

Research Article

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Mapping students' organizations in post-communist Romania: a structuration perspective

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Abstract: Who is who in Romanian student representation? In this article we answer this (apparently) simple question. We start with early 1990, when the Romanian campuses experienced ample changes – part of the societal transformations which swept over Central and Eastern Europe. Our ambitions in this text are twofold: (1) to construct a map of student federations in post-communist Romania, and (2) to identify and describe the waves of structuration of the field. In doing so, we revert to classical social theory and document the emergence of “organizational archetypes” of student representation. We identify two types of structuration, “bottom-up” and “top-down”. We find evidence regarding the resilience of the “bottom-up” organizational archetypes in relation to the successive attempts of “top-down” (re)structuration.

Keywords: student movements, organizations, structuration, higher education, post-communism, Romania

Introduction

Who is who in Romanian student representation? In this article we answer this (apparently) simple question. In doing so, we start with early 1990, when the Romanian campuses experienced ample changes – part of the societal transformations which swept over Central and Eastern Europe. Without engaging in normative discussions on what student organizations are and what they are not, we revert to classical social theory and identify the

emergence of “organizational archetypes” (McLaughlin, Scott, Deschenes, Hopkins, & Newman, 2009) and the waves of structuration of national student representation in Romania.

Beyond the empirics, we intend our account also as a plea for an analytical perspective building on historical particularities, acknowledging that the structure in which actors are embedded is not neutral; on the contrary, it favours certain organizational archetypes over the others – see for example the dynamics of national student representation in Germany (Jungblut & Weber, 2015).

Our ambitions in this text are twofold: (1) to construct a map of higher-order student organizations in post-communist Romania, which is amenable to the addition of an extra layer of analytical complexity, that of causal explanation; and (2) to identify and describe the waves of structuration of the field. In more conceptual terms, our aim is to provide an account for both the major actors in national student representation in Romania, and also for the social structure in which they are embedded.

Theoretical background

The process whereby social actors deploy material and symbolic resources within a set of institutions, partly in a struggle to define those very institutions, is known in social theory as ‘structuration’ (Giddens 2015[1976], 1984). In order to overcome the limitations of structuralism (or functionalism, as he prefers to call it) in sociological analysis and to re-introduce agency into the picture, Giddens defines the “duality of structure” as a combination of “generative rules” (which he categorized as “semantic”, or having to do with the construction and exchange of meanings, and “moral”, or normative); and of resources (referring to whatever capabilities the actors “are able to bring to bear to facilitate the achievement of their purposes in the course of social interaction”) (Giddens 2015[1976], 118).

In this text we use “structuration” in the tradition of Giddens (1984), as “the manner and extent to which a collective conception arises among a set of organizations

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that they are mutually interdependent – whether as allies or as enemies – and are involved in interdependent relations to advance or oppose a given agenda” (McLaughlin et al., 2009, p. 140).

Our narrative will flow along the lines of the emergence of “organizational archetypes”, understood as “a set of [structures] and systems that consistently embodies a single interpretative scheme” (Greenwood and Hinings 1993 p. 1005 apud McLaughlin et al., 2009, p. 30). The starting point is the dissolution of the campus arrangements of the late ‘80s in Romania, documented from primary sources (UASCR, 1988a, 1988b) and the limited historiography available (Cioflâncă, 2006; Murgescu, Sora, Gheboianu, & Rotaru, 2014). We adopt the operationalization used by McLaughlin et al. (2009, p. 118), which analysed governance within the organization, staffing, interdependence with other organizations (McAdam & Scott, 2005, p. 17). We refer to “repertoires of action”, which we understand as “the activities or tactics that organizations employ to achieve their goals” (McLaughlin et al., 2009, p. 122). Research on students’ organizations, both conceptual (Klemenčič, 2012), and empirical (Jungblut & Weber, 2015; Popović, 2015) indicate an association between organizational archetypes and repertoires of action. Sometimes this association is used in deterministic accounts of the structure of students’ organizations in various national systems (Antonowicz, Pinheiro, & Smużewska, 2014; Klemenčič, 2012), a perspective which illustrates, in our opinion, the theoretical cleavage between organizational studies and social movement theories (Campbell, 2005; McAdam & Scott, 2005).

McLaughlin et al. (2009, pp. 40–41) posit that structuration within an organizational field may be of two types: “top-down” and “bottom-up”. The enactment of national regulations – the coercive isomorphism of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) –, and the “imitation [...] of the behavior of the *more successful* organizations” – the mimetic isomorphism of DiMaggio and Powell (1983) –, are included in the first type. The bottom-up structuration includes an “adverse response from subordinate units” or “the mobilization of suppressed interests”. We will include this perspective in our structuration narrative.

Methodology and data

In doing so, we rely on three types of data: (1) archives, on paper or electronic, belonging to student organizations, universities, public libraries, but also personal archives obtained through the goodwill of former student leaders;

(2) semi-structured interviews with student leaders from the early 90s up until the present day; and (3) newspaper articles covering student life from the 1990-2008 timeframe. We have digitized, structured and analyzed more than 2,000 archival files. The student organizations covered by the research are mostly based in the big academic cities of Bucharest, Timișoara, Cluj, and Iași. To a lesser extent, we have also covered student organizations in Constanța, Galați, Craiova and Târgu Mureș. The 19 interviews with former student leaders, ranging from one to three hours in length, were carried out with formal student leaders and activists from Bucharest, Timișoara and Cluj.

We collected relevant newspaper articles from four sources, two national (“Romania Liberă” [Free Romania] and “Adevărul” [The Truth]) and two local (“Renasterea Banateana” [The Rebirth of Banat] and “Ziarul Timișoara” [Timișoara Newspaper]). We chose these newspaper according to three criteria: (1) continuity throughout the “printed press period”, roughly 1990 – 2010, (2) representativeness for the partisan divide of the early nineties mass-media: anti-government and pro-government and (3) significant circulation¹. We established a broad database of over 2,300 student-related articles that have been digitized, stored and organized. From these articles we thoroughly coded the 447 articles reporting on various forms of student contentious claims or actions, based on a coding system we developed taking stock of previous research on social movements in Central and Eastern Europe (Ekiert & Kubik, 1998a, 1998b; Szabo, 1996). The code book mainly included factual items such as protest timelines, social actors involved, claims, action repertoires, slogans, outcomes, forms or repression or violent protests. Because we were dealing with a pronounced lack of data on the post-communist Romanian student movement, this endeavor of analyzing press reports has birthed an extensive, longitudinally consistent track record of student protests – with inherent limits, which are characteristic to press analyses.

¹ Circulation data for the national newspapers of the early nineties, the beginning of the “printed-press period”, are provided by Drăgan (1993, 1999 apud Gheboianu, 2015). Circulation data for the end of the period are provided by the Romanian Transmedia Audit Office (BRAT) and indicate that the two national sources we studied remained amongst the top three generalist newspapers towards 2010.

What is a student organization in Romania? Structuration at the local level

According to the interviews we collected and to the evidence provided by a historian who himself took part in the events (Antoniou, 1994), the roots of the students' organizations which, in the nineties, regularly marched tens of thousands of Romanians on the streets of the major cities can be traced back to the groups of students who "guarded" their universities against "terrorists"² (interview 2; interview 3), in the midst of the days of panic and confusion of late December 1989. Days and weeks later, these groups claimed legal status on the basis of a non-governmental organizations' law from the inter-war period (Romanian Parliament, 1924) which was not abolished by the communist legislature and a decree from 1954 which governs the establishment of organizations under the control of the socialist state – as well as the establishment of the "socialist" organizations (State Council, 1954). The basic requirements to start a non-governmental organization (NGO) included having twenty members, an office, a starting patrimony, aims and goals, a reserved name, a governing body, and a statute. Membership consisted of students and was voluntary in all the statutes we analyzed. Labor unions and civil society organizations also founded in the same period as NGOs all claimed legal identity by exploiting the same statutory opportunity.

Unlike in the case of Poland, documented in detail by (Antonowicz et al., 2014; Smużewska, 2018), the communist students' associations did not continue to function after December 1989, thus not interfering with the newly established students' organizations. Some of the organizations established during or in the aftermath of the 1989 revolutionary events still exist today, a few even playing still the "dominant" (McAdam & Scott, 2005) role in representing students at their faculties and universities. Others lost their privileges to "challengers" established at later moments. Still others ceased to exist, radically changed their structures and repertoire of action, or became marginal.

Strictly semantically defined, any NGO which is operated by students is a students' organization. But some

of these NGOs have special links with universities and/or with specific issues that are relevant primarily for students. One of the easily identifiable links is that their office is on campus, owned by the university. In most of the cases we have documented, this is a room in one of the buildings where classes are taught, or, in some cases, in one of the dormitories. Sometimes, the students' organization, legally an NGO, is nominated in the university charter or in other regulations, as if it were an administrative unit of the university. These arrangements vary from university to university, and we will not engage here in a typology due to space limitations. We will restrict ourselves at noting that the local students' organizations we studied usually define themselves in terms of one or more of the functions advanced by (Altbach, 2006): representation, political functions, and services.

Altbach (2006, p. 333) defines the representation function as "represent[ation of] student interests to the university and often appoint[ment of] student representatives to academic committees (sometimes even to governing boards)". The services function is defined as consisting in the provision of "food, entertainment, reduced price tickets, transportation and others", and, in Romania, it is carried out in a market logic, based on the funds the organizations manage to attract (Năstase, 2018, this issue). "[I]nstitution-based student governments sometimes reflect broader political concerns and often are thrust into a political role by campus events" (Altbach, 2006, p. 333). Altbach defines this function in a way specific to United States campuses, though such a definition would fit well with various European accounts as well (Crossley & Ibrahim, 2012; Jungblut & Weber, 2015; Popović, 2015; Smużewska, 2018). The political function, or rather its partisan component, is limited in Romania due to the interdiction of political activism on university campuses (Romanian Parliament, 1995), though it is not uncommon for Romanian rectors to also occupy top political positions (while formally interrupting their term as rectors), such as those of minister (Proteasa, Andreescu, & Curaj, 2017), member of Parliament, or a leadership position in the major parties.

The national legislation, combined with the university charter and regulations, determine only partly the context in which these students' organizations operate. One example is representation in university senates. The national legislation establishes some general aspects, such as the percentage of student representatives in certain decisional bodies. The provisions rarely indicate the organizational actors which are entitled to these positions. In fact, the regulatory framework in which organizational actors compete for such positions was not

² The so-called "terrorists" were individuals or groups whose identity remains hazy and strongly contested that shot at the Romanian protesters during the days of revolution. They instilled panic in the general population, particularly as their activities were reported by the newly liberated media channels, and the television in particular.

altered substantially, in our opinion, after 1990. Some universities represent notable exceptions in this regard, as a single student organization managed to inscribe its privileges in the formal regulations, but we will not engage with this subject here.

A dynamic map of higher-order student associations in post-communist Romania

Schmitter & Streeck (1999, p. 69) define “higher-order associations” as “permanent organizations specializing in coordinating the activities of their member associations”. In other words, they are federative actors – for simplicity, we will refer to them as “federations” throughout the text, though we admit some of the actors we will analyse are not *sensu stricto* federations. According to Altbach (2006, p. 333) federations serve “political functions” consisting of “represent[ation of] student interests to academic authorities”, as well as “service functions” comprising of anything from “low-cost travel arrangements” to a variety of “student service agencies of many kinds” – where the service function is developed predominantly amongst European higher-order student associations. Klemenčič (2012, p. 3) extends Altbach’s definition, advancing that federations target “public authorities and international cooperation” through their political activities.

Based on these conceptual representations, we mapped the Romanian federations we identified in our empirical investigations – see Figure 1, below. We distinguish two tracks: the grassroots, bottom-up one, and the top-down one. The bottom-up track (or ‘NGO track’) consists of those higher-order organizations which emerged as forms of coordination among local organizations. We included in the diagram only those actors which were indicated by our data to present a certain organizational stability and influence in the organizational field. Other short-lived organizational actors were not included for reasons of brevity. Though some of these higher-order students’ associations acquired a certain level of recognition from the state, none of them were granted the formal representational monopoly which would challenge their inclusion in the bottom-up type. We operate with a definition of monopoly specific to neo-corporatist approaches: “[i]n addition to recognition and access, the state may grant interest associations specific *organizational privileges* to stabilize and increase their resource supply and to strengthen their independence from their members. Organizational

privileges dispensed by the state to interest associations are essentially monopoly rights – exclusive licenses to provide certain essential goods or services to a particular group constituency” which “do not involve direct financial subsidies” (Schmitter & Streeck, 1999, p. 84).

The top-down track involves actors which were established through the formal agency (i.e., through a decision or order) of an official body, in these cases the ministry of education. These actors, which also acquired representational monopolies as defined in the paragraph above, are mapped in the top-down track of Figure 1. Both the bottom-up and top-down federations deviate from the definition advanced by (Altbach, 2006) in terms of service provision: they do not offer services for individual students. Instead, when they do offer services, they target their constituency – generally, local student organizations.

Structuration in the nineties: the first wave

The newly established local students’ organizations coalesced in 1990 around two poles of influence: the student leaders from two flagship universities in the capital of Romania – the University Bucharest and the Polytechnic Institute (later the Polytechnic University). The Polytechnic was the largest university of the communist and immediately post-communist times, probably the main beneficiary of what Reisz (2003) terms the ‘polytechnization’ of higher education before 1990, a phenomenon common in the countries under Soviet influence. In Romania, polytechnics and the historical comprehensive universities enjoyed the same formal status – that of higher education organizations (Proteasa, 2013) – and a good reputation, judged in terms of competition for the scarce student places (Miroiu & Vlăsceanu, 2012). According to the interviews we conducted, the main goals which the early federations pursued with various levels of intensity were: (1) amassing the patrimony of the former Union of Communist Students’ Associations; (2) sectoral, student issues, such as study conditions, scholarships, living conditions in the dormitories or student discounts for public transport; and (3) broader, political issues, with democratisation and “Westernisation” of the society featuring prominently in the (early) nineties.

The setting up of the Romanian Students’ League (LSR) hovered around the local organization within the comprehensive University of Bucharest and its leader, Marian Munteanu. Some of the details regarding the initial organization and its membership are presented in Antoniu (1994). The Students’ League at the University of

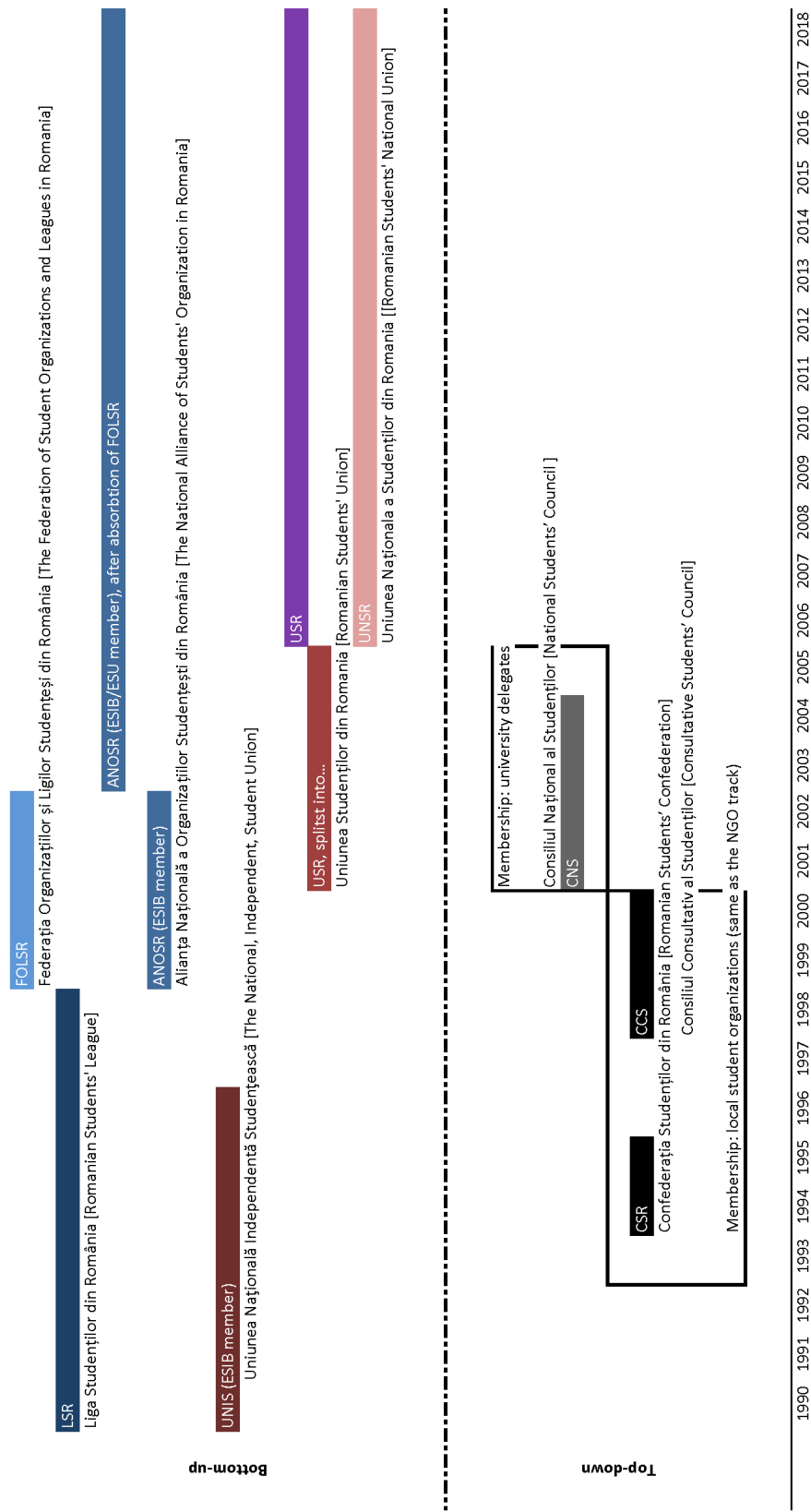


Figure 1: A Gantt diagram of national student representation in Romania (1990-2017)*

* The year when the federation ceased to exist can be disputed. We stopped representing a federation when, according to the evidence we have, it stopped exercising its higher-order association functions – though we are aware that, at least formally, some of these actors continued to exist as NGOs.

Bucharest gained a level of fame and recognition that no other student organization in post-communist Romania has achieved after opening the balcony of the University for speeches during the most prominent protest against the new power in 1990, known in the Romanian historiography as “The University Square” (Gledhill, 2005; Vasi, 2004). The demonstrations, widely covered by the international press, were a marathon permanent protest lasting almost two months, located in and around the main square of the city, right next to the historical building of the University of Bucharest. Right after communist leader Ceaușescu was toppled, administrative power was taken over by the National Salvation Front (FSN), a body which promised to govern the country without political partisanship and to organize the first free elections. The University Square demonstration was sparked by the decision of this provisional body (in fact, of a key faction within it labeled by the protesters “neo-communist”) to run for elections as a political party. Some of the major claims of the demonstration were that the FSN was controlled by “neo-communists”³ and was hijacking Romania’s transition to a democracy and to a strategic partnership with the USA and Western European countries⁴. We will limit our account here to noting that the demonstration ended up in bloodshed, as organized groups of armed miners came to Bucharest and shut down the protests, and that the Students’ League at the University of Bucharest was one of the targets of this violence. Its leader, Marian Munteanu, suffered severe beatings.

The University Square became a landmark event and we consider it a symbolic reference for the student organization at the University of Bucharest, as it molded, first of all, the latter’s repertoire of actions, which were described as “anti-communist” and anti-Soviet – in the many incarnations of these terms. The press analysis we conducted enables us to document a list of themes or claims relevant for the “social movement” structure of this organization and its network: the National Salvation Front and its successor parties⁵, Russian aggression towards the newly independent former Soviet Countries⁶, the territories lost by Romania during World War II – Bukovina

and Bessarabia⁷, and the abolition of monarchy⁸, to name only the few most representative issues (exemplified in footnotes).

The National Union of Independent Students (UNIS) was centered around the newly established student organization at the Polytechnic of Bucharest. Its membership was not restricted to student organizations in technical universities, just as the membership in the Romanian Students’ League was not restricted to (comprehensive) universities. The leaders we interviewed pointed out that the relations between the two higher-order associations – in many cases mixed up with the relation between the University of Bucharest and the Bucharest Polytechnic themselves – had their ups and downs. One of the issues was the perception that UNIS and the Bucharest Polytechnic associations did not participate in the University Square protests. However, UNIS and its members did include protests in their repertoire of action – though confined to the “[s]ectoral, higher education issues” (Klemenčič, 2012, p. 8), especially if judged by comparison with the militant actions of the Romanian Students’ League and its members. This focus on higher education claims was mentioned by all of the interviewees which responded to questions regarding UNIS (interviews 5, 7 and 12).

Neither of the two higher-order associations managed to formalize its relation with the state. However, they were more or less embedded in wider political networks. Due to space limitations, we will not engage in this discussion here, just noting instead that relationships with the state figured differently in the interpretive frames of the two higher-order associations. University Square protesters, for example, considered the government to be immoral, even illegitimate⁹. As such, while the Romanian Students’ League and some of its members, especially the Students’ League at the University of Bucharest, appeared to be much closer to the early nineties opposition, which had little dialogue with the government, UNIS and its members cultivated links with some of the political gate-keepers of the day.

According to the interviews we conducted (interview 5 and interview 7), the personal connections of the early 1990s UNIS leadership with the youth NGOs involved in the transfer of the patrimony of the former communist youth association to the newly established actors

³ We use the admittedly contentious terms “neo-communism” and “anti-communism” (Gledhill, 2005, p. 77) circumscribed to their meaning in the archival materials we analyzed.

⁴ See for example: Paul, Gh., “Piața Universității, 24 de Zile și 24 de Nopti”. *România Liberă*, May 17, 1990.

⁵ Popovici, Dan. “Fără Violență (!).” *Ziarul Timișoara*, February 6, 1990.

⁶ Iordache, Roxana. “Marș Studențesc de Protest.” *România Liberă*, January 18, 1991.

⁷ “Marșul Drumul Crucii.” *Renașterea Bănățeană*, March 10, 1992.

⁸ Popa, Daniel. “Liga Studenților îl acuză pe Emil Constantinescu de Ipocrizie.” *Adevărul*, October 4, 1995.

⁹ Iordache, Roxana. “Moment Istoric în Piața Universității: Unitate pentru Libertate.” *România Liberă*, May 11, 1990.

enabled the former to use the offices of the national unions of communist associations. The latter were located in a symbolic spot: the former building of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, the place from where communist leader Ceaușescu flew away via helicopter, thus surrendering his power, in December 1989. On one hand, this paved the way for UNIS becoming a member of WESIB, the Western European Students' Information Bureau, which would soon drop "Western" from its name to welcome national unions from countries previously beyond the Iron Curtain (Ivosevic, Päll, Primožič, Slegers, & Vukasovic, 2012). The interviewee insisted on the accidentality of this relationship: most of the international correspondence continued to be addressed to the offices of the former communist union, in the absence of an alternative national union of students (interview 5). The interviews with former UNIS leaders indicate a pragmatic, even transactional, relation with the authorities, associated with a "well-behaved and toned down" (interview 7) repertoire of protest, especially in terms of claims relating to the broader societal or political issues of the day.

It is interesting to note that the two higher-order associations also had common members. We asked the leader of one of these local organizations how they managed the two partially conflicting organizational models. He replied that they were part of UNIS in order to maximize their chances to inherit part of former communist students' associations patrimony, while they were attached to the social movement logic of the Romanian Students' League (interview 2).

This brings us to the issue of the patrimony and allows us to set the stage for the discussion of top-down arrangements. An early formal attempt to resolve the question of the assets of the former communist student associations (UASCR) was a 1990 Government Resolution awarding them to a "democratically established national committee representing all student organizations" (Romanian Government, 1990). Interviews and an analysis of archival material and of press articles indicates that amassing the former UASCR patrimony featured high on the national platforms of newly established student organizations until the late nineties. It represented one of the main areas of coordination among these organizations – though they could not reach the compromise needed to transform this opportunity into an achievement. In other words, no "national committee representing all student organizations" was created, and it is debatable whether the government decision above aimed (top-down) at the creation of such an association, or was merely looking for a convenient way out of the question who would

inherit the patrimony of the former Union of Communist Students' Association.

A second, more substantial attempt to organize the field in a top-down manner came in 1994, when a Romanian Students' Confederation (CSR) was established by way of an act issued by the Romanian Ministry of Youth (interview 18). As far as we have managed to document, the confederation only had few meetings, in 1994 and in 1996. Its members were local student organizations, most of them already members of the two (bottom-up) higher-order associations discussed previously. CSR was headed by the President of UNIS and it ceased to function shortly after the last meeting in 1996, the year in which the government changed and the early nineties' opposition came into power. The repertoire of action associated with the Romanian Students' Confederation included formal meetings sponsored by the government and the issuing of statements – as far as we managed to document. The statements included claims belonging to the sectoral, higher education-oriented approach, such as transport subsidies, lowering campus fees and additional benefits for students formerly placed in foster care¹⁰.

Another similar top-down arrangement was instituted in 1998, under the government of the parties which came to power in 1996, when the previous top-down arrangement was, practically, aborted. The Consultative Student's Council (CCS) was set up as a representative body for Romanian students as well as an advisory board for education reform initiatives (Ministerul Educației Naționale [Ministry of National Education], 1998). Its members were local student organizations. It had an executive body which held regular meetings and made policy proposals. It was headed by the president of the student organization of the University of Bucharest (LSUB) (Students' Consultative Council, 1998b). In fact, most of the CCS executive board members seemed to be linked with the Romanian Students' League network. Members of the student organisation backed by the Romanian Orthodox Church – ASCOR, were also part of the structure of the Council, on equal footing with the local students' organizations described in the beginning of our narrative (Students' Consultative Council, 1998b). The Council's initiatives, mostly statements and policy positions, are circumscribed to a sectoral approach: 50% hotel¹¹ discounts for students, additional medical facilities in campuses and discounts on drug prescriptions,

¹⁰ These claims were agreed at the first official meeting of the CSR, in 1994, and were curiously aimed directly at the Romanian Parliament, Government and Presidency.

¹¹ Yes, hotels, it is not a typo.

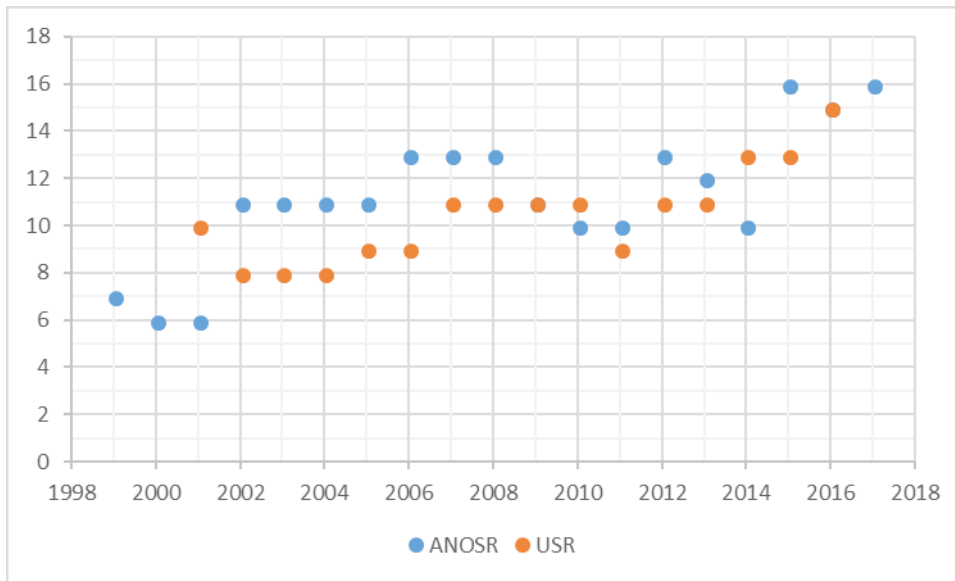


Figure 2: Formal positions in two bottom-up higher-order associations (ANOSR and USR)

additional trains for students during the weekends or bigger allowances for the socially disadvantaged students (Students' Consultative Council, 1998a). According to interviews (interview 9), the ample 1998 student protests were organized based on the network of this top-down initiative. The National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania (ANOSR), a federation belonging to the second-generation federations, which is still active as of this writing, was formed from the network activated for the protests – according to the same source.

All of these organizations, bottom-up and top-down, relied in practice on a flat, network-type structure, which was based on the local organizations established in the early nineties – or later, but belonging to the same archetype. As they grew in membership, their organizational charts featured numerous formal positions (president, executive president, vice-presidents, first-vice-presidents, secretary general etc.), occupied by elected representatives of the local organizations. These “officials” acted as volunteers. None of the higher-order student organizations had paid professional staff, according to the evidence we collected. A rough count of formal positions is illustrated in Figure 2, for the most long-lived bottom-up higher-order associations¹².

In fact, we consider the abundance of formal positions to be indicative of a flat structure with a very limited transfer of authority from the member organizations

to the elected officials – as in a principal-agent relation (Eisenhardt, 1989). For reference, we note that the Romanian Students' League had four formal positions in 1991 (Romanian Students' League, 1991), the Romanian Students' Confederation had also four “officials” in 1994 (Romanian Students' Confederation, 1994), same as the Students' Consultative Council in 1998 (Ministerul Educației Naționale [Ministry of National Education], 1998). The National Students' Council had only three formal positions in 2001 (Ministerul Educației și Cercetării [Ministry of Education and Research], 2001).

In the early nineties we documented the presence of professional staff in local students' organizations, as well as organizational assets which suggest a more professional structure (interview 3 and 11). These capacities had belonged to the former communist students' associations and were attached to the organizations established in early 1990 through a process too complex to engage with here.

The ‘early 2000s challenge’

A different wave of structuration came top-down, at the turn of the century. While both of the top-down initiatives of the nineties were essentially associations of NGOs, the National Student Council established in 2001 (Ministerul Educației și Cercetării [Ministry of Education and Research], 2001) had a different membership structure: the representatives to the Council were appointed by elected student senators from every university. It also enjoyed representational monopoly and a hierarchical

¹² We used data from archival sources and from the websites of the two organizations: <http://www.anosr.ro/despre-noi/> and <http://uni-unea.ro/istoric/>, accessed on the 21st of January 2018.

structure, illustrated through the low number of formal positions.

According to the data we collected (interview 19), the National Student Council became an arena of competition between national federations of organizations, which acted like parties in a political competition. The last meeting of the National Students' Council was held in 2005, before another change of government. However, the organizational archetype remained embodied in the structure of local student representation in two of the largest universities in Romania: "Babeş-Bolyai" University in Cluj-Napoca (Stan, 2012, p. 344) and the Academy of Economic Studies in Bucharest (Petrariu, Orindaru, Partenie, & Constantinescu, 2013). In these universities, the pyramidal student representation structure formalised in the regulations of the university employed a repertoire of action similar to that of the student NGO archetype, especially focused on "projects". Thus, they doubled their monopoly positions with the forms of collective action specific to the student NGOs and turned into strong competitors for the older organizational actors within those universities – those originated from the early 90s archetype.

Post-2005 Europeanization

The next wave of structuration was associated with Europeanization via the Bologna Process. We consider this also as a top-down process, to the extent that the interactions between the federations were influenced to a larger extent by the higher education policy decisions (themselves subject to nudging from international organizations and ESIB/ESU). The federations rooted in the archetypal local organizations were given consultative or even voting positions in state agencies and buffer organizations fulfilling a so-called 'expertise' function. This third wave of top-down structuration is different from the previous one because it has not challenged, but, on the contrary, it has consolidated the positions of the federations in the bottom-up track of Figure 1.

A first process which we consider relevant for this re-structuration was the establishment of the quality assurance systems, where students were given positions in the external evaluation teams and the two competing national federations were each given the right to send a representative to the Council (the main decision-making body) of the national accreditation agency. This was done through the so-called 'quality assurance law' (2005) and, as a side note, the arrangement became problematic less than two years later, when one of the two

national federations split in two (see Figure 1). All three competitors claimed positions in the Council – while the number of student seats was set by law to two and could not be changed unless the law was amended in the Parliament. Since then, most of the legislative changes in the governance of higher education have implemented the student participation principle, and, in most of the cases, were followed by negotiations between the higher-order associations: whose representative should occupy the seat.

Discussion and conclusions

The student organizations founded as NGOs in the early nineties proved to be a resilient organizational archetype which emerged at the local level, in universities. They were pivotal for the bottom-up structuration of national representation in the early nineties. Even though the national organizational actors belonging to the bottom-up track had their dynamics, including mortality, we consider that the federation archetype of the early nineties proved its resilience, just as the local one.

In a nutshell, the first attempts of top-down structuration acknowledged the pivotal character of the student organizations founded as NGOs. The turn of the millennium top-down structuration challenged the position of the bottom-up higher-order associations. It left traces (i.e., provided a model for some local students' organizations in large universities), but did not replace the dominant model. The wave of structuration associated with Europeanization, also top-down in character, restored to the bottom-up organizations the momentum they had lost some years before, and awarded them recognition by the state, cementing their positions as competitors with each other.

Our research contributes to the body of knowledge initiated by Philip Altbach (Altbach, 1989, 2006; Lipset & Altbach, 1966) – see also (Luescher-Mamashela, 2015), and continued by Klemenčič (2012). Though we did not focus our empirical study on this issue, we consider our results invite discussion on the relation between normative and descriptive perspectives in the study of students' organizations and students' protests. To exemplify, while the top-down archetype rooted in student representatives in university senates is better aligned with the normative perspectives associated with Europeanization via the Bologna Process (Proteasa, 2009; Zgaga, 2012), in the Romanian case it challenged the relative position of the organizations belonging to the historically entrenched archetype. From this point of view, it comes as no surprise

that national student representation and local student involvement are portrayed as having contradictory trends under the influence of the Bologna Process (Almqvist et al., 2003; Blättler & Santa, 2010; Carapinha, 2009; ESIB, 2005; Galán Palomares & Pietkiewicz, 2015; Malnes, Vuksanović, & Simola, 2012; Mikkola, Carapinha, & Tuck, 2007) in some cases – such as Romania's, and also in other Central and Eastern European countries.

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