

Habilitation Thesis

Configurations of the National Public Sphere in the European Context.

Discursive and Identity Challenges

Abstract

The present paper is a summary of the personal research conducted during the last 24 years of activity in the field of higher education, and particularly in the field of communication sciences, after having earned the doctoral degree in philology (Bucharest, 2002), most of which encompasses the analysis of Romanian mass-media from various points of view: normative, discursive and that of the identity and professional transformations in different time periods. To these are added a number of texts (articles, books, participation in conferences) that reflected my interest in recent years for the study of social phenomena and media in the European context.

The scientific literature, that aims to research and analyze the public sphere, whether we refer to the work of the “founding fathers” of the field or to the more recent work, based on the European public sphere, the global networks and the mutations in the field of journalism during the last ten years in the context of the economic crisis and the fierce competition with new media, has been the foundation of the idea that the public sphere is the proper theoretical and methodological frame for integrating the media analysis, either empirical, professional or discursive. The detailed research that follows is a minute analysis of one of the most important actors of the national public sphere, the mass-media, together with what we consider to be its essential components: the professional identity and norms, and the journalistic discourse with all its implications on a methodological and analytical level. This was the premise of the studies and books on this topic being written and published in journals, or by prestigious publishing houses from Romania and abroad, or in thematic books.

The first part (chapters 1-3) presents the main directions of our research, as follows: 1. the public sphere – theoretical framework and the analysis of the Romanian public sphere; 2. the comparative analysis of the Romanian journalistic discourse, with emphasis on the totalitarian and post totalitarian period; 3. identity and discursive transformations of the Romanian journalism in different time periods; 4. the analysis of journalistic, norms and professional values in the Romanian cultural space.

The research includes consistent referrals to the theory of the public sphere, approaches on the emergent European public sphere, and niche research, as well, original research concerning how concepts such as “Europe” and “Europeanization” have become operational in the Romanian public space in different historical contexts. The public sphere problematization makes frequent references to mass-media because they participate actively to establishing, deconstructing and transforming the public space, as one of the ways of making public the events, the different information, the relevant discourses in any historical context and with measurable long-term effects. The interest in the public sphere throughout almost our entire research derives from the fact that it is that part of the social life where citizens can exchange views on important issues for the common well-being, being related to the exercise of public reason, as part of the process of democratization of the society. Under these circumstances, the public sphere becomes a source of social emancipation when the public interest is the result of rational consensus, based on practical conversations between the social actors.

The mass media, the main actor of the public sphere, are operationalized on a discursive level through comparative approaches: the national discursive perspective vs. the European discursive perspective, the current Romanian media vs. the communist media vs. the post-communist media, with regard to the privileged topics and editorial strategies promoted by the media. Thus, the comparative approach and the pragmatic discourse analysis are the proper approaches for the aimed objectives. The pragmatic analyses of the media discourse emphasize the fundamental role of the ideological and historical context and of the cultural tradition in the process of journalistic production. Another dimension we have taken into consideration in the analysis of the process of establishing the meanings in the public sphere is the adaptation of the discursive strategy to the purpose of the discourse and to the expectations of a well-defined

public. In the most recent research, we have also taken into consideration the interference of the supra-national actor, the European Union, especially after the EU accession. Our research corpus has always been the Romanian central written press, which has been subject to permanent transformations from both structural and identity points of view, influenced at first by the expectations on social, political and cultural levels in different historical periods: before and after 1947, after December 1989, before and after 2007, under the pressure of the “alignment” to the process of reintegration into the European Union “family”.

The inflection point of the media analyses and of the focus on the normative academic discourse is the permanent interest for the complex study of the professional identity of the Romanian journalists, with an emphasized diachronic component.

The second part (chapter 4) of the present paper includes the evolution and development plans of the professional, scientific and academic career, starting from the main lines of research of our scientific approach, as they were identified in the first part. The objectives I propose in this section focus on the evolution of my future career within the Doctoral School of international Relations and Security Studies of the University Babeş-Bolyai in Cluj, in the main field of International Relations and European Studies in accordance to an adequate integration of communication studies in the strategic context of the international relations and european studies.