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Collective memory and social movements in times of crisis: the case of Romania

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Social movements are not completely spontaneous. On the contrary, they depend on past events and experiences and are rooted in specific contexts. By focusing on three case studies – the student mobilizations of 2011 and 2013, the anti-government mobilizations of 2012, and the protests against the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation project of 2013 – this article aims to investigate the role of collective memory in post-2011 movements in Romania. The legacy of the past is reflected not only in a return to the symbols and frames of the anti-Communist mobilizations of 1989 and 1990, but also in the difficulties of the protesters to delimit themselves from nationalist actors, to develop global claims, and to target austerity and neoliberalism. Therefore, even in difficult economic conditions, Romanian movements found it hard to align their efforts with those of the Indignados/Occupy movements. More generally, the case of Romania proves that activism remains rooted in the local and national context, reflecting the memories, experiences, and fears of the mobilized actors, in spite of the spread of a repertoire of action from Western and southern Europe.

Keywords: mobilization; genealogy; economic crisis; post-Communism

Introduction

A new wave of political protest reclaiming economic and social justice issues has arisen since the outbreak of the global economic crisis in 2008, raising questions about "the crisis of representative democracy" (Nugent 2012) and about the re-politicization of socio-economic issues (Rosenhek and Shalev 2013). The case of Central and Eastern Europe is rarely considered in recent scholarly debates about collective actions, with the literature mainly focused on the NGO-ization of civil societies in the region (Petrova and Tarrow 2007). Nevertheless, recently, non-institutional forms of political participation, both episodic forms of contention, such as the contesting of invalid ballots (Obradović-Wochnik and Wochnik 2014), and citizen's initiatives (Jacobsson 2015), have become frequent in the region. In order to fill the void in the literature, this article aims to study the mobilizations that occurred between 2011 and 2013 in Romania, by focusing on the impact of collective memory upon social movements and by broadening, therefore, the crisis-focused perspective. The second objective is to place the genealogy of these mobilizations in the European and global context, making connections with recent global civic unrest. More exactly, the

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article examines the student mobilizations of 2011 and 2013, the anti-government protests of 2012, and the protests against the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation project of 2013. All three emerged at the same time as "the movements of the crisis" targeting austerity and representative democracy (della Porta and Mattoni 2014). In this article, the three chosen mobilizations are considered social movements, since they (1) include informal networks that interact with one another, (2) promote or prevent social change, (3) develop collective identities, and (4) use methods such as protests, blockades, occupations, and sit-ins (della Porta and Diani 1999, 14–15). This broad definition prevents us from focusing exclusively on the formal organizations, or on the willingness of the actors to enter the political arena, aspects that do not explain the particularities of post-2011 movements (Pleyers 2015, 201–202).

In accordance with *path dependency* theory (Stark 1996), we claim that the national and regional particularities of social movements in Central and Eastern Europe could be understood by focusing on the genealogy of the protest patterns. The post-Communist mobilizations in Central and Eastern Europe are connected to the conditions of departure from Communist rule. More precisely, this article wants to test the hypothesis that the anti-Communist legacy is important in the emergence of post-2011 movements in the post-Communist space. Therefore, the main argument of this research is that, in post-Communist Romania, unlike non-Communist southern Europe, past struggles do not represent a legacy of anti-neoliberal resistance which would bolster the legitimacy of the current protests (Kubal and Becerra 2014). The difference in collective memory leads to the articulation of the mobilizations of the 2000s, which are based more on moral formulations and less on opposition to neoliberalism and austerity. More exactly, Romanian protesters invoke a "national exceptionalism" that is "an ideational framework" (Pagoulatos 2004) through which they perceive their engagement and mobilization in the European and global context and in relation to anti-austerity mobilizations emerging after the outbreak of the worldwide economic crisis. As a consequence of this self-perception, Romanian activists distance themselves from Occupy/Indignados movements, in spite of borrowing types of actions from these movements. The particular path taken by social movements in Romania suggests that the geographical spread of the claims made by social movements rooted in Western and Southern space (Occupy/Indignados) should be considered alongside the force of activists' memories of past events.

In order to explain the particularities of social movements in Romania, we draw on Halbwachs' use of the concept of collective memory, referring to the role of the past in the formation of present identities, trajectories, and events, different from the concept of history, which marks a clear difference between the past and the present and refers to the historicity of events (Wertsch 2008, 150). By taking into account the impact of the anti-Communist legacy upon post-2011 social movements in Romania, we will be referring to collective memory from below. Scholars have focused on the state politics of memory in the context of the institutionalization of the condemnation of the Communist regime in 2006 by the Tismăneanu Commission and President Traian Băsescu (Stan 2013), and they have often overlooked collective memory from below. At the same time, by focusing on the connection between collective memory from below and social movements, this article is a continuation of previous research that emphasizes the role in the post-2011 movements of activists' previous engagements (Zamponi and Daphi 2014; Flesher Fominaya 2015). Placing Romanian social movements in the broader global and European context suggest how the Romanian case could open more general debates in the collective-actions literature. More exactly, the study of social movements in Central and Eastern Europe could explain how local roots and national identity affect the chances of building global and European alliances, given activists' difficulties in

coordinating their actions at the European and global levels during the post-2011 social movements (Pleyers 2015).

This paper is divided into three parts. After a brief theoretical section that puts in context the social movements in Central and Eastern Europe and the particular case of Romania, we will focus on post-2011 movements in Romania, through the three chosen case studies. In the last part, we will go back to four explicative categories for the direction taken by these movements in Romania. To capture the dynamic relationship between activists' experiences and their claims, the article is based on 45 interviews conducted in November 2011 and in October 2013 with activists involved in the three chosen mobilizations. Mainly, we focused on what activists considered to be continuities between past mobilizations in Romania and present movements, and on what they identified as their legacy. The activists interviewed were either in their twenties and early thirties, with a rather short history of activism, or "longtime activists" in their forties and early fifties, who were involved in, or at least affected by, the anti-Communist mobilizations following the fall of the Communist regime. Apart from emphasizing the importance of the generational factor in the study of social movements, the choice of those interviewed was made according to their visibility and long-term engagement in the post-2011 movements. This research is completed by participant observations of several activists' meetings in Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, and Timisoara between 2011 and 2013, and of publications produced by the informal groups during the mobilizations.

Putting in context the social movements in Central and Eastern Europe

Theoretical background

The difficulty of establishing a European social-movements field and the tendency to universalize theories and experiences rooted in "American exceptionalism" (Flesher Fominaya and Cox 2013) was reinforced in the context of the economic crisis. Recent analyses highlight the return of social and economic justice issues in the contentious politics of Central and Eastern Europe (Císař and Navrátil 2017). It was also recently noted that it was easier to endure economic difficulties in the 1990s, amid optimism about the transition, than to endure them for a second time (Beissinger and Sasse 2014). In continuity with this research, we believe the articulation of collective actions during the economic crisis cannot be understood without references to experiences and memories. If in the Western countries, diagnoses of the "crisis of capitalism" or the "crisis of the European project" (Kriesi et al. 2013) were related to the transformations of the welfare state, Central and Eastern Europe experienced much worse economic difficulties during the 1980s and 1990s (Beissinger and Sasse 2014). In this situation, the connection between the economic crisis and the welfare state can be a major limitation in understanding the relationship between the crisis and the movements that emerge outside of the West (Tilly 1999). More exactly, for the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, even the idea of debt and austerity goes back to the economic deprivation of the Communist regime, and the lack of access to public services is linked to a political elite that did not break its ties with the past, leading to a reactivation of anti-Communist frames and of the hopes of the transition during post-2011 social movements. In this context, the difficulties in addressing social justice claims (Alyukov et al. 2016) associated with the Communist regime and the prevalence of normative, moral visions and of the Communist-anti-Communist cleavage over socioeconomic interests (Bielasiak 2010) still fuel contentious politics in Central and Eastern Europe. At the same time, geopolitical tensions between Russia and the Western powers help distract activists from socioeconomic interests. Specifically, the geopolitical

formulation of domestic problems (Ishchenko 2011), which sees "the foreigner" as an agent socially and financially involved in domestic mobilizations, has an impact upon mobilizations in Central and Eastern Europe. These particularities of social movements in Central and Eastern Europe suggest that the connection between left-wing political attitudes and non-electoral participation observed in Western Europe (Dalton 2006) would not apply in the post-Communist democracies.

Given the legacy of anti-Communist mobilizations for post-Communist movements in Central and Eastern Europe (della Porta 2016), focusing on phenomena similar to Western models ignores the forms of social organization that are rooted in the local political culture, kinship networks, various communitarian forms, or previous actions. A genealogical approach (Flesher Fominaya 2015) could help us understand the local experiences of activists in Central and Eastern Europe, without seeing the region's social movements as incomplete or lacking compared with those in Western Europe. This approach also qualifies the logic of rupture with the past that was central for transitologist approaches applied to the post-Communist space (Dobry 2000).

The Romanian case

Taking into account the regional particularities of social movements in Central and Eastern Europe, we will focus on Romania, which we find interesting for three reasons. In the first place, the case of Romania proves that the conditions of departure from state socialism affect the emergence and the development of post-2011 movements. More exactly, after the outbreak of the economic crisis in 2008, Romania did not see large-scale mobilizations against budget cuts and privatization of public services, even though austerity measures had increased poverty and social inequalities. In a late-2011 survey by the Urban and Regional Sociology Center (CURS), 42% of respondents said their household income sufficed only for the bare necessities, while 24% said it was not even enough for that (Stoica 2012, 35). In 2011, polls showed that only 6% of respondents trusted the parliament and that only 7% trusted political parties (Stoica 2012, 37). In spite of these structural conditions (crisis of representation, lack of confidence in political elites, decrease in living standards), austerity measures did not lead to important mobilizations or to the articulation of autonomous practices in reaction to the decline of confidence in national political elites and public institutions. The protests that emerged in 2012 came two years after austerity measures. If the tendency to welcome privatizations (Meardi 2005; Ost 2006) and "anti-Communist" sentiment are features of Central and East European civil societies both in countries with a strong dissident past and in countries with a weak, Communist-era resistance, some national particularities of social movements in Romania should be taken into account. In the first place, unlike some of its peers, Romania did not have a strong anti-Communist resistance in the 1970s and 1980s that could have triggered a peaceful and negotiated change of regime. The weak resistance (such as the 1977 strike of miners from the Jiu Valley and the workers' protests in the city of Brasov in 1986) and the frail underground networks of critical intellectuals concentrated mainly around individual figures ("the Goma movement") were almost immediately repressed by the Communist regime. As a consequence, unlike in Poland (Karolewski 2016), the anti-Communist intellectual dissident networks developed in Communist Romania in the 1970s and 1980s did not play a role in the post-2011 movements. Most importantly, frustration and disillusionment that the transition had not represented a radical break with the Communist past and that Romanian political life continued to be dominated by members of the former nomenklatura (Anderson 1999) influenced post-2011 movements, bringing "unresolved issues" into the

public space. This explains why Romanians, like activists from other parts of Central and Eastern Europe, tended to mobilize around opposition to the penetration of the Communist nomenklatura in the post-Communist political arena[1] instead of around socioeconomic issues, as in the case of post-2011 movements in southern or Western Europe. Secondly, police intervention during the protests raised questions about the repressive state, about the legacy of the Securitatea, and of surveillance and repression mechanisms dating from the period of "actually existing socialism."[2]

More broadly, protest groups criticizing representative democracy raised questions about the possibility of horizontal and autonomous practices in a space lacking a strong autonomist tradition, since the Occupy and Indignados camps and assemblies brought to scholarly attention the "democratic experimentation" of horizontal and participatory processes (Nez 2012). If protests in Spain, Greece, and the United States were rooted in existing local practices and if many activists in these countries were already involved in grassroots struggles (Romanos 2013), in Romania, for the older generations, the occupation of public spaces evokes the University Square phenomenon (*fenomenul Piața Universității*) of 1990. This mobilization is associated with protests against the former Communist nomenklatura's coopting of the anti-Communist revolution of 1989; the lack of accountability of former members and collaborators of the Communist regime and with national and religious symbols (Cesereanu 2003) – rather with charismatic leaders than with egalitarian forms of organization. The use of anti-Communist symbols (the flag with a hole, the song "Imnul golanilor") during the post-2011 movements signaled a direct continuity with the mobilizations of 1989 and 1990.

In Romania, the legacy of the anti-Communist mobilizations of 1989 and 1990 had a stronger imprint on the "movements of crisis" than did the home-grown networks created in the early 2000s. In fact, the practices of horizontal decision-making before 2011 were limited to the subcultural networks related to the global justice movement protesting economic globalization and international financial institutions in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Nevertheless, if the global justice movements in Western Europe were based on previous networks and struggles (Sommier, Fillieule, and Agrikolianski 2008), this movement emerged in post-Communist Romania at the initiative of intellectuals and activists in contact with Western Europe, and who had the resources to follow Western alternative lifestyles. More precisely, the first networks created in post-Communist Romania were related to the European Social Forum, which brought together ex-Communists and trade unionists adhering to the global justice movement structure without taking into account horizontal practices (Gagyi 2013). Only a second wave of mobilization adopted anti-imperialist, anti-American, and pacifist positions and brought together activists who warned that Romania would "become a Western colony after being an Eastern colony" (Ovidiu 2004). Nevertheless, the internalization of a global justice movement in Romania was less visible and cohesive than in the Czech Republic or Poland, not only because of the resurgence of nationalism that followed the fall of the Communist regime in continuity with "actually-existing socialism" that constituted a synthesis between neo (Stalinism) and Herderian nationalism (Verdery 1995), but also because of the weakness (or "the weak tradition of left-wing activism") of a tradition of left-wing activism. One activist described the atmosphere of nationalism at the time:

> In the early 2000s, there were many fascists in Romania, very tolerated by public opinion. It was not a good time to be alternative. In our city, when you say anti-systemic, you think about the Legionnaire movement. So the construction of our group began as a matter of self-defense against the far right and people saw our pacifist actions as a Jewish conspiracy. (Bogdan, 29)

Another activist involved both in the global justice movement and in the post-2011 movements confirms the same idea:

> In the 1990s there was real ideological confusion and people tended to mix anarchist ideas with nationalist symbols, and there were many heroic stories about the Legionnaires. Even among organizers of the Underground Festival,[3] there were some neo-Nazis and absurd discussions about race. My impression is that before and after 2000 we had a tendency to imitate anarchist practices and symbols from Western Europe, without understanding the ideological aspects behind them. In time, it became unpopular to have friends who had ideas that discriminated against ethnic and sexual minorities, but mostly because of the Germans who supported our festival. (Adi, 49)

The repression of activists who mobilized during the NATO summit in 2008 in Bucharest led to the demobilization and dissolution of these local networks and to the emigration of some activists by the time the economic crisis hit, at the end of that year. This was one of the factors that created a disruption between the Global Justice Movement and the movements of the crisis in Romania, contrary to the continuity between the two waves that could be observed in the occidental space (della Porta and Mattoni 2014) and that legitimized and created a continuity of left-wing activism.

Post-2011 social movements in Romania

Student movement

After 2011, various informal networks were created and direct actions occurred in Romania. Not all participants identified with a global wave of mobilization, but the emergence of radical fringe groups, part of the broader Romanian student movement traditionally centered around trade unions and NGOs, was connected to the global context. An action called Occupy the Faculty of History started in November 2011 as a protest against students' lack of voice in the debate over the university's role in society. The occupation was initially about the militarization of the university, in which participants were forbidden to enter the university and the authorities called the police to evict them. From there, protesters broadened their scope to include issues such as the national education budget, the relationship between the university and the market, and the system of university governance. Two groups and visions developed during the occupation, creating a division between experienced activists familiar with foreign practices and ideas, and actors who referred rather to the domestic context of mobilization. On the one hand, the students of the history faculty and their representatives placed themselves as descendants of the Students' League mobilized in 1990, during the University Square protests. The entrance into the occupied amphitheater of Petre Roman, a politician involved in the revolution of 1989, was applauded by these actors. On the other hand, activists familiar with autonomous practices in southern and Western Europe insisted on the role of horizontality and on decision-making made by consensus. These radical actors criticized the tendency toward hierarchy, the ignorance of the global context, the students' reluctance to make socioeconomic claims, and the use of national symbols during the occupation.

> During the occupation, some students said the militarization of the university was justified, since we shouldn't let the homeless enter the university. For me, the use of the national flag and the references to conservative figures weren't normal in our recent global context. I remembered that, during the occupation of the University of Vienna, the doors were open for everybody. Even the homeless could come to eat and sleep in the university. (Cristian, 31)

Two years after Occupy the Faculty of History, an informal group in Cluj-Napoca reacted to the difficulties in organizing a debate in a university building by occupying an amphitheater

of Babes-Bolyai University in order to discuss students' problems, including the under-funding of the education system, scholarships, residences, and access to university build-ings. As in Occupy Wall Street, formal organizations and the students' representatives were targeted during the occupation and criticized for their "opportunism" and for not solving students' problems. If a viewing of the film "The University Square" in the occu-pied amphitheater showed interest in the local roots of resistance in Romania, the inter-national context was also known and internalized by many of the occupants. The participants created thematic workshops and "non-hierarchical assemblies" moderated by rotation, and used forms of communication inspired by the Spanish Indignados. Neverthe-less, apart from the approximately 70 students who occupied the amphitheater, many stu-dents viewed the action warily. About 200 students and professors from Babes-Bolyai University signed a petition to end the occupation. That skepticism was shared by journal-ists, most of whom labeled the occupation "useless," without clear claims and marked by the legacy of the Romanian Communist Party (*Stiri de Cluj*, March 29, 2013). Exhausted and lacking broad support, the occupiers went home.

Anti-governmental protests of 2012

These small student mobilizations were followed by more extended collective actions. Starting in January 2012, thousands of Romanians went to the streets to protest a bill ela-borated by the center-right government of Emil Boc aiming to privatize the health system. Raed Arafat, a doctor of Syrian origin well-known for having initiated an emergency service system, had resigned following a dispute with President Traian Băsescu. Thousands in cities across Romania, including Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Timisoara, Oradea, Constanta, and Arad, joined the protests. Gradually, the demonstrations started to reflect a general dis-content with the post-1989 political elites and parties. Protests brought together groups and individuals with different claims, dividing them into an older generation with short-term demands – the resignation of Băsescu, pension increases – and young people (students, members of NGOs, academics) with a more systemic agenda, including "real democracy," civil rights, environmental protection, and women's rights.

It is interesting to note some continuities between the 1990 and the 2012 protests. If the foreign newspapers almost immediately labeled the protests of 2012 "an anti-crisis move-ment" (Bran 2012), interviews with participants present a more nuanced picture. In fact, the privatization of the health system is regarded by most of the participants as a pretext for revolting against the political elites. At the same time, the symbolism of the University Square and the references "to the heroes who died for our freedom during the Revolution of 1989" are important factors. The Opera Square (Piata Operei) of Timisoara, the city where the proclamation prohibiting the access of the members of the Communist *nomenk-latura* to the post-Communist power structures, was written and read, and the University Square (Piata Universitatii) of Bucharest are places with a strong symbolic power and mem-orial value. The references in the protesters' slogans to the former Romanian Communist Party, "in which are rooted all the existing political parties," and to the links between Traian Băsescu and Nicolae Ceauşescu, mark a continuity between the anti-Communist mobilizations of 1989 and 1990 and the protests of 2012. More exactly, the slogan "PDL and USL, all come from the Romanian Communist Party" – referring to opposing political forces – was chanted in Timisoara and Bucharest by football fans and members of the New Right. These continuities of the past struggles against the Communist *nomenk-latura*, however, do not preclude some important differences between the two mobiliz-ations. If the NGOs and the opposition parties were supported by the protesters in 1990,

in 2012, the criticism of all political parties (the slogans "All parties steal by rotation" and "PSD and PDL are the same trash" were chanted in all the big cities of Romania) and the rejection of "infiltrators" became an important factor.

The anti-RMGC mobilization in 2013

The protests that began in September 2013 opposed a cyanide-based gold-mining project developed by the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation, a Canadian multinational, which involved moving the residents of Rosia Montana, a small western village. These protests relied on activist networks already created "before and" (some activist networks against the gold-mining project were created in 2002, so before the mobilizations of 2012) during the mobilizations of 2012. In several cities, protesters organized marches every Sunday for four months to raise awareness and support. The organizational core was formed of a few highly engaged activists organized on the "United We Save" platform (Uniti Salvăm) who attended administrative meetings and forums on the directions of future actions. This platform remained active even after the protests stopped the Rosia Montana project. A part of the United We Save group wrote the Proclamation of Bucharest on 21 December 2014, marking the passing of 25 years since the Revolution of 1989 and aiming to "come back to the stolen ideals of the revolution," open the archive of the revolution, and condemn those who committed crimes during the fall of the regime. The moment was marked by a commemorative and mourning celebration where the national anthem, prayers, and the national flag reminded of the anti-Communist mobilizations of 1989 and 1990.

   Given that the protests occurred after the occupation of Gezi Park in Istanbul, in which a few members of the United We Save group had participated, several tactics were adopted, including sitting on the ground and "occupying" public places. Furthermore, two activists of the Spanish Indignados went through Bucharest, Cluj, and Timisoara to meet Romanian activists and support their actions. Nevertheless, the distance between the Romanian mobilizations of 2013 and what is called "movements of the crisis" is obvious from the activists' perception of social justice issues. The difficulties of articulating claims for social and economic justice may seem paradoxical, especially since protesters were students and young workers, social groups that normally get involved in economic contention, and from what Andretta and della Porta had called "a contentious precarious generation" (2012). But among the United We Save group, wariness of the anti-capitalist agenda and the difficulties of incorporating claims of social justice into the broader protest agenda became important aspects. This tendency was prevalent despite the fact that many ideas – the lack of leaders, the organization outside of institutionalized politics, decentralization, and occupation of public buildings and squares – were adopted from the autonomous movements in the United States, Spain, and Turkey after the outbreak of the economic crisis.

> We managed to bring together educated people with a civic conscience, but we're not interested in the masses. You see, the quality of people changes when they come with socioeconomic demands. I don't discriminate, but I think everyone should mind his own business. The masses must have limited power to vote, because the vote must be exercised according to the general culture. People who are less concerned about what is good for our nation should have a limited right to vote. (Mircea, 24)
>
> Activism is about values, not about demanding higher salaries and pensions. (Iulia, 27)

These excerpts go against the spirit of the Occupy and Indignados movements promoting political participation "from below" by citizens making claims based on economic and social rights. In time, some of the United We Save activists would get involved in the parliamentary campaign of right-wing politician Monica Macovei, whose platform declared,

"The state monopoly in education must stop. Parents should be able to choose their education provider as they choose any service provider" (Macovei, 2014). The anti-welfare vision that attracted some of the United We Save activists is contrary to the claims for social justice of the movements of the crisis in southern Europe. At the same time, the revolt of the United We Save group against politicians and corruption is rooted in a different context than the revolt of the Indignados. Lacking any memory of postwar welfare or left-wing mobilizations, Romanian protesters saw neoliberal programs as an opportunity to create distance from the Communist past (Ban 2013). In consequence, the activists did not perceive their struggles in connection with the global economic context, did not raise global claims or target global issues (neoliberalism, migration), and framed their own struggles in "national exceptionalism."

> In Romania, there is a mafia that has no connection with capitalism, neoliberalism, and imperialism. In France, you can say that ideologies are important. In Romania, the problem is not neoliberalism, but the immorality of the political elite. (Dragos, 49)

At the same time, the attempt not to divide the protesters and the references to the union of "the people" against the political class and the state is similar to the "us versus them" division between the population and the Communist *nomenklatura* in the 1980s and 1990s (Mudde 2003). According to the Facebook page of the group, "The United We Save Community proposes the construction of a plural society based on trust [...] and of a consensus that is the foundation of the fair articulation of society." This consensual and unified vision led to the protesters' acceptance of activists who promoted far-right ideologies. The best example is the refusal of the United We Save group to condemn and to distance itself from protesters who beat a young activist displaying anti-fascist symbols and banners during the protests of 2013. The young activist was attacked because "he did not speak Romanian" and because he was seen in the company of "some foreigners."

> During the protests, we had anarchist and nationalist flags mixed up. Many activists from Timisoara and Bucharest said we should have national flags, because this was the symbol of the Revolution of 1989 and of the University Square of 1990. We had to accept alliances with nationalist and orthodox groups. I was solidly with the guy who was beaten up, but I had to accept compromises in order to be able to exist in the public space. (Florin, 32)

Social movements in the context of the economic crisis

Different activist trajectories and different political socialization

The political socialization of citizens in the Communist regime has been seen as an explanation for their civic inertia (Howard 2003), with less attention paid to their personal experience of social protests (McAdam 1989). In our case, the engagement of an older generation of activists in the anti-Communist protests after the fall of the regime is an important factor. The protests that took place after 2011 brought into the public space what we call "the disappointed activists of 1989 and 1990," older people who experienced the change of the Communist regime and even participated in an active way at the collapse of Communism. The first political engagement of these actors was linked to the anti-Communist protests of 1989 and 1990.

> The first time I went out in the street was in 1989. I was 18 and I protested against Ceausescu. In time, I realized that I didn't protest for what we have today. All the collaborators with the Communist regime are still in power. (Alex, 49)

The involvement of these "memory activists" who negotiated the remembrance of past events marks a "generational cleavage" between an older generation directly influenced

by the mobilizations after the collapse of the Communist regime and disappointed in the transition and a younger one, more influenced by social media and by protests originating abroad.

> I'm not like the other activists that you can see here. I'm 45, and in 1989 and 1990 I had a gun with a bullet in the barrel. Nowadays, there are extremely few activists who get involved out of conviction. For most of them, it's just fashionable to protest. As long as young people from the former Communist countries imitate what happens in the West, nothing will change. Twenty years ago, thousands of people took the street because they were desperate. Now activists invest too much energy chasing the subject of horizontality and they don't see the forest for the trees. (Andrei, 45)

> In 2013, I went in the street every Sunday. The click occurred a few weeks before the protests of 2012, when I saw the screening of a film, "The Real Social Network," about student protests in the United Kingdom. Something changed in me when I saw that movie. In the street, I found people like me. The 2013 protests were very creative, focusing on alternative events (concerts, exhibitions, workshops, etc.) and the occupation of public squares was a novelty for us. (Alina, 26)

The legacy of the Securitatea

The repression of social movements in Central and Eastern Europe, where the interaction between contentious actors and the police is volatile, has an impact on the demobilization of activists. In Romania, the legacy of the secret services of the Communist regime, the Securitatea, from intimidation to infiltration to physical repression of activists, is the subject of many disputes and controversies. The question of policing methods rooted in the Communist regime returned to public attention after the protests of 2012 (for the first time since the mass arrests of activists protesting the NATO summit in Bucharest in 2008). For instance, one visible activist received a visit from "two men of the system" who questioned his mother about his activities, warning that her son may have problems. The family's doctor was questioned about the activist's possible "mental illness." Although this particular case has been published in several Romanian newspapers, there are many stories of surveillance and intimidation of activists. For instance, after Babes-Bolyai University asked the police to evacuate the Occupy protesters, the vice rector for student affairs, relying on a document from the prefecture, said the university had been informed by the secret service a few days before the action that "influenced and paid people" would organize a protest in the university and that the occupation was "democracy taken to extremes."[4] This episode seemed indicative of the alliance between public institutions and the secret services. In another example, in 2013, the president of the Romanian Intelligence Service said the organization had followed for years all the activities related to the Rosia Montana Gold Corporation project and that "the protesters were manipulated by eco-anarchists," paid by "foreigners," and intent on "violence and social destabilization" (Varzaru 2013). These statements echoed the techniques of the Communist regime, when the police and the secret services undermined the weak latent movements mobilized against the Communist regime (Nistor 2016).

Attitudes toward western movements

Despite the sharing of methods and claims from the Western and southern space, the activists' perception of the distance between Western movements and their own mobilization shows that transnational mobilizations and identities do not overwhelm national differences (Tarrow 2010).

> It's clear that the Greek and Spanish movements are more decentralized and more political than ours. In Greece, the same group doesn't go out in the streets with the flag of the country, goes to meetings behind closed doors with politicians, and wants an anarchist world, all at the same time. (Raluca, 29)

The weakness of the autonomist tradition

The lack of continuity of an anti-neoliberal resistance and the weakness of an autonomist tradition leads to a cultural translation of patterns of protests borrowed from the Western space, triggering claim-making around religious and national symbols.

> I remember that we organized a Food Not Bombs[5] at the periphery of the city in 2013 and many people believed that it was something religious, that we were from the church. They saw nothing political in what we did. (Marius, 24)

Conclusions

Contrary to the tendency to see protests as a completely spontaneous outburst, especially in the post-Communist space, since the literature has often depicted the low level of engagement in the region, this article has adopted a long-term perspective and a genealogical approach. We have shown that the mobilizations that emerged in post-Communist Romania between 2011 and 2013 did not start from scratch in the public square. The different development of the movements of the crisis in Western Europe and in Central and Eastern Europe is related to a different genealogy of social movements in the two spaces. In Romania, the revolt against the "confiscation of the Revolution of 1989" and the refusal to reckon with the traumas of the first years of the transition (Stan 2013) affected the pattern of mobilization. The return of "unresolved issues of the past" explains why the activists in the post-2011 movements tended to see the anti-Communist mobilizations of 1989 and 1990 as their antecedents, not the mobilizations of trade unions around a materialist agenda that occurred in the first years of the transition. At the same time, unlike in Western Europe, the revolt against the police and the surveillance mechanisms is partially rooted in criticism of the collaboration of the police with the Communist regime. So, collective memory has a role in creating a kinship across time between the mobilizations of 1989–1990 and the post-2011 movements.

Second, the absence of a clear continuity between the global justice movement and the movements of the crisis, of a long-term anti-neoliberal resistance, and of an anti-austerity discourse hinders the emergence of social movements that could question neoliberalism, as in Spain. More exactly, in the context of the economic crisis and of the emergence of the movements of the crisis, Romania is confronted with the creation of new, decentralized networks that organize outside of institutionalized politics. Nevertheless, as with the United We Save group, some groups and activists adopted autonomous principles – decisions made by consensus, the lack of leaders, horizontality, the occupation of public squares – without including a criticism of neoliberalism and of liberal democracy or showing a sensitivity toward social issues that were important aspects for the post-2011 anti-austerity mobilizations. The conflict between imported participatory mechanisms and the post-Communist context (Gille 2000), the perception among Eastern activists of a difference from the Western activists have implications for the possibility of articulating global collective actions and networks. Even if they used tactics inspired from abroad, many Romanian protesters continued to frame their actions in terms of national exceptionalism, hindering the emergence of transnational and anti-national forms of activism.

Notes

1. The struggle against the former Communist *nomenklatura* remained important even during the anti-corruption protests of 2017. Even if these mobilizations do not constitute the object of this research, it is important to note the perpetuation of certain protest patterns. According to a survey conducted in February 2017 by the Center of Studies in Political Ideas (2017), the main agents of corruption are the Communist *nomenklatura*, those who became rich after 1989, while at the opposite pole are international multinationals and technocrats.
2. This phrase was a term used in East German propaganda.
3. Punk and punk rock festival held in Timisoara starting in late 1990.
4. "SRI îi monitorizează pe studenții care au OCUPAT UBB Cluj? Dezvăluirea este făcută de șefii Universității – VIDEO." 2013. *Stiri de Cluj* March 21. http://www.stirideclu.ro/social/sri-ii-monitorizeaza-pe-studentii-care-au-ocupat-ubb-cluj-dezvaluirea-este-facuta-de-sefii-universitatii-video.
5. Autonomous collectives protesting war and poverty and serving vegan food to the needy. The practice was born in the 1980s in the United States.

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