Journalism 'under' - on the limits of transformation in Romania

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Abstract

The main argument of this paper is that Romanian journalism did not manage to become the subject and main actor within professional self-observed boundaries, but has conserved an object-like position, not only under communism, but as well after. I argue that the objectified position of journalism in Romania has been a continuum, since the beginning of this type of activity. The three theoretical explanatory pillars that I built my argument on are: political culture, path-dependence, and the low institutionalization of rational-legal authority. The first explanatory element refers to the relation of the citizens to power and the state, and more specifically to the implication or withdrawal of regular individuals in the life of their polis. The second refers to the power of the past for explaining present time institutional structuration. On this matter the main process to be observed is how the legacy of journalism under politics has fed the servitude of this sphere of practice to the present day. The latter refers to the instance of incomplete modernization within the Romanian polity, where people in power or established customs are more important than rules and agreed-upon procedures. The above phenomena are visible when studying the field of journalism in its grassroots manifestations.

Keywords

Journalism under politics, professionalization, political culture, path-dependence, rational-legal authority.

Résumé

Le principal argument développé dans cette étude concerne l'échec du journalisme roumain de se poser en tant que sujet et acteur de son propre champ professionnel, en conservant un statut d'objet, non seulement pendant l'époque communiste mais aussi bien après la fin de celle-ci.

Je montrerai que l'objectification de la position du journalisme en Roumanie s'inscrit dans un continuum et cela depuis ces origines. Les trois piliers explicatifs de ma démarche sont les suivants : culture politique, dépendance au sentier et un bas niveau d'institutionnalisation de l'autorité légale rationnelle. Le premier élément d'explication vise la relation entre les citoyens et les pouvoirs politiques et étatiques, plus précisément la participation ou le retrait des individus de la vie de leurs polis. Le deuxième concerne l'emprise du passe sur la structuration institutionnelle du présent. Ici il y a lieu d'observer le processus fondamental par le biais duquel l'héritage de la subordination du journalisme a la politique a nourri le servilisme de ce métier jusqu'à nos jours.

Enfin le dernier renvoie à l'incomplète modernisation de l'espace politique roumain, toujours tributaire aux relations personnelles et aux coutumes, aux détriment des règles et procédures préétablies. Tous ces phénomènes deviennent visibles à l'étude du journalisme tel qu'il se manifeste aux niveaux les plus locaux.

Mots-clés

Journalisme sous domination politique, professionnalisation, culture politique, dépendance au sentier, autorité légale rationnelle.

In this paper I attempt to explore the structural roots of the low autonomy of journalism in Romania, in the framework of the journalism – politics nexus. The starting point, based on empirical research (Petre, 2012), is that Romanian journalism did not manage to become the subject and main actor within professional self-observed boundaries, but has conserved an object-like position, not only under communism, but as well after. I argue that the objectified position of journalism in Romania has been a continuum, since the beginning of this type of activity.

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The three theoretical explanatory pillars that I built my argument on are: political culture, path-dependence, and the low institutionalization of rational-legal authority. The first explanatory element refers to the relation of the citizens to power and the state, and more specifically to the implication or withdrawal of regular individuals in the life of their polis (Almond & Verba, 1996 [1963]). The second refers to the power of the past for explaining present time institutional structuration (North, 1998). On this matter the main process to be observed is how the legacy of journalism under politics has fed the servitude of this sphere of practice to the present day. The latter refers to the instance of incomplete modernization within the Romanian polity, where people in power or established customs are more important than rules and agreed-upon procedures (Weber, 1997). The above phenomena are visible when studying the field of journalism in its grassroots manifestations (Petre, 2012).

The expectations have been high when it comes to journalism as carrier of freedom of expression after 1989, yet it merely managed to be the voice of change, but not the main actor of its own transformation. While under communism journalism was placed solidly under politics, after communism the range of servitudes merely diversified and fragmented, ranging from dependence on political actors and donors, to dependence on economic actors.

One decade ago, Alina Mungiu-Pippidi remarked: "few studies have focused on the role of the media and broadcasting in new democracies and the relationship between the media and the emerging political and social order" (2003: 32). Meanwhile, the scholarly interest in the media-politics nexus has not grown much, especially in the context of fading interest in the new democracies of Eastern Europe and shifting attention towards China and the Arab Spring.

Political culture and subjective empowerment

In order to make sense of the subservient position of journalists in the Romanian polity I propose political culture as one of the theoretical explanatory framework (Almond & Verba, 1996 [1963]). Thus, I address the state dependent subject position of the Romanian citizens in general. I argue that the subject position has been a continuum in the Romanian polity; that has experienced multiple authoritarian regimes since the inception of the state in the second part of the nineteenth century (Hitchins, 1994, 1996). In order to make sense of the variations in the relation of the citizens to their society, to power, and to the state, one should start by explaining the western model of autonomous citizen. I argue that it is actually more curious to observe the emergence and the existence of fully fledged, participant citizens, than that of passive individuals. In order to make sense of the participant citizen Ernest Gellner is revealing in this respect: "Modern Western civilization was a gamble that ordinary men were capable of disinterested reason. Their autonomy and freedom from coercion required that they refrain from coercing others in the name of morality or belief (…) Both their freedom and their prosperity depended on virtues of dependability, reciprocity, and performance – virtues reinforced neither by ritual nor by revelation, but by the interest each member of society had in the disinterested performance of obligations by himself and others." (in Gress, 1998: 506)

In order to contextualize the Romanian case, one simple question is whether the Romanian citizens have historically been under coercive pressures or whether they are autonomous individuals that would reciprocate their relations according to self-interest. One of the characteristics of the communist regimes was the total penetration of the state and of the main party into all spheres of life and activities. Under these circumstances, the citizens were first of all clients of the state, and least of all autonomous individuals aware of their responsibilities, taking individual decisions, and living upon the consequences of their decisions. "The stultifying and demeaning communicative and associative conditions and, as a consequence, the widespread 'semantic incompetence', 'cognitive confusion', and 'self-doubt' (…) stood in the way of any formation of agency and made most people most of the time actually cooperate in their own repression. They became apathetic about collective aspirations and were forced into a passive and fatalistic 'semi-loyalty'. (di Palma in Elster, Offe, Preuss et alii, 1998: 13) The communist state, according to some observers, did have the effect of infantilizing its subjects, of making them totally dependent on the state, its resources and its authority.

Political culture carries explanatory power in the issue of activism versus passivity, agency versus

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object-like positions. This perspective is useful for situating the actors in the field of media when the discussion narrows to this specific sector. Romanians have traditionally been objectified in a hierarchical relation with the authority, be it the communist state, the ruler or the editorial coordinator for this case. The communist system did nothing but enforce a feature that had already been present in the political culture of the Romanian citizens . This type of relating to the state and to the power can be an explanatory key for the behavior of the ones already in the field of journalism and of the ones joining the field after the fall of communism. It has explanatory power for the relations with politics that had been specific for communism and that has taken a plural shape but a similar ethos and substance after communism, in the era of neo-liberalism.

On legacy; some considerations on the position of journalism under communism

Journalism under politics represents the key to understand this sphere of activity under the communist regime, both in terms of its structure, and in terms of the actors in the field. In this part of the paper I problematize the rules governing the field as well as the process of naturalization of the politically controlled understanding of journalism in Romania.

When it comes to the origins of the politics – journalism nexus in the soviet understanding, even before the Bolshevik revolution, in the first years of the twentieth century, Lenin had elaborated the doctrine of a party press; that was to be a collective propagandist, a collective agitator, and a collective organizer. From its very inception, the Soviet understanding of journalism did not envisage the autonomy of this field, but considered it a mere tool for achieving higher political ends. On the same token, Stalin would call the press 'his longest-range weapon'. The bellicose vocabulary when dealing with the press is illuminating as to the assigned position of this activity in the communist society, moreover as to the militant orientations of the ones to take part in this mission. The Polish scholar Goban-Klas observed that "totalitarianism does not tolerate any form of professionalism, as it cannot stand any form of independence." (1994: 30) It is against this understanding that journalism under communism in Romania is to be discussed.

The structuration of the field of journalism after the Second World War was in the logic of a mere appurtenance to the political structure. "The Communist information-propaganda apparatus developed along the structures of the party apparatus. It designed what should be known and said at any given moment, censoring and schooling creative writers, spreading fear and ignorance among audiences, teaching the only correct answers in a particular situation.' (Goban-Klas, 1994:16)

In Romania, after 1965 up until the fall of communism in 1989, it was the Ceauşescu family that had ruled Romania, and in a very absolutist way. "In the RCP since the ascent of the clan, this centralizing principle has been taken to its logical extreme, which is the subordination to all party life, all debate, all decision-making, to the whim of the top leadership." (Gilberg, 1990: 93) The only agency exerted was that of the ruler and of the ones in a small circle of power. The journalists were mere channels that had to accurately transmit the official version of life and politics. Moreover, as Tismăneanu remarks "in the 1980s, repression was harshest in Romania (…) Bulgaria and Romania were set apart from other countries by certain 'sultanistic' tendencies and a strong reliance on nationalist mobilization. In Romania, the personalization of power gave rise to a strange blend of 'dynastic socialism'." (in Elster, Offe, Preuss et alii, 1998: 42-3)

The odds that the practices of journalism would eventually become institutionalized as a distinct profession were thus structurally low under communism. "Since information is a main instrument of social control, political power belongs to those who control information, to the programming unit. Monopolistic power requires a monopoly of information – to control all knowledge (collected in universities, archives, libraries, etc.) and the institutions that retrieve and analyze information (research institutes), process it (bureaucratic apparatus) and distribute it (media). The monopolization of information, communication, and decision making is not accidental; on the contrary, it is part of any form of totalitarianism."(Goban Klas, 1994: 15)

Journalism in the communist understanding enjoyed a reduced space for developing a specific professional behavior, and this behavior was largely dependent on politics. "They also have the least clearly defined professional qualifications and skills so they are the most easily politically regulated and penetrated profession" .(Curry, 1 990:7) In Romania,

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the role of the journalists covering politics was merely that of transcribing political positions and documents; that of transmitting the official voice of the Communist Party to the population. One specific task was that of receiving information from the state news agency Agerpres, and of publishing it unchanged to the last comma. "The normative messages (…) provided the 'pattern' of what could and should be said or expressed in public (…) All words and images were controlled, that is, the entire public discourse," (Goban-Klas, 1994: 15)

At the same time, journalism in communism was a privileged job; it was performed by a limited number of people. "The significance of the mass-media in any society, but especially in those where mobilization and modernization are primary goals, sets the journalism profession apart from other professions. Journalists play a broader social and political role than other professionals for whom politics has limited political relevance in their work lives (…) Journalists and their media are charged with being at least the gatekeepers for all but interpersonal communications in the society." (Curry, 1990: 4) In this context, the actors in the field of journalism were important players for the larger political aims of the communist society under continuous construction. The process of joining the field was not open to everybody, but good political credentials and support from high political officials were needed in order to get in. In Romania, it was not as much the school or peer-evaluation that would provide the credentials for the future journalists, but the political actors of the day (Petre, 2012).

The functioning of the Romanian actors in the journalistic field was not on a group or professional basis as much as on an individual basis. More specifically, each journalist would look up to the power and try to stay within the proper limits. In this respect, "the vast majority of the rulers of press institutions, named according to political criteria, were preoccupied, first of all, to be 'forgotten' there for as long as possible (…) [they] knew the few iron rules of the system and did not even want to know anything else." (Schwartz, 2001: 13) It seems that, for most of the cases, the strategies of the ones in the field, especially of the ones in high hierarchical position, was one of conservation rather than of articulated activity in the name of a distinct profession with autonomous characteristics and interests.

There is no doubt that there was some sort of professional identity among the journalists in the communist period, and it is equally true that the participants in the journalistic field were privileged individuals. At the same time, the issue that is of theoretical relevance for the present discussion is that these individuals would take their credentials from their links with the politics rather than from the peer pressure towards professional excellence. It is under this structural circumstance that the move towards professionalization and differentiation into a distinct field has been continuously hampered.

Path-dependence or the limits of transformation into the new order

One of the most fruitful angles of studying the journalism – politics nexus in Romania is that of the transformation from an appurtenance of the communist political order, into something else. It is plausible to state that the legacies of high dependency on politics under communist conditions have been feeding the links between journalism and politics into the new order. I argue that the degree of continuity and inertia is high when it comes to journalism as praxis because of the inherited legacies of the field. If we are to consider the path-dependence paradigm then traditional high autonomy of the journalistic field feeds premises for high autonomy into a new order, while traditional low autonomy feeds premises for the reproduction of low autonomy. "Media institutions evolve over time; at each step of their evolution past events and institutional patterns inherited from earlier periods influence the direction they take." (Hallin & Mancini, 2004:12)

At the same time, most of the standard literature on journalism is built on premises that regard media as autonomous, a 'fourth power' in the state. At the beginning of the nineties, competing sites emerged to provide alternative definitions of journalism. The Anglo-Saxon norm came to shake the old common-sense domestic understanding of journalism under politics in Romania (Petre, 2012). The core values of Anglo-Saxon journalism would be objectivity and impartiality, in sharp contrast to the domestic understandings at that moment. The current understanding of journalism, as derived from the Anglo-Saxon praxis, is that of independent, or at least autonomous profession. The bases of the fact oriented

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journalism are the English philosophical traditions of empiricism, as set by David Hume or John Locke. The premise in this understanding of reality is that whatever is perceivable with the human senses represents reality, and there is no other thing out of the world of perception. I argue that the Anglo-Saxon understanding, that lately frames our common-sense on this profession, is not useful in order to make sense of journalism in its various shapes around the world. In the communist order, that represents the main legacy of Romanian journalism, the empiric reality was less important than the higher political aims. "The publication of information for its own sake never entered into (…) discussions." (Curry, 1990: 5) The praxis of journalism under communism was characterized by limited professional autonomy and tight political control over the field.

The liberal imagination is built on ideas that have to do with the separation of powers in the state and with individuals that have civil rights and freedoms. It was in this conceptual framework that journalism was considered a beneficial element in a plural society; that would serve as forum for the free citizens to express and reach enlightened conclusions. It was more than once that this way of imagining media failed to provide with positive results , for journalism is not automatically an independent and autonomous body, but can as well be subservient to politics, as it was the case for the soviet press.

I argue that journalism in Romania has been more successful as the voice of change, than to change itself into an autonomous field of professional practice. There are various arguments for this position the most important being that vocabulary can be more prone to change, being set mainly in the language, than an institutional structure that is set in routine and internalized processes and human relations. Actually, the discourse has been a versatile device that allowed the old actors to occupy positions into the emerging new (dis)order.

One of the ideas derived from the path-dependence theoretical paradigm is that journalism as a sphere of practice that had been governed directly by the communist political order has been likely to stay frozen in a natural disposition of subordination after the demise of the authoritarian regime. This proposition is sustained by the empirical evidence gathered in my doctoral work. The ideas of Michael Foucault are illuminating in this respect as, according to the French sociologist "the act of liberation is not sufficient to establish the practices of liberty that later on will be necessary for this people, this society and these individuals to decide upon receivable and acceptable forms of their existence or political society." (in Bernauer & Rasmussen eds. 1988: 12-3)

In this respect, the structures and institutions that it developed, and no less important, the actors populating the field, had been socialized in a social and political imagination of natural political subservience. It was noticed quite fast that the new language of democracy was an access key to influential networks. At the same time, it was not, for many actors in the field of journalism, an internalized, meaningful, discourse that would translate into fundamental changes at the level of action and actual organization of the field.

The naturalization of the subservient role of journalism into the social structure under communism has been much more resistant to change than anticipated by the democratic enthusiasts. It might be argued that the fall of communism meant as well the multiplication of voices and of institutional actors in the field of journalism. At the same time, the field has experienced a multiplication of the instances of subservience as well, ranging from political bonds to emerging economic ones.

While the potentialities of expression have been much larger after the fall of communism, providing space for different perspectives and legitimating new ideas like freedom and democracy, the structural dimension of the field of journalism has proved much less prone to fundamental change in terms of an institutional setting that would have as core values freedom, democracy, and professional self-determination. Thus, to a large extent the journalistic field kept its autocratic structure up to very recently, the discourse of freedom and democracy not being paralleled with practices of freedom and democracy inside this sphere of action.

It is indeed true that the journalistic field has been attempting a separation from politics in a process of gaining autonomy. This position is sustained by the very discourse of media and democracy, with journalism as a herald of a democratic new order. Nevertheless, in the current practice, it is more likely to find journalism as an instrumentalized object that speaks of change and new horizons, rather than a self-sustainable subject of empowerment. One of the

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fundamental reasons that led to the perpetuation of this weak position is the lack of sustainability of most of the media channels. At the moment most of the media channels are not successful economic enterprises, and need constant money injections in order to survive on an increasingly competitive market. The economic fragility of the present time adds to the institutional fragility that legacy endowed them with.

The legacies of being 'the organ of…' the party or some other organization was to determine the behavior and the trajectories of the transforming media channels into the new post-communist order. Another element that came to complicate the issue was the concurrence from newly established journals. While in the communist past the party journals were the only generalist newspapers available, at least at the local level, under new conditions of liberalization new titles would emerge jeopardizing the previously monopolistic positions of these newspapers. Moreover, during communism it was compulsory for all institutions to have subscriptions to the party journals. It was under conditions of increasing economic insecurity that old links with politics would be revitalized, and pave the way for on-going dependency on political actors turned economic actors after the fall of communism.

It took a while before the denaturalization of the idea of journalism under politics would become an honest subject of discussion in the Romanian society. It was a process driven for most part by externally funded civil society organizations. It was not easy to have it imposed on the public agenda and to make it to be taken seriously by the actors in the field. It was as well because this principle of separation and autonomy would be for a long time perceived as an unrealistic import of foreign ideas; that could not practically function in the Romanian system as emerged out of communism. One structural reasons was that media was not and it is still not a sustainable sector that could live out of self-generated revenues and out of the control or custody of political/economic actors.

Thus, the legacies of high dependence on politics under communist conditions have fed the links between journalism and politics into the new order. At the same time, the transformation of political capital into economic capital has been a major phenomenon that accompanied the restructuring of the links of the journalistic sphere of action into the new post-communist order. This is a discussion that is worth undertaking on its own, but not within the limited space of this article.

The low institutionalization of rational-legal authority in the Romanian field of journalism

The power of the people over the power of the law is the last but not the least important key that helps explain the limited autonomy of the journalistic field up to the present day. The context of elite continuity (Sparks, 2010) sheds additional light on the limited possibilities for substantive change within the Romanian field of journalism in terms of the actors performing in the field of journalism.

One of the preliminary considerations in this respect, that places the issue into a larger legacy picture, is the limited importance of the law in communist Romania. During the communist period, the Constitution had been changed several times (Focşeneanu, 1998) and the laws were proposed by a handful of people in the political circles to be voted in unanimity be a weak parliament . In the understanding provided by Tom Gallagher (2005), ruling on personal name, politics as a mean to reach power and influence has been a constant characteristic of Romanian political culture.

On the same token, the concept of common good is an alien understanding of performing politics. It could be argued that it is only in the last two decades that it has started to be considered, under the external pressures for democratisation. These aspects represent additional structural legacies that are not promising conditions for the structuration of rational-legal authority in general, and for the professiona lization of journalism in the case under study.

Even though communist Romania looked like an over-formalised polity, the actual practices had more to do with the powerful of the day and their ways of interpreting the formal decrees. At the same time, at the moment of the fall of communism, one of the main requirements of the population was to get free from bureaucracy. Another name for rational-legal authority is bureaucratic authority. Thus, unknowingly, grassroots pressure supported continuity in terms of the low relevance of agreed upon procedures and the low relevance of the law. Instead, the procedural vacuum paved the way for the old actors into the new order. Moreover, deregulation

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driven by the neo-liberal ethos of the early nineties was only convergent to the general direction of newly found 'freedom'.

The type of institutional transformation, 'rebuilding the ship at sea', that was specific to Eastern Europe represents another explanatory factor for the limited scope of change. The fact that there has been no war or genuine revolution made it possible that the old structures and people would continue to be active in the field, as Elster, Offe, Preuss et.ali. (1998) convincingly argue; there has been no total de-legitimation of the previous regime as would have been be the case in a situation of war and human loses, with a clear identification of the 'enemy'. It was indeed not clear and not easy to point in the direction of the guilty, and most of the frustration became concentrated on the ruler, Nicolae Ceaușescu, and his wife, Elena Ceaușescu.

In the Romanian journalistic field it is possible to trace the legacy of actors that are influencing the transformation by virtue of the important positions that they occupy in the journalistic – political nexus. The Romanian polity, shaped by the soviet traditions of building and driving institutions (Deletant, 2006) was characterized by the legacy of the actor in the field, rather than that of rules and procedures, thus a pre-modern type of setting.

This phenomenon is observable from ruling in personal name at the top of the ladder to autocratic practices at common institutional level. In this context, the bonds that had linked the institutional actors have traditionally been of personal nature, rather than of agreed upon rules (Verdery, 2002). The lines of informality have continued to survive well into the new order, with prominent actors being the main engines for symbolically redesigning the media discourse while institutionally trying to preserve it in order to reproduce positions of power. The ones that were the closest to the circles of power and resources were less idealistic and more pragmatic than the ones far from resources and power. One of the outcomes of this type of institutional setting is that at the moment one can speak of established people and names in the field of media, rather than of established practices. It is equally true that most of the actors that had been previously populating the field continued their professional activity, most of the times raising into positions of authority and having an important say on the training and formation of the newcomers into the field, thus on the perpetuation of the existing ways.

On the other hand, at the moment of the fall of communism, the connection with the oppressive and abusive communist totalitarianism was to be denounced. One of the strategies of the ones in the field was to become the heralds of the new order. This switch took place in the name of the new-found freedom; that was considered a blessing by many of the Romanians, including the ones that had previously served as journalists under the communist order.

The general discontent of the Romanians had been mounting in the eighties, the journalists being affected by the dictatorial ways of imposing agendas as well. Romanian journalists under communism had a permanent feeling of fear and worry, looking permanently up not to be wrong. They would have the administrative recognition from the political actors, much less than from the peers. The salary and all the privileges depended on the powerful actors of the day and their whims. From this structural limitation derived the overwhelming power of the political representatives that could manage to keep the journalists worried on a continuous basis. "Absolutely everything depends on the state budget. It is the supreme blackmail and the supreme way to rule the culture." (Marino, 1996: 257)

After communism, new media channels emerged driven by actors that had two strong believes derived from the previous order. The first was that mass communication is very powerful, an idea derived from the domesticated soviet model. The second was the common-sense link with politics, either as 'organ of' or as totally against the ones in power, the 'anti' position (Elster, Offe, Preuss et.ali., 1998). The second perspective emerged after the fall of communism. Nevertheless, open institutionalized political dialogue was not a natural concept for the ones emerging from communism as democratic enthusiasts from the West would initially believe.

The *in nuce* political parallelism of media became distorted when the journals would not represent political ideas but political people, with no impressive record of political conceptualisations. This phenomenon started to emerge already in the nineties, in the event of the economic crisis in the media, after a few years of sustainability of the press via direct sales. Thus, in the first moments after the fall of communism a new journal would serve liberal ideas and ideals, but then the journalists would slowly come

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to realise that they were serving the personal agenda of a certain influential individual, that had participations in the journal.

At the moment, as a consequence, the young journalists want to perform internal pluralism (Hallin & Mancini, 2004), they are structurally limited; they find themselves practicing a 'personalized external pluralism' which they find illegitimate (Petre, 2012: 135-159). Thus, they come to reject politics altogether because they identify it with the persons that structurally limit and direct them in ways other than ones of their will.

There are many young journalists that blame the publications where they work for being politicized. First of all, I do not believe that Romanian media settings serve articulated political ideas, but articulated personal interests of the ones that control the media setting. It is simply a consequence of a long legacy of the praxis of journalism under politics paralleled by the privatization of the media and the emergence of individual owners, each with specific interests to be served by the media channel they owe.

The workplace can be considered the site of tension between 'idealist' ideas that young journalists bring from university, the entertaining desiderata of other young aspirants, the objectivity desideratum learnt during various formal professional programs and the clientele like demands clearly formulated by the owners. There is a legacy of the communist understanding of the link and subordination of media to the political field; that transformed into economic subordination after the fall of communism.

It was only in the early nineties that a window of opportunity shortly opened for the journalistic sphere, with the changing property rules and the opportunity of sustainability via direct sales. The journalists got the chance to become the owners of their means of production via privatizations in the context of a peak of demand for media products. Nevertheless, these circumstances would fundamentally change in the years to come, up to the present day. It was already in the second part of the nineties that the property would be sold outside the field of journalism to more entrepreneurial actors, from the economic or the political spheres (Coman, 2006, 2009; Petre, 2012).

At the moment, the commercial media sector can be considered one of the sites that slowly denaturalizes the journalism-politics nexus, especially in the event of growing revenues from advertising and real capacity for self-sustainability from the part of the various media channels. At the same time, it is not to be forgotten that most of the new media entrepreneurs are people that had a say in the previous regime.

Conclusion:

One of the central theses of the classical modernization theory is that society tends towards differentiation in the process of development. One of the instances of such differentiation is the emergence of specialized fields of practice that tend to become autonomous, in control of the specialized knowledge that they generate. The process of differentiation is accompanied by processes of professionalization for the ones inside various specialized sectors. The main thesis of this paper is that Romanian journalism is still an amorphous, undifferentiated field; that does not move towards professionalization, but stays within the limits of various servitudes. These have historically ranged from political subservience, to more recent economic variants, yet both in accentuated personalized versions. Romanian journalism is controlled to the present day by powerful actors that are not first of all journalists, and this situation hampers the chances for autonomy within professionally controlled borders. This paper attempted to bring some explanations, ranging from the pervasive subject like political culture within the Romanian polity, to inherited legacies of subservience corroborated with a low institutionalization of the rational-legal authority, thus the prominence of powerful individuals rather than agreed upon rules and legislation. One of the unfortunate consequences of the fragile position of journalism within the Romanian polity can be the pauperization of the human resources within this sphere of practice. This is a hypothesis that is to be further tested and explored, for it is of relevance for the democratic chances of this profession.

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