EMOTIONAL CONVERGENCE
IN MASS AND SOCIAL MEDIA
IN ELECTION.
CASE STUDY: ROMANIA 2014

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Abstract

The present study is centered on some of
the recent transformations that have taken place
in the field of political communication, influenced
by changes in the broader area of communica-
tions and, consequently, by the increasingly eas-
ier access to modern equipment and technology.
These developments take the form of media,
technological and emotional convergence, lead-
ing to major changes in the public and political
spheres, therefore contributing to the electoral
victory of certain candidates credited with small-
er chances of success. The study centers on the
Romanian presidential elections that took place
in the autumn of 2014. Then, a large percentage
of the Romanian diaspora – most of them living
in Western European countries – have given
their support to those candidates considered to
have a more democratic approach to govern-
ment in Romania. The need for change came to
be regarded as a challenge, and the subsequent
tensions led to the formation of a virtual group,
whose members were brought together by their
adherence to a shared set of values – translated
into active influence in the mass and social me-
dia, electronic mail, or via telephone. This move-
ment was so effective, that the runner-up in the
first round (30.3% of the votes) won the second
round of elections with a total score of 54.4%.

Keywords: emotional convergence, elec-
tion, Romanian diaspora, political communica-
tion, media activists, digital media.

1. Introduction

Mass and social media convergence (MSMC) is currently an important field of research. This phenomenon could be termed 'interactive media', and mainly consists of various users taking part in the development of communication products (Krumsvik, 2013; Steensen, 2014). Technological convergence (TC) enables the development of new means of communication, as users are offered a wide array of apps and software. Consequently, the public sphere becomes more dynamic, since users are given the opportunity to identify more easily with values and ideals, to support various causes and people, to interact with individuals of similar status and to refute undesirable views. Adherence to an idea or a virtual group depends on the personal interests and aspirations of each participant, and the process of co-participation is enabled by Emotional Convergence (EC). MSMC and EC phenomena occur constantly in the political arena, especially during key moments such as elections (Bennett and Segerberg, 2013; Castells, 2015; Fenton, 2016). Therefore, MSMC is part of a wider spectrum of collective action in Romania, alongside the civil society and the press, as mentioned by Mungiu-Pippidi (2013).

This paper attempts to show how media convergence and technological convergence enable the channeling of emotional factors, strengthening the position of some candidates in favor of others and leading to changes in attitude on the part of the voters. We are dealing with a complex communication environment, where 'users assess what different media can do for them in a given situation, how they complement each other and what social and emotional consequences their media choices have in different contexts' (Swart, Peters and Broersma, 2017). In the public sphere though, media convergence is part of the political polarization phenomenon (Garrett *et al.*, 2014), determining strong action and attitudes.

In the introductory part of our paper we will present a number of elements and concepts, necessary for the understanding of the technological and emotional media convergence of the perception of candidates in elections. We will follow with a presentation of the data and methods we have used and a chapter dedicated to the results of the analysis of positions expressed in social media. The final part of our paper will focus on conclusions on the way emotional convergence made electoral success possible. We will end with suggestions for further research.

In order to understand how convergence takes place, we will examine the 2014 Romanian presidential elections, looking particularly at the second round. The two candidates who have reached this phase had an important administrative experience. Klaus Iohannis was, at the date of the elections, the mayor of Sibiu (a municipality in the center of the country), while Victor Ponta was the acting Prime Minister of Romania, in a period of economic growth. The administrative functions of the two candidates increased their prominence, which led to an important advantage compared to all the other candidates who ran in the first round of the elections.

There is a long history of research in the field of human emotions, which is elegantly summarized by Smith-Lovin and Winkielman (2010). Frijda and Mesquita

(1998) have identified five main features of emotions, which, in their opinion, are individual responses to major events that are tied to values, motives or sensibilities. Extensive research has been done on voting behavior and the way it is influenced. In the second half of the 20th century democratic elections became the norm in consolidated democracies, and since then, emotional behavior has provided a fertile field for research. Scholars display a growing interest in online interaction and the possibility of creating relatively homogenous groups.

Emotional agency is not uncommon during political elections. Moreover, the electoral race bears two distinctive features: (1) an increase in emotional agency, which leads to a more aggressive electoral race in Romania; (2) existing high-tensions are amplified by mass media and social media. Thus, the phenomenon of media convergence takes shape, through which news or sometimes just rough information and rumors are picked-up by televisions or other media channels from social networks, blogs, and websites, and then redistributed in the social media, in a process of ever increasing tension. How was it possible for a runner-up with a clear disadvantage in the polls to win the presidential elections in Romania? Two hypotheses present themselves: (1) the large number of diaspora voters, by far the largest percentage in the post-revolutionary history of Romania; (2) the actions of Romanian expats have persuaded some of the undecided and a certain segment of those who supported the left-wing candidate to change their voting preference. Still, what triggered this massive intervention from the diaspora, and what prompted its emotional and mediated unification in favor of the candidate considered to be the most qualified to hold the presidential office?

The 2014 Romanian presidential elections witnessed a powerful convergence effect, which determined the turnover of the election results from the first round. The final victory went to Klaus Iohannis, the rightwing candidate, initially credited with fewer chances of success. His coming to power was backed not only by his base – party members, mass media and social media activists, etc. – but also by other individuals. In the events that led up to the second round of elections (November 16, 2014), the massive involvement of Romanian expats, most of them living in the European Union, is indeed without precedent. Although only 12% of these individuals were able to vote (377,000 people out of approximately three million), their contribution proved to be decisive in terms of expressing general discontent and dissatisfaction with the way the elections were organized in various polling stations across the EU. These factors led to a total difference of 8% (600,000 votes) between the winner and the runner-up, a score that nobody anticipated: best polls for the right-wing candidate credited him with a 2-3% victory.

These individuals displaying average to high civic engagement, acknowledged for their professional skills and used to European standards of living, also have access to the modern means of communication in terms of apps and technology (Szabo, 2014). Ten to fifteen years ago, Romanian emigrants found it hard to reach their friends and relatives back home or in other countries. Many of them still wrote letters. Interna-

tional calls were expensive, and few had the means to acquire mobile phones. E-mail communication was starting to take roots, but high-prices in computer equipment coupled with low-level computer skills led to uneven developments in this particular field of communication. However, things have changed dramatically in the last decade, particularly in the last five years. As part of the global diaspora, Romanians quickly adopted these new means of communication, in the area of social media.

2. Data and methods

The present article uses a mixed methodology, approaching the main research questions both in a qualitative and a quantitative way. The content analysis method was used in determining the position of candidates, close supporters and their base, as well as the level of aggregation around the political leader who was offered support through emotional convergence revealed by the multiple political messages posted on various media platforms. Furthermore, elements of digital ethnography (Postill and Pink, 2013) were used to study user behavior in the virtual environment. Many communication items were analyzed (i.e., press items in various papers, radio and television websites, blogs and personal pages of candidates, political parties and base voters). Particular emphasis was placed on user commentaries regarding the political views expressed in existing communication products (approximately one thousand texts were analyzed). Moreover, this investigation allowed us to determine the way in which media convergence enabled emotional convergence – in terms of affiliated political views, as users were brought together in supporting one or the other candidate – as well as conflicting opinions meant to undermine one candidate's position in favor of the other. These messages were both textual and visual in nature. Video messages ranked highest, given their increased communication potential, some of which went viral (Wallsten, 2010). Pictures showing hundreds of Romanian expats standing in the cold waiting to cast their vote were used by Prime Minister Ponta's adversaries to reveal both the government's faulty setup of the election process abroad and its attempts to impede the fundamental right to vote. Given these circumstances, media convergence revealed the emotional convergence and divergence regarding the relationship between the two candidates present in the second round of the Romanian presidential elections.

For our quantitative analysis we have followed the Facebook presence of the two main candidates of the 2014 presidential elections in Romania collecting all the campaign events posted on their official pages. For each event, we collected the date, the number of likes and shares and we stored the content for future qualitative analysis. We consider that we can identify, to a certain degree, the number of events with campaign staff activity, the number of shares with political activism and the number of likes with reactions of sympathizers. The data collection was made during May and June 2015[1],

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1   We thank our graduate student Tudor Curea for the data collection.

i.e., a relatively long time after the events. This leads to the fact that the temporal moments of likes and shares attributed to the events are non-factual. While, of course, such activity is generally more pregnant during the first two days after posting, we cannot exclude late incoming reactions. Nevertheless, we will consider the statistics of like and share reactions as, on the one hand, perceptions of the events that elicited them and, on the other hand, supporters' mobilization in the presidential campaign.

After data collection, we constructed a time-line of events. This summarized a time series to reproduce the temporal development of campaign reactions. A reconstruction of data was necessary mainly for three reasons: (1) Events did not take place every day. (2) On some days a higher number of events took place. (3) Events of the two candidates happened on different days. The timeline adds up events, likes and shares for each day of the campaign, for both rounds, spanning as such between the 15th of September and the 16th of November 2014.

We started the statistical analysis of data with simple descriptive and time-series line graphs. These will enable us a comparative visual overview of the Facebook campaign. Comparing the two campaigns we can find their patterns of activity. We have continued by analyzing the relationship between the campaigns of the two candidates. Here the main question was in what respect the campaigns were independent or reactive. Time-series analysis allow also for an important analytical tool, while adding a lot to the complexity of data analysis mostly because autocorrelations have to be taken into consideration. Time-series enable us a certain causal analysis by using ARIMA and VAR models. We have started testing the time-series with unit-root tests to determine if the time series are stationary, trend-stationary or non-stationary. We found that time series of Facebook events involved in the modelling can be considered as stationary. Based on the results of these tests, we concluded that ARIMA forecasting models can be used to determine the relationship between the two campaigns. ARIMA, autoregressive integrated moving average models, allow for a modelling of time series that takes into consideration the impact of a number of previous values, considering different ways in which these impact on their future. We have used ARIMA models including predictors. This has enabled us to test if the campaigns were reactive to each other, and in what way this reactivity was asymmetrical.

3. Main descriptive findings

First we introduce the main descriptive findings separated according to the rounds of the campaign. The first round of the 2014 Romanian presidential elections included 14 candidates. We have separated in the two tables below the main descriptive statistics of the Facebook presence of the two candidates.

A number of immediate quantitative results have to be highlighted here. In the first campaign round Ponta's Facebook page had 25 postings, somewhat less than the 30 postings on Klaus Iohannis' page. This lead to an average of 0.51 postings per day for Ponta, and 0.61 postings per day for Iohannis. This gained much more impetus

Table 1: First round of presidential elections

	Days	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Average	Standard deviation
Facebook events Iohannis	49	0	3	30	.61	.862
Likes Iohannis	21	3,227	95,675	332,172	15,817.71	21,077.563
Shares Iohannis	21	72	7,967	18,292	871.05	1,676.611
Facebook events Ponta	49	0	2	25	.51	.649
Likes Ponta	21	2,385	23,579	167,461	7,974.33	5,416.051
Shares Ponta	21	158	2,174	13,435	639.76	461.302
Overlapping events	9					

Table 2: Second round of presidential elections

	Days	Minimum	Maximum	Sum	Average	Standard deviation
Facebook events Iohannis	14	0	7	26	1.86	1.916
Likes Iohannis	12	1,676	960,780	1,441,202	120,100.17	266,728.252
Shares Iohannis	12	157	87,210	182,835	15,236.25	23,877.606
Facebook events Ponta	14	0	8	46	3.29	2.431
Likes Ponta	12	12,205	107,245	605,819	50,484.92	33,582.049
Shares Ponta	12	1,049	8,731	58,638	4,886.50	2,621.980
Overlapping events	10					

in the second round. Contrary to the general perception, during the second round Victor Ponta's Facebook campaign included more events than Klaus Iohannis' campaign. Ponta's page had an overall of 46 postings, that is 3.29 per day, while Iohannis had only 26 postings, 1.86 per day.

The number of likes and shares shows at first view a completely different image. Iohannis leads very clearly having an overall number of 332,172 likes in the first round, double as much as Ponta's 167,461 likes. During the second round the difference is even bigger: 1,441,202 compared to 605,819. Taking a closer look at the data, we have found that this difference relies on a single outlier day. On the last day of the second round of the campaign, Klaus Iohannis' Facebook page has hosted 7 postings adding up for a number of 960,780 likes. On the same day, Ponta's page had only one posting with a number of 23,669 likes. Taking this outlier day out of the data we find the overall number of likes for Iohannis' postings lower than those for Ponta's: 480,422 vs. 582,150. Recomputing the average number of likes per posting we find values that are relatively close to each other, but giving Ponta a certain advantage: 43,674 vs. 52,922. The statistic of shares reproduces these results. Taking the whole second round campaign, Iohannis has much higher values, eliminating the last campaign day, these fall below the values for his competitor.

The graph below shows the numbers of Facebook postings each day for the two campaigns. We see the somewhat higher numbers for the second round that started on the 3rd of November 2014. We also find that postings rarely overlapped. An interesting alternance is visible here, that later we will analyze statistically.
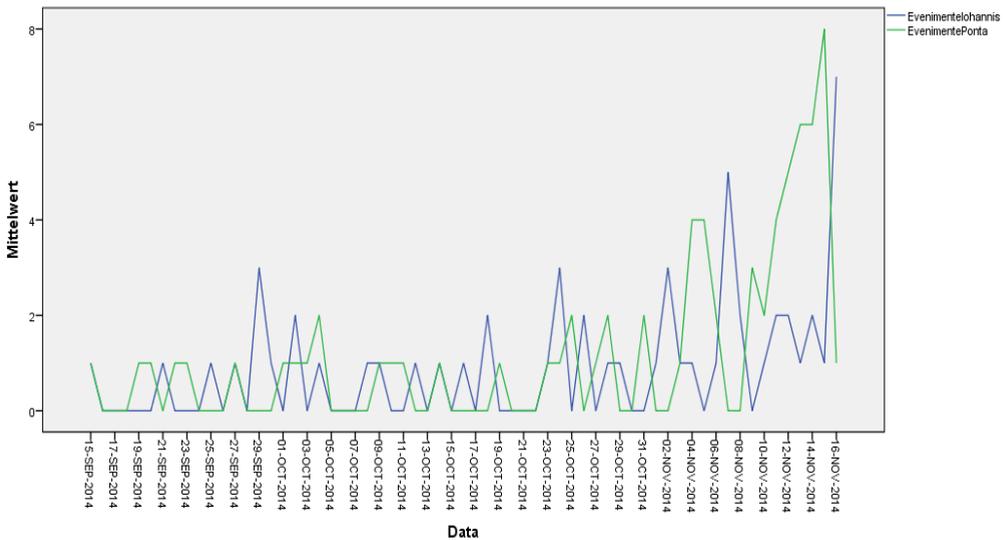
Figure 1: Facebook events

For the following graphical representations we have eliminated the outlier. Given the ten-fold scale difference between the last campaign day and other days, the graph would have been unreadable. Also we have not represented zero values for days with no events as these would have distorted the development of the campaign. The graphs allow for a visualization of our previous findings concerning likes and shares. The second round of the campaign sees both candidates much more active, and no clear superiority of any of the campaign activities is visible. The lines intertwine here similarly to the event lines.
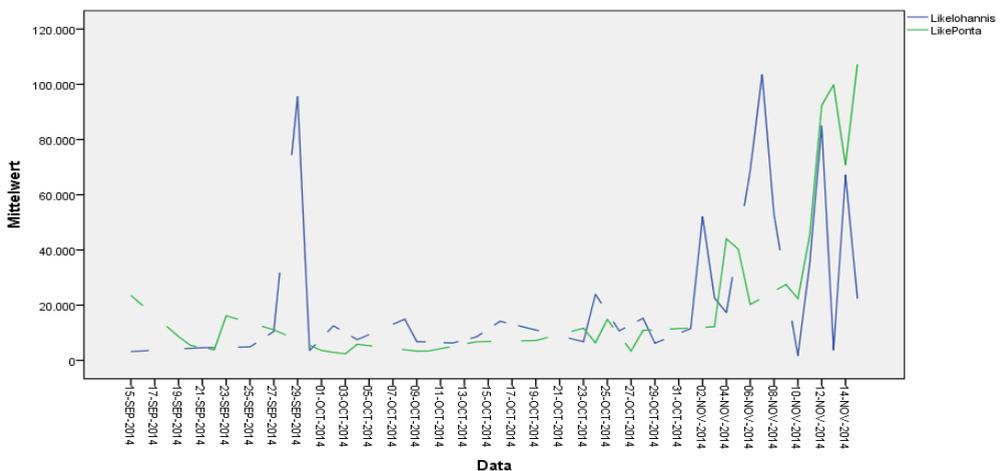

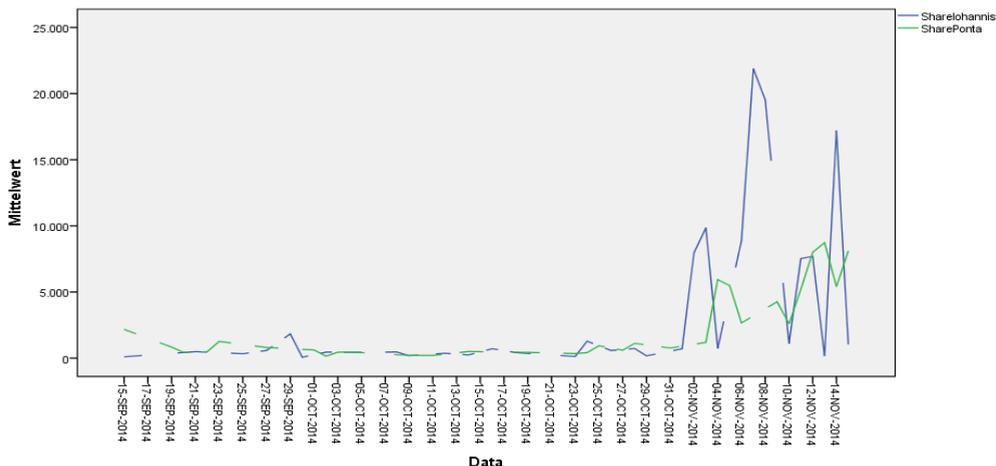**Figure 2:** Facebook likes

Figure 3: Facebook shares

The graphs above request for a simple question: are the two campaigns correlated in some way? Let us first note the correlations with the two campaigns. As obvious the numbers of events, likes and shares correlate for each of the campaigns, values being slightly different for campaigns and rounds. The table below summarizes these results.

Table 3: Correlation between events and likes, events and shares, likes and shares

Round	Candidate	Correlation	Pearson's r	Significance
1	Iohannis	Events and Likes	.647	.002
		Events and Shares	.544	.011
		Likes and Shares	.834	.000
	Ponta	Events and Likes	.340	.131
		Events and Shares	.360	.108
		Likes and Shares	.661	.001
2	Iohannis	Events and Likes	.804	.002
		Events and Shares	.766	.004
		Likes and Shares	.818	.001
	Ponta	Events and Likes	.949	.000
		Events and Shares	.917	.000
		Likes and Shares	.888	.000

Most of the correlations are significant and show relatively high values. As a general rule, correlations between likes and shares are higher than those that relate the numbers of events with any of these reactions. An immediate observation also shows that during the first round all correlations were lower than during the second round and that the change was much more radical for Ponta's campaign than for Iohannis' campaign. Overall higher correlations could mean a more focused use of Facebook events, more attention given to them, or a better design of these according to the interests of activists and sympathizers.

There are also a series of possible structural explanations that do not refer to elements of content. One partial explanation is the higher interest for the two competitors during the second round, when they were the only candidates in the race. To this we can add a series of hypothetical effects. One possibility would be more activity in promoting and maybe even purchasing likes and shares during the second round. A second effect would be an increased focus on the Facebook campaign during the second round from Ponta's campaign staff, after Klaus Iohannis gathered more positive reaction for his Facebook campaign during the first round (Camaj and Santana, 2015).

Correlations between the two campaigns were not significant during the first round. Campaigns can be considered independent from each other. The existence of 14 candidates in this phase had, of course, a big importance as well. During the second phase of the election campaign we find a strong and significant interdependence between Ponta's events and Iohannis' events (r = .688, sig = .013) and between Ponta's shares and Iohannis' shares (r = .709, sig = .022). We will further investigate these relationships in our ARIMA modelling. It is interesting to note that the relationship is most significant at the level of activist involvement.

4. Time series modelling of the interdependence of the two campaigns

Modelling the interdependence of time-series we can decide on the way the two campaigns influenced each other. Were one of the campaigns mainly reactive and the other more pro-active? Did the two campaigns act mostly independently from each other?

The statistical modelling of causality relies on its temporal asymmetry. That is, a cause can never follow an event. This simple observation has led to a number of techniques that test if a temporal development can be explained by previous values, both of the dependent as well as of a number of independent variables. Which of these models is most adequate depends on the characteristics of the time series themselves. Of these the most important is stationarity. We have used the augmented Dickey Fuller unit root test to test stationarity. This test intends to refute the existence of a unit root, if this is successful, stationarity or trend stationarity can be considered. The time series of Facebook events for both campaigns can be considered stationary (the Mckinnon p-values are .0000 for the Iohannis campaign and .0067 for the Ponta campaign). For the series of likes and shares of both campaigns the unit root cannot be refuted. Using KPSS, a trend stationarity test, we find that these series are trend stationary, but have higher levels of integration. We will as such test first the interdependence of event creation, that can be made using ARIMA modelling, and follow with the more complex models to test the interdependence of the statistics of reactions: likes and shares.

Testing in an ARIMA regression the dependence of the numbers of postings on the Iohannis Facebook page upon the numbers of postings on the Ponta page as well as the other way around, we find that for both cases the independence can be refuted if a 1-level integration is included in the model. This is a regression of first differenc-

es, modelling the changes of the dependent variable. The significance of both caus-
al direction models is extremely good, .0000. So, both campaigns have been reactive
to the number and frequency of postings of the other. Considering the reactivity of
events without lags, we find that Iohannis's campaign events were reactive to the
events of the Ponta campaign (R^2 = .114, sig = .090), while the events of the Ponta
campaign were not significantly reactive (R^2 = .583, sig = .879). The high R^2 value has
no relevance, because of the very bad significance. While these results are not very
impressive in their significance they convincingly refute the common theory of the
media that it was the internet campaign, and especially the Facebook campaign that
won Klaus Iohannis the Romanian presidency. Our empirical data show that not only
was Victor Ponta's Facebook team more active in numbers, but that it also was more
pro-active.

5. Discussions

By looking at the available communication items, mass media news and reactions,
posts on social media networks, messages from the commentary sections, as well as
expert analyses on how voters and supporters behave, we can determine that politi-
cal involvement is linked to political polarization. Media and emotional convergence
enabled the consolidation of the purported value system of the favored candidate,
downplaying his weak points and emphasizing the shortcomings of his political
opponent. Emotionally charged participants provided message coherence, restat-
ing popular opinions, such as: 'candidate A is pro-European, whereas his rival is a
figurehead for the communist nostalgists' or conversely: 'candidate B has provided
economic growth and higher wages, whereas candidate A lacks experience and has
a different ethnic background'. We have ascertained that those who participated in
these intense virtual debates have imposed specific topics, such as the role played
by the impressive Romanian diaspora in the development of the country. It also en-
forced new values, such as the right of every Romanian to vote easily, anywhere in
the world, or the recognition of the diaspora as an integral part of Romanian society.
In these circumstances, both of the candidates who proceeded to the second round
of the Romanian presidential elections (scheduled for November 16th 2014), were
compelled to maximize their advantages and minimize the effect of those certain el-
ements that threatened their chances of success. The leftwing candidate, Victor Pon-
ta, was viewed as a potential winner, since he received the most votes in the first
round. The rightwing candidate, Klaus Iohannis, had to overcome this disadvantage
by trying to gain new supporters from those who voted other candidates in the first
round. Concurrently, he needed votes either from individuals who initially voted for
his rival, Victor Ponta – not an easy task, given the traditional stability of the lat-
ter's base – or from those who abstained from voting in the first round. This is where
the Romanian diaspora comes in. They asserted themselves as both beneficiaries of
certain communication products developed by others, and as message creators, in a
process of interactive experience which Bruns (2008) termed 'produsage'. However,

these active expats exhibited another quality that was emotionally determined. They got involved in the election process, influencing the public opinion both at a general and at a particular level.

Overall, the general circumstances seemed to favor Victor Ponta at the time of the elections. He boasted several advantages: (1) he was the acting Prime Minister and therefore had control over the agencies in charge of organizing the elections; (2) he had a successful mandate, capitalizing on Romania's surfacing out of the financial and economic crisis that the previous rightwing cabinet managed so poorly; (3) he was the president of Romania's largest political party; (4) he had a loyal and stable base; (5) he was the head of a majority government and was allied with three smaller political parties, all of them having influential leaders; (6) he staunchly opposed acting president Traian Băsescu, held responsible by Ponta's supporters for the stern austerity measures enforced in 2010 – considered by many abusive and unnecessary. Some disadvantages also need to be mentioned: (1) a precarious personal situation due to allegations of plagiarism regarding his PhD thesis – indicating questionable morality; (2) his association with former political leaders Ion Iliescu and Adrian Năstase – the first accused of having communist sympathies, the latter of corruption and despotic tendencies; (3) head of a party considered to be leaning too much to the left, with many important members suspected of corruption; (4) his image as the head of a conservative government, with few reform measures to speak of and incapable of generating a solid development and consolidation program; (5) his aggressive attitude towards acting president Traian Băsescu, considered by Ponta's opponents as having a decisive role in enforcing the necessary measures to pull Romania out of the economic crisis; (6) the lack of support given to the criminal justice system in its fight against corruption. These are issues relating to public image, revealing the way in which the candidate is perceived by the voters, even though there are clear instances where various individuals have been tried and condemned for corruption.

On the other hand, Klaus Iohannis had fewer advantages, but one essential edge: his promise to reform Romanian politics – a rather rhetorical statement made by many candidates over the years, to no discernible effect. Klaus Iohannis' qualities were perceived as follows: (1) a new figure in national politics, bent on talking less and doing more; (2) his success as mayor of Sibiu, an important city in the central region of Romania; (3) his German descent (more specifically Saxon, or 'sas') which conjures up an image of discipline and effective management, but also improved relations with Germany, the most important economy in the European Union; (4) coming from Transylvania, a historical region with higher standards of living and hardworking people; (5) the ability to ensure ethnic solidarity (being part of a minority himself); (6) support from rightwing voters – whilst lacking homogeneity, this group was nonetheless brought together by the hopes of electing a president that would embody all the aspirations of the right. There are also clear disadvantages to be noted: (1) a newcomer to national politics, with little experience at this level; (2) a short interlude as leader of an important but volatile political party; (3) potential corruption charges,

including a case of incompatibility declared by the National Integrity Agency (ANI); (4) coming from an ethnic minority in a country where Romanians constitute a majority; (5) being part of a religious minority, in a predominantly orthodox country; (6) being perceived as a weak leader, based on the preconception that Romanians need strong, authoritarian rulers.

Victor Ponta based his campaign on the rhetoric of national pride, presenting the voters with folk-art symbols and motifs. His campaign materials (posters, banners, pictures, calendars, etc.) revealed such explicit graphic and ethnographic elements. He intended to emphasize ethnical identity and a set of values shared by the majority of the population, but also to portray his political opponent, Klaus Iohannis, as the Saxon 'foreigner' of German descent. At this point, we should note Victor Ponta's ability to effectively manage the possibilities of bribing the voters. Electoral bribery has been a constant and ever growing 'plague' in post-revolutionary Romania (Miroiu, 2011). All parties offer 'incentives', but those in power have a wider array of possibilities, ranging from wage raising and benefits for state employees to distributing food and household appliances (especially to the underprivileged), in hopes that these people will show their gratitude on election day. This is clearly a direct and transparent attempt on the part of the bribers to increase their chances of success by working on people's emotions. The emotional convergence of the Romanian diaspora with the sensible individuals in the country also meant solid attempts to break the chain of influence created by bribery. These opinion leaders pressed for free voting, regardless if the voters (friends and family) were awarded gifts and well-earned rights or not. Consequently, we can see the phenomenon of convergence taking place inside the group, whereas outside and especially in relation to political opponents emotional divergence is prevalent and appears in varying degrees, ranging from difference of opinion and values to hate (van der Schalk *et al.*, 2011; Serrano-Puce, 2016).

These elements were widely debated in the mass media. Televisions took a special interest in the electoral process, some of them displaying unrestrained political bias. Other media platforms were also active, both electronic and in print. Social media platforms played a crucial role in the process, enabling interaction and communication as well as strengthening the bonds between users. Whilst not up to par with social networks, the electronic mail played an important role in converging emotions. We should not forget phone calls, which enable participants to share more intimate conversations. While mass-media offered various supporters the necessary space to create opinion trends by supplying them with relevant news, social media (using computers, laptops, tabs and phones) allowed people to act directly upon other individuals and persuade them to adopt a specific attitude in regard to the election process. Investigations show that the influence exerted by the Romanian diaspora over those at home, especially over the elderly, proved to be decisive (IRES, 2014). Those involved in this activity benefited from the democratization of modern technologies available at low prices. These are convergent technologies, therefore 'the industry be-

hind online culture cajoles, seduces, and invites the user to move into becoming part of a different public sphere' (Marshall, 2015). It is a complex system of 'mediatisation', partially emerged at the crossroads between political practice and media institutions. (Skogerbø and Karlsen, 2014).

6. Conclusions

To conclude, we have shown that in the autumn of 2014, a large segment of the Romanian diaspora felt the need to be part of the Romanian election process, and becoming more involved than in previous elections. Together with voters back home, the expats determined a major change in Romanian politics, awarding the second round victory to the runner-up. This was perceived as a profound change, as well as a rallying around a set of democratic values and a candidate that seemed most fit to embody them. The interaction was made possible by energetic action in the mass and social media and in other communication systems. Users proved to be adept in handling new technologies and communication devices, which were highly accessible due to low prices.

Close to 1,000 such commentaries were analyzed, and the results indicate that over 80% of them were biased, heated and uncivilized in nature, as defined by Hmielowski, Hutchens and Cicchirillo (2014), irrespective of the favored candidate. Given this hostile and uncivilized environment, some users who uphold the principles of polite conversation withdraw from the debate. This has a negative impact on political communication, limiting the deliberative potential (Gervais, 2015). Individuals who used mass and social media platforms proved to be highly competent. Whilst the practical aspects prevailed, some users wanted to better understand these communication channels. Romanian expats (predominantly youths) studying abroad or working in companies and organizations where they had access to high-tech communications equipment and software enabled media and emotional convergence by disseminating useful tips for navigating the social and mass media platforms to an extended group of users. However, most participants used the traditional channels of communication, interacting with their friends and families via phone, email, and the video software provided by social media. These devices and software were used to post messages on various mass and social media platforms, to disseminate information, images, or elaborate content. By bringing the group together emotionally, under a shared set of values and with a well-established goal, and by taking affirmative action, Klaus Iohannis' supporters managed to mobilize enough people to vote for Iohannis in the second round and ensure his success in the 2014 presidential elections.

Mass and social media convergence (MSMC) can take place when persons with a good (local or central) administrative performance compete in the electoral race, representing models of good governance and efficient management. Private domain experience might also count, but our argument is that mere political positioning is not sufficient. Future candidates to important positions in state can as such enhance the emotional convergence of the electorate using managerial performance that can most

adequately be obtained in local and/or central government. We have also learned that social media users can rapidly become supporters of certain values and persons, tilting the electoral scale.

Arendt (1972, p. 74) claims that the formation of a group or a body is essential in generating a decisive intervention to change certain aspects of society. This action can be termed as civil disobedience. In 2014, this took the form of a virtual revolt, as opposed to a street revolt. It must be noted that the following year, in the autumn of 2015, massive street protests prompted the resignation of Prime Minister Victor Ponta, the former presidential candidate. In this case, the virtual convergence of his contesters did not possess the legal means to validate change (i.e., the 2014 elections). Consequently, an analysis of this phenomenon is imperative. What inspired these upholders of democratic values, embodied to a certain extent by Klaus Iohannis, to abandon their idleness and indifference and form a strong pressure group, capable of changing the outcome of the elections? Shortly after the second round of the Romanian presidential elections, a RIES (Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy) study confirmed these influences, showing that up to a quarter of the voters crystallized their voting preference in between the two rounds, and 32% admitted that the incidents related to the Romanian diaspora influenced their decisions (RIES, 2014).

This study managed to fulfill its purpose of showing how emotional convergence, boosted by mass and social media convergence, enabled the Romanian diaspora settled in traditionally democratic countries to take part in the Romanian election debates, persuading many people to vote and to change their initial preference. Some of the aspects presented here in generic terms should be the subject of further detailed investigations. One chapter could be dedicated to analyzing the communication products generated by the Romanian expats amongst themselves, in the virtual group and also outside of the group, with people upholding similar opinions and divergent interests. Further research can focus on the quality and structure of the messages delivered over the social networks, on the particularities of phone calls and text messages. Of great importance is the study of publication products propagated by mass media, in a traditional form, and also studying interactivity on the new media platforms. The behavior of politicians should also come under scrutiny, as well as their modes of interaction. This will enable us to have a clearer picture regarding the strategies used to influence and generate emotional convergence in the political community.

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