

Symbolic constructions in the media discourse: Bucharest, Universitatii Square protests, 22 years after

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Abstract: *The current study proposes an analysis of 2012 Universitatii Square media coverage as a media event characterized by liminality, favorable to use symbolic and mythological constructions in media discourse. The aim is to identify these symbolic constructions. As in 1990, when covering a media event which exceeds the daily journalistic routine, journalists are usually employing binary representations in order to understand the reality. Their media reports are usually structured on oppositions: between protesters and police forces, between Raed Arafat and Traian Basescu, between protesters and the cold weather. This new episode is confirming the Universitatii Square special statute in the symbolic geography of Bucharest.*

Keywords: *media coverage, media event, 2012 Universitatii Square protests, symbolic constructions.*

A square not like the others

Two weeks along, in January 2012, the Universitatii Square in Bucharest was, once again, the scene of a long series of protests, like 22 years before, in December 1989 (fall of Nicolae Ceausescu regime) or in May-June 1990 (when protests have been stopped by the violent miners' descent).

Started as a solidarity meeting with the deputy State Secretary at the Ministry of Health, Raed Arafat, dismissed after a public conflict with the president Traian Basescu, Universitatii Square protests have finally forced the Prime minister in charge at that time to resign.

Since 1990, several attempts of the political forces to occupy this space reserved to openly express civic opinions, have failed. Even in January 2012 political personalities who appeared among protesters haven't been welcomed. The message was that Universitatii Square was not for politicians, a reconfirmation of the symbolic power of this place. This symbolic power is not unique if we consider, for example, the Independence Square in Kiev (scene of the Orange Revolution between 2004-2005) or, more recently, Taksim Square in Istanbul where the civic platform opposed to the urban development plan for Gezi Park has the same name as the Square: Taksim Solidarity Movement.

In a research published in 1996 in *Réseaux*, Mihai Coman (1997, p. 13-29) proposed an interpretation of the Romanian media discourse about the 1990 Universitatii Square protests using the symbolic anthropology tools: ritual, liminality, *communitas*. 22 years later, a similar phenomenon monopolized once again media attention. The current study builds a dialogue in time with this particular media analysis, using a similar interpretation grid.

The author will analyze how 2012 Universitatii Square protests were reflected in two Romanian daily newspapers (print copy and online) – *Jurnalul național* (*The National Journal*) and *Evenimentul Zilei* (*The Event of the Day*), with two opposed political orientations in a very polarized media environment. When reporting about an event with political implications, every daily newspaper covering depends on its partisanship. This is what is happening in the case of January 2012 protests, with very different media coverage by daily newspapers as *Evenimentul Zilei*, *Romania libera* (*Free Romania*) and *Adevarul* (*The Truth*, with pro governmental sympathies) and by *Jurnalul național* (closed to the opposition).

In order to have a balanced image of the media coverage, the author chooses to analyze one daily newspaper close to the government – *Evenimentul Zilei*, and another one closed to the opposition – *Jurnalul național*. The study's corpus is composed by articles published in the two daily newspaper from 13 January 2014 (when protests begin in Universitatii Square) and till the subject is no longer a news for the two newspapers, precisely 5 February for *Jurnalul național* and 28 January for *Evenimentul Zilei*.

In a context when analysts are talking about postmodern aspects in the media discourse targeting lesser a rational reader and information consumer and more his or her emotional resources, the author is trying to investigate mechanism employed by media when they are not providing a strictly informational coverage but an event reconstruction focusing on the spectacular aspect and on the generalized "infotainment" (Frumusani 2009, p. 176).

The current study's research hypothesis is that the 2012 Piata Universitatii Square is an event characterized by *liminality* (Turner 1969) favorable to use symbolic and mythological constructions in media discourse. The objective is to identify these symbolic constructions.

The author proposes a media analysis using an analytical grid focusing on the actors' definition and the reality's definition and trying to underline "semantic structures and make explicit implications, presuppositions, connections, strategies, etc., which usually remain implicit in the discourse" (Van Dijk 1983, p. 27). This kind of analysis is looking for "the rules or principles underlying the structures, the production, and the comprehension of media messages" (Van Dijk 1983, p. 27).

Writing about the journalistic discourse, Patrick Charaudeau notes that "when the capture is the dominant issue – and it often is – the informative purpose disappears in favor of a set of sensationalism and dramatization" (Charaudeau 2006). The author will try to identify the dramatization aspects in the Romanian media discourse about the 2012 Universitatii Square movement.

Media as myths producers

This study's analysis is based in a theoretical approach considering that, in certain conditions, media are creating and imposing their own definitions about the reality using symbolic constructions: « mass-media, like non-modern manifestations studied with the aid of concepts such as myth, rite, sacred, liminality, magic, and so on, create and impose symbolic systems of thinking surrounding reality and of articulating it in cultural constructs that are accessible and satisfying to their audience" (Coman 2005, p. 46). In this sense, media coverages are "symbolic constructs that function and signify in the same way as the mythical systems and rituals of non-modern societies" (Coman 2005, p. 46).

Journalists are not creating themselves the rites but "a ritualized image of certain events" by "selecting certain acts of the actors of the event and presenting them as elements that define and attribute meaning to the situation" and by "employing a culturally defined narrative and labels to interpret the event as out of the ordinary, as something that retains and transmits symbolic values that surpass the proper event values" (Coman 2005, p. 50).

This approach is part of the *media anthropology* which "preserves the methodological and conceptual assets of earlier anthropological tradition" encouraging in the same time the interest for "the symbolic construction of reality and the fundamental importance of symbolic structures, myth, and ritual in everyday life" (Coman, Rothenbuhler 2005, p. 1). In Mihai Coman opinion, "in specific circumstances related to the coverage of particular events, where routine procedures can be "mechanically" applied", journalists "involve ritual techniques, or rather ritualized construction of meaning" (Coman 2003, p. 139). Mihai Coman

underlines that “the anthropological approach imposes a perspective that places the media in the center of the process of social construction of reality » (Coman 2003, p. 110).

Communitas, liminality

As well as in the 1990 similar movement, in 2012 Universitatii Square protests we can identify several elements of liminality in the sense of Victor Turner (1969, p. 94) inspired by Van Gennep definition for rites of passage in three different stages: separation, limen and aggregation. According to Turner, the attributes of liminality are “ambiguous, since this condition and these persons elude or slip through the network of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space” (Turner 1969, p. 95). “Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a rich variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualize social and cultural transitions”, says Turner (Turner 1969, p. 95). According to this model, during the liminal phase, there is a form of organisation “unstructured or rudimentarily structured” called *communitas* (Turner 1969, p. 96).

Two weeks in a row, in the Universitatii Square, we assist at the creation of this *communitas*, a social structure with very different rules from those existing before the protests, but also different from those in place after its end. It’s also, a very fertile period from a symbolic point of view.

Protests in Universitatii Square are not authorized and are not taking place according to a well-known and generally accepted scenario. Everything is improvised and defined on the place (ad-hoc). “They did not know each other but they shared hot tea in thermos, pieces of pizza, sandwiches and Vitamin C with propolis », is written in *Jurnalul național* (28-01). And these examples are frequent, revealing a kind of actions that wouldn’t exist in everyday life: “five students brought the protesters 10 liters of tea to warm up” (*Jurnalul național*, 2-02), “people brought flutes, trumpets, bells, they use enthusiastically» (*Jurnalul național*, 23-01). The protesters are feeling very well together and they manifest it openly: “shouting “Resignation!”, a country dance begins” (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 25-01). They act emotionally like they would never do in other regular situations: “Emotions are great in the University Square. A man began to cry in front of a beggar (...), we talk, we take pictures, films. Many people listen fascinated songs” (*Jurnalul național*, 19-01).

It’s just the same as it happens 22 years ago when “anonymous relations in everyday life have been replaced by familiar relations” and there were no “normative regulations, just ad-hoc procedures” (Coman 1996, p. 24). In his analyse of the media discourse about the 1990 University Square event, the cited

author observed the same communitarian stage “marked by the sharing of goods, through simple gestures that suggest the disappearance of social boundaries” as well as by “ replacing the word by the song” (Coman 1996, pp. 24-25).

Just as in 1990, in 2012, the liminality encourages a rich symbolic use and creativity: “The protesters brought the “coliva” (wheat and nut cake offered to honor dead parents – note of the author), (*Jurnalul național*, 17-01) they addressed to contested politicians or they “are caring a crucifix labelled with PDL=PCR” (the ruling party is identified as similar to the former communist party – note of the author), (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 15-01). Journalists are also talking about the protesters’ “fashion to wear coffins on which is written thieves, the Government or Basescu”. The “coliva”, the coffin or the crucifix labelled with the name of the contested leaders are functioning as a pressure-hole, a manifestation of the symbolic violence replacing the real violence. And protesters are using a real symbolic arsenal in this sense: “boards, flags, governors’ masks, especially representing Basescu, designed in the most grotesque hypostases” or even “a plastic reproducing a human head impaled on a stick, with Basescu’s photo on it” (*Jurnalul național*, 17-01).

And these aren’t the only examples. Some symbolic characters make their appearance in the University Square: “a retreator created a Zorro mask using a neck cloth”; “a woman wearing a banderole posting “hooligan 1990, *ciumpalac* (invented term, almost impossible to translate; a possible equivalence would be “horn” – note of the author) 2012” is walking with a naked doll labelled “Elena Udrea” (Ministry of Tourism at that time – note of the author). Or, a protester is wearing “a hat and a pirate wig” and some others are “wrapped in flags” (*Jurnalul național*, 23-01). Protesters are also writing their slogans on “shoes and boots” (*Jurnalul național*, 5-02) in order to send a personalized message to one of the government’s representative known for this kind of extravagances (very expensive shoes) while another protester “hanged a parrot around his neck” (*Evenimentul zilei*, 16-01). The participants at the Piata Universitatii Square movement in January 2012 are also “improvising coffins they are carrying shouting “Basescu go away, after Ceausescu!” (*Jurnalul național*, 16-02). When it’s snowing, they are making snowmen they are calling « snow-ciumpalaci » supposed to replace their absent comrades, doubling the effect of the protesters in a symbolic way, once again.

In 1990 Universitatii Square movement, the handwritten boards, pins and “hooligan” diplomas, the portrait of the national poet Mihai Eminescu or the barricades delimitating “The Hooligans’ Square” were also functioning as “fetishes” of the “communitarian ritual” (Coman 1996, p. 26-27).

Media as an actor

In 2012, TV channels but also the written press changed their ordinary formats and choose live transmission (in the case of news channels) or some atypical journalistic genres (in the case of the written press). Both *Jurnalul național* and

Evenimentul Zilei choose, for example, during the analyzed period, the chronology in order to face the rapid change of events. *Jurnalul național* published even some poems dedicated to this event which is not, of course, a journalistic genre ("It's snowing in the Universitatii Square" by Lucian Avramescu, 19-01).

Journalists covering this event are emotionally involved and they are frequently reporting by using the first person: "My first revolution" (*Jurnalul național*, 14-01), "How I spent the beginning of the violence" (*Jurnalul național*, 16-01) or, they even become the heroes of the news: "Journalist injured in mission" (*Jurnalul național*, 15-01), "Working journalist, victim of the violence" (*Jurnalul național*, 17-01), "five gendarmes and a journalist injured" (*Evenimentul zilei*, 15-01). The journalists are describing the situation like this: "Between gendarmes and the groups of young people which are burgling and firing, there are, as between the devil and the deep sea, the journalists" (*Jurnalul național*, 17-01). Their presence is causing logistical problems to the "belligerents": "Soldiers didn't know what to do, disturbed by the TV camera reporting live" (*Jurnalul național*, 19-01) or is making participants reacting: "he's getting angry when seeing the TV lights creating a reality show atmosphere and destroying the photos' veracity" (*Jurnalul național*, 23-01). Sometimes, this media presence is even changing the participants' behaviour: "a man undressed in short pants and, because any TV channel wasn't reporting live, he gets back dressed" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 26-01). "On television, everything seems bigger, more powerful and more alive than in reality. On the TV screen, protesters seem fiercer", *Jurnalul național* reports (17-01).

This implication of the journalist in the events he is reporting about is new when compared with Universitatii Square 1990 analysis and is witnessing about the redefinition of this profession in time. Journalists are more likely to use the "I" when certain events are demanding this kind of approach. However, Mihai Coman was already noticing in his analysis of the 1990 Universitatii Square protests the ambiguous position media had "between that as observers (traditionally assumed) and the one (fascinating but dangerous) as actors and ritual's officiants" as well as that of journalists "acting simultaneously, in and out, as witnesses and participants, in ethnographers and sense producers, in heroes and judges of the event" (Coman 1996, p. 17).

2012 Universitatii Square protests have the features of a media event as described by Dayan and Katz (1996, p. 12) (interruptive dimension, public attention monopoly, live transmission – for TV channels but also for newspapers which are updating their online editions several times a day). Counting several confrontations between police forces and apolitical protesters, 2012 Universitatii Square could fit in the typology of "confrontations" defined by the two authors. However, in this case it is not a confrontation according to defined rules and between well-defined groups as stipulated in the cited typology but, on the

contrary: there are no rules but anomy, no groups or well-known leaders. 2012 Universitatii Square protests are a confrontation that monopolised the TV and written press attention, especially during the first week, stimulating media to change their usual formats and genre and inciting journalists to emotionally cover the event. This event can also be considered as a “transformative” (Dayan, Katz 1996, p. 153) because it’s a “turning point” representing “an interruption of the routine social time” (idem, p. 161).

Angels, demons, plus the trickster

Just as happened in the case of 1990 Universitatii Square media coverage, we have on one side a sacralising media discourse (*Jurnalul național*) and, on the other side, a pejorative and de-sacralising media discourse (*Evenimentul Zilei*) because, just as it was the case in 1990, every newspaper has a political partisanship, being extremely polarized.

According to this partisanship, sometimes, the media discourse seems describing different realities. In *Jurnalul național*, the protesters are described in general terms: “people have been beaten without discrimination”, “a protester felt on the ground” (*Jurnalul național*, 14-01), “normal people come to express their problems” (*Jurnalul național*, 15-01). And when abandoning the general terms, the journalist is talking about disadvantaged and innocent groups, victims of the police force’s brutality: “women, elderly people, children”, “a woman fainted”, “an old person has been hurt” (*Jurnalul național*, 14-01), “young people need medical care” (*Jurnalul național*, 15-01), “young people taken into the police van” (*Jurnalul național*, 17-01). People protesting in the Universitatii Square are “powerful”, “beautiful”, “resigned” and their revolt is “sincere, legitimate and full of sense” (*Jurnalul național*, 17-01). “Several thousands of people gave an extraordinary lesson of civic action, dignity and common sense to the Romania’s President”, *Jurnalul național* reports (14-01).

By comparison, their enemies are “ugly”, “blase”, “servants of one man” (*Jurnalul național*, 17-01). Police forces “are pushing without discrimination”, their bats „have no soul”, they want “to hush the people” and “send them home”. They are “Basescu’s slaves” (*Jurnalul național*, 14-01).

Between these two categories in opposition, a third one appears: the violent protesters called “ultras” because they are supposed to be fanatic supporters of Bucharest’s soccer teams. These ultras are destroying the net binary and sending all in uncertainty. Ultras are functioning in this model exactly as the Trickster as defined by Ballandier: “All through him will be blurred and challenged; the boundaries are erased, the categories are mixed, the rules and obligations lose their strength” (Ballandier, 1992, p. 44; see also Levi-Strauss, 1977). That’s exactly what happened with the violent groups described in the press: “the pipe that

is pouring dubious broke", "violent groups of restless pubertal young men", "physiognomies recently released from Jilava (well-known Romanian prison)", "hysterical groups", "the sleeping generation" (*Jurnalul național*, 16-01), "violent suburbs gangs", "morons with teeth", "the fools", "the destroyed people" (*Jurnalul național*, 17-01), "gangs covering their faces with neck clothes", "children urban guerrilla", "night felons", "the excluded of the Capital" or even explicitly considered as "between two worlds" (*Jurnalul național*, 22-01).

The confusion introduced by this group called "ultras" is amplified by their ambivalent appearance because, just as buffoons, they are wearing masks: "boys covering their faces with neck clothes". Consequently, gendarmes announce the protesters that "hiding his face under a neck cloth or hood it's not allowed anymore" (*Jurnalul național*, 18-01).

It is to notice that, as well as in 1990, the pejorative terms employed by the governors to describe their street contesters – "worms", "ciumpalac", "the violent and inept suburb", are adopted and re-valorized by the protesters. The same phenomenon happened 22 years ago when the term "hooligan" ("golan" in Romanian – note of the author) was adopted by Romanian intellectual elite (even the well-known writer Eugène Ionesco declared himself a "hooligan" in solidarity with the Universitatii Square protesters). "By a symbolic inversion (so characteristic to the universe of ceremonies) the mean of the word stipulated in the dictionary as pejorative is becoming a noble title", Mihai Coman noticed (1996, p. 23) in reference with the employment of the term "hooligan" in 1990. In 2012, protesters in Universitatii Square are proudly exhibiting their "ciumpalac" title and, when temperature drops, the "frozen ciumpalac" title.

In de-sacralising media discourse, protesters are not described in general but in depreciative terms: "some bystanders", "40-50 members of the PNL Youth Organisation", "envoys of the PSD (main opposition party – note of the author)", "some elements of the New Right, Steaua supporters or some OTV fans" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 14-01), "250-300 retreaters, 50 from Occupy Bucharest, 25% from the New Right, 150 ultras", "some young people arrived by curiosity", "groups used to provoke scandal" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 15-01), "a group of persons", "groups", "suburbs gangs", "young man over excited", "some curious people with their children" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 16-01), "protesters avec un uncertain agenda", "some eco-anti-globalisation protesters", "guys who think that things are going wrong because of the masonry and aliens" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 17-01). This kind of media discourse is surprisingly similar with the de-sacralising one employed in 1990 by some of the Romanian media.

If in *Jurnalul național*'s report all protesters' actions seem to be animated by generous ideas, in *Evenimentul Zilei* discourse, everything seems floating in promiscuity: "some characters are making an escapade in the neighbourhood

restaurant" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 15-01), "drugs are not absent", "two young men said they want Traian Basescu to give them ethno-botanic substances", "35 unemployed, not shaved and wearing sport shoes: "Maybe I can get a revolutionnary certificate"" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 16-01). This newspaper insists on the presence, among the protests, of some caricatured characters, enjoying a certain notoriety, the aim being to discredit the entire action (Nati Meir, Viorel Lis, Princess Briana Caradgea) or describe "a protester who wanted to get a saint relics in order to bring more people to the manifestation" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 17-01). There is even a conspiracy theory which would explain protesters' presence. They are either paid by PNL (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 18-01), or manipulated by the owner of Intact press group (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 13-01). This newspaper is frequently talking about "paid agitators" and about "rough manipulation" (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 22-01). Protesters' slogans are sending "contradicting messages" and their opinions seem mixed (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 23-01). In this case, the media discourse doesn't operate a distinction between peaceful and violent protesters while police forces are rather described as a positive actor: "police forces proceed according to the law", "gendarmes managed to liberate the Universitatii Square". Sometimes, we even witness a role change while gendarmes becoming victims. In fact, in *Evenimentul zilei* coverage, roles are inverted: gendarmes represent the Good and protesters the Evil.

This kind of binary construction (sometimes questioned by a third one) is characteristic to the 2012 media coverage when we assist at several confrontations between police forces and protesters. These kind of confrontations were absent in 1990, except from the final phase. In his analysis of 1990 phenomenon, Mihai Coman was talking about "The Square where nothing was going on" because the development was "predictable" and "redundant" (Coman, 1996, p. 14). It is not the case in 2012 when journalists have to take into account the war model to explain a kind of event that exceed their daily routine.

Hero and anti-hero

Even if there isn't any hero among the protesters, "on the ground", there is however a hero in the media discourse. "The man who invented the Super-Salvation in Romania" (*Jurnalul național*, 13-01), "a symbol" (*Jurnalul național*, 14-01), "one of the few people who actually built something in the last 22 years", "a name recognized by Romanians due to his good doings", known for his "outstanding behavioural experience" and "good sense" (*Jurnalul național*, 16-01), "the man who does the work", "valuable model" (*Jurnalul național*, 19-01): it's in these terms that the Syrian-born Romanian intensive care physician of Palestinian origin Raed Arafat, the founder of Mobile Emergency Service for Resuscitation and Extrication (SMURD), is described.

In opposition, the president Traian Basescu is “the dictator”, “the bastard”, “the blind bandit from Cotroceni” (*Jurnalul național*, 14-01), “humble rat who want to run away shamefully” and “has dictatorial manners” (*Jurnalul național*, 15-01), “the most perfidious person who has lead Romania” (*Jurnalul național*, 16-01), “the model who destroyed the confidence and hope, who brought the crisis and famine” (*Jurnalul național*, 19-01).

In sacralising media discourse, the president Basescu is compared with Nicolae Ceausescu and he is expected to run away as Ceausescu did 22 years ago (he has “the same shaking as Ceausescu in the balcony, in his last day” – *Jurnalul național*, 24-01). In the same time, protests are often compared to the popular revolt in December 1989, which led to the fall of communism. The media discourse is referring to renewing myths: “the output of numbness” (*Jurnalul național*, 13-01), “the people are moving, the vegetables are waking up” (*Jurnalul național*, 16-01), “the real revolution”, “a new social model” (*Jurnalul național*, 19-01). The 1989 discourse is refreshed when, in 2012, media is talking about “the revolutionary revolt against dictatorship” (*Jurnalul național*, 16-01). Among protesters, the journalist invokes “a 80 years old woman leaning on a cane” who says “I haven’t participated in 22 December protests, but now I came out to see how is going on”.

The situation is only partially comparable to 1990 when “among the participants, looking for heroes, media identifies a few characters perceived as symbolic” but they are playing only in the “second stage” because “the crowd, the without-voice till now, have occupied the entire ritualic space”. (Coman,1996, p. 24)

The triad model victim/aggressor/savior that we can identify in the media coverage of 2012 Universitatii Square protests is mentioned by Patrick Charaudeau as one of the media discourse strategies aimed to “touch the receiver emotion” using three kind of discourse: victimization, the portrait of the enemy, the heroization process, everything in an amalgam procedure” (Charaudeau 2006).

In war with gendarmes but also with the Nature

When covering a violent conflict with an unpredictable development (between the violent protesters and the police forces), journalists employ war terms: “devices”, “they were lined up”, “they riposted”, “bombardment”, “assault”, “they retired”, “barricades”, “camp”, they have regrouped”, “conflict zone”, “confrontations”, “they dispersed” (*Jurnalul național*, 15-01), “the entire arsenal”, “entered in force”, “real street confrontations”, “like after the war”, “the carnage balance sheet” (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 16-01), they “attacked”, “fired”, “spirits were heated” (*Evenimentul Zilei*, 19-01).

In the second part of the protests, when it’s snowing and temperature drops, protesters affront not only the police forces but also the Nature which is not anymore, like in Romanian folklore, protesters’ friend. At the beginning,

“the young people are well dressed to defeat the cold weather and the system” (*Jurnalul național*, 15-01). Later, “the cold weather didn’t intimidate them” and the favorite slogans were: “Winter or summer, we rest here till you leave”, “Raining or snowing, we will win” (*Jurnalul național*, 22-01). Protesters have to deal both with “cold weather and bats” (*Jurnalul național*, 22-01). Despite the fact that “it was snowing cruelly” (*Jurnalul național*, 25-01), protesters remain there: “blizzard didn’t stop them” and media are talking about “frozen ciumpalac” (*Jurnalul național*, 26-01) or about “snowmen” supposed to replace the protesters (*Jurnalul național*, 27-01). On January 28, journalists are invoking “stubbornness at -10 degrees Celsius”. Despite all this, the international press is talking about “a Romanian spring in the middle of the winter” (*Jurnalul național*, 29-01).

Conclusions

This analysis confirms that there can be identified elements of liminality favorable to a *communitas* in the media coverage of the 2012 Universitatii Square protests, like it was the case in May-June 1990. In the position of talking about a media event which exceeds their daily journalistic routine, journalists are usually employing binary representations in order to understand the reality. Their media reports are frequently structured on oppositions: between protesters and police forces, between Raed Arafat and Traian Basescu, between protesters and the cold weather.

This new episode is confirming the Universitatii Square special statute in the symbolic geography of Bucharest. “During his history, every town acquires these places which receive a symbolic function (...). They are theatres where the “official” society is performing and where the popular is expresses”, says Ballandier. The Universitatii Square is definitely part of this symbolic topography of the town.

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