

Sociological Imagination and Disciplinary Orientation in Applied Social Research. An Inquiry into Present-Day Market Research in Romania

Scientific Report

2013

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1. Introduction

Initiated in October 2011, the project “Sociological imagination and disciplinary orientation in applied social research” has reached the end of the third calendar year, which coincides with a phase of crystallization of the first directions of analysis of empirical evidence informed by the theoretical perspectives explored by its members during 2011-2012. This year we have continued the theoretical and methodological analysis, while simultaneously interpreting already conducted interviews and also conducting new interviews.

The project is oriented towards conceptual and methodological innovations. From a theoretical point of view, the dominant interest of the project consists of a better **understanding and a more precise conceptualization of the common and professional knowledge of social interactions** – what we have called, in the project proposal “**interactional imagination**”. From a methodological point of view, the dominant concern consists of employing this concept to project and analyse sociological interviews, taking into consideration the logic of the social interaction during the interview situation. In 2013, the team proposed the phrase “situational ingenuity” to refer to both the scientific competence and common social knowledge involved in understanding the dynamics of a social situation and its influence on an action (Toth, Rughiniş and Humă, 2013).

Throughout the project, the thematic area in which these theoretical and methodological preoccupations have been pursued has diversified, encompassing, besides market research, which represented the empirical start point of the study, the following areas of social knowledge :

- **The experiential knowledge of organizations:** the knowledge which members of organizations (market research institutes, as well as other corporations) possess with regards to the organization that they work for: how do they understand the organizational dynamic? What part do individual, situational, organizational, and systemic attributions play in the understanding of their professional lives in organizations – as that appears in the sociological interviews?
- **Knowledge from quantitative modelling of social interaction:** how is the quantification of social behaviours socially organized (in the market research institutes, in academic research)? How could quantitative modelling of social behaviour be grounded in an understanding of social action as being fundamentally situated and interactional?

- **Social knowledge incorporated in informational systems** – such as platforms for online interactions, smartphone apps, or social robots: what are the social interactions incorporated in the materiality of these technologies? In what ways are users’ real interactions with these technologies convergent with or divergent from the usage scenarios proposed by the apps?
- **Knowledge of people from different social worlds** – with emphasis on visually impaired people: how are visually impaired users known and, especially, imagined by professionals who develop technological solutions for them? More specifically, what is the role of social interactions between visually impaired and visually non-impaired individuals in configuring this knowledge? What is the role of vocabularies of motive in structuring this knowledge: how do these contribute to the intelligibility of actions performed by people in atypical life situations?

2. Activities

The main activities conducted in 2013 are:

- Continuing the methodological and theoretical documentation:
 1. Expanding the narrative perspective of analyzing conversations between researchers and their interlocutors in the interview situation;
 2. The study of Human-Computer Interaction domain, exploring the concept “user” as a central element of social professional knowledge;
 3. The study of disability as a socially and interactionally constructed phenomenon – through inter-human and human-artefact interactions;
- Producing scientific publications;
- Conducting interviews: the team conducted a total of **24 interviews** with:
 1. Members of market research organizations, on the topic of the social organization of knowledge;
 2. Members of other corporations, on the topic of experiential knowledge of organizations;
 3. Members of the academic environment (teaching staff, students), on the topic of projecting and implementing computer mediated interaction systems;
- Scientific communication:
 1. Producing calls for thematic papers for the Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology.

2. Participating to national and international conferences with papers that develop the topic of the relationship between the researcher and the studied social world;
 - Participating to international stages of practice and theoretical-methodological development;
 - Communicating with and disseminating to the public sector: updating the webpage; disseminating the reflexive perspective on research among the students enrolled in the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work.

3. Theoretical and methodological documentation

Throughout the year, the members of the team have become more familiar with narrative analysis, as a distinct type of theoretical and methodological positioning. According to it, interviews, as speech events, are first and foremost conversations between at least two people – a researcher and a respondent – in whose analysis one can observe the contributions of the interlocutors or the way they co-construct the conversation using situational resources. A prerequisite, accepted and controversial alike, is that the self is narratively exposed/built/constructed, in other words that the existence of individuals is interactionally constructed in a narrative shape. In order to understand the assumptions, the implications, and the forms of the narrative perspective, we have chosen to read and discuss texts that situate us in an interdisciplinary context:

- Ruth Page (2012), *Stories and Social Media: Identities and Interaction*, Routledge.
- Jan Baetens 2008, "Graphic Novels: Literature Without Text", in *English Language Notes* 46:2, pp. 77-88.
- Jared Gardner 2011, "Storylines", in *Substance* vol. 40:1, pp. 53-69.
- Charles Hatfield 2012, *Hand of Fire*, Jackson: Mississippi UP.
- Jan Baetens & Steven Surdiacourt (2013, forthcoming), "European Graphic Novel: Toward a cultural and mediological history", in Daniel Stein and Jan Thon, eds, *From Comic Strips to Graphic Novels: Contributions to the Theory and History of Graphic Narrative*, Berlin: De Gruyter.
- Susan Lanser 1992, "Toward a Feminist Poetics on Narrative Voice", in: *Fictions of Authority*, pp. 3-24.
- Richard Aczel 1998, "Hearing Voices in Narrative Texts", in: *New Literary History*, Vol. 29, No. 3, pp. 467-500.

- Paul Dawson 2012, “Real Authors and Real Readers: Omniscient Narration and a Discursive Approach to the Narrative Communication Model”, in: *Journal of Narrative Theory*, 42.1, pp. 91–116.
- Henrik Skov Nielsen (2010), “Natural Authors, Unnatural Narration”, in *Postclassical Narratology. Approaches and Analyses*, Ohio State University Press, Columbus, pp. 275-301.
- Richard Walsh (2007), *The Rhetoric of Fictionality. Narrative Theory and the Idea of Fiction*, Ohio State University Press, Columbus, pp. 1-12, 13-37, 69-85.
- Marie-Laure Ryan, (2006), *Avatars of Story*, University of Minnesota Press. pp. 4-30, 231-235.
- Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2012), *Analyzing Narrative*, Cambridge University Press.
- Alexandra Georgakopoulou (forthcoming, in *Narrative Inquiry*), “Building iterativity into positioning analysis: A practice-based approach to small stories and self”.
- Alexandra Georgakopoulou (forthcomingB, in Schiff (ed), *Life and Narrative*), “Narrative/life of The moment: From telling a story to taking a narrative stance”.
- Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2013), “Small stories research & social media: The role of narrative stance-taking in the circulation of a Greek news story”, in *Working Papers in Urban Language & Literacies* .
- Anna De Fina and Alexandra Georgakopoulou (2012), *Analyzing Narrative*, Cambridge University Press.
- James Phelan (2006), “Narrative Theory, 1966–2006: A Narrative” in Scholes and Kelloggs: *The Nature of Narrative*, Oxford University Press.

Another field of theoretical study consisted of the area of research Human-Computer Interaction - HCI, with emphasis on the concept “user” in the design of the human-computer interaction, and as an interactional resource during the projection process:

- Sharrock W, Anderson B. The user as a scenic feature of the design space. *Design Study*. 1994;15(1):5–18.
- Johansson M, Messeter J. Present-ing the user: constructing the persona. *Digital Creativity*. 2005;16(4):231–243.
- Higgins V. Performing Users: The Case of a Computer-Based Dairy Decision-Support System. *Science, Technology & Human Values*. 2007;32:263–286.

- Woolgar S. Configuring the user: the case of usability trials. In: Law J, ed. *A Sociology of Monsters: Essays on Power, Technology and Domination.*; 1991:57–102.
- Rooksby J, Martin D, Rouncefield M. Users as contextual features of software product development and testing. In: Group 2007. Sanibel Island, Florida, USA; 2007:4–7.

The third field of theoretical analysis consists of literature dedicated to the Social Study of Disability as a social and, foremost, interactional construction, through texts such as:

- Michalko R. Blindness Enters the Classroom. *Disability & Society.* 2001;16(3):349–359.
- Michalko R. *The Two-in-One. Walking with Smokie, Walking with Blindness.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press; 1998.
- Michalko RL. *Accomplishing the Sighted World.* 1977. Available at: https://circle.ubc.ca/bitstream/handle/2429/20966/UBC_1977_A8 M52.pdf.
- Coates DC. Social order and the construction of meaning in social interaction: Troubled communication between sighted and partially sighted/blind people. 2003. Available at: <http://search.proquest.com/docview/305279654>.
- Titchkosky T. Looking Blind. A Revelation of Culture's Eye. In: Sandahl C, Auslander P, eds. *Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance.* Ann Arbor, MI: The University of Michigan Press; 2008:219–229.

4. Scientific Publications

During 2013 the following scientific publications have been produced:

4.1 Published papers:

- Cosmin Toth (2013) Rationality and irrationality in understanding human behavior; in *Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology - Compaso*, 4(1). Available at: <http://compaso.eu/wp/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Compaso2013-42-Toth.pdf>
- Cosima Rughiniș, Ștefania Matei (2013). Learning through Massively Co-Authored Biographies: Making Sense of Steve Jobs on Wikipedia through Delegated Voice. In: *International Workshop on Design and Spontaneity in Computer Supported Collaborative Learning, The 19th International Conference on Control Systems and Computer Science, CSCS 2013, University Politehnica of Bucharest.* Available at: <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2510542>

- Răzvan Deaconescu, Ștefania Matei, The Negotiation of Knowledge and Knowing: The Challenge of Using Wiki Technology in Computer Supported Collaborative Learning. In: International Workshop on Design and Spontaneity in Computer Supported Collaborative Learning, The 19th International Conference on Control Systems and Computer Science, CSCS 2013, University Politehnica of Bucharest. Available at: <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2510171.2510540&coll=DL&dl=GUIDE&CFID=369686467&CFTOKEN=92491653>

4.2 Papers in the process of being published:

- Cosmin Toth, Cosima Rughiniș, Bogdana Humă, 2013, Rationalité professionnelle et interprétation des entretiens dans les sciences sociales, presented at the international simpozion « Les sciences sociales et la société. Nouvelles approches de la rationalité », CEREFREA, University of Bucharest and Université Lyon 2, Bucharest, 20-21 September 2013. The material will be available in the conference volume.
- Roxana Bratu, 2013, Vocabularies of happiness, accepted towards publication in the Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology - Compaso 2 / 2013
- Alina Petra Marinescu Nenciu, 2013, The Rhetoric of a Former Corporate Job. How People Construct Their Working Experience in Conversation, accepted towards publication in the Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Sociology - Compaso 2 / 2013

4.3 Papers sent to publications:

- Cosima Rughiniș (2013), „Who Theorizes Age? The “Socio-Demographic Variables” Device and Age-Period-Cohort Analysis in the Rhetoric of Survey-Based Social Research”, sent to be published at: Theory and Society, <http://link.springer.com/journal/11186> [indexed ISI]
- Cosima Rughiniș, Răzvan Rughiniș, Influence of daily smoking frequency on passive smoking behaviors and beliefs: Implications for self tracking practices and mobile applications, sent to publishing at: The Magazine for research and social intervention RCIS, <http://www.rcis.ro/> [indexed ISI]
- Răzvan Rughiniș, Cosima Rughiniș, Robots and the European Public Imagination: Eurobarometer Survey Results and Methodological Issues, sent to be published at: The 2013 3rd International Conference on Social Sciences and Society (ICSSS 2013) [indexed ISI]
- Răzvan Rughiniș, Cosima Rughiniș, Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Profiles of online activity, cyber crime exposure, and security measures of end users in the European

Union, sent to be published at: Computers & Security, <http://www.journals.elsevier.com/computers-and-security/> [indexed ISI]

- Răzvan Rughiniș, Ștefania Matei and Cosima Rughiniș, “Smoking Does Not Make You Happy”. Unlearning Smoking Habits through Mobile Applications on Android OS, sent to be published at: The International Conference on Computer Supported Education CSEDU 2014, <http://www.csedu.org/>
- Răzvan Rughiniș, Cosima Rughiniș, Introducing accessibility for blind users to sighted computer science students. The aesthetics of tools, pursuits, and characters, sent to be published at: The International Conference on Computer Supported Education CSEDU 2014, <http://www.csedu.org/>
- Răzvan Rughiniș, Cosima Rughiniș, ‘In My Shoes’ Interaction Sandbox: Online Encounters with Blind People for Sighted Computer Science Students, sent to be published at: The 16th International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction HCII 2014, <http://www.hcii2014.org/>
- Răzvan Rughiniș, Ștefania Matei and Cosima Rughiniș, Look Who’s Typing: A Repertoire of Tools, Identities, and Relations in Smoking Cessation Applications, sent to be published at: The 8th International Conference on Universal Access in Human-Computer Interaction UAHCI 2014, <http://www.hcii2014.org/uahci> [indexed ISI]

5 Scientific Communication

5.1 Call for papers – Motives and Social Organization, Compaso

As a result of the research activity in the project, a call for publications for the Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Society - Compaso, on the theme: “Motives and social organization” was issued.

The thematic number is coordinated by Prof. Richard Fitzgerald, University of Queensland.

The call for papers is available at:

<http://compaso.eu/2013/02/03/call-for-papers-motives-and-social-organization/>

5.2 Call for Papers – Stories in Social Organization, Compaso

In 2013, the project team launched a second appeal of publications for the magazine Journal of Comparative Research in Anthropology and Society - Compaso, on the subject: “Stories in social organization”. The appeal reflects the theoretical and methodological concerns of the

project, inviting interested authors to contribute with analyses grounded in the narrative and interactional perspectives.

This thematic number will be coordinated by Prof. Alexandra Georgakopoulou-Nunes, King's College London.

The appeal is available at:

<http://compaso.eu/2013/10/15/call-for-papers-stories-in-social-organization/>

5.3 Attendances at scientific conferences

Team member	Conference	Paper
1. Cosima Rughiniş and Bogdana Humă	National Conference of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work <i>Distance and togetherness through time and space</i>	Rhetorical Construction of Lay Persons' Physiognomical Abilities in Current Experimental Psychology
2. Cosima Rughiniş, Cosmin Toth, Maria-Miruna Rădan Gorska, Alexandra Deliu	National Conference of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work <i>Distance and togetherness through time and space</i>	Market Research as an Accountable Activity in interviews Between Academic and Market Research Sociologists
3. Alexandra Deliu	National Conference of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work <i>Distance and togetherness through time and space</i>	Narratives of Error in Quantitative Data Analysis: The Matter of Acquiescent Response Style
4. Cosmin Toth	National Conference of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work <i>Distance and togetherness through time and space</i>	Rationality and Irrationality in the Understanding of Human Behavior. An Evaluation of the Methodological Consequences Implied by the Conceptualization of Irrationality
5. Cosima Rughiniş and Bogdana Humă	<i>Psychology and the Conduct of Everyday Life</i> , Roskilde University, Denmark	First impression reports as methodically constructed narratives of first acquaintances in daily talk-in-interaction

6. Ștefania Matei	National Conference of the Faculty of Sociology and Social Work <i>Distance and togetherness through time and space</i>	Time's Up! The materiality and enactment of absences in forms of maintain posthumous memories
7. Cosima Rughiniș and Ștefania Matei	International Workshop „ <i>Design and spontaneity in computer-supported collaborative learning</i> ”, The 19th International Conference on Control Systems and Computer Science, CSCS 2013, University Politehnica of Bucharest	Learning through Massively Co-Authored Biographies: Making Sense of Steve Jobs on Wikipedia through Delegated Voice. In CSCS19, University Politehnica of Bucharest
8. Răzvan Deaconescu and Ștefania Matei	International Workshop „ <i>Design and spontaneity in computer-supported collaborative learning</i> ”, The 19th International Conference on Control Systems and Computer Science, CSCS 2013, University Politehnica of Bucharest	The Negotiation of Knowledge and Knowing: The Challenge of Using Wiki Technology in Computer Supported Collaborative Learning
9. Alexandra Deliu	<i>Crisis, critique and change</i> , the 11 th international ESA conference, Turin, Italy	Where to, where from? The narrative construction of social spaces in migration
10. Alexandra Deliu	<i>Strangers, aliens and foreigners</i> , the 5th global conference, Oxford, UK	Social spaces of migration: a narrative perspective
11. Cosmin Toth, Cosima Rughiniș, Bogdana Humă	International symposium « <i>Les sciences sociales et la société. Nouvelles approches de la rationalité</i> », CEREFREA University of Bucharest and University Lyon 2, Bucharest, 20-21 September 2013	Professional rationality and interpretation of interviews in social sciences

6. International internships of practice and training

In 2013, three of the team members took part in practice and training internships in an international academic environment:

- Cosima Rughiniş: 21 April – 1 June 2013, research stay at EUROLAB (GESIS), Cologne, Germany;
- Ştefania Matei: 11-16 August 2013, Summer Course in Narrative Studies, Faculty of Arts, Aarhus University, Denmark;
- Alexandra Deliu: 11-16 August 2013, Summer Course in Narrative Studies, Faculty of Arts, Aarhus University, Denmark.

7. Communication and dissemination in the public sphere

Aiming to acquaint young researchers with the constructionist perspective on social data and to launch a reflexive exercise, in February 2013 we organized a Communication Session aimed at students enrolled in the *Social Research Methodology* module. In this session, students presented their projects produced throughout the semester, on the topic: *The social life of numbers*.

In pursuit of carrying out the projects' activities, team members had regular face to face meetings and continued using online communication resources, in order to be in contact and to create the necessary environment for the exchange of ideas and the discussion of data analyses strategies.