Analyzing social movements from multiple perspectives: Key concepts and methodologies of study

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Abstract

Social movements happen worldwide nowadays. They have clear or diffuse motives, imply innovative or familiar sorts of manifestations. The study of social movement can be found in sociology, social psychology, economics, political science, history, anthropology. No matter the field of study, the research interests are focused on how, why and where do mass movements occurs. Together with the development of the theoretical study over social movements through history, we can notice also a diversity of opinions regarding the methodology that should be used in order to better analyze collective actions. Brouder studies refer to the development of social movements (actors involved, narrative used, defined goals and identity). up to the impact of collective actions over the political spectrum or the discernible changes generated within a society. Strictly from a sociological point of view, social movements are collective and goal-oriented actions, based on informal networks, shared beliefs about conflictual issues and with a possible high impact over society, generating change and laying the foundations for the state's modernisation. Talking in terms of social psychology or communication, we can infer that a social movement's narrative and its reflection in media and public agenda represent key-elements to its developments and indicators over the strength of the social networks involved.

Keywords

Social movement, social network, mobilization, narrative, group's identity, emotions

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Introduction

"An out stretched hand without a story to tell gets no pardon." The message above is one of the words written on the banners which were displayed by the Romanian protesters against the government, in Bucharest, at the beginning of 2017. It reflects the frustration of the activists and their determination to address one of their defined goals – the removal of the emergency motion planned to modify several stipulations of Romania's penal code.

According to Economist Intelligence Unit, in 2009, Romania was at high risk of protests and mass mobilizations, due to the growing economic crisis and the rising unemployment rate. The immediate consequence of this development would be political instability. The conclusions were also connected to the electoral context of the year (presidential elections) (Dinu, 2009).

What we learn from this report is the fact that there are clear indicators of the risk of social movements, visible within the society, such as political and economic development, people's attitude towards the latest trends, towards the country's leadership and the way they see their future and the ones of their children and families. We can state that if individuals feel their standard of living and their future to be threatened by some political acts or possible outcomes, they are prone to involve in collective actions, in order to solve the issues, they no longer tolerate.

Social movements happen worldwide nowadays. They have clear or diffuse motives, imply innovative or the same forms (following the neighbours' actions or the ones of the countries facing similar problems) of protest against Government policies, laws or decisions under debate, acts that have or can have a high impact on society as a whole. Regardless of the number of people involved, the symbols and messages used, its dynamics, its causes, public support and media representations, violent or peaceful demonstrations are aimed to raise awareness over problematic issues and moreover, to generate changes and solutions with a positive impact on society.

The study of social movement can be found in sociology, social psychology, economics, political science, history, anthropology. No matter the field of study, the research interests are focused on how, why and where do mass movements occurs. Learning from past mobilization efforts, trying to discover some patterns of action, to analyze the role played by media or by social networks or simply to perceive the activists as rationale actors, though a clear and comprehensive strategy of action - represent efforts developed by scholars in order to explain, interpret and theorize collective actions.

When trying to analyze a social movement one should go further than the mobilizing process of the population, their power and the risks to public order. As Oliver and Roa highlight, scholars must take into consideration that social movements have moral and cultural dimensions, grounded by public conscience, beliefs and practices, a cultural heritage which will survive throughout a state's history (Oliver & Roa, 2003, p.226). Moreover, collective actions could have a major impact on society and on the link

between the political spectrum and public opinion. Through mass movements are brought important changes within a state or even on a global scale.

In the following lines, our aim is to define and analyze social movements, from a sociological perspective, but also from a socio-psychology one. Our paper starts with a brief overview over the research conducted in the last decades over collective actions and continues with an insight into available instruments to analyze mass movements. Last but not least, it reveals, using two case-studies (the protests held in Romania at the beginning of 2017 and the Yellow vests movement from Europe – November 2018) some insights regarding the possible causes of social movements, their development and expansion, appealing to theories and studies already developed.

The study of social movements: Multilateral approaches

Research on social movements transformed through history. Scholars from the nineteenth century firstly focused on the *emotions* used by the protesters to raise awareness and to change attitudes, behaviours to the issues highlighted. Every social movement was frightened and perceived as an action outside of the normal institutional order (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015, p.6).

The cognitive and narrative paradigms study the emotional and spontaneous items involved in collective actions. Therefore, the emphasis on emotions brought the individualistic perspective to the core of the debate over social theories of collective actions. Key concepts like solidarity, pride, shame, group identity and energy are considered main of the triggers exploited before and during a social movement (Eder, 2015, pp.5-7).

The emotions revealed by a social movement is another important aspect regarding the people's involvement in public debate and ruling decisions. Messages and causes that exploit anger, compassion or anxiety are the object of study of scholars and continues to be nowadays (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015, p.8).

Emotions are vivid representation of a social movement, not only from an irrational point, but also as essential components of individual actions. The study of emotions is divided between theoretical approaches concerning biological aspects and social relations. The latter involves the focus on crowd behaviour, as a result of social interactions (Eyerman, 2005, pp. 41-43).

All movements seem to be rational and emotion-based, with a planned or totally uncontrolled development, certain narratives and different channels used to communicate, in order to mobilize civil society to adhere at a national or transnational cause. There is no such thing as a pattern of organization or activism, followed by every participant. On the contrary, there is always a context-influenced cause that, once properly phrased, exploits people's complaints and emotions, starting from a rational strategy to protest or a spontaneous movement.

In the second half of the twentieth century an *economic perspective* over the rationality of the protesters was published. In *The Logic of Collective Action*, Mancur Olson describes the people as purely rational, carefully analyzing the costs and benefits of their

actions, which meant they could rationally choose to involve in a protest, weighing visible gains and loss (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015, p.7).

In the article published in The Oxford Handbook of Social Movements, Klaus Eder emphasizes the rational perspective towards social movements, which refers to resource mobilization in order to create a critical mass of actors, with clear objectives and planned actions (Eder, 2015, p.3).

An important feature of social movements is the one theorized by Karl Marx, which refers to collective actions made by different groups aware of their position in social relations. Another classic theory with a clear impact on social movement's research is outlined by Emile Durkheim, regarding the role of collective feelings in collective actions. In other words, an important item when analyzing social movements is their ability and willing to act together for a shared cause and goal, when and why it comes out (Eder, 2015, p.4).

Alain Touraine is considered by Eder to be the most important social theorist of social movements concerning the rational perspective. His works are focused on collective action as action systems that intervene in institutionalized order and shape future directions of social processes. Touraine describes social movements as events with a positive impact on society, guiding it through modernity and development (Eder, 2015, p.4).

At the end of twentieth century, *the political dimension* of social movements was discovered, brought up by the civil rights demanded by large movements directly to the state (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015, p.7).

The political science perspective describes social movements as collective actions opposed with other powers, like the state, capitalism or different civil groups (Cisar, 2015, p.2).

According to the Encyclopaedia of Governance, social movements address collective changes to systems of governance. Analyzing collective actions means identifying the conditions under which the movements appeared and developed, the organizational, mobilization resources used and also the impact of the movements on activists, national or international policies an on the society, as a whole (Bevir, 2007, pp.888-890).

Most political process approaches to social movement focus on resources external to the organized actions, especially on opportunities that stimulate public participation (Bevir, 2007, p.890).

The Marxist view describes social movements as the chance to build an alternative social order, based on the power of the ones below, left outside of the decision-making process (Cisar, 2015, p.2).

A relevant post-Marxist theory is the one regarding *new social movements*, related to new systemic conflicts over goals like autonomy, recognition of minorities, political participation. New social movements include the movements that emerged in western societies at the beginning of the 1960s, related to central conflicts definitive of the new era (Crossley, 2002, pp.11-12).

Adding to the political dimension of social movements, the neo-Weberian perspective describes the state as an important cause of social movements – defined by political mobilization and the level of trust, agreement the society has towards the political actors (Cisar, 2015, pp.7-8).

Moreover, together with globalization, changes in international relations or national developments led to opportunities for activists within a state or for the ones promoting an organization's goals, in different states, opposing a political view or austere economic reforms (Cisar, 2015, p.10).

The *cultural side* of protests was discovered in the late 1980s and consisted in symbols and the desire to stand in solidarity with the people they care for or they identify with (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015, p.8).

Culture is defined as learned and shared patterns of thought, actions, irrational behaviours of the crowd, influenced by a cultural context and led by a cause, defined and communicated in a specific way, in order to stimulate individuals to participate to collective actions (Bevir, 2007, p.891).

The cultural perspective also brought the term *frame* – the way some issues are presented in order to resonate with a targeted public and stimulate public participation to protests. Another cultural component widely studied is the collective identity created by the organizers of the protests to create interest in their cause and to ensure the closeness of the people to the group's shared beliefs and needs (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015, p.8).

Adding to the cultural approach, the notion of *network* was recently used by scholars in order to analyze the dynamics of protests. Social relations and the channels use for social interactions in order to disseminate a narrative are described as processes of constructing social reality by opposing the existing institutional order (Eder, 2015, p.17).

The social networks through people are mobilized are key elements studied within the mobilization process. The connections between potential recruits, or the ones created between the activists and the potential recruits are premises for the emergence of the collective action. Thus, network approach focuses on the connections existing within a community, a group who might be involved in the protests. The ones with strong ties with different groups, considered to be `connectors`, are prone to mobilize people and lay the foundation for a social movement. Moreover, social ties are items that could predict the magnitude of a social movement and also its duration. Analyzing these networks, one can tell the difference between a small movement and an extended one (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015, p.10).

Apart from social networking, *messages* are ways of spreading ideas through society, during a social movement, mainly among participants and potential activists, having an ultimate goal - to influence public agenda and finally politics or high-level decisions. Talking from an activist's perspective, interpreting events in order to mobilize participants is a tool used in order to gain legitimacy for the entire movement, in order to properly oppose the defined adversary (Bennett & Segerberg, 2015, pp.1-3).

The messages must be related to a known and understood topic by media and also by the public, related to a problematic issue from a society. The second criteria are to

frame the message, in order to generate favourable mass media descriptions, which is critical for the movement to gain visibility. In most cases, gaining media attention is a simple goal. Using media support, at an optimal level, in order to promote the movement's causes is sometimes a challenge that can be overcome with the aid of social networks (Bennett & Segerberg, 2015, pp.4-5).

The role of communication in social movements is to mobilize consensus and solidarity, using frames, in order to ensure the worthiness, numbers, commitment and unity, needed to spread the effect of the demonstrations over public opinion (Bennett & Segerberg, 2015, p.9).

Communication during or preparing a social movement involves having inspiring leaders that should deliver speeches that highlight the importance and the need to protest and also the goals followed by organizing a collective action. Another important feature of the communication issue is the choice for words and language, including the release of personal stories, vivid images through social media or other visual elements easily understood by the public (Bennett & Segerberg, 2015, pp.11-12).

During the last years, *social media* has been used as an organization, information and mobilization tool for social movement. Facebook or Twitter are the most popular social networks involved in stimulating collective actions. There are a lot of studies about the connection between social media and mass mobilization, but few concerning the possibility to predict protests starting from the interactions on social media, language used, level of coordination between potential activists (Bahrami, Findik, Bozkaya, & Balcisoy, 2018).

In their work, Bahrami, Findik, Bozkaya, & Balcisoy aim to predict protests by analyzing the content of different tweets calling for active participation in a collective manner, opposing the election of Donald Trump as president of United States. After the elections, a large group of citizens started to gather activitst, on Twitter. As a result, mass demonstrations were organizes in several major cities of US, that lasted for about one week. The authors designed an alghoritm that implied steps like data collection, looking for signals (words and terms referring to a protest), finding main trending hashtags and reasons to participate in the collective actions, extracting features from the tweets collected (such as volume of online activity, time, date and place mentioned, hostility or violent words used – reveal people's emotions regarding the event, possible reasons to protest, possible triggers) (Bahrami, Findik, Bozkaya, & Balcisoy, 2018).

Methodological aspects regarding the study of social movements

Together with the development of the theoretical study over social movements (scholars perceived the activists as rational actors and or described them as being strongly irrational and taking emotion-guided decisions, focused on the role of culture and the group's identity, symbols and narratives). we can notice also a diversity of opinions regarding the methodology that should be used in order to better analyze collective actions. According to research questions or the general or smart objectives of the study, sociologists, economists, anthropologists, psychologists or specialists in other fields of

study can choose one main method or to combine qualitative and quantitative techniques in order to better describe the movement's complexity and its inner and outer dynamic. Brouder studies of collective actions may refer to the development of the movements (actors involved, narrative used, defined goals and identity) up to the impact of the actions over the political spectrum or the discernible changes within society.

Therefore, to analyze collective actions, analysts use grounded theory, multiple data sources and collection methods, comparative historical analysis or participant observation. Frame and discourse analysis are also applied in order to identify cognitive and mobilization mechanism. Taking in-depth interviews, scholars can get detailed descriptions of beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, ideology and emotions revealed by the activists involved in the collective actions. Surveying and organizing focus group discussions are techniques used to gather multiple data about individual roles in collective actions. Innovative methods used are Protest Event Analysis, a quantitative content analysis that implies coding a broader set of units in order to identify the main themes, analyzing the narratives used by the actors involved in the movement or opposing it, studying the visual dimension of protests, in order to discover symbols, signs, visual posters that form the movement's ideology and comparing the current movements with the ones that took place in the last years, in similar surroundings. The visual analysis method is considered to be a comprehensive one, a predictor of future mobilization, of communication strategies used before and during a protest, an instrument that reveals also the impact of signs and symbols in media field and in public agenda (Della Porta, 2014).

Regardless of the instruments mentioned above, analyzing actions of protests could represent a stand-alone method to study social movements, presuming the evaluation of the movement's characteristics in a specific time frame, taking into account the cultural dimension of the region. Using the basic principles observed in the content analysis, the above specified method tries to identify the connections between protests' dynamics and the broad social context. According to Della Porta, when applying the method, scholars are able to highlight cause-effect relationships such as: the evolution of protests and media; the intensity of protests and the changes they generate either in the society or at the decisional level (Della Porta, 2014).

Social movements through sociological lenses: Defining the main concepts

According to The Sage dictionary of sociology, a social movement represents a collective and goal-oriented action, made by a large number of people. The study of social movements includes the analysis of causes of recruitment to the form of the activities developed, its duration and the effects followed. From US sociological perspective, social movement is defined by its form of activity. From the European point, it is defined by the content of the activity, its challenging, oppositional nature (Bruce & Yearly, 2006, p.284).

Analysing the definition outlined, we notice the terms *collective* and *goal-oriented action*, which represent, in our opinion, the main concepts that best define social movements. They suggest that a large number of people are involved in actions that, if

successful, could generate changes in the society, starting with the messages and causes expressed through protests and ending with the ideas and issues brought under public debate and even in the decision-making process. Moreover, when we talk about social movements, we refer to public interventions into the leading process of the country. Interfering with the leading process involves creating and supporting a sort of an opposition to the existing rules.

Going further, we gather another features and explanations of social movement, in general. According to Della Porta and Diani (1999), cited by Nick Crossley (2006), social movements are informal networks based on shared beliefs about conflictual issues, which are expresses through various forms of protest (Crossley, 2002).

Adding to the points revealed before, we talk about informal networks and shared beliefs. In other words, there is a planned way of organising the protests and solid reasons the individuals have to participate to some form of protest, together with your friends, family or some group of people you identify with. Maybe the main cause of the protests is a trigger for you, because you felt the same way, you share the same expectations and complaints and you want to participate in driving the change.

In Jeff Goodwin and James M Jasper's perspective, social movements are conscious, concerted, imply sustained efforts made by ordinary people, in order to generate changes within their country, imposing a challenge to authorities, power-holders, using extra-institutional means (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015, p.3).

The terms used in this definition are not different from the ones mentioned above, except from the *extra-institutional means* used by the ones involved in the movement, in order to oppose the country's leadership, which highlights the nature of the instruments used by the activists (out of the defined system) and mostly the fact that the movement is not an ordinary practice, widely approved, but rather an uncontrolled form of challenging a problematic issue, practice, decision to be made, with a possible negative impact over society.

Analyzing social movements from a sociological perspective; case study: Yellow vests protests (2018)

Sociologists are interested in social movement mostly because they want to discover why and how do the people cooperate within an oriented-goal or diffused movement and mostly how a social change is possible through a social movement, given the fact that mass demonstrations are known to be central sources of social transformation. Innovative values or political beliefs are brought up by collective actions, visible all around the country and abroad, through media, or even in the leading agenda. In other words, social movements could develop ways of seeing and modernizing society, the political field, the relation between the leadership and the public (Goodwin & Jasper, 2015, pp.4-5).

Social movements raise a lot of questions for sociologists, among which the most important are: why and where are social movements take place and mostly when and how extensive the protests will be?

Why do the movements last? Why do some of them cross the borders? How are people mobilized and when do we know the actions are going to extend their goals and stimulate participation in the spirit of several causes, not only the ones declared once the movements begin. Maybe the most relevant item is to identify and analyze the pattern of development and the main causes of the movement, in order to be able to predict or signal the possibility of occurrence of similar collective actions, in a different cultural and socio-political background (Crossley, 2002, pp.9-10).

One of the movement's causes may be spontaneous events, a term that came into focus mainly for the situations when these kinds of events contributed to the emergence of larger collective actions, acting like triggers for mass mobilization, being impossible to prevent or predict it. Spontaneous events may lead to social movements but without being unilateral causes of collective actions. This kind of events can increase a protest's magnitude only in certain circumstances, such as political instability, raising discontent within society, fear regarding future issues or economic difficulties. Moreover, spontaneous events can play the role of triggers for potential activity only used in conjunction with frames and widespread media stories. Together with organization, spontaneity plays a prominent role in the process of mobilization. The two concepts are not dichotomous or oppositional, but interactive, the first being under the activists' control and the latter totally out of control and unplanned (Snow & Moss, 2014, pp.1122-1126).

Spontaneity often happen in the dynamics of social movements. According to Snow and Moss, there are several conditions under which spontaneous events are more likely to occur. Among them we mention the absence of hierarchical organization of the protests, ambiguous or uncertain moments (when actors must define the situation, without planning it or acting upon certain rules), emotional priming (exposure to certain stimuli due to prior experiences; mental constructs, such as stereotypes, prejudices can influence behaviour) and framing, spatial contexts and constraints (Snow & Moss, 2014, pp.1128-1138).

We think there aren't totally spontaneous, nor highly organized social movements. Internal or external factors are prone to influence the development of every collective action, due to the uncertainty of social and political spectrum or the mass dynamics, towards a defined cause or opposing a common enemy. Spontaneous events can boost a movement's magnitude or go unnoticed. It mainly depends on how they are interpreted, contextualized to the public.

Spontaneous or not, there are mass movements that spread fast worldwide and become an inspiration for the activists that share the need to oppose the same public policies, but don't have the resources or the symbology needed to invite the people to join their cause. Yellow vests movement, for example, the mass demonstrations, named after the safety vests the drivers have to wear on board vehicles, refer to the protests that began in France in November 2018 and soon spread to Belgium and Netherlands.

According to Aljazeera's reports, some of the calls of the Yellow vest's protesters, in France, are lower fuel taxes and wage increase, economic reforms that could support the way of living of the working class and the need to fight against additional and

expensive charges. The protests are currently developing, becoming one of the largest demonstrations that took place in this country, in its recent history. They had an impact over Government's decisions, forcing the leaders to give up on their plans to raise fuel tax. These concessions weren't enough for the activist. The demonstrations became more powerful, a nation-wide movement in just a few weeks, based on the people's economic worries, on the fear of increasing unemployment and poverty, asking for support for the ones struggling to survive in a tough economic system and even for the resignation of the President Emmanuel Macron (Diallo, 2018).

In Belgium, at the beginning of December, mass protests were also held, under the name of Yellow vests, to complain about the cost of living and demanding the removal of Belgium's government. The demonstrations culminated with clashes between the demonstrators and police officers (Macdonald, 2018).

In several Dutch cities, at the beginning of December, hundreds of people took part in yellow vests demonstrations, expressing their concerns about migrations and refugees, the effects of climate change and income. The protests were peaceful, outlined in media as acts of sympathy for the cause of the mass movements from France (DutchNews, 2018).

At a first glance, the Yellow vests is more than a name of the demonstrations that firstly took place in France. It became a symbol for the complaints of people all around France, Belgium, Netherlands over austerity policies, that affect the way of living and raise concerns over future economic difficulties, with a direct impact on society. The movement's cause extended from critics to raising fuel tax, to complaints over the whole economic system and the way of ruling.

In all the three countries, the protests had different dynamics – developed and goal-oriented in France or diffuse in Netherlands; long-term protests in France, short-term demonstrations in the other countries; violent (France, Belgium) or peaceful actions (Netherlands), involving a large number of people or just a few hundred. The development of the movements may have been influenced by the political context of the country, the level of dissatisfaction with public policies under debate, Government agenda, way of leading the country and the number of the ones that shared the cause and were willing to express their complaints and participate to the public demonstrations.

A comprehensive analysis over the causes of the movement's expansion could be done using quantitative and qualitative instruments, such as surveys within protesters or in-depth interviews in order to better understand their motivations and beliefs towards the movement's causes. Nevertheless, a content analysis over the narratives used in this case and on social media could provide data over the reasons of the protests' perpetuation in France.

Comparing the three forms of the movement would be impossible without a careful analysis over the political and social context from the countries mentioned, keeping in mind the task to identify signals that could predict an expansion of the movement and taking into account the political answer to the protests' development.

Social movements from a social psychology perspective; case study: Protests held at the beginning of 2017 in Romania

Social movements create a *We* vs. *Them,* phrase a message in front of an audience of possible future activists, involve different levels of movement – from resources used to stimulate people's active participation to the changes implemented in attitudes and also in practices. Every stage of the movement is filled with emotions and narratives, these elements being vital for designing the framing effect (Eyerman, 2005, p.44).

Movements often happen due to exploited emotions, anger, shame, guilt, discontent. Cognitive strategies direct emotion and energy in certain directions: to protest and display solidarity towards the others participants, understanding and helping them to fight for a public cause, related to your own interests (inside the movement); to change the others' behaviour, expressing the movement's power, identity and commitment in front of the opponents (policymakers, organizations) (Eyerman, 2005, pp.46-48).

Framing is one of the key concepts used in social psychology, which brings the focus to some powerful ideas disseminated within the society to determine the population to take part in protest actions. The core assumption of the mentioned approach is the following: at an individual level, one searches the sense of certain issues and then reacts based on his own evaluations (Benford, 1997).

In this regard, the most important thing seems to be the narratives chosen and its echo within the socio-cultural background of the target audience. Having done that, one highlighted problem gains adherence at the micro-social level, being able to sustain a future behaviour.

In order to oppose a political decision to modify several stipulations of the Romania's penal code, at the beginning of 2017, Romanian citizens organized an impressive protest campaign. After three weeks of protest, Romanian Parliament repealed the proposed modifications, yet the protests continued, demanding the resignations of those in charge (Oprea, 2017). In the following lines, we will analyze the mobilization and the perpetuation of the social movement as a result of the framing or modelling process of the participants' motives. From this point of view, the social response of Romanian citizens became the unique solution to certain systemic deficiencies.

Triggers used in order to stimulate mobilization

The applicability effect shown by Price and Tewksbury (1997), as a starting point, helps us to analyze not just the facts which caught the public opinion attention, determining it to react, but also the way these facts are connected one with another, adapting the messages to the pre-existent cognition schemes functioning at an individual level (Price & Tewksbury, 1997).

The mobilizing messages were disseminated through Facebook (the majority of the questioned protesters indicated as sources of information TV, online media and

Facebook, in equal measure). The targeted audience was formed by adults (people which uses social media to communicate and which represented the vast majority of the protesters) (CESIP, 2017). The key-words which determined people to react and then to mobilize were concentrated around the idea of systemic corruption.

The trigger event, cited in order to encourage the participation to protests, seemed to be the necessity to rally towards a common goal: the repeal of one normative act which could be in favour of political leaders under investigation for committing different crimes. Until it became a trigger event the following steps were made: media started to present the law's negative effects and impact; the debates in the virtual world started to amplify, stipulating that these normative acts are serving to the political leaders' interests; protest actions were demanded as the solely way for the society to oppose the proposed changes.

Opinion polls applied among the protesters showed that a negative perception existed, indicating negative feelings towards a perceived phenomenon of political corruption, constantly growing in the last few years. As the participants showed, the main causes for this phenomenon were: the personal economic interests of the political leaders, nepotism, individuals who got enriched after the 1989 Revolution and keeping in power former member of the Romanian Communist Party (CESIP, 2017).

Corruption was one of the main problems highlighted by the participants, also representing the core of the mobilizing process of the population through messages such as: "no abuse, no corruption", "we must fight against corruption". The same thing happened in 2015, soon after 'Colectiv' club burnt down, causing the death of 64 people. In the same manner, individuals surveyed in regard with this tragedy answered that there is a need to act rational, pragmatic in order to determine the political leaders at that moment to resign and to be held accountable for the unfortunate event (CESIP, 2017).

The protests that took place in February 2017 can be perceived as a result of the previous social movements such as: the protests organized after the 'Colectiv' tragedy, the presidential elections in 2014 in diaspora and against the mining at the Rosia Montana in 2013. These actions show a growing sense of the Romanian civic activities in the past few years.

The above mentioned hypothesis is confirmed by an INSCOP poll, data gathered in the first days of the protests showing that: 16% of the population participating in the February 2017 protests also participated in the Rosia Montana protests; the majority of the participants in the February 2017 protests pointed them as protesters after the 'Colectiv' tragedy. Around 70% of the protesters in February 2017 consider that these actions are very efficient (CESIP, 2017).

Another example showing attitudinal changes of Romanians towards collective actions is the one related to the 1989 Revolution. Protesters saw themselves as continuing the 1989 mission started by their fellow citizens. Media and historical, philosophers and psychology scholars point that these two events are similar, especially from a free speech perspective and in magnitude. In fact, their comparison to the 1989 events shows to us the existence of the socio-cultural background for the Romanian young generation (Pro Tv, 2017).

Participation of Romanian population in the above mentioned social movements reveal not just some sort of familiarity with the society's problems and their struggle to overcome them, but also the existence of "cognition schemes" such as: people's complaints towards systemic problems, transformed into extended negative effects or having the potential to generate this kind of effects; the ignorance towards the society's role when public decisions must be taken; the awareness of the society's mobilizing power, which can change the course of events, especially the negative ones. This represented the background exploited by those who organized the protests. Analyzed together with the trigger factors, we can easily see that the Romanian society moved along from a tolerant state to a pro-active behaviour.

Protests' perpetuation: Possible causes; the symbolism of the movement

The context for the protests to happen was in favour of their escalation: the time frame people had in order to mobilize was a short one, given the speed of the governmental process to adopt the law. "United", "Resist" were the main protesters' slogans, revealing the social solidarity developed among them. The other messages highlighted the pro-European values of Romanian society, this being a perspective supporting the stated goal of the social movement. Bearing in mind the recent actions of protests and the idea of social movement opportunity ("We are awake"), we can stress out the civic activism against "a common enemy" (ProTv, 2017).

With the perpetuation of the social movements a specific culture was created, facilitating people to mobilize and solidarize, formed by symbols and participants' public behaviour (Oliver & Roa, 2003, pp.228-230).

The symbolism of the February 2017 protests is a complex one: hopscotches drawn on tarmac by the participants' children, Romanian national flag formed by the activists, coloured placards, thousands of phone flashlights, Romanian national anthem and many creative messages shown against a common enemy, expressing frustration and dissatisfaction towards the government actions (ProTv, 2017).

In addition, the solidarity sense present among protesters can be taken into consideration as a commitment indicator towards the movement stated purposes (Oliver & Roa, 2003, p.231). Individual identity can be found within the collective identity throughout the protests, particularly in the moments when the participants, although they didn't give up, the intensity of their actions dropped considerably.

Besides, according to the polls, the social solidarity represented the main reason for the Romanian citizens to protest in such a large number: on a scale from 1 to 6, respondents declared that their involvement in the protest is due to solidarity with others (5.71). This was followed by disappointment (4.94). and frustration (4.83). In the same poll, trust and hope that things could change obtained low scores (CESIP, 2017).

At first, people demanded the repeal of the normative act. When confronted with ignorance and continuous efforts from the government in order to adopt the law, the solidarity sense between Romanian citizens strengthened and determined them to

protest. Even after the normative act was repealed, the protest continued, participants asking those in charge to resign from the office.

Regarding the debate between rationality and emotionality, when talking about the driving forces which determined Romanian public opinion to react, we think the events firstly followed a rational decision and continued as an emotional fight, thus being, from our point of view, an argument explaining the considerable growth of the number of participants all over across the country to the social movement.

Conclusion

The study of social movement has developed in the past decades, from sociology, political science to history, anthropology, psychology, economics, communication, social psychology. The most recent approach reveals the importance of narratives in organizing and developing a mass movement. The choice for words and language, the channel used to communicate (social media or traditional media). being vital for the activists' mission. Within the studies over the link between social media and movements, we gathered a growing interest over the possibility to predict future protests, starting from the communication held on social media, the language used and the social network revealed by virtual dialogue.

Together with the diversity of fields grew the need to better analyze and predict movements' dynamics, inside the actions (mobilization). and outside them (effect on political arena or changes within society). Therefore, some theories or methodological instruments (regarding data collection or data analysis). are considered to be more appropriate in order to monitor the `voice` of the activists and to build coping or preventing strategies, if the situation requires it. Among them we mention Protest Event Analysis, frame or narrative analysis or studying the visual dimension of collective actions.

Focusing only on the sociological perspective, we can conclude that social movements are collective and goal-oriented actions, based on informal networks, shared beliefs about conflictual issues and could have a high impact over society, generating change and laying the foundations for the state's modernisation.

From a social psychology point of view, every stage of a social movement is filled with emotions and narratives, exploit people's feelings and involves cognitive strategies, aimed at raising attention and increasing mobilization to a common goal. Triggers and messages properly phrased are key-elements in every successful mass movement.

Regardless the objects of study, the methodologies used, we think every scholar should perceive social movements as dynamic events, filled with rationality, emotions, strategies and spontaneity. A comprehensive analysis of collective actions should address inside developments (such as mobilization, individual causes united through the movement's identity). and outside connections (the enemy, the reflection of the movement's activity in media, the effects over society and political agenda).

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