was gradually built by addressing the ontology of the Internet in relation to structural stakes; this is a tense relationship marked by competition and confrontation, but also a complementary one, thus framing more precisely the rational institutions in relation to the mimetic, or symbolic ones, or those of non-human entities, multiplying and / or aggregating messages in

⁹ Félix Guattari, *Lignes de fuite. Pour un autre monde de possibles*, Editions de l' Aube, Paris, 2011.

¹⁰ Shann Thurnbull (2003). *The Science of Corporate Governance*, Wyley Online Library, p.137

the space of the global communication network, defined by design. In this sense, the theory he chose, and which raises the designers' interest is the realist-critical theory of the British philosopher Roy Bhaskar¹¹. This theory allows nuances of the concept of reality - real, current, and empirical, with increased relevance for describing and explaining the processes of knowledge. According to this theory, the realm of reality includes mechanisms (respectively, causes) that often manifest themselves simultaneously with events and experiences or independently, through latencies, etc. This category of the real is influenced by the knowledge of structural complexity; the present includes events and experiences; while the empirical is the "tip of the iceberg", encompassing "residual" traces - ideas, thoughts, memories, cognitive acquisitions - generated by events.

According to Pratt, the design of techno-societal systems must acknowledge that the Internet has the nature a social system. In this way, there emerges the opportunity to frame within the reality some description ways and complex logical reasoning, oriented towards solving problems. On the other hand, in observing the differences between a systemic model and the architecture of a platform as a networking space, it is necessary to reconsider systems with open results (unpredictable, risky, or even failure), like "the system created by an agent (author) to reshape a communication system".

This perspective allowed the acknowledgement of an agency in a collaborative culture (associated with autopoiesis, therefore opposite to the structure), the latter being a loop that can metamorphose quickly, unlike the slow transformations of the structure, characterized by "historical inertia". This study is an important step for understanding the complementarities in / between the network, collaborative culture, and social structure (institutions, organizations), advocating a re-thematization of the network ontology through the construction of systemic models and the recovery of the social complexity in the digital culture.

¹¹ Roy Bhaskar (2008:1977). *A Realist Theory of Science*, Routledge.