

Varia

Reflecting on democratic and responsible citizenship.
Where do the media step in?

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Abstract: Citizenship is one notion that generated debates and, on occasion, contradictory positions within academic community, opening the doors not only for political scientists, but for practitioners, activists, politicians as well to step in. The paper aims to explore and highlight how sociologists, political scientists and mass media practitioners envisage responsible and democratic citizenship in Romania. Reviews of literature developments on citizenship in connection with democracy and participation, and perspectives of local journalists, sociologists and political scientists on the intersection of media and responsible citizenship allowed me to highlight key inner marks of responsible and democratic citizenship. The final part of the paper proposes a process of (re)thinking citizenship, emphasizing few propositions with a decisive role when drafting responsible and democratic citizenship: citizenship cannot be separated from participation, active participation; citizenship is correlated with political interests; 3. Active citizenship is democratic and responsible citizenship; citizenship has both a private and a public dimension.

Keywords: citizenship, participation, responsible, mass media

Réflexion sur la citoyenneté démocratique et responsable. Où les médias doivent-ils intervenir?

Résumé : La citoyenneté est un concept qui a suscité de nombreux débats et, parfois, des approches contradictoires. Ce concept est abordé par les théoriciens, les

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professionnels, les militants et les politiques. Dans ce contexte, cet article se propose de mettre en exergue la manière dont les sociologues, politologues et journalistes définissent la citoyenneté démocratique et responsable en Roumanie. L'état de l'art sur la citoyenneté en rapport avec la démocratie et la participation, le regard critique sur les perspectives des journalistes, politologues et sociologues portant sur les médias et la citoyenneté démocratique et responsable nous ont permis de mettre en évidence les éléments centraux de la citoyenneté démocratique et responsable. La dernière partie de l'étude propose un modèle de (re)penser la citoyenneté, modèle focalisé sur quatre propositions qui jouent un rôle central dans la construction de la citoyenneté démocratique et responsable : la citoyenneté ne peut pas être dissociée de la participation et de la participation active ; la citoyenneté est liée à des intérêts politiques ; la citoyenneté active est une citoyenneté démocratique et responsable ; la citoyenneté est à la fois publique et privée.

Mots-clés : citoyenneté, participation, responsabilité, médias

Introduction

This paper intends to (re)visit the crossroads of three important institutions of our present times, mass media, citizenship and democracy. *Reflecting on democratic and responsible citizenship. Where do the media step in?* is mainly the outcome of a research project¹ whose goal was to identify both the way in which mass-media contributes to the construction of responsible citizens, and the correspondence between the citizens' agenda² and the agenda of mass-media.

Rooted in a research project, the paper is more exploratory and empirical oriented aiming to understand and highlight how sociologists, political scientists and mass media practitioners envisage responsible and democratic citizenship. However, when appropriate, references will be made to normative approaches of citizenship. Theorists and researchers interested in studies of citizenship have emphasized its „slippery” characteristics as citizenship gains new meanings in different historical contexts (Stewart, 1995). The exploratory process proposed in the paper is rooted in the voices (perspectives) of representative Romanian political scientists, sociologists and media practitioners (political journalists) who, in 2010, during several focus group investigations, were provoked to step in and deliberate on democratic responsible citizens. The paper will reflect on the perspectives of 'experts'

¹ *Mass-media, and responsible and democratic citizenship* Project, number 914_CNCSIS, was coordinated by Professor Mihai Coman and implemented by The Faculty and Journalism and Communication Studies, University of Bucharest between 2009-2012.

² While engaging with citizens' own agenda, the project also considered the role played by variables such as: gender, age, ethnicity, education etc.

exclusively, nevertheless it approaches them critically and attempts to reconsider the trajectories portrayed by sociologists, political scientists and journalists.

While the crossroads of mass media and democracy provoked theoretical and empirical approaches of representatives coming from different disciplines (sociology, political and communication studies), their outcomes rather shifted from normative to descriptive writings. Even if not my intention to operate with a clear cut methodological distinction such as East versus West, focusing my analysis on an East European country does pose challenges in regards to former political regime and later democratic and participatory developments of the last two decades. Citizenship in Romania has not triggered so much conceptual debates or analysis; it just came along with or accompanied democracy³. The same statement is also suited for the intersection of mass media and citizenship as local researchers of mass media somehow considered a matter of “analytical common-sense” the two coming together. I am not aware of any country specific literature⁴ raising questions on whether there is an intrinsic linkage between the two institutions, a mutual dependency⁵, or whether mass media has a certain role in shaping citizenship⁶ and what type of mass media⁷ is more open to the process of practicing citizenship?

A continuous diminishing interest of citizens towards politics (seen as corrupt), politicians (considered unresponsive to citizen's interests and political representation), institutions (Parliament, for example), a raising distrust in government and a recently more revitalized and participatory civil society triggers reflections on how citizenship is shaped and whether one can identify an ideal type of democratic and responsible citizenship.

1. Building bridges: participation and citizenship

Citizenship is one notion that generated debates and, on occasion, contradictory positions within academic community, opening the doors not only for political

³ A 2011 doctoral thesis reflects on citizenship and women in Romania, see Neaga, Diana, *Gender and Citizenship in Romania. Hunedoara- case study (Gen și cetățenie în România. Studiu de caz în zona Hunedoara)*, thesis coordinated by professor Mihaela Miroiu and defended at National School for Political Studies and Public Administration.

⁴ Nevertheless, international and local researchers discussed and debated on media and democracy, transformations of media during transition (Coman, 2008; Gross, 2004; Coman, 2003).

⁵ I consider rather mandatory for researchers to ask questions on this ‘mutual dependency’ and whether it can be understood in terms of: an individual more aware of its rights and obligations will be more interested in the degree of freedom within mass media, then such an individual will monitor whether ethical values are embraced by media practitioners when exercising their profession.

⁶ Inherent questions of this dependency are: what type of citizenship is more open to media shaping, active or passive? What are its means, its instruments during the process?

⁷ Is it public journalism for instance or the more market-oriented can also impact conceptualization of citizenship as it raises questions on whether the individual in relationship with politics is more a consumer and less a citizen?

scientists, but for practitioners, activists, politicians as well to engage in and sometimes even question whether contemporary developments of citizenship are rather utopian types or they include features that can be actually be implemented in policies⁸. Questions on the status of ethnic and sexual minorities, women, refugees, and environment and so on challenged previous understandings and forced theorists to further rethink the meanings of citizenship and what it is to be a citizen. Thus, diversity issues or nuances accompanying identity stepped in and opened doors for further conceptualization and deliberations of citizenship and its language of rights and obligations.

This section does not comprise an extensive overview of theoretical analysis of citizenship⁹, it nevertheless summarizes some approaches and inner key-features particularly useful for the empirical and theoretical developments of this article.

In regards to the spectacular growth in ‘citizenship studies’, various theorists highlighted two main factors influencing the discussions on citizenship: changing the nature of political regimes in Central and Eastern Europe and the reshaping partnership between state and market in the West (Stewart, 1995, p. 63-64). According to Isin and Turner, the editors of *Handbook on Citizenship* (2002), other dimensions also triggered important developments of citizenship, globalization, postmodernization, social movements, for instance, thus forcing “academics, practitioner and activists alike an urgent need to rethink the political agent or subject under these transformations” (Isin, Turner, 2002, p. 1) Nevertheless, these debates will be further triggered by the outcomes of the still-present economic and financial crisis in a context giving raise to more contestation and citizen’s participation in the public sphere. As we shall see in the final section of this paper, the country’s raising civic engagement does ‘impend’ over ‘experts’ perception on how far off citizens actually fall from their perspectives on how citizens are.

The diverse and sometimes divergent theoretical approaches made authors interested in citizenship conclude that it is a rather „slippery concept” because it lacks a clear understanding since it obtains meanings in different historical contexts through the usages of historical participants.

⁸ See for instance the cosmopolitan citizenship (Linklater apud Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 316-332) and critical remarks on its poor pragmatism and viability (e.g. Michael Walzer, 1994).

⁹ Isin and Turner (2002) emphasize the fact that even if “citizenship studies is a young and contested field, already there are literally hundreds of books and thousands of articles spanning all disciplines in humanities and social sciences. As of 2001, a search in Canada’s largest research library, Robarts, yielded more than 2,600 books, manuscripts and reports mentioning citizenship. Of these, 976 included citizenship specifically in their subject keywords, a vast majority of which were published in the 1990s. Of these 2,600, more than 900 specifically included ‘citizenship’ in their titles, which is a much stronger measure of their affiliation with the field” (Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 9).

Angus Stewart (1995) argues the debates around citizenship can be clarified “by recognizing the existence of two conceptions of citizenship (Stewart, 1995, p. 63). While the first is *state citizenship* and “involves the identification of citizenship with the elaboration of formal legal status co-terminus with the emergence of nation-states and their diverse lineages” (Stewart, 1995, p. 63). It is from this understanding of citizenship that rights, privileges and obligations derive from. *Democratic citizenship* is the second approach and it presupposes “the elaboration of citizenship around shared membership of a political community, in which citizens is political actors constituting political spaces” (Stewart, 1995, p. 63).

Advancing more in-depth in the literature on citizenship, one can also identify political, economical and social citizenship, or a liberal, republican, communitarian, sexual, multicultural, ecological citizenship corresponding to different types of political theories, liberalism, communitarianism, multiculturalism and so on. Feminist theories contributed extensively to a through inclusiveness of citizenship. Ruth Lister’s in her outstanding work *Citizenship. Feminist Perspectives* (2003) critically reflects on both the *status*, “carrying a set of rights including social and reproductive rights”, and the *practice* of citizenship “involving political participation broadly defined so as to include the kind of informal politics in which women are more likely to engage”. (Lister, 2003, 195-196) She highlights that when defining citizenship as membership of a community poses questions as “each element of this equation – membership, identity and relationships – is being interrogated” (Lister, 2003, 7) This particular theorist considers citizenship “an invaluable strategic theoretical concept for the analysis of women’s subordination (..)” and proposes a feminist citizenship theory redefining the concept in order to increase its inclusiveness potential (Lister, 2003, 195).

Unlike previous approaches focusing on content and political values, Theiss-Morse (1993) contextualizes citizens’ roles by analyzing four democratic theories that advance different roles citizens have. Elitist democratic theory correlated citizen’s power with their ability to vote an elite into office (Sartori, 1962). What this approach further emphasizes is when apathetic, it is better for citizens not to participate (Dahl, 1956), however, if informed about politics and supporting democratic values, elitist theorists consider citizens should “participate actively in electoral politics”. (Theiss-Morse, 1993, p. 360). Pluralist theorists emphasize it is more likely citizens become interested and involved in politics when an issue affecting them reaches the public agenda (Zeigler, 1964). Neither elitist theorists, nor pluralists consider more participation is needed when shaping the political system, as professionals can take care of politics. (Theiss-Morse, 1993, p. 361). Citizenship theory considers citizens can be educated to become aware of their interests, and advance two forms of participation: discussion-based helping citizens to learn their interests and through voting “based on the knowledge of their interests” (Theiss-Morse, 1993, p. 361) Theorists of participatory democracy advocate an active role of citizens and define politics in a broader sense. Both the

private and the public sphere become marks of citizenship as politics also characterizes workplace and family (Pateman, 1980). In regards with the roles of the citizens, Theiss-Morse summarizes the different beliefs of citizenship and participatory theorists: the former focus on “political discussion and voting”, while the latter “believe politics is intrinsic to any decision-making situation” (Theiss-Morse, 1993, p. 361) As this particular theorist concludes, “all four theories hold that, ideally, citizens should be active in politics in one way or another and should be informed about politics in order to make better political decisions” (Theiss-Morse, 1993, p. 361).

Later on, Thomas Janoski and Brian Gran (2002) advance a social action approach of citizenship and identify several types of citizens “motivated by value involvement and behavioral activity” (Janoski and Gran *apud* Isin and Turner, 2002, 39). This typology includes incorporated, active, deferential, cynical, opportunistic, marginal and fatalistic citizen-selves and “operates within a context of active or passive social motivation and allegiant or oppositional positions”. (Janoski, Gran *apud* Isin, Turner, 2002, p. 39). The typology represents a useful and comprehensive framing for the analytical and empirical research I propose in the present article, especially because of the construction process rooted in the active/passive axis. Further on, I shall insist more on the characteristics of each member of the typology as it is particularly useful for the purposes of this study.

The *incorporated citizens* are or feel part of the political establishment associated with party and governmental institutions, they participate and support party goals, they trust their leaders and “operate somewhat altruistically because they benefit from the political system” (Janoski and Gran *apud* Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 39). Unlike the first type, *active citizens* engage in conflict with the political establishment and prefer grassroots approaches. We may find active citizens (social reformers of established parties, activists etc.) engaged both in politics or civic life (political party, social movement, associations embracing ideologies of change). These citizens believe in change “for the people”, “for the country” (Janoski and Gran *apud* Isin and Turner, 2002, 39-40). An important link between the incorporated and active citizens is participation, and what differentiates them is the relationship with the political establishment. According to Janoski and Gran, while the incorporated citizens embrace elite politics, active citizens are grassroots (political as well) and civic oriented.

Deferential, cynical and opportunistic citizens are non-participant citizens. Janoski and Gran define *deferential citizens* in connection with political elites: they accept authority, but do not actually believe in the objectives followed by a state or party, stick to tradition due to family socialization and rather make a detour when it comes to political activities, leaving them to political elites; nevertheless such a citizen will vote and contact politicians when needed (Janoski and Gran *apud* Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 40). *Cynical citizens* “are passive but often bitter critics of politics and state” (Janoski and Gran *apud* Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 40), discuss

about the necessity for political action, but do not participate as they believe many situations cannot be simply changed. If cynical citizens lack confidence in their changing capabilities, *marginal citizens* are “detached and alienated from the system often because of having few resources and little power” (Janoski and Gran apud Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 40) According to the two theorists, marginal citizens experience poverty and are thus excluded from political participation, rarely vote or engage within civic life as volunteers and “both fatalistic loyalist and opposition citizens are closely related to marginal citizen” (Janoski and Gran apud Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 40).

Opportunistic citizens are material interests driven and participate in political activities only if immediate interests are affected or involve income or are a road towards achieving some goals. Otherwise this type of citizen is more attached to his/her “private world of interests” (Janoski and Gran apud Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 40). Janoski and Gran also emphasize “politics and ideology are uninteresting” for opportunistic citizens (Janoski and Gran apud Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 40). The classification proposed by Janoski and Gran is guided by values and action position of citizens. As the theorists describe, the former “concerns accepting the value position of the dominant political regime, which ranges from allegiance to apathy and alienation”, for example incorporated and deferential citizens embrace the regime, while activist and cynical reject it (Janoski and Gran apud Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 40). The latter “refers to behavior including active participation, deferential subjection, and inactive domination or disability”. (Janoski and Gran apud Isin and Turner, 2002, p. 40-41).

One key features of citizenship have been highlighted, the following section presents beliefs of ‘experts’ on responsible citizenship and tries to identify what types of citizens they perceive within the political community.

2. What types of citizens do we have and where do media step in?

Mass-media is a system where meanings are constructed and where negotiation of various representations of the world take place. Mass-media is also a system that transmits information to the citizens, values related to responsible civic engagement and democratic citizenship. A democratic and responsible citizen is an informed citizen. This is where mass media enters the democratic scenario and assumes a leading role. One embedded assumption of the paper is that beliefs of media practitioners on citizenship will be further reflected in their activity. Likewise, the beliefs of political scientists and sociologists will be a mirror reflecting what counts for the construction of responsible and democratic citizenship. Journalists, sociologists and political scientists are active participants in the mediated public sphere and shape public opinion on what matters more or less in regards to responsible citizenship. This overview highlights important elements in the

conceptualization of responsible and democratic citizenship. These citizenship perspectives are descriptive, nevertheless they act as a tool impinging on how journalists, sociologists and political scientists construct an image of the world and on what counts for responsible and democratic citizenship. The end of the exploration will reflect on whether these perspectives replicate on the types of citizens proposed by Janoski and Gran (2002). The next analysis is rooted in 20 semi-structured interviews conducted in 2010 with Romanian journalists, sociologists and political scientists exploring perspectives on responsible citizenship, media's contribution to the country's democratization process, information media should favor to support responsible citizenship. Only the first theme will be discussed in the following section.

2.1. *Romanian citizens, caught between 'shadow-citizens' and voters*

The research explored both normative and descriptive perspective of responsible and democratic citizens. As we shall see, the normative understanding of responsible citizens is centered more on obligations, and less on rights, and when asked for descriptive perspective, more respondents acknowledged citizens rather tend to fall outside the imposed normativity. Three aspects were highlighted by our journalists, sociologists and political scientists: citizens can not be separated from the rights and obligations perspective and they are tied to a political community in the sense there is a close relationship between citizens and the process of exercising rights and obligations towards the community, citizens should not be just passive members, but participate in the community with the clear goal of improving that community.

Being citizens constrain individuals to move beyond egoistic self interests, turn towards the community and participate at the constitution, defense and development of the public space and common good. (V.M., sociologist)

The world of rights and obligations was reiterated continuously by all our respondents as the core defining citizenship. Nevertheless, as we shall see, it is rather obligations and less the awareness of rights closer to how experts considered both individuals' and state's perception of citizenship.

Citizenship is characterized by respect towards rules, usually ones imposed by states, starting with paying taxes up to type of services you can provide within the community. Respect should be mutual, from the state towards citizens reflected in the role of the state as a provider of basic services and care as a responsible political actor. Nevertheless, here respect has been replaced by contempt, citizens despise rules, despise the state, and the state despises citizens, and their rights. Thus, citizens better respect rules including punitive elements, or any type of sanctions, and fewer rules that offer different types of rewarding. When it comes to citizens, the state has more chances of success when it stimulates punishments and less when emphasis is put on social responsibility and civism. (A.U., journalist)

When it comes to citizens, state authorities relate to obligations, and not to rights, creating a public discourse where citizens have nothing but obligations: to pay taxes, obey rules and so on. (V.V., journalist)

One sociologist draws attention that the continuous emphasis on obligations and sanctions diminishes any awareness the citizens might have on rewarding coming back to him/her after having paid the taxes.

Romanian citizens know they have to pay their taxes, but hardly are they aware something must be given in exchange and that he/she should act as such in order to convince the other 'partner' to respect its part of the contract. (M.K., sociologist)

On the contrary, when it comes to citizens' responsibilities, all the major projects of the community should be developed through citizens' participation. (L.V., sociologist)

Further on, what hinders participation in the community is the growing individualism of citizens. The ups and downs of individualism, of self material interests were emphasized by our respondents. Due to powerful individualism, citizens have rather failed to address community issues during the last two post-communist decades. According to our respondents, citizenship is contextually shaped by two main determinants. It is the former political regime that continues to impinge on how citizens mediate their relationship with the political community. However, the interviewees introduced another factor causing a proliferation of self centering of individuals on their private interests while neglecting community: explosion of the market economy. Concluding, our respondents consider both Eastern and Western features shape the passive or active membership of citizens within the political community.

During communism, citizens perceived their private life as a refuge. The state subordinated all the interpersonal connections starting with the hallways, streets and leisure spaces. Citizens predominately associated these spaces with the state. Both public space and the political community were state's responsibility, not theirs. It is only in their privacy the state could be eluded¹⁰ (D.C.T., journalist).

We barely know how to deal with the consequences of the market. We are still waiting for the divine intervention of the Leviathan (...). Major institutional or community oriented projects raise citizens' interests only if they replicate their interests because it is the market raising prospects for more and more individualization. Further on, the state eludes any involvement in regards to the welfare of individuals (L.V., sociologist).

¹⁰ It is rather an optimistic view taking into account state's intrusion in the private life until reaching the uterus (see Kligman, G. (1998). *The Politics of Duplicity: Controlling Reproduction in Ceausescu's Romania*. London: University of California Press).

One political scientist proposed an important nuance of material interests. Theorists highlighted that when a society undergoes a change from materialism to post-materialism it is more likely for individuals to raise issues on ethics in public and political life, ecology, rights of excluded groups and so on (Inglehart, 2008; Heywood, 2007). R. N. draws attention that active citizenship falls off citizens' interests when immediate survival is at stake.

Some individuals are deeply involved in the life of the community, others have withdrawn and are not interested anymore in the public and political life, they refuse to participate in the decision making being too involved in their private life or too burden with deprivations. (R.N., political scientist)

Curiously enough, some journalists blame the communist political regime for placing a derogatory label both upon participatory democracy and responsibility of citizens towards the political community they live in. The same respondent emphasizes age sensitivity in regards to models of participation and activism.

Many of us still carry deep within the mythology of participatory democracy, of the social role of each individual. We should not operate at this level, and probably if you asked someone ten years younger his or her answer would differ much from mine and they would offer examples extracted from books of civic culture read in schools. (A.U., journalist)

Further on, other journalists expressed a more alarming view on the consequences of the material interests driven citizens. It is not only a passive inclusion of the individual within the community, but also poor awareness in regards to any correlation between values and economic satisfaction.

When entirely economically driven, citizens do not understand anymore the link between liberty, democracy and 'what is good for me'. Immediate satisfaction is prior to support for democratic values. If it is good for me I could not care less about a deficit on human rights (V.V., journalist).

One fundamental discontent of citizens is the unjust distribution of theft. The concern of Romanian citizens is not theft in itself, but they despise politicians and entrepreneurs for not wanting to distribute and share benefits. The disdainful anticorruption feeling included within various statistics expresses nothing but material beliefs and not moral ones. (C.T.P., journalist)

It is journalists and political scientists who revealed a rather gloomy perspective on citizens. According to one prominent local journalist, they are nothing but 'shadow-citizens', only activated by political parties during the electoral process and they conform to this imposed status. One political scientist highlighted the continuous 'electoral democracy' have negative outcomes on the inclusion of citizens within the political community as it diminishes their agency.

Romanian citizens have one core inner existential feature: the vote. As long as he/she is a vote bearer and only when exercising the right to vote, one is a citizen. Outside the electoral campaign they do not exist. Romanian citizens are nothing but a mass made visible by politicians and political parties during elections. (C.T.P., journalist)

The first image that comes to my mind when thinking about responsible citizens is that of an individual within an electoral cabin. (D.B., journalist)

Romanian citizens are only voters- spectators. It is not citizens, but the type of 'electoral democracy' in itself who demands only electoral participation. Citizens are spectators because it is only freedom of expression that counts, reflected in a vast media pluralism that theoretically should convey the interests and perspectives of citizens. Yet, from a descriptive perspective, media practices point otherwise, nevertheless citizens spend an impermissible amount of time accompanied by media and only as viewers (...). (M.M., political scientist)

Fewer respondents highlighted participation within the community as a decisive feature of responsible citizens. Nevertheless, participation was correlated with mass participation, and less with individual or small group acts of civic engagement.

It is participation that defines citizens. Whenever otherwise, one falls in the category of the consumer. Apathy and citizenship do not come together. If one lacks interest in participation, he or she starts to become a consumer of the political process. A consumer only chooses something out of different offers. A citizen has to engage and debate over choices and then decide on the basis of rational arguments and not emotionally driven. (R.N., political scientist)

By now, based on Janoski's and Gran's (2002) typology of citizens, we may come to a preliminary conclusion that our respondents have a rather pessimistic perspective on citizens, closer to the cynical and opportunistic types. It is important not to dismiss the image of marginal citizens as well taking into account our respondents drew attention that active citizenship falls far off citizens' interests when survival is at stake. By now, the image of active citizens, the ones engaging in conflict with political authorities and embracing grassroots actions escaped the perspectives of our respondents. At the same time, even if part of citizens vote, I would not include them in the type of deferential citizens, as such individuals do more than participate in the electoral process, they also contact their politicians when needed. Nevertheless, these proximities are conditioned by several assumptions on participation. I shall not elaborate more on these assumptions, but come back later in the concluding part of this paper precisely because the next section, exploring the intersection of mass media with citizenship, provides useful data. After having examined the above perceptions of journalists, sociologists and

political scientists, it is 'natural' to ask, where do media stand in this complicated equation concerning responsible citizens.

2.2. *Where do media come in? Information is the key*

The door was opened by our respondents' congruent emphasis on information. Journalists, sociologists and political scientists reached one consensus on what it takes to be responsible, respectively only informed citizens can be responsible citizens.

One can not be responsible unless he /she is informed. Informed citizens are not individuals who have read an entire bibliography on various topics. They are not researchers or experts. Informed citizens have coherent and intelligible basic information on issues that interest them, unless generally aware of those topics, they are only fictitiously responsible. In consequence, one can not be a responsible citizen without being an informed citizen. And here is where media step in (...). (V.M., sociologist)

The importance of information can hardly be debated. While deepening more the discussion, the types of marginal citizens and opportunistic were once more introduced by our respondents, moreover information was later correlated with values, with freedom:

Some individuals understand one can not be both ignorant and free, and information is essential in order to be able to participate in the decision making process and in public discussion. On the other hand, some individuals do not care about information; they are either too tired or too attached to his/her world of interests and fail to acknowledge their interdependence with society and community. (R. N., political scientist)

Nevertheless, when descriptively discussing mass media and information, consensus was abandoned and the perspectives of our respondents polarized, journalists on one hand and sociologists and political scientists on the other hand. If the former emphasized mass media does contribute to shaping responsible citizens and support the democratization process of the country, the latter highlighted media's failure. The reasons introduced by our respondents varied from economic interests, poorly trained journalists depicting social issues, blindness of journalists in regards to diversity of the community members. As their opinion is divergent, I shall separate the following analysis on the two professional groups.

2.2.1. Journalists on mass media and responsible citizenship: balancing information and business

Even if intrusion of politics within media activity has been debated locally by journalists and NGOs, an ardent issue introduced by our respondents was the economic interests driven media. Journalists did acknowledge the market orientation of media, however they highlighted that proliferation of media institutions makes difficult or even impossible hiding information from the public.

Besides media magnates, mercenary press, poorly trained journalists, even if televisions and newspaper can distort information, lie and misinform citizens, it is important to acknowledge we have an open media system that supports the democratization process of the country because truth can not be kept outside citizens' reach. If one journalist misinforms or hides information, another journalist will immediately do otherwise. His or her actions are not morally driven, but business oriented. Even if journalists agree to dismiss or distort one subject favoring decision makers or someone in particular, one tiny radio station or television or newspaper will launch the data in the public sphere. Information can not be hidden, nowadays mass media are an open system and this is what differentiates this media regime from the communist one. (C.T.P., journalist)

Journalists highlighted it is hardly possible to convey information and educate citizens when media institutions are dominated by the economic logics of capitalism. As the emphasis from below reveals, economics pervaded even language when it comes to the relationship between journalists and citizens, and information is not conveyed to citizens anymore, but to clients.

Media do have an ungrateful role as it should carefully monitor state authorities and convey all necessary information to any of its clients (my emphasis)... in the end media is a private business, it is not based on voluntary or non-profit activity. It may come a moment when media could demand to take back its information and education functions highlighted in books of journalism; nevertheless it is hardly probable since the society is based on capitalist rules (...). (A.U., journalist)

Further on, journalists introduced the public among constraints guiding their activity. The following lines comprise thoroughly enough that media understood as an economic system are almost completely deprived of value guiding practices. One may notice a wider sense of self-reflexivity in the words of the journalists highlighting media practitioners may also fall far from the portrait of 'mercenaries' simply rolling dices on the market.

We are confronted with a vicious circle, the audience does not appreciate issues correlated with values and democracy, thus media representatives feel their audience is lost and quickly abandon those topics, and then the public considers the issues less as they are not present on the public agenda and so on. I think media's

reactions are similar to those of a virus. If media see a growing audience, it will continue to walk on that path. Media are not programmed, but are guided by their instincts. If media saw a certain formula is not working, just abandoned it and moved on. Media are a business. Media walks the path of audience. And this is where media started digging its own grave. Abandoning ideals such as civic participations, democracy, freedom, media kept close only to its economic significance guided by entertainment.

The paper includes few quotations only, however all our journalists respondents engaged in ample discussions on economic constraints of media. This influence and its outcomes on democracy as a system are hardly new, however the value triggered by this part resides especially in the voices of journalists. I consider important for an exploratory approach to also listen to media practitioners highlighting less positive effects on democracy as one may notice some reflexivity among members of this profession.

2.2.2. Sociologists and political scientists on mass media and responsible citizenship

Some journalists acknowledged constraints when it comes to the interaction of media and responsible citizenship. If reflexivity 'poured' now and then among journalists, both sociologists and political scientists engaged in criticism of media practices. While the former focused on constraints imposed by market rules, the latter emphasized negative practices and their effects on responsible citizenship. If information reached consensus, whether media actually manages to convey it to citizens separated the groups and revealed divergent opinions. Moreover, sociologists and political scientists emphasized an important risk concerning participation of citizens within the community. The next inventory shapes one pessimistic scenario. If media, information and responsible citizens would have been actors (only), media would definitely be holding the negative part, and one scene would portray only media juggling information and not conveying it to citizens.

In the national media, state authorities are presented as if they were a public enemy. Instead of urging individuals towards more participation, media rather finds stimulus for citizens to stay away from everything with a social, political meaning or involving authorities. (M.K., sociologist)

Definetely there is no relationship between media and the process of making citizens responsible. Even if national media is not homogenous (...) an important part of media positioned itself in partisan political conflicts. Different media channels convey specific political messages. I think media plays a rather negative role as it does not reflect the diversity of our world. (L.V., sociologist)

Statistically, media is more opinionated and less information-oriented. (V.M., sociologist)

When it comes to citizens and responsibility, journalists should support citizens' actions and help them reach a common public decision. Journalists should not be only a mirror reflecting news, but they should also support groups of citizens, coalitions to engage in social change through civic participation. (R. N., political scientist)

Mass media should be working with citizens' agenda, not with the agendas of the economic groups. My major argument when it comes to mass-media and democracy is media can not be free unless it functions in a democratic political regime. (M.M., political scientist)

Having explored perceptions of journalists, sociologist and political scientists on responsible citizenship, allowed me to identify types of citizens that are more predominant in the political community. We understood that information is a *sine qua non* condition as only informed citizens are responsible citizens. However, in regards to media capacity to convey information the opinions were divergent. Still, the sense of reflexivity and criticism may suggest one possible explanation on why neither journalists, nor sociologist and political scientists could identify/ point to a 'grain' of active citizens.

3. Towards (re)thinking responsible citizenship

Even if the paper rather explores meanings of responsible and democratic citizenship, previous review of literature developments on citizenship in connection with democracy and participation, and perspectives of local journalists, sociologists and political scientists on the topic and on the intersection of media and responsible citizenship have taken me to one major question: what features do I consider key inner marks of responsible and democratic citizenship? What is mandatory along the (re)constructing citizenship process? Depicting some characteristics as a *guiding map* (and not as decisive crossroads in (re)thinking citizenship as meanings are also context dependent) has a high potential in helping both the researcher and the reader. I consider the following statements play a very important role. They depart from the above discussion lines and represent further developments of citizenship towards a more participatory, diversity and interests focused road.

1. It is rather democratic citizenship, less state centered, more community oriented and consciously embraced by individuals that should be given higher consideration. According to Anne Phillips, democratic citizenship is closely and intensively connected with the political and public sphere and it presupposes a movement from the private to the public and political world. (Phillips, 1991, p. 82-87) Thus, "citizenship is an explicitly political activity, in which people who are equals address collective and general concerns" (Phillips, 1991, p. 82) Angus Stewart emphasizes democratic citizenship "requires us to acknowledge the other members as being of equal social worth" (Stewart, 1995, p. 76). Alongside its

determinant political mark, in my opinion, democratic citizenship has the advantage of being a 'friendly-concept' to proliferating theoretical and empirical corpus concerning the role of intersectional identities (of race, gender, ethnicity etc.) (Weldon, 2008; Davis, 2008; Yuval Davis, 2006; Crenshaw, 1991)

2. To advance further in the process of (re)thinking citizenship I will detach two other important features, citizenship has both a public and a private dimension. Conceptualizing both the private and public meanings poses some important outcomes, in regards with specific social groups, women for example. Drawing upon feminist critiques of politics and political science, the private sphere plays an important role when women access citizenship, as across centuries mainstream philosophers and decision makers operated with a clear cut division of 'public men and private women' excluding women from the public and political life. Nevertheless, neglecting the role of private sphere is not an answer either when it comes to women addressing citizenship, as family is not always an oasis of justice¹¹.

3. Citizenship cannot be separated from participation, active participation understood as citizens' engagement in the decision making process or in the civil society. This statement should be correlated with the next.

4. Citizenship is closely linked with political interests. Even if literature on the topic is vast, Anne Jónasdóttir proposes an understanding of political interests I find extremely useful in the (re)thinking process of citizenship. This particular theorist differentiates between two approaches of the concept of interests: a formal one focusing on participation, on the necessity "to be among" and dealing with the content of interests, with the needs and preferences people have (Jónasdóttir, 1998, 39-40). This analysis of interests urges citizens "to be among", to participate. Unlike the theory of interests that asks for action, needs is compatible with non- action, with passivity as someone outside the individual may satisfy his/her needs. Coming back to citizenship, when correlating needs and interests with theories of citizenship, we understand that when citizenship is characterized through passive participation, it is closer to state citizenship. On the other hand, democratic citizenship better accommodates with theories of political interests, and with their specific demand for participation (more or less metaphorically understood as 'to be among').

To sum up, in (re)thinking citizenship, when drafting responsible and democratic citizenship, I consider the next propositions have a decisive role:

- a) Citizenship can not be separated from participation, active participation;
- b) Citizenship is correlated with political interests;
- c) Active citizenship is democratic and responsible citizenship;
- d) Citizenship has both a private and a public dimension.

¹¹ See Susan Moller Okin, *Justice, Gender and the Family* (1989) where she critiques modern theories of justice as they assume family is just and further questions when justice is correlated with the public sphere exclusively.

Drawing from previous explorations of journalists, sociologists and political scientists, one can shape a pessimistic image of responsible citizenship and media coming together. Nevertheless, some important corrections or amendments can be done.

The type of active citizens (Janoski and Gran, 2002) escaped the perspectives of our respondents. In my opinion, the explanations are rooted in two questions: “how” and “who”. When asking how individuals participate, theorists and researchers argue that “participation is shifting from elections to new, non-electoral forms of action” and “these new forms of direct action include participation in public interests groups, direct contacting of politicians, and contentious activities. (Dalton, 2008, p. 32-33) Democratic participation of citizens may take different forms voting, campaign and communal activity, protest and contentious action, Internet activism (Dalton, 2008, 33-34) it is protests and contentious actions that destabilize the perspectives of our respondents on citizens. According to Russel J. Dalton, the nature of protests has been changing in what he calls ‘advanced industrial democracies’, however not exclusively, I add taking into account (among other local examples) the raising number of protests in Central and Eastern Europe as well during 2012¹². When it comes to the “who” question, various individuals participate, including young and more sophisticated intellectuals. Protest may embrace various forms: demonstrations, boycotts, occupying buildings and these forms of protest transcend conventional political participation (Dalton, 2008, p. 48-49). Electoral participation over four or five year period is not enough for active policy change. In *Citizen Politics* (2008), Russel J. Dalton highlights “some scholars have missed this pattern because they focused their attention on electoral participation instead of the full range of possible political activities. Instead of disengagement, more people are now involved in more forms of political action” (Dalton, 2008, p. 55) Likewise Dalton’s, my hypothesis is not only the sociologists and political scientists have missed other patterns of participation, but also journalists embraced a narrowing understanding of participation, that did not welcome “active citizen” type. (Janoski, Gran, 2002). Moreover, our respondents discussed about mass participation and ignored/disavowed action groups. It is the case that women rights/feminist groups¹³ and ecologist groups¹⁴ actively participate in other forms than conventional ones; however one can hardly argue that they have mass adherents. While sociologists and

¹² Nevertheless protests in Europe (not exclusively) began before; *Time* called 2011 *The Year of the Protester*,

http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2101745_2102132_2102373,00.html

¹³ On the 25th of November 2011 human rights/women’s rights/feminist groups and other citizens protested in front of Romanian Parliament against poor regulations concerning violence against women. <http://www.centrulfilia.ro/index.php/example-pages/112-25-noiembrie-protest-stop-violentei-asupra-femeilor>

On the 6th of October women’s rights/feminist groups initiated SlutWalk protesting against discrimination and sexual harassment. <http://www.feminism-romania.ro/presa/stiri/608-marsul-panaramelor.html>

¹⁴ See, Dohotaru, A. (2012). *The Protester- a Participatory History (Protestatarul- o istorie participativă)*. Bucharest: Tracus Arte Publishing House.

political scientists operated with a restrictive notion of participation that impinged on their perceptions on citizens, as far as journalists are concerned I would like to introduce another hypothesis rooted nevertheless in journalists' own remarks on media as a system. This working hypothesis is correlated with economic interests embedded within mass media. One of the most active local groups of citizens advocates environmental issues. It is the case of the group centered on Roşia Montană¹⁵. The company displaying economic interests in Roşia Montană region invested largely in advertising in national Romania media (Dohotaru, 2012). The economically driven interests of media system impeded journalists to acknowledge or verbalize the existence of other forms of civic participation. Summarizing, active citizens did not find a place on 'citizenship's table' envisaged by journalists, sociologists and political scientists because they all operate with a narrow definition of participation, mainly electoral, and in case of civic participation, they associated it with mass participation, and disavowed action groups actively engaged. In addition, economic interests within media, have a similar outcome on journalists, making them neglect or disavow civic engagement.

Different 'framing' demands specific answers. Exploring the intersection of citizenship and mass media opens up new challenges as it highlights the evolution of meanings attached to citizenship, participation and mass media. Intended only as an exploratory approach, this intersection highlighted provoking correlations for theorists and researchers. Further on, we may presume that active citizens have a closer relationship with new media and less with traditional media. Thus, other questions to be further addressed: what role do corporations have in keeping information away from citizens? What is the role of traditional media and of new media in cases of unconventional participation of citizens?

¹⁵ Roşia Montană is a village located in the Apuseni Mountains, under risk of destruction by Roşia Montana Gold Corporation's mining project aiming to cast gold mine, using cyanide. There is a powerful activism and resistance against the mining project affecting environment, cultural heritage, life of the community, see <http://rosiamontana.org/>. Save Roşia Montană is one of the most visible environmental campaigns fighting against the mining project, a movement initiated by Alburnus Maior Association supported by many other NGOs and citizens. The environmental activism is expressed through non-conventional forms of participation (flash mobs, occupy buildings, street performance etc.). One major event is FânFest, a Festival displaying both cultural and activist events reaching already in 2012 its seventh edition. Nevertheless there are journalists who joined the campaign, see for instance numerous articles written by Mihai Goţiu .

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