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Exploring the Nexus of Family Businesses Management: Technological Diversification and Exploratory AI Innovation

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ABSTRACT: This extensive research examines the complex relationship that exists among family management, technology diversity, and enterprise-wide exploration of Artificial Intelligence (AI) innovation. Family-managed enterprises, which are motivated by factors other than economic family interests and have a propensity to avoid risk, have characteristics that impede their participation in innovative AI endeavors. Various elements, including extended tenures of leadership, strong emotional ties to current assets, authority in decision-making, and deeply ingrained mental models, together contribute to a conservative stance that is resistive to the revolutionary possibilities that AI advancements provide. The research further emphasizes the crucial significance of technological diversification by defining a crucial differentiation between forms that are connected and those that are unrelated. Diversification into similar technologies may provide synergy possibilities; conversely, diversification into unrelated technologies adds costs, risks, and hinders the organization's capacity to respond to AI exploration. Additionally, the possible loss of control and the resulting need for external skills discourage family-managed enterprises from entering the ever-changing field of artificial intelligence. Amidst the rapid pace of digital development, it is crucial to comprehend the intricacies of technology diversification and family management. The study underscores the need of further inquiries into mitigating elements and exploring approaches that empower family-owned businesses to adapt to the changing requirements of AI innovation while maintaining their fundamental principles and socio-emotional well-being. The enduring success of such enterprises in the digital age will depend on their ability to uncover synergies between family-centric objectives and the ever-evolving potential of artificial intelligence (AI) while maintaining a delicate equilibrium between innovation and tradition.

KEYWORDS: family businesses management, technological diversification, AI, innovation

1. Introduction

Family businesses and, in particular, the management of their information systems have been significantly impacted by the digital transformation of organizations (Casson M. and C. Casson 2015), which is defined as the activities by which a company fundamentally transforms its business strategies, commercial processes, capabilities, products, and services, in addition to its key inter-business relationships in extended commercial networks. Analysts predict that between 2020 and 2023, "direct investment expenditure on

digital transformation [will surpass] \$7.4 trillion." This impacts organizations of all sizes and in all industries. Digital technologies enable organizations to generate novel economic opportunities, therefore bolstering their long-term viability (Zellweger Nason, and Nordqvist 2012). Critical differentiating a high-performing organization from one that is less successful is the "effective" and efficient use of information technology. Notwithstanding its intermediate and enduring benefits, digital transformation presents substantial obstacles for organizations, mostly attributable to the need of constructing novel capabilities for the corporation. In an ever more digital world, for the family company to maintain its competitiveness, these obstacles must be effectively resolved.

These obstacles are especially pertinent to family companies, which are often privately owned, small to medium-sized, and managed by a single family or a restricted number of families, on account of their constrained resources. The current state of study on innovation management in family firms remains limited in both theoretical and empirical understanding of their approach to digital transformation and the subsequent creation of new capabilities.

The following research inquiries are prompted by this matter:

1. What is the operational mechanism of the digital transformation process inside family companies, and how can such enterprises use this process to cultivate the necessary capabilities?
2. What barriers and determinants impede or facilitate the digital transformation of family-owned enterprises, and by what means, and rationale do they facilitate or obstruct the building of essential dynamic capabilities?

As research on information systems has shown, the adoption of digital technologies by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) varies from those of bigger companies and necessitates fresh theorization, it is critical to address these problems. A more comprehensive theoretical comprehension of the many phases of the digital transformation process would facilitate the identification of the diverse range of business environments in terms of their present level of digital adoption. To further conceptualize the digital transformation process, a more nuanced understanding of the skills needed along the process is also essential. In addition, it is imperative to ascertain barriers and enablers in the digital transformation process so that general management and information systems research can be integrated to gain a comprehensive understanding of how organizations attempt to implement digital technologies.

2. Embracing Industry: The Emergence of Innovative Technologies and Imperative for Digital Transformation

Industry has seen a diversity of developmental phases throughout the course of history. The most significant industrial revolution took place during the 18th century, when an economy reliant on industry, agriculture, and handicrafts was replaced by mechanized production in enormous factories. Throughout the nineteenth century, the second industrial revolution, sometimes referred to as the period of steam and electricity, persisted. Additionally, the era after World War II was characterized by tremendous development, which continues to this day with important scientific and technical advances (Mohajan 2019).

Primarily, scientific study has identified three business models in relation to Industry 4.0. The first option is a completely automated firm that prioritizes profit primarily; it is used for mass-produced consumer products across a limited number of product categories. The second model differentiates itself via its emphasis on advanced production customization, which entails the distribution of highly tailored items in limited numbers to meet the precise demands of individual consumers. E-factories represent the third business model, which prioritizes remote operations and individualization while aiming to achieve

cost competitiveness via minimal investment costs (Ibarra 2018). Nonetheless, Industry 4.0 extends beyond manufacturing-level enhancements to include distribution and buying as well. General Electric emphasizes the significance of integrating networked sensors and software with complex physical machinery and systems to improve market and social results (Calabrò, Brogi, and Torchia 2018). As the total of all innovations and implementations in a value chain addressing digitalization (Chen and Su 2023), empowerment, openness, mobility, modularization, network cooperation, and socializing of products and processes, Industry 4.0 may also be extended to the whole supply chain (Calabrò, Brogi, and Torchia 2018).

Industry 4.0 may furthermore include a collection of philosophies and technology designed to streamline the supply chain. The most critical, however, may be summed up as follows, considering documentary research: Examples of cyber-physical systems include the Internet of Things (IoT), smart factories, cyber-physical systems (CPS), and the Internet of Services. Over sixty breakthroughs pertinent to the term have been delineated by Brettel and colleagues; these advancements may be categorized into four groups: data and connections, research and artificial intelligence, human-computer interactions, and automated machinery fleet (Brettel 2014).

At various levels of value creation module aggregation and hierarchy, intelligent digitization is defined by networked production systems and vertical integration, which extend from manufacturing stations to cells, lines, and factories. The use of intelligent digital tools is an integral component of the implementation of an end-to-end solution using integrated information and communication technologies in the cloud.

The implementation of intelligent interaction in a manufacturing system is accomplished via the use of Cyber-Physical Systems (CPS), which function autonomously and without centralization. CPS leverages integrated mechatronic components, including actuator systems for regulating physical processes and sensor systems for gathering data, to establish intelligent connections and continuously exchange data over virtual networks akin to a real-time cloud. The infrastructure for the cloud is included inside the Internet of Things and Services. As an element of a sociotechnical system, CPS engage in human-machine interface interactions with operators.

The Internet of Things (IoT), conversely, is among the most swiftly embraced advancements within the context of Industry 4.0. It pertains to the ability of entities to retain, manipulate, distribute, or swap information via network links, whether explicit or implicit. This technology has the benefit of not being factory-centric; rather, it mostly manifests itself in distribution, including customer service and object use.

From a macro viewpoint, Industry 4.0 represents a more extensive kind of horizontal integration. As it is founded on a product lifecycle perspective, visualization is crucial to the value generation networks of Industry 4.0. From a macro viewpoint, horizontal integration is distinguished by a network of value generating modules. The modules in question symbolize the interplay among various value-generating elements, including goods, gadgets, human capital, operations, and procedures. Throughout the product lifecycle value chain, value production modules are linked; at the greatest level of aggregation, these modules are represented by factories; in neighboring value chains of the product lifecycle, comparable kinds of modules are located. This linkage initiates an intelligent network of value generation modules that span various phases of the product lifecycle and include value chains. The intelligent network now changing conventional business tactics by fostering an atmosphere that is receptive to the development of novel company models. The end-to-end engineering approach, which falls under the same macro view, examines the whole product lifetime, from the procurement of raw materials to the end-of-life phase. It functions as an intermediary between the product, equipment, and actors.

Various entities (customers, staff, suppliers, and so on), products, and manufacturing equipment will be included into a virtual network, where data exchange will take place at every phase of a product's life cycle. The lifespan of a product has many stages: raw material acquisition, production (including product design, production system engineering, and manufacturing), consumption and service, end-of-life (which includes reuse, recycling, recovery, and disposal), and transit between each step. Also included in this phase are transfers between all tiers (Chukalov 2017). These sophisticated data flows will transform industries into so-called "smart factories." Smart factories are powered by intelligent networks and produce intelligent goods. Material flow will be facilitated by intelligent logistics throughout the whole product lifetime and across adjacent lifecycle phases. The intelligent data flow between various components of Industry 4.0 value network systems is sent over the cloud.

Smart data is produced by the intelligent structure of Big Data information, which is then used to enhance knowledge and make decisions throughout the product lifetime (Chirico and Salvato 2008). Smart factories use integrated cyber-physical systems to generate value (CPS). This allows the intelligent producer to decentralize and distribute critical production processes around the plant via the exchange of intelligent data with CPS. The intelligent product is equipped with data pertaining to its production process and equipment requirements. CPS is used by intelligent logistics to oversee the movement of materials inside and between the manufacturer, the customer, and other stakeholders. In addition, they are decentralized according to product specifications, with a smart network tailoring manufacturing from suppliers to end-users in real time. Conversely, the micro viewpoint of Industry 4.0 pertains primarily to the horizontal and vertical integration of intelligent manufacturing facilities, while also being an element of comprehensive engineering. As a value creation module, the smart factory at the highest aggregation level comprises many value creation modules situated at lower aggregation levels, including production lines, manufacturing cells, and production stations. The intelligent network and management system of the smart factory must adapt to changing production and supply requirements.

Horizontally connected with value creation modules throughout the material flow of the intelligent factory, which also incorporates intelligent logistics, is the micro view. As part of intelligent logistics, incoming and departing commercial logistics will be distinguished by transport equipment that can operate independently between the point of origin and destination and react quickly to unanticipated occurrences, such as traffic or weather conditions. In pursuit of internal transit throughout the material flow, automated guided vehicles and other forms of autonomous transport equipment will be implemented. To enable decentralized coordination of goods and supplies from transport networks, value creation modules are used by every transport equipment to share intelligent data. Products and supplies are equipped with identifying technologies, such as RFID chips or QR codes, for this purpose. This enables monitoring and wireless identification of all materials across the value chain. Vertical integration and networked manufacturing systems refer to the intelligent articulation of value factors, equipment, human resources, and products, as well as the various aggregation levels of value generating modules between production stations and the smart factory. Cross-articulation of value creation modules with diverse value chain activities entails interconnections across several aggregation levels, such as marketing, sales, service, and procurement, among others.

3. Revolutionizing Family Businesses: Digital Transformation Across Industries

Continuous renewal via innovation may drive the performance and expansion of firms, according to experts. However, the competencies that businesses need to innovate

successfully during times of technological transition and how these qualities might be cultivated remain a matter of controversy (Chen and Su 2023). Scholars investigating business innovation capabilities (Chen and Su 2023) during such periods place significant emphasis on the criticality of organizational resources, the necessity to confront the disruptive characteristics of technology, and the capacity to adapt effectively to technological advancements while preserving fundamental operations. The pervasive impact of technology on companies and innovation specifically makes this discourse especially pertinent in the context of digital technologies (Steininger 2019).

Commencing digital transformation via the use of digital technologies—comprising binary-number-based approaches, competencies, and procedures—promises benefits to enterprises while concurrently introducing obstacles. Organizations have the potential to grow income and decrease expenses via the use of digital technology, generate value for the company through the introduction of novel business models, and attain a competitive edge. Conversely, implementing digital technology is a protracted and expensive endeavor, accompanied with indeterminate results that need some time to manifest.

A comprehensive comprehension of digital transformation is especially vital for family companies, given their substantial economic impact as well as the unique resource limits and peculiarities that may impede the process. The existing body of research has highlighted the distinctions between family firms and their non-family equivalents, with particular emphasis on the owner-position manager's and the resources at their disposal. This may lead to variations in the way family companies undergo digital transformation. One encouraging aspect is that a recent meta-analysis.

Family businesses exhibit greater efficacy in their innovation endeavors compared to non-family enterprises (Casson 2015). This superiority can be attributed to several factors, including the personal investment and dedication of their owners and managers, their long-term focus (Zellweger, Nason, and Nordqvist 2012), minimal bureaucratic procedures, tacit expertise, and a devoted community comprising employees, suppliers, and customers. Nevertheless, scholars underscore the fact that although family-owned enterprises could flourish in incremental innovation, they have difficulties when faced with more revolutionary forms of innovation, such as digital transformation. The aforementioned obstacles are attributable to their particular risk-taking conduct, which consists of a preference for self-financing and an aversion to the loss of socio-emotional wealth (Berrone, Cruz, and Gomez-Mejia 2012); these behaviors restrict the resources that these companies may allocate towards innovation (Chua, Chrisman, and Sharma 1999).

With respect to the consequences of digital technology implementation in small and medium-sized firms (SMEs), previous studies have shown that digitization may facilitate complementarity within innovation networks (Chen and Su 2023) and that cloud technologies can inspire an entrepreneurial mindset among SMEs. Additionally, prior studies have shown findings that support the notion that manufacturing SME adoption of digital technology might provide significant advantages. In brief, study results are almost uniform in their agreement that family companies may benefit from the use of digital technology. It is worth mentioning that most of the research have isolatedly concentrated on certain facets (such as particular drivers, results, or digital technology) of the digital transformation process. Consequently, the most research designs discovered have been cross-sectional in nature. As a result, we were unable to locate a study that provided a full examination of the digital transformation process inside family companies. In the realm of theorization, a substantial body of peer-reviewed literature has been devoted to the application of theoretical frameworks connected with (dynamic) capabilities and ideas that are intricately linked, such resource-based view and adaptability. More specifically, these publications contend that to effectively use digital technology, organizations must first reconfigure their resources and enhance their competencies.

Dynamic capabilities, which are based on the evolutionary theory of the firm, have the potential to accurately mirror and direct the digital transformation endeavors of organizations. Operational capabilities refer to the functional capacities necessary for conducting daily routine tasks. On the other hand, dynamic capabilities comprise a collection of distinct and processes or routines that demonstrate "possible adaptations to external environments marked by abrupt or sudden changes." These capabilities include strategic decision-making (Sharma, Chrisman, and Chua 1997), learning routines, and alliances. Capabilities can be broadly categorized into three activities: detection, seizing, and transforming. Detection pertains to the identification and development of technological opportunities; seizing concerns the mobilization of an organization's resources to capitalize on these opportunities; and transforming concerns the ongoing renewal of the organization.

Particularly for family enterprises and SMBs, size restrictions may need distinctive (dynamic) capabilities (De-Massis 2016). Family businesses have unique dynamic capabilities, such as the ability to "internalize and reinterpret past knowledge" and the veto power in decision-making processes. Dynamic capabilities known as "fraternizing" and "imbuing" can aid family businesses in acquiring and transferring knowledge with business partners in a collaborative setting (Chirico and Salvato 2008; Casson 2015). In contrast, inflexible mental models and emotional attachments to current assets may impede the growth of (dynamic) capacities connected with the transformation of existing assets in family enterprises. Moreover, the hesitancy of family-owned enterprises to embrace technology developed outside suggests challenges in cultivating dynamic competencies linked to strategic cooperation and operation. Typically, the limited availability of resources inside family-owned enterprises might hinder the growth and progress of substantial dynamic capacities (Sharma, Chrisman, and Chua 1997).

Within the framework of digital transformation, information technology capabilities—which are defined as the "capacity to mobilize and deploy IT resources"—along with other capabilities—improve the cost-effectiveness and overall performance of organizations, particularly when the company possesses the requisite dynamic capabilities to effectively leverage them. Put simply, dynamic skills have the potential to assist organizations in initiating "a wide range of competitive activities," which are thereafter a "substantial predictor of firm success."

Nonetheless, the conventional assessment of (dynamic) capabilities is merely a momentary glimpse that fails to unveil a comprehensive comprehension of the precise capabilities required, the way these capabilities evolve during the digital transformation endeavor, or their interplay with both internal and external influencing factors. Additionally, the catalysts and impediments to the development of this skill are yet largely unknown. Moreover, there exists a dearth of understanding about the precise high-level skills that are pertinent to digital transformation, although the widespread agreement that dynamic capabilities constitute a substantial determinant in the process of corporate digital transformation.

4. AI as the Core of the Digital Transformation Era

Artificial intelligence (AI) is a swiftly advancing and disruptive technology advancement that broadens the domain of traditional intelligence by facilitating information processing and inter-intelligent system communication. As a result, AI is seen as a fundamental element and catalyst of the ongoing digital revolution in the business sector. AI serves as the driving force behind the fourth industrial revolution (Industry 4.0), facilitating transformations in the characteristics of systems and information that provide fresh opportunities to reassess foundational business paradigms (Chen and Su 2023). Prominent instances include the capacity to promote intelligent and interconnected solutions, enhance

the synchronization of processes centered on supply and demand, and incorporate digital services into operational company operations. In addition, it is anticipated that artificial intelligence will erode the distinctions between technology and non-technology enterprises, creating prospects and challenges for established and emerging firms alike, thereby transforming the worldwide competitive environment.

Despite these forecasts and anticipations, substantial investments in AI are dangerous and, as such, have not yet been completely implemented. This is especially true when the objective of these investments is to develop innovative AI solutions, in which monitoring, control, and optimization are marketed as novel product attributes that potentially coincide with innovation (Chen and Su 2023). Undoubtedly, the task of designing organizations that specialize in delivering AI solutions is exceptionally intricate. This is primarily due to the potential diversity and variety of data types, the lack of substantial interface standardization, and the challenge of forecasting the innovative company's integration into the ever-evolving AI and Industry 4.0 ecosystem (Westerlund 2014). As a result, managers have difficulties in staying abreast of the rapid technical advancements in AI products and in strategizing the corresponding investments in R&D.

This difficulty is further compounded by the fact that organizations frequently encounter the subsequent paradox: integrating offerings of products and services or developing entirely new purposes for existing products (e.g., disruptive business models replacing the traditional product purpose) while simultaneously incorporating additional features into existing products via exploitation innovation activities (e.g., operational innovation activities). The paradox at hand pertains to the correlation between AI innovations and a company's understanding of its current products (Doe and Hinson 2023). To the degree that organizations are compelled to augment established core competencies with novel technological proficiencies to generate value through AI investments while mitigating risks and shortening time to market. Understanding the factors that can effectively facilitate or impede a company's development of AI solutions is crucial and urgent, especially given the potential for tensions to arise when a company invests in and commits to AI innovation development and must choose between deviating from its current knowledge base and continuing along current R&D trajectories (Chen and Su 2023).

In conclusion, it is crucial to acknowledge the significance of understanding technologies that complement artificial intelligence and are vital in creating the industry 4.0 movement (e.g., the Internet of Things, cloud computing, robots, big data structures, etc.). Increasingly, it is recognized that AI innovations necessitate the concurrent management of various complementary technological domains, many of which are of a general nature (e.g., IoT and cloud computing) and not always well-established in mature markets (Doe and Hinson 2023; Lannon, Lyons, and O'Connor 2023). Therefore, a company's technological diversification gains greater explanatory power when tensions between deviating from the company's existing knowledge base and maintaining continuity with current R&D trajectories are analyzed (Chirico and Salvato 2008). This enables one to determine whether the top management team facilitates or hinders the emphasis on exploratory/explanatory innovation activities in the AI domain (TMT). Technological diversification pertains to the company's capacity to effectively manage a wide range of technological expertise, as it signifies the extent of its technological foundation. However, it may have drawbacks that impede the management team's goal to participate in innovation activities rather than encourage them (Chen and Su 2023).

5. Pioneering AI: Innovation and Family-Driven Management

Family enterprises, which are defined as organizations in which a family member has discretionary authority to manage, allocate, add, or dispose of the company's resources in

strategic projects based on the family, are pervasive in the global economy. These companies are now at the center of academic and policy discussions due to their significance, with a special focus on the intricate and well-defined impacts that family-specific elements have on innovative endeavors (Chrisman 2006). In fact, familial participation in organizations having family participation in management, governance (Le Breton-Miller and Miller 2006), and ownership exhibit unique patterns of innovative behavior in comparison to those that do not (Chua, Chrisman, and Sharma 1999). The top management team (TMT) symbolizes the highest levels of a family business. Their pivotal position in the family business literature is indisputable, as they represent the "most significant intersection between family and business." As a result, differentiations are drawn between companies that incorporate family members into the TMT (i.e., family management) and those that do not, specifically about innovation performance, albeit yielding inconsistent outcomes (Chen and Su 2023).

One perspective posits that family participation in the TMT grants companies access to scarce and distinctive resources, which, when coupled with a more steadfast commitment to the long term (Zellweger, Nason, and Nordqvist 2012), intensified personal investment, and enhanced managerial oversight, may ultimately augment the organization's capacity to adapt to technological advancements and, ultimately, foster innovation (Chen and Su 2023).

Family managers, by virtue of their extensive tenure with the organization, consider the business to be an intrinsic component of themselves. Consequently, managerial focus is directed towards non-economic goals that revolve around the family. This orientation towards the family results in a tendency to safeguard the socio-emotional wealth of the family (Gomez-Mejía 2001; Berrone, Cruz, and Gomez-Mejia 2012). As a result, family managers adhere to conservative strategic behaviors to protect their socio-emotional wealth (Chua, Chrisman, and Sharma 1999; Sharma, Chrisman, and Chua 1997). These behaviors involve avoiding risky innovation projects that may jeopardize their socio-emotional wealth priorities, such as preserving family control, even when potential economic benefits are present (Chen and Su 2023). Nevertheless, most of these explanations fail to account for the diversity of innovation that family-managed enterprises foster; hence, further study on the relationship between family management and innovation performance is required (Berrone, Cruz, and Gomez-Mejia 2012).

In particular, the digitalization megatrend, which may be an additional source of disruption for family-managed enterprises, has heightened tensions and uncertainty over choices to conduct exploratory/explanatory innovation efforts. The attributes of senior executives that influence the development of exploratory or explanatory AI technologies remain unexplored in this setting. As a result, the link between family management and AI innovation is investigated in this research.

Several attributes of TMT-affiliated family-owned businesses impact the organization's determination to create AI advancements. Initially, family managers often prioritize non-economic objectives that revolve around the family, such as family social standing and harmony (Calabrò, Brogi, and Torchia 2018), which are comparatively less linked to a propensity for taking risks. When combined with a concentrated ownership and decision-making process, this characteristic leads to an increased aversion to risk. Thus, family managers are likely to exercise more prudence and conservatism in their investment selections compared to managers of publicly traded companies. AI is distinguished by its extensive technical intricacy, which encompasses a wide range of protocols and technologies, a broad selection of devices, compatibility with several general-purpose digital technologies, and the participation of numerous players that need coordination. Developing defined R&D strategies or digital business models and assessing the state of the art in AI advancements are difficult tasks due to this complexity. As a result, the advancement of artificial intelligence advances could entail notably elevated levels of

danger. Family leaders, by nature, prioritize non-economic objectives that revolve on the family. Consequently, they often exhibit a heightened sensitivity to risk and favor exploitation over exploration, given that the rewards of exploitation are more immediate, assured, and convenient. Furthermore, family-affiliated executives often serve on the board for longer terms (Zellweger, Nason, and Nordqvist 2012), which ensures a more consistent progression of the company's innovative endeavors. This continuity may inhibit AI research in organizations whose family members have held TMT positions for an extended period, since it necessitates the investigation of novel innovation paths, which eventually disrupts existing innovation routines (Chen and Su 2023). Furthermore, family members exhibit more profound emotional attachments to established assets, since family leaders have a heightened sense of emotional connection to the business's environs and its current resources. These linkages to current assets impede family-owned enterprises' exploratory efforts. Certain organizations, such as software technology businesses, may see the development of AI advancements as exploitative. However, it is worth noting that for those not working in the software industry, pursuing AI advances may be considered an experimental undertaking.

To sell AI advancements, businesses may be required to develop new business models and digital ecosystems; this may make old assets useless. Therefore, it is imperative that they reassess "virtually every aspect of their operations, including sourcing, manufacturing, conceptualizing, designing, and constructing products, as well as operating, maintaining, and establishing the requisite IT infrastructure." This raises the following query: "Where am I focused my efforts?" Consequently, the emotional attachments of a family leader to established ecosystems and tangible and intangible assets will hinder their inclination to innovate concerning exploratory AI. Therefore, it is anticipated that an increased quantity of family members in the TMT will be linked to more inflexible cognitive frameworks and regional inquiry, impeding the progress of AI innovations that shrewdly diverge from established product concepts and business models (Doe and Hinson 2023). Organizations with more substantial family ownership are less receptive to the input of external stakeholders in the decision-making process. Nevertheless, participation in artificial intelligence innovation endeavors frequently alters the allocation of decision-making authority (Chen and Su 2023).

Family members in TMTs are distinguished by their emphasis on non-economic family-oriented objectives, longevity (Zellweger, Nason, and Nordqvist 2012), emotional attachment to current assets, decision-making authority, and inflexible mental frameworks. These attributes may discourage companies from embracing innovations that are too far removed from the organization's current technological foundation. Our contention is that these attributes are especially pertinent when considering IoT innovations, given the unique challenges they present (Chen and Su 2023).

To begin with, artificial intelligence (AI) possesses the capacity to fundamentally alter the process of product design, thereby presenting novel avenues for value creation, delivery, and capture. As previously stated, AI engenders more intricate ecosystems due to the substantial volume of data exchanged among numerous actors and stakeholders engaged in value creation endeavors. In general, emerging AI ecosystems are disorderly, chaotic, and complex, necessitating the establishment of novel relationships, coordination of participants, and definition of positions within the ecosystem.

Furthermore, analogous to digital technologies, artificial intelligence (AI) exhibits an exponential growth trajectory. Moreover, in its capacity as a swiftly expanding industry, AI provides unparalleled and "virtually infinite" methods of integrating data to improve the process of decision-making. In a realm where combinatorial possibilities are exponentially multiplying, the task is to identify genuinely intriguing prospects, and expeditiously

managing options becomes the most significant limitation. These two developments underscore the critical nature of adoption speed.

Furthermore, artificial intelligence (AI) is a swiftly advancing technology, which implies that even outdated AI solutions may be enhanced. Data obtained from various sources frequently possesses distinct technical characteristics and specifications. Investments in AI innovations are arduous and risky due to the absence of interoperability and apprehensions regarding security and privacy. Family-managed businesses are prone to a greater aversion to risk, which ought to discourage them from engaging in exploratory AI initiatives (Doe and Hinson 2023; Lannon, Lyons, and O'Connor 2023).

Prior studies have also emphasized the substantial influence that a firm's degree of technological diversification has on its exploration and exploitation endeavors. An organization's inclination to discover novel solutions is influenced by its access to and exposure to a variety of alternative technological knowledge domains (Chirico and Salvato, 2008). Furthermore, technological diversification results in reduced exploration expenses compared to a specialization strategy and expedites the identification of fresh research and development prospects. Consequently, its effect on exploration is substantial. However, in organizations where the family has a significant stake in the TMT, an excessive degree of technology variety might impede exploratory innovation endeavors (Chen and Su 2023), including those related to artificial intelligence (Allioui 2022).

To begin with, the implementation of technological diversification necessitates an escalation in research and development expenses that the family may not be able to entirely finance. Consequently, family leaders are compelled to pursue external capital against their will (e.g., by going public or assuming bank debt), thereby jeopardizing the company's control over shareholders and banks. Furthermore, an extensive technological diversification mandates a restructuring of the operations and routines of family-managed businesses, which may incite reluctance among family members.

As the R&D costs of increased technological diversification add to the costs of entering the AI domain, these issues of (enforced) diversification are likely to be especially pertinent when exploratory AI development is undertaken. The necessity to reshape the company because of technological diversification exacerbates the radical changes that result from digital transformation, and the challenge of prioritizing R&D activities and selecting the best ideas is further compounded.

Diversification risks associated with technological diversification are likely to be especially detrimental to family-managed businesses, which tend to protect the socio-emotional wealth of the family and concentrate on their core business. As a result, these businesses innovate "in technological areas adjacent to their existing technological platforms." Consequently, family businesses' inclination to maintain control within the family will outweigh their inclination to engage in riskier innovations (Berrone, Cruz, and Gomez-Mejia 2012; Allioui 2022).

6. Navigating the Influence of Technological Diversity: Exploring Related and Unrelated Moderating Effects

The risk mechanisms linked to technological diversification that bolster the adverse impact of family management on the development of remote AI innovations (Doe and Hinson 2023) were identified in the preceding section. Nevertheless, prior research has indicated that a more nuanced approach may be necessary to comprehend these mechanisms that contribute to the consequences of technological diversification. In line with early investigations into the extent of a firm's operations, scholarly discourse on technological diversification has evolved (Chen and Su 2023).

Despite the limited empirical research that presently exists on the subject, the subsequent attributes of related and unrelated technological diversification have been discerned. Research has demonstrated that technological advancements that gravitate towards non-related forms of technological diversification are especially perilous, given the high degree of technological uncertainty associated with such a strategy.

These arguments posit that the adverse impact of technological diversification on the correlation between family management and investments in exploratory AI innovations is attributable to unrelated technological diversification. The inclination to conceive entirely new AI products is diminished, specifically in relation to the heightened risk associated with unrelated technological diversification. Organizations whose family leaders initiate the process of diversifying their underlying technologies are more likely to experience this negative effect.

Furthermore, the organization faces the potential peril of relinquishing control over its strategy to safeguard the family legacy due to the heightened requirement for fresh personnel resulting from unrelated technological diversification. These considerations, in conjunction with the organization's inclination to evade (technological) uncertainty, which is a significant component of unrelated technological diversification, indicate that unrelated technological diversification adversely impacts development.

7. Conclusion

In summary, the comprehensive examination underscores the complex correlation among technological diversification, family management, and the endeavor to pioneer exploratory AI in the business sector. Family-owned enterprises, motivated by a preference for risk aversion and a preoccupation with socio-emotional wealth (Berrone, Cruz, and Gomez-Mejia 2012), demonstrate inclinations that impede involvement in exploratory AI undertakings. Factors such as the tenure of family leaders, emotional attachments to current assets, decision-making authority, and inflexible technological horizons.

Moreover, the influence of technological diversification, particularly when it comes to unrelated forms, becomes a crucial moderating element. Although synergy opportunities may arise from related technological diversification, unrelated technological diversification escalates risks, costs, and hinders the organization's capacity to adopt AI exploration. Additionally, family-managed businesses are deterred further by the associated requirement for external talent and the potential loss of control.

Considering the swift digital transformation occurring in the business environment, it is critical to comprehend the intricacies of family management and technological diversification. Subsequent investigations should further examine factors that mitigate the challenges and devise approaches for family-managed enterprises to effectively navigate the evolving requirements of AI innovation while safeguarding their fundamental values and socio-emotional well-being. Striking a balance between innovation and tradition continues to be a significant obstacle.

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Evidence and the Object of Probatorium in Criminal Cases: Features, Particularities and Regulation

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ABSTRACT: A necessary condition for the administration of justice in criminal cases is the appropriate establishment of the circumstances of the crime and the correspondence of the conclusions of the criminal investigation body regarding the circumstances of the cause of the existing factual situation. The achievement of this objective is ensured due to the presence of a universal connection between the phenomena of the reality that surrounds us. The crime, representing such a phenomenon, has, in turn, a certain connection with various facts and events. Some of them determine the commission of the crime, while others appear or change due to the commission of the criminal act. All these facts, reflected in the environment, leave certain traces. These, in turn, represent the information that gives the criminal investigation body the opportunity to restore the picture of the crime and identify the perpetrator.

KEYWORDS: evidence, probatorium, evidentiary procedures, criminal case, investigating body, court, main fact, probatorium fact, auxiliary fact, intermediate fact, means of evidence, criminal trial, elements of fact

In order to solve criminal cases, judicial bodies need data or information that led to the conclusion of the existence or non-existence of the crime, the guilt or innocence of the perpetrator, etc. Data or information that helps solve the criminal case is provided through evidence (Neagu and Damaschin 2020, 451). Under these conditions, the criminal process is made up of a sequence of procedural acts carried out by the judicial authority or under its control, in order to confirm or deny the existence of a crime and to draw consequences in terms of general and special criminal law. In this way, establishing the truth, which must be understood in the material sense of the term, is part of the objective pursued. The discovery of this factual truth falls under the attributions of a criminal court, which cannot be satisfied with a formal truth, in the shadow of the reality of the facts. The procedural acts carried out during the criminal process, both in the criminal investigation phase and in the trial phase, tend to establish the facts and legal frameworks, which are indispensable for the administration of justice in criminal matters.

The elements of fact and law on which the court decision that resolves the material criminal law conflict brought before the court must be based are established by means of the evidence and the means of proof provided by law (Mateuț 2012, 1).

In the criminal process, probatorium occupies a central place. In order to make a decision that will influence the lives of some people, the magistrate must fully know the reality of all the circumstances of the case and be convinced that the solution he adopts is

the only correct one. However, this decision - whether or not to sue, or whether to convict or acquit a person - is fundamentally determined by the probatorium (Sava 2002, 5).

It is obvious that the changes in the environment determined by the fact of the crime are reflected in all its components - on objects, in the memory of people etc. But, by themselves, the objects of the environment with the traces left by the criminal acts are still not evidence - they are only the epistemological premise of them. However, in order to appear as evidence in criminal cases, they must be discovered, fixed, lifted and perfected in the appropriate manner by certain special subjects: criminal investigation officer, specialist, prosecutor. And the discovery, and the fixing and, respectively, the certification of the presence of the necessary information on the specific objects is carried out in strict accordance with the provisions of the criminal procedural law.

The law is also guided by these premises - art. 93 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Moldova (2003), which defines the concept of "evidence": *"Evidences are factual elements acquired in the manner established by Criminal Procedure Code, which serve to establish the existence or non-existence of the crime, to identify the perpetrator, to establish guilt, as well as to establish other important circumstances for the just resolution of the case"*.

All these elements of fact, all information cannot exist by itself, outside of the carrier object and the procedural form in which it is to be materialized. The sources and form of this information are determined by the criminal procedural law: statements of injured parties, statements of witnesses, suspects, accused, expert reports, technical-scientific and medico-legal findings, criminal bodies, documents, minutes of criminal prosecution actions etc. In these circumstances, the question arises whether all these means of evidence constitute evidence or probative value can only have the information they contain. The question in question has been subject to debate for a long time in the specialized literature. Initially, the opinion regarding the "dual character" of the evidence prevailed, this status being attributed to the sources from which the evidence was obtained, and the facts that were established with the help of means of proof (Hmirov 2005, 12-13).

Later, the discussions on this subject were resumed, as a result of which the opinion became predominant according to which the evidence represents an inseparable unit of important information for the criminal case and the procedural form in which this information is materialized, reflected. However, we believe that this opinion is correct: neither the procedural form, if it does not contain certain information relevant to the criminal case, nor the information outside the procedural form can be examined as evidence in criminal cases. Only their unity forms the notion and concept of "evidence" in the criminal process. Probably, based on these considerations, the authors of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Moldova recognized, in para. (2) from art. 93, as evidence, expert reports, minutes of criminal prosecution actions and documents, thus emphasizing the unity of their content and procedural form.

Also important is the question of the probative value of the facts established in criminal cases, the information about which is contained in the procedural sources (means of proof) if, based on these facts (known in the doctrine as intermediate facts), conclusions are made regarding the presence or the absence of the criminal act, the guilt of the accused or regarding other important circumstances for the criminal case.

In the specialized literature it has been mentioned that they are also recognized as evidence in criminal trials (Fatkullin 1976, 109). For the most part, we cannot accept this opinion. The intermediate facts, obviously, prove the existence of the circumstances to be proven in criminal cases, but the character of these "evidences" is substantially different from that of procedural evidence. However, to recognize them as being identical to the information contained in the procedural sources is not correct. Intermediate facts are established, as a rule, on the basis of several sources, means of evidence (for example, the

fact of hostile relations or threats can be established on the basis of the statements of several people; the presence of the suspect at the scene of the crime can be established by the presence of traces at the scene of the act, moment reflected in the report of the crime scene investigation, in the expert report on the belonging of these traces and in the statements of the witnesses or the injured party etc.). In this way, the intermediate facts usually have a cumulative source, from which the criminal investigation body is supposed to resort to abstraction in the process of operating with the intermediate facts. Or, from another point of view, they represent the argument of logical probatorium, something that is mentioned in the specialized literature (Kokorev and Kuznetsov 195, 111). In this way, until the intermediate facts are used in logical operations, they are to be established with certainty, which can only be established with the help of evidence. Precisely for this reason, such facts are called “intermediate”, occupying a middle place between the evidence and the facts to be proven, ascertained.

The intermediate facts that give us grounds to conclude about the presence of the crime or the guilt of the accused are known as circumstantial evidence. Accordingly, similar facts are recognized as anti-evidence, which establish the absence of the criminal act or the innocence of the accused. Thus, with the help of the evidence, three categories of facts are established: *the probatorium fact; the intermediate fact and the necessary fact* (Hmîrov 1996, 14).

Probative facts are those facts about which the information is contained directly in the respective means of evidence. For example, the fact of the presence of fingerprints on the box in which certain jewels were kept, ascertained and fixed in the crime scene report; the finding by the expert of the fact that these fingerprints belong to a certain person is also a means of proof.

With the help of evidentiary facts, other categories of facts are established - intermediate facts, which are also called “secondary facts”. The intermediate fact represents some knowledge inferred from the analysis of evidentiary facts. Thus, in the example mentioned above, based on the two evidentiary facts we can conclude about a certain intermediate fact: the suspected person was at the place where the crime was committed.

The necessary facts are the facts of a certain importance and legal value, the presence of which depends on the resolution of the substantive moments and issues in criminal cases in strict accordance with the rules of substantive and procedural law. The sum of all these facts constitutes *the object of probatorium* (the circumstances to be proven in the criminal trial). However, this notion is of particular importance from a procedural-criminal point of view. Its correct determination makes it possible to properly identify the tasks, directions and volume of the investigation in the framework of the criminal investigation and the examination of criminal cases in the substantive court, the investigation and resolution of criminal cases objectively, fully, in all aspects with minimal “expenditure” of time, means and forces. The definite and precise determination of the object of the probatorium will allow us to correctly solve the question of the classification of the evidence, in particular, regarding their division into direct evidence and indirect evidence (Hmîrov 2005, 14-15).

The specialized literature also tells us about other categories of facts and circumstances. Thus, *auxiliary facts or circumstances* can form the object of probatorium when they help to specify and implicitly to assess the evidence administered in the case (for example, a statement made extrajudicially by a relative of a witness from which it follows that a certain testimony of that witness is or is not serious). *Similar facts*, in turn, are alike to those that form the object of probatorium in a specific case, but without being in a relation of connection with that fact (for example, the fact that the defendant was in the past prosecuted or convicted for a similar crime), does not generally constitute conclusive evidence and as such cannot constitute the object of probatorium in the case under investigation (Dongoroz et al. 2003, 178). Auxiliary facts consist of circumstances that

attest to the accuracy or inaccuracy of some evidence. The auxiliary facts can form the object of the probatorium because they serve, by default, for the exact ascertainment of the main fact (Theodoru and Chiş 2020, 372).

Probatorium can have as its object all those realities that are necessary to know the truth regarding a criminal case. It can therefore constitute the object of probatorium: establishing the existence or non-existence of the crime; identification of the person who committed it; knowledge of the circumstances necessary for the just resolution of the case. Therefore, in relation to the object of the probatorium, the use of evidence must serve to establish: a) the existence of all the elements that constitute the content of the crime; b) all the circumstances that refer to the guilt or innocence of the perpetrator; c) circumstances that aggravate or mitigate the guilt of the perpetrator; d) the consequences of the crime, knowledge of which is necessary for qualifying the act; e) data relating to the parties; f) the factors that determined, facilitated or favored the commission of the crime (Dongoroz et al. 2003, 176).

The object of evidence (*thema probandum*) represents what is proven in the criminal trial, respectively any fact, factual circumstance or situation that is proven in a criminal case in order to resolve it (Mateuţ 2012, 11). The author Gr. Theodoru claims that “the facts and factual circumstances that form the object of the evidence are related to both the criminal and civil side, as well as to some issues adjacent to the case (for example, when the law conditions a procedural activity on a certain factual circumstance, this must be proven, such as the suspension of the trial which can only take place after a medico-legal examination has been carried out to establish the fact that the defendant suffers from an illness that prevents him from participating in the trial)” (Theodoru 2007, 334).

Rationally, the evidence has a double object: the existence of the deed and knowledge of the personality of its author (character traits and criminal antecedents). Determining the personality is important both to clarify the guilt and to determine the punishment. From this, it follows that only facts and factual circumstances can constitute the object of evidence. *Per a contrario*, the applicable legal text cannot be subjected to proof, namely the legislative text or the incrimination and repression regulation on which the initiation of the criminal trial is based, which must be discovered by the judicial bodies, mainly, since the legal element is only “*a pseudo-element of the crime*” (Mateuţ 2012, 11; Decocq 1971, 62).

Each piece of evidence contains one or more elements of fact that serve to establish the truth about the object of the probatorium. Together, these elements form the object of evidence, that is, what they reveal (fact, circumstance, incident, data etc.) and is likely to constitute evidence.

The object of evidence (*factum probans*) must concern the object of probatorium (*factum probandum*); this correlation makes it possible to qualify the evidence as admissible, pertinent, conclusive and useful (Dongoroz et al. 2003, 176-177).

According to art. 96 of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Moldova (Law of the Republic of Moldova no. 122-XV of 14 March 2003), in a criminal trial the following circumstances must be proven: a) the facts relating to the existence of the elements of the crime, as well as the causes that remove the criminal character of the deed; b) the circumstances provided by law that mitigate or aggravate the criminal liability of the perpetrator; c) personal data characterizing the defendant and the victim; d) the nature and size of the damage caused by the crime; e) the existence of assets intended or used for the commission of the crime or acquired through the crime, regardless of the fact to whom they were transmitted; f) all the circumstances relevant to determining the penalty.

Simultaneously with the circumstances to be proven in the criminal trial, the causes and conditions that contributed to the commission of the crime must be discovered. In this way, the legislator included in the object of probatorium only such circumstances, the establishment of which directly depends on the judgment of the court, pronounced in

accordance with the norms of criminal law and criminal procedure, regarding the existence or absence of the crime, its qualification, the guilt or innocence of the perpetrator, the application or non-application of a certain punishment measure. Or, in the content of the probatorium object, only those circumstances can be found that have value from a legal point of view and the establishment of which allows the correct solution of all problems, legal issues of the criminal case (Hmîrov 2005, 16).

The determination of the object of the probatorium in a criminal case cannot be carried out by a single action, and the conclusions reached by the criminal investigation body or the court after carrying out this action cannot be considered definitive. The range of issues to be determined in a criminal case may change depending on the analysis of the evidence that has already been collected. Or, there is a generic object and a specific object of probatorium (one abstract, and one concrete, characteristic for a certain criminal case. The generic object is characteristic for any criminal case (Dolea et al. 2005, 268). Knowing the object of the probatorium is of particular importance for the legal and thorough resolution of criminal cases, because it tells us everything that needs to be proven, guiding the judicial bodies to clarify, through evidence, all the aspects that interest the case, but, at the same time, preventing them from wasting time and means of proving some deeds and circumstances that have no interest in the case.

Although the object of probatorium is initially determined by the accusation against a person, this determination does not remain unchanged during the trial, it adapts in relation to the change of the accusation, by narrowing or expanding it both with regard to facts and persons. The law admits the proof of certain new facts and circumstances in the case of revision, which means that it is possible that the object of evidence will not be exhausted even at the time of the final judgment (Theodoru and Chiş 2020, 370-371. See also Bitanga, Franguloiu and Sanchez-Hermosilla 2018, 30).

The generic or abstract object of probatorium can be determined in its general components, because no matter how varied the causes and therefore the concrete object of probatorium, certain generic elements are present in any proof activity. The specific or concrete object of probatorium can only be determined in relation to a certain particular case, due to its infinite variety (Volonciu 1996, 342-343).

The facts or circumstances contained in the object of the probatorium are particularly varied, having informative relevance only in concrete terms to the problems raised by the resolution of a certain criminal case. Even if the criminal files have the same crime as their object, the facts or circumstances to be included in the object of the probatorium are different, because both the circumstances in which the crime was committed and the manner in which the crime was committed can be different in each criminal case (Neagu and Damaschin 2020, 457).

The facts and factual circumstances that constitute the object of the evidence in the criminal process may concern: the existence or non-existence of the crime; the identity of the person who committed it; the circumstances that establish its criminal and civil liability (Mateuţ 2012, 13). This opinion is recognized and unanimously accepted in the science of criminal procedural law. At the same time, some authors are in favor of including *intermediate facts* in the content of the object of probatorium. The position invoked in this regard is justified by the fact that the facts, used as arguments in a probatorium, must be established truthfully, with certainty, namely proven (Şeifer 1994, 57; Trusov 1960, 74). That finding does not raise doubts nor is it contested by researchers in the field of procedural-criminal law, but, at the same time, it cannot serve as a basis for the inclusion of intermediate facts in the content of the object of probatorium.

Like any event, in reality, the crime is characterized by several signs. They can be cataloged to the object of the crime, to the objective side (method, time, place of commission, socially-dangerous consequences) and to the subject of the crime. Some of

these signs have a juridical-material importance: the recognition of a certain deed as a crime, the qualification of the deed, the responsibility of the perpetrator etc., depends on their presence. Other signs may have little procedural importance: their presence depends on the resolution of the issue related to the suspension or termination of the criminal prosecution etc. At the same time, we can also encounter signs that are devoid of both juridical-material value and procedural order. However, establishing them is generally not necessary in certain concrete cases. At the same time, in their system, such signs are often found, the establishment of which becomes mandatory, as they appear as a means of establishing the circumstances that are important for the criminal case. They prove these circumstances, having, from the probatorium point of view, a certain value (Hmîrov 2005, 16-17).

The first group of signs is characteristic of all criminal cases and all criminal acts. Their accumulation forms the object of probatorium in criminal cases. The group of circumstances that have only an evidentiary value includes certain individual facts for each criminal case – the intermediate ones, the sum of which forms *the limits of probatorium* in the criminal process (Lupinskaya 1976, 78-79; Treushnikov 2004, 15-16.). The object of probatorium reflects a general category, common to a certain category of criminal cases (Banin 1975, 36). The limits of probatorium represent the expression of singularity for each individual criminal case.

The concept of “object of probatorium” is intended to serve to fulfill the tasks of the criminal process: in order for these tasks to be successfully fulfilled, it is necessary that, in the process of investigation and examination of criminal cases, they should be determined with absolute certainty. Namely, this is where the meaning of the notion of “object of probatorium” can be found. For this reason, the law includes in the content of the object of probatorium only those circumstances whose establishment will represent the final purpose of probatorium in criminal cases. The intermediate facts represent the means of establishing the criminal fact and other elements of the object of the probatorium. Even if a certain separate intermediate fact cannot be proved, then the circumstance for the finding of which it was used can be established with the help of other truthful facts. Meanwhile, such a substitution of circumstances, which are found in the object of the probatorium, is not admitted.

The limits of the object of the probatorium as a criterion for determining the tasks and objectives of the probatorium must be clearly determined. Otherwise, the notion of “object of probatorium” loses its practical meaning. However, the inclusion of the intermediate facts in the object of the probatorium would deprive it of the boundaries of a necessary certainty. Arsenev (1964, 24) claims, rightly, that “the change, the substitution of the circumstances to be proven with the intermediate facts can have the effect of improper completion of the procedural documents. Thus, the exposition of the facts to be proven is replaced by certain evidentiary facts, from which the accusation loses its clarity and limits, and the evidentiary material is exposed, improperly, with certain gaps.”

Some authors come up with the proposal to incorporate the *intermediate facts* into the object of the probatorium not as an obligatory element of it, but with the status of an optional element: in cases where the probatorium is carried out with the help of indirect evidence, the evidentiary facts that form them must also, to be proven (Arsenev 1964, 24).

The practice of judicial bodies tells us that in most criminal cases emphasis and a certain weight is placed on circumstantial evidence. This would mean that the intermediate facts would not represent the optional elements, but the mandatory elements of the object of the probatorium. However, this situation is a specific one. We cannot predict exactly which intermediate facts are to be established in each criminal case. At the same time, admitting the cataloging of an indefinite number of unknown facts to the object of probatorium would deprive this notion of its enormous practical relevance. Or, in the content of the object of

probatorium, only those facts can be found that contain signs of the crime and are of legal importance for the resolution of the issue regarding the guilt of the person held criminally liable and the application of the punishment measure regarding him (Eisman 1973, 93-94).

We will remember the moment that in the opinion of several Romanian doctrinaires, the facts and circumstances that must be proven can refer to: a) the substance of the case; b) the normal conduct of the criminal trial. Those that refer to the the substance of the case are of two types: 1) the main facts (*res probandae*) that are identified with the very object of the criminal trial (the guilty commission by the accused or defendant of the act provided for by the criminal law for which he is prosecuted or judged); 2) evidentiary facts (*res probandes*), which, although they are not included in the main facts, through their existence or non-existence ensure the establishment of the existence or non-existence of the main facts (Theodoru 2007, 290-291; Mateuț 2012, 14).

Neagu (1997, 260) claims that “the evidentiary facts are nothing more than indirect evidence because, through the information they provide, they lead to the indirect establishment of the main facts”. This author also claims that they are also called “clues”, in the sense of facts or circumstances that allow the formulation of logical deductions.

The main facts are, in terms of the classification of evidence, direct evidence, through which it is possible to prove the existence or non-existence of the deed, its socially dangerous consequences and the guilt or innocence of the perpetrator. The main facts, through the quantity and quality of the information they provide, can alone lead to solving the criminal case (Neagu and Damaschin 2020, 456).

Next, if we catalog the facts and circumstances that refer to the normal conduct of the criminal trial, they refer to: 1) the circumstances that attract the suspension of the process; 2) the circumstances that justify the absence of the parties from the trial or the non-fulfillment of some obligations established by law; 3) the circumstances that justify the prosecution without listening to the accused (Mateuț 2012, 19).

Finally, against the inclusion of intermediate facts in the content of the object of probatorium, the following argument is also invoked: the totality of the circumstances to be proven in the criminal trial is precisely determined by art. 96 Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Moldova, by the rules of the general part of the criminal law, which refer to the grounds of criminal liability and the composition of the crime, as well as by the corresponding articles of the special part of the criminal law that describe the signs of the investigated criminal deeds.

If necessary, to determine the object of the probatorium, we will also resort to the provisions of administrative, contraventional, civil, labor law etc. The particularities of the object of probatorium in criminal cases with minors, as well as regarding persons who have committed crimes in a state of irresponsibility, are also determined by law (art. 488-489 Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Moldova). In all these cases, the circle of circumstances to be proven in the criminal trial is defined by the law.

The content and nature of the intermediate facts, obviously, cannot be determined by legal rules - they are determined, each time, by the criminal investigation body and the court depending on the concrete situation created. The legal norm contains indications regarding the purpose of probatorium in criminal cases, and the means of achieving this purpose within the framework of criminal procedural law are determined by the criminal investigation body and the court.

The concept of “object of the probatorium” is sometimes associated with the notion of “main fact”. This concept is purely conventional because, in reality, the “general fact of probatorium” does not exist. For this reason, there is no single opinion in the criminal process regarding the content of this notion. In addition, several researchers have categorically spoken against the use of this notion, considering that, with the adoption of the legal norm, which determines with certainty and clarity the spectrum of circumstances to be

proven in the criminal trial, it has turned into a fiction, in a term devoid of content, which does not add any added value to the criminal trial and judicial practice (Grozinsky 1964, 7-8; Tanasevici 1962, 38).

Curălev also spoke categorically against the application of this notion, considering the construction of the main fact to be useless. He argued for its removal on the grounds that it can serve as a basis for the incorrect perception and interpretation of the grounds for classifying direct and indirect evidence, for meaningless discussions about the volume of circumstances that are found in the content of the main fact (Curălev 1969, 52). However, in the last period of time, statements regarding the need to apply this term in the theory of procedural-criminal law have been repeated, referring to the argument that the main fact is expressed in three basic issues that are to be clarified by the court: 1) did the respective deed take place? 2) is it proven that this act was committed by the defendant? 3) is the defendant guilty of committing this act? (Ugolovno-proțessualnoye pravo Rossiyskoy Federatsii. Upravleniye, Lupinskoy 2003, 223).

In his time, this notion was introduced into the theory of procedural-criminal law with one goal – to simplify the classification of evidence into direct and indirect. Direct evidence was considered to be those that directly and directly establish the “main fact”, and indirect - those that do not establish the main fact, but the secondary one (Hmîrov 2005, 20).

It seems that this particular “project” determined the rooting in the theory and practice of the criminal process of the opinion regarding the secondary character of indirect evidence, they being considered less important in relation to the direct ones, a fact that obviously does not contribute to the proper realization of the tasks of the criminal trial.

Conclusions and recommendations

Evidence represents an inseparable unit of important information for the criminal case and the procedural form in which this information is materialized, reflected. However, we believe that this opinion is correct: neither the procedural form, if it does not contain certain information relevant to the criminal case, nor the information outside the procedural form can be examined as evidence in criminal cases. Only their unity forms the notion and concept of “evidence” in the criminal trial. Probably, based on these considerations, the authors of the Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Moldova recognized, in para. (2) from art. 93, as evidence, expert reports, minutes of criminal prosecution actions and documents, thus emphasizing the unity of their content and procedural form.

The legislator included in the object of probatorium only such circumstances, on the establishment of which depends, directly, the judgment of the court, pronounced in accordance with the norms of criminal law and criminal procedure, regarding the existence or absence of the crime, its qualification, the guilt or innocence of the perpetrator, the application or non-application of a certain penalty measure. Or, in the content of the object of the probatorium, only those circumstances are found that have value from a legal point of view and the establishment of which allows the correct solution of all the problems, the legal issues of the criminal case.

The concept of “object of probatorium” is intended to serve to fulfill the tasks of the criminal trial: in order for these tasks to be successfully fulfilled, it is necessary that, in the process of investigation and examination of criminal cases, they should be determined with absolute certainty. Namely, this is where the meaning of the notion of “object of probatorium” can be found. For this reason, the law includes in the content of the object of probatorium only those circumstances whose establishment will represent the final purpose of probatorium in criminal cases.

The limits of the object of the probatorium as a criterion for determining the tasks and objectives of the probatorium must be clearly determined. Otherwise, the notion of “object of probatorium” loses its practical meaning.

We also propose the exposition of para. (1) from art. 99 Criminal Procedure Code of the Republic of Moldova - (*Probatorium*) - in the following wording: “*Within the criminal trial, probatorium consists in the collection, verification, invocation, proposal and administration of evidence in order to establish the circumstances specified in art. 96 of the present code.*”

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Government Investiture in the Current European Legislation

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ABSTRACT: The issue of Government formation is of general interest and captures the attention not only of those involved but also of citizens who need to know all the details of this legal mechanism. Periodically, all states are faced with this reality of choosing, through constitutional mechanisms, their central authorities. The present study investigates how, according to the Constitution, the public authority that runs the public administration in the state is formed, also trying to capture European trends on this subject. In order to achieve this scope, the paper work was structured into two plans, the national and the European, by following the analysis of the wording of the Fundamental Law. In this respect, the study will take national legislation as a starting point and then investigate several European countries, randomly chosen, to understand how the Fundamental Law relates to the procedure of the investiture of the Government, a central public authority. Thus, a documentary analysis of ten Constitutions of European countries, was carried out. From this point of view, in our opinion the topic is interesting for the scientific community who will find in this paper information about the investiture of the Government from the perspective of comparative law.

KEYWORDS: Constitution, Prime Minister, public authority, procedure of government investiture, political party

1. Introduction

In accordance with the provisions of art. 102 para. (1) of the revised Constitution of Romania: “*The Government shall, in accordance with its government program accepted by Parliament, ensure the implementation of the domestic and foreign policy of the country, and exercise the general management of public administration*”. The Government, a multi-person public authority, in order to be formed, must go through a certain procedure, which we will analyze below as the procedure for the investiture or formation of the Government.

From this point of view, the proposed scope of this study is to analyze, from the perspective of the comparative law, the status of the normative regulation in the Fundamental Law of the European states of the procedure for the investiture of the Government, this being a mixed procedure that combines the legal and the political sectors, several subjects of law being involved. According to the doctrine “it is of the essence of any community to establish by normative means certain criteria of conduct, certain requirements which the community intends to formulate with regard to the conduct of people, in such a way that the community preserves itself, that its very existence is not called into question by arbitrary conduct” (Popa 2008, 36).

In this respect, the research methodology we use involves the analysis of the provisions of the Fundamental Law in several randomly chosen European countries,

regardless of political regime but with a republican form of government. "National law cannot be self-sufficient, as it is obliged to continually adapt to international trends and developments in society as a whole" (Ștefan 2023b, 573).

In this paper, we do not analyze the European Union as subject of law (2017, 61) or the implementation of the EU legal order (Popescu 2014, 34-41). The bibliography used combined doctrinal and legislative sources, in print (Deaconu et al. 2015, 23-748) or online (Codex Constitutional, n.d. <https://codex.just.ro/Tari/IT>).

2. Normative references on the Government investiture procedure – national plan

The national normative references on the Government, a component of the executive power, include on the one hand the Constitution of Romania, as revised, as well as a succession of laws, which we will name in this section, all of which start from the imperative sentence: "*In Romania, the observance of the Constitution, its supremacy and the laws shall be mandatory*" (art. 1 para. 5 of the Constitution).

The central public authority, the Government is regulated in the Constitution in Title III -*Public Authorities*, Chapter III – *The Government* (art. 102-110) and Chapter IV – *Relations between Parliament and the Government* (art. 111-115). It is worth recalling that: "The Revolution of December 1989 brought the first regulation of the institution of Government, respectively Law Decree no. 10 of 31 December 1989 on the formation, organization and operation of the Government of Romania, and subsequently Law no. 37 of 7 December 1990 on the organization and operation of the Government of Romania was adopted" (Ștefan 2023a, 199). Chronologically speaking, the next normative act to regulate the Government was Law no. 90/2001 on the organization and operation of the Government of Romania and of the ministries, repealed by the Administrative Code in 2019 (GEO no. 57/2019, published in Official Journal no. 555 of 5 July 2019).

Nowadays, the Government is regulated by the Administrative Code in Part II – *Central Public Authorities*, in Title I – *The Government* (art. 14 - 50). By analyzing the provisions of the Administrative Code, we note that a single article is relevant to our topic, namely the one regarding the role of the Government: "*The Government is the public authority of the executive power which operates under the vote of confidence granted by the Parliament on the basis of the government program. The government ensures the implementation of the country's domestic and foreign policy and exercises overall direction of public administration*" (GEO no. 57/2019, art. 14). Therefore, in order to find out what is the procedure for the investiture of the Government, we will refer to the constitutional text. Regarding this legal mechanism, we learn that two articles of the Romanian Constitution are applicable: art. 85 – *Appointment of the Government* and 103 - *Investiture*.

According to the doctrine: "there are four stages in the Government investiture procedure:

- 1) the nomination made by the President for the candidate to the office of Prime Minister, following political consultation;
- 2) the set-up of the government team and the government program;
- 3) the request made by the candidate for the office of Prime Minister for the vote of confidence of the Parliament;
- 4) the appointment of the Government by the President of Romania and the taking of the oath of allegiance" (Vedinaș 2023, 147-149).

In short, the Government investiture procedure begins with the President of Romania calling for consultations with the political party that has an absolute majority in Parliament, or, if there is no such majority, with the parties represented in Parliament. Following the consultations, a candidate is nominated and, within 10 days, the

respective candidate draws up the political program of government and the list of ministers, then goes to Parliament to obtain the vote of investiture, the procedure ending with the oath of allegiance taken by the entire cabinet before the President. We note that the wording of the oath of allegiance is the following: *“I solemnly swear that I will dedicate all my strength and the best of my ability for the spiritual and material welfare of the Romanian people, to abide by the Constitution and laws of the country, to defend democracy, the fundamental rights and freedoms of my fellow-citizens, Romania's sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity. So, help me God!”*

Specialized literature pointed out that: *“in the view of the constituent legislator, even from the constitutional stage when he/she was only a candidate for the office of Prime Minister, the person appointed had the task of leading the future Government by building it from scratch, all the more so, the whole constitutional and later legal edifice has at its centre the Prime Minister, who coordinates the work of the ministries and leads the central public administration”*(Barbu and Ștefan 2022, 10).

3. Comparative law references on the investiture of the Government - brief considerations

3.1. Constitution of the Republic of Austria

This country has a Federal Government under the coordination of a Federal Chancellor. Art. 70 of the Fundamental Law holds our attention: *“The Federal Chancellor and, on his proposal, the other members of the Federal Government are appointed by the Federal President”*. Furthermore, the following are provided: *“Only persons who are eligible for the National Council can be appointed Federal Chancellor, Vice Chancellor or Federal Minister (...)”*. Art. 72 regarding the oath is also interesting: *“The members of the Federal Government, before the assumption of their office, shall be sworn in by the Federal President. The addition of a religious affirmation is admissible. Furthermore, “the documents of appointment of the Federal Chancellor, the Vice Chancellor and other Federal Ministers, shall be executed by the Federal President on the day of their swearing in and countersigned by the newly appointed Federal Chancellor”*.

3.2. Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria

The Government formation procedure is described in art. 99: *“Following consultations with the parliamentary groups, the President shall appoint the Prime Minister-designate nominated by the party holding the highest number of seats in the National Assembly to form a government”*. Furthermore, *“should the Prime Minister-designate fail to form a government within seven days, the President shall entrust this task to a Prime Minister-designate nominated by the second largest parliamentary group. Should the new Prime Minister-designate also fail to form a government within the period established by the preceding paragraph, the President shall entrust the task to a Prime Minister-designate nominated by one of the minor parliamentary groups. Should the consultations prove successful, the President shall ask the National Assembly to elect the Prime Minister-designate (...)”*. Furthermore, the Constitution provides that the Government team is sworn in by the Parliament: *“I swear in the name of the Republic of Bulgaria to observe the Constitution and the laws of the country and in all my actions to be guided by the interests of the people. I have sworn.”* (art. 109 in connection with art. 76 para. 2).

3.3. Constitution of the Czech Republic

According to art. 68: *“The Prime Minister shall be appointed by the President of the Republic (...). Within thirty days after its appointment, the Government shall present*

itself to the Chamber of Deputies and shall ask it for a vote of confidence. If the Government fails to win the confidence of the Chamber of Deputies, the procedure shall be repeated. If a thus appointed Government again fails to win the confidence of the Chamber of Deputies, the President of the Republic shall appoint a Prime Minister on the proposal of the Chairman of the Chamber of Deputies.

The Constitution provides the obligation of the members of the Government to be sworn in by the President of the Republic: *“I hereby swear allegiance to the Czech Republic. I swear to uphold its Constitution and laws and to implement them. I swear upon my honor that I shall conscientiously perform my office and shall not misuse my position”* (art. 69 item 2).

3.4. Constitution of the Republic of Croatia

Art. 110 describes the Government formation procedure. Therefore, *“the person to whom the President of the Republic confides the mandate to form the Government shall propose its members. Immediately upon the formation of the Government, but not later than 30 days from the acceptance of the mandate, the mandatary shall present the Government and its program to the Croatian Parliament and demand a vote of confidence to be passed. The Government shall assume its duty if the vote of confidence is passed by a majority vote of all members of the Croatian Parliament”*.

Furthermore, the following are provided: *“The Prime Minister and the members of the Government shall take a solemn oath before the Croatian Parliament. The text of the oath shall be determined by law. Upon the decision of the Croatian Parliament to express confidence to the Government of the Republic of Croatia, the ruling on the appointment of the Prime Minister shall be brought by the President of the Republic, with the countersignature of the President of the Croatian Parliament (...)”*.

3.5. Constitution of the Hellenic Republic

Art. 84 provides the following: *“The Government must enjoy the confidence of the Parliament. The Government shall be obliged to request a vote of confidence by the Parliament within fifteen days of the date the Prime Minister shall have been sworn in, and may also do so at any other time”*.

Unlike our system of law, this Constitution entails the possibility that the Parliament can decide to withdraw its vote of confidence for the Government or for a member of the Government: *“A motion of confidence cannot be adopted unless it is approved by an absolute majority of the present Members of Parliament, which however cannot be less than the two-fifths of the total number of the members”*.

3.6. Constitution of the Italian Republic

Art. 92-94 are relevant to our analysis: *“The President of the Republic appoints the President of the Council of Ministers (...). Before taking office, the President of the Council of Ministers and the Ministers shall be sworn in by the President of the Republic”*, without mentioning the wording of the oath.

Furthermore, according to art. 94, *“Each House grants or withdraws its confidence through a reasoned motion voted on by roll-call. Within ten days as of its formation, the Government shall come before Parliament to obtain confidence”*.

3.7. Constitution of the Republic of Ireland

According to the Constitution: *“The Government shall consist of not less than seven and not more than fifteen members who shall be appointed by the President in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution”* (art. 28 para. 1). It is expressly provided that:

“The head of the Government, or Prime Minister, shall be called, and is in this Constitution referred to as, the Taoiseach”.

3.8. Constitution of the French Republic

Title III of the Constitution – *The Government* does not detail the Government investiture procedure, but only describes the role of the Government, acts and duties of the Prime Minister and the incompatibility situation (art. 20-23), although art. 8 expressly provides that: *“The President of the Republic shall appoint the Prime Minister”*. *“It is the French Prime Minister who chooses the members of his Government”* (Tofan 2006, 88).

3.9. Constitution of the Republic of Finland

Art. 61 – *Formation of the Government* provides as follows: *“The Parliament elects the Prime Minister, who is thereafter appointed to the office by the President of the Republic. The President appoints the other Ministers in accordance with a proposal made by the Prime Minister. Before the Prime Minister is elected, the groups represented in the Parliament negotiate on the political program and composition of the Government. On the basis of the outcome of these negotiations, and after having heard the Speaker of the Parliament and the parliamentary groups, the President informs the Parliament of the nominee for Prime Minister”*.

Furthermore, *“The nominee is elected Prime Minister if his or her election has been supported by more than half of the votes cast in an open vote in the Parliament. If the nominee does not receive the necessary majority, another nominee shall be put forward in accordance with the same procedure. If the second nominee fails to receive the support of more than half of the votes cast, the election of the Prime Minister shall be held in the Parliament by open vote. In this event, the person receiving the most votes is elected”*. Notwithstanding, the Constitution does not refer to the oath to be taken by the government team at the beginning of its mandate.

3.10. Constitution of the Portuguese Republic

The Constitution dedicates Title III to the Government, of which we draw attention to Article 187 - *Formation*. According to the aforementioned article: *“The President of the Republic appoints the Prime Minister after consulting the parties with seats in Assembly of the Republic and in the light of the electoral results”*. Furthermore: *“The President of the Republic appoints the remaining members of the Government upon a proposal from the Prime Minister”*.

We highlight an interesting article about the analysis of the Government program: *“within no more than 10 days after its appointment, the Government shall submit its program to the Assembly of the Republic for consideration by means of a statement made by the Prime Minister”* (art. 192).

4. Conclusions

Our analysis aimed to find out, by referring to several legal systems, the status of the normative regulation in the Fundamental Law of the European States, of the Government investiture procedure. As a consequence of our analysis, we consider that the objective of this study has been achieved and the following conclusions can be drawn up:

(I). Similar to the national Constitution, all the European Constitutions analyzed refer to the public authority - the Government, detailing or not the procedure for its investiture.

(II). Some Constitutions, like the national one, detail the investiture procedure, such as the Constitutions of the Republic of Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, the Republic of Croatia, the Hellenic Republic, the Republic of Finland or the Portuguese Republic, compared to the more elliptical Constitutions of the French Republic, the Republic of Ireland, the Italian Republic or the Republic of Austria.

(III). With regard to the term used in reference to the person of the future Prime Minister, unlike the Romanian Constitution where there is the specification of “*nomination* of a candidate for the office of Prime Minister”, in other Constitutions the term is “*appoints*” (for example, the Constitution of the Republic of Austria – “*The Federal Chancellor is appointed by the Federal President*”) or “*elected*” (Constitution of the Republic of Finland, “*The Parliament elects the Prime Minister, who is thereafter appointed to the office by the President of the Republic*”).

(IV). The final stage in the investiture procedure is the taking of the oath. Unlike the Constitution of Romania, Bulgaria and Czech Republic, which expressly provides the wording of the oath, not all Constitutions detail this. If in the national plan the text of the oath includes the religious formula, only in one other case the following is stated: “*The addition of a religious affirmation is admissible*” (Constitution of the Republic of Austria).

(V). In what concerns the procedure of taking the oath, we encountered the following situations:

- the oath is taken before the President of the Republic, similar to the national case. Several states are included here: “*The members of the Federal Government shall be sworn in by the Federal President*” (Constitution of the Republic of Austria), Constitution of Czech Republic or Constitution of the Italian Republic (“*the President of the Council of Ministers and the Ministers shall be sworn in by the President of the Republic*”);

- the oath is taken before Parliament, for example the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria or the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (“*The Prime Minister and the members of the Government shall take a solemn oath before the Croatian Parliament*”).

(VI). With regard to the deadline for requesting the vote of investiture, we note several situations.

Taking the national plan as a reference, where the constituent legislator set the time limit at 10 days, we note a similarity only with regard to the length of the period for requesting a vote of confidence, in two cases:

- Constitution of the Italian Republic (“*Within ten days as of its formation, the Government shall come before Parliament to obtain confidence*”) and

- Constitution of the Portuguese Republic (“*Within no more than 10 days after its appointment, the Government shall submit its program to the Assembly of the Republic*”).

In contrast to these two cases, differences are noted in other countries. We consider the following:

- the deadline of 7 days (Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria);
- the deadline of 15 days provided in case of the Constitution of the Hellenic Republic (“*The Government shall be obliged to request a vote of confidence by the Parliament within fifteen days of the date the Prime Minister shall have been sworn in, and may also do so at any other time*”);

- the deadline of 30 days as of its appointment (Constitution of Czech Republic) or 30 days as of the acceptance of the mandate, in case of the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (“*Immediately upon the formation of the Government, but not later than 30 days from the acceptance of the mandate*”).

(VII). It was also analyzed whether, within the legal mechanism of the investiture procedure, negotiations take place or, on the contrary, the Prime Minister is appointed. From this perspective, we found out interesting things, different from state to state.

Therefore, the term used in the revised Constitution of Romania is “*consultations*”, and there is only one case where we have identified this term, respectively in the Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (“*Following consultations with the parliamentary groups*”). On the contrary, in case of the Constitution of the Republic of Finland, the term used is “*negotiations*”: “*Before the Prime Minister is elected, the groups represented in the Parliament negotiate on the political program and composition of the Government*”.

(VIII). Concerning the subjects who resort to consultations/negotiations for the formation of the Government, we have noticed a difference from the national plan. While in the Romanian Constitution, the President calls for consultations with the political party that has an absolute majority in Parliament, or, if there is no such majority, with the parties represented in Parliament, there are two cases where it has been noted that this consultation concerns the parliamentary groups, as follows:

- Constitution of the Republic of Bulgaria (“*Following consultations with the parliamentary groups*”);

- Constitution of the Republic of Finland (“*Before the Prime Minister is elected, the groups represented in the Parliament negotiate on the political program and composition of the Government*”).

(IX). One last aspect caught our attention, namely the composition of the Government. Unlike the national plan where there is no minimum or maximum number of ministers, in case of the Republic of Ireland, the Constitution states: “*The Government shall consist of not less than seven and not more than fifteen members who shall be appointed by the President in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution*”.

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Progressing Attitude towards Sustainability: The Developmental Role of Open Sciences on Open Educational Resources in the MENA Region

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ABSTRACT: Open science is crucial for researchers as it entails sharing all the research methods and their results in an entire project. This research focuses on the issues of Open Science Resources directing its focus specifically to the MENA region and the global stakeholders, aiming to assist them in developing structured practices and policies. Therefore, ensuring long-term sustainability and completeness in the education system. However, problems emanate from the negative publicity surrounding publishing services within the subject-field practices. The data collected through a questionnaire conducted by the researcher under methodology will help focus the research on providing evidence to prove the role Open Education Resources (OERs), played in the MENA region. The research also looks at the recommendations addressing the need for necessary infrastructure to facilitate and make open education practices more sustainable to communities. The data on OERs deemed reusable and accessible will aid the MENA region in achieving its sustainable development goals in the long run. These elements will go a long way in designing the necessary support to lower the barriers to research outputs and facilitate potential secondary researchers' access to existing resources. The region will reuse and repurpose the data and eventually realize additional research opportunities. Research integrity will also adhere to as researchers tend to act honestly and reliably, and a conducive environment will be created that reflects the Open Science agenda.

KEYWORDS: open educational resources, sustainable development goals, MENA region, open sciences

Introduction

The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region is composed of approximately 19 countries, but it can also stretch to further include about 24 countries. UNESCO has defined Open Educational Resources (OERs) as free and modifiable educational materials (Bartoszewicz 2019). These materials are considered to have a bigger potential of increasing access to education in the improvised and remote communities relevant to a substantial portion of the aquaculture community. Many educational initiatives, such as the EU Horizon, investigate whether OERs have a key role in achieving its objectives. The first developers have banked so much on the development of OE, its contribution, and the ongoing sustainability as a matter of concern for all the potential developers. Several reasons OERs can be of great significance when implemented, especially in the MENA regions. One of these includes its opportunities and needs. Open educational practices will offer key opportunities for effective organizational development to higher education institutions. This will be achieved when they give access to quality education in delivering content offered by the international

academic community. Also, OERs are considered tools of innovation that can act as catalysts of cultural and organizational change (Blessinger and Bliss 2018).

Literature Review

The most important question is why every individual and institution engages in OERs. In trying to answer this, many countries, not only from the MENA side, have put forward some arguments that bring on board the key relevance of the program. One of these arguments is that free sharing leads to a broader and faster passage of information, involving many people in problem-solving and facilitating rapid quality improvements.

According to Shaw, Irwin and Blanton (2019), from the point of view of institutions, major arguments have been put forward that are involved in the OER projects. The considerate argument posits that sharing knowledge is one of the best options and is in line with the academic traditions indicated by the Open access movement. Openness is a major aspect of education and research, and the resources created by educators and researchers, in general, should not be restricted to use and even reuse (Mallery 2016). Additionally, education institutions are considered good for public relations.

As far as internationalization and the readiness to adopt are concerned, programs of academic exchange and scientific collaboration have been one of the major strategies and policies in the institutional positioning of the universities. The higher education centers that participate in the OpenMed projects usually receive students from both Arab and African countries, as their graduates often choose to move to European and USA universities, particularly when they want to complete their doctorate level of education. The MENA region has a greater say in its university systems. Hence, it has established a difference between the eastern and the western Arabas that differ not only in the Arabic dialect but also in the greater connection with the French and the Anglo-Saxon academic model, respectively.

According to Pounds and Bostock (2019), collectivism and power distance are other primary elements of the OERs. From the context of MENA regions, the reuse of the educational content should often be under the context of intercultural contact. As soon as the didactic materials are created in the context bearing the organizational culture or national culture deemed different from the university system, the cultural diversity factors can be considered decisive for effective implementation. Comparing this with the context of Europe and North America, both the North African and the Middle East regions have been argued to have a more collective behavior that prevails and with bigger power distance. As a result, the group membership and its hierarchy possess comparatively more weight.

On the barriers and difficulties that might be experienced during the implementation of the policies in the MENA region, experts and governments need to be keen on the strategies put forth. One of the major issues faced includes the idea of awareness. There is always a low awareness concerning the opportunities offered by open education. In most cases, the students and the professors will always perceive the online classes as a way of depicting low-quality teaching in the classrooms. Secondly, the open education resources sometimes affect the income of the teaching staff. Thus, there will be some friction when the same idea is sold to the teachers on its implementation. Additionally, there are other standards and restrictions from the higher education institutions directed at the use of all educational content, from the approval of all the authorized books to the open cases admitted to the students (Kamphuis and Kanavos 2021). One example is that from some of the universities in the Middle East, the percentage of teaching done online is between 20% and 30% of all the teaching

material (Kamphuis and Kanavos 2021). Besides, the scarcity of all the OERs in Arabic may be considered inferior compared to other countries' content.

These difficulties mostly become more conspicuous at the level of implementation of the OERs that were learned at the center of the OpenMed project. Therefore, the proposal from the experts incorporated the incentives that later boosted the development of the training in the interviews (Blessinger and Bliss 2018). The experts also agreed that the participants needed to come from the same university, which was seen as more comprehensive than the exchanges made at the regional or international levels.

Methodology

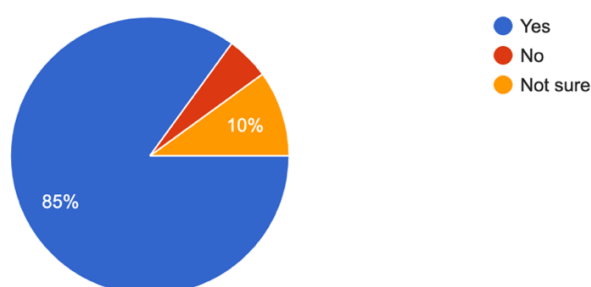
The methodology used in this paper is both qualitative and quantitative. The quantitative data is based on the analysis of the Open Science Resources in the MENA region. In contrast, the qualitative information is based on consultation with stakeholders in the area. Qualitative methodology is used to understand better the stakeholders' perceptions and views on Open Science. This will help develop effective policies that will improve the region's research quality. Similarly, the quantitative methodology is also used to analyze the Open Science Resources in the MENA region. This will help understand the extent of open access and its impact on research outputs. Other methodologies used to conduct the research include interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys.

Interviews, for example, are used to collect qualitative data from experts in the field. This will help them understand their perceptions of Open Science and its impact on research outputs. Focus group discussions also collect qualitative data from several regional stakeholders to understand their views on Open Science and its impact on research outputs. Surveys are also used to collect quantitative data from a representative population sample. This will help understand the extent of open access and its impact on research outputs. For example, a survey was conducted to understand researchers' perceptions of Open Science. During the survey, researchers were asked about their experiences with Open Science and its impact on their research outputs. In response, the survey found that Open Science positively impacted researchers' work and productivity.

Lastly, focus groups are also used to collect qualitative data from a group of stakeholders in the region, offering additional insights into their views on Open Science and its impact on research outputs. Overall, the methodology used in this report is both qualitative and quantitative. The following section presents a questionnaire conducted by the researcher with the purpose of understanding the impact of Open Access on research outputs.

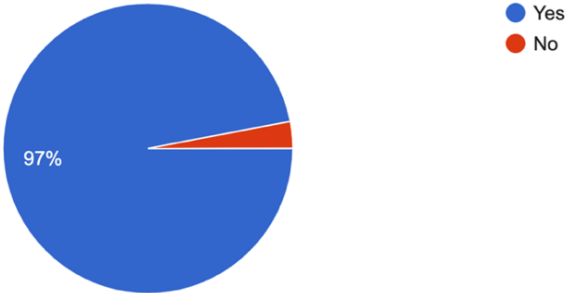
Are you familiar with the term open sciences?

100 responses



Do you work in the MENA region

100 responses



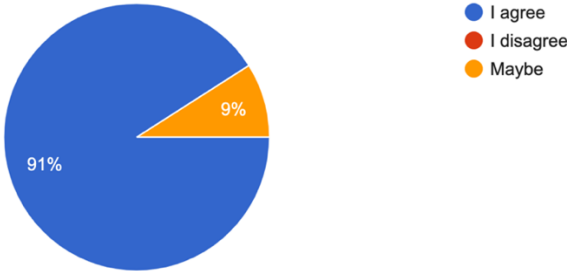
Your position in your institution is

100 responses



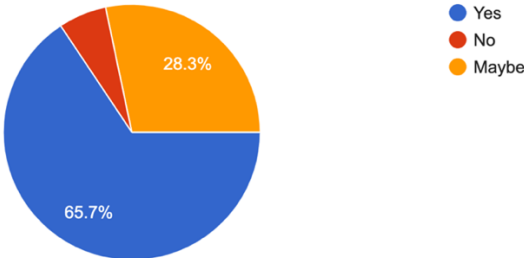
Do you think open sciences can lead a role in open educational recourses known as (OER) ?

100 responses



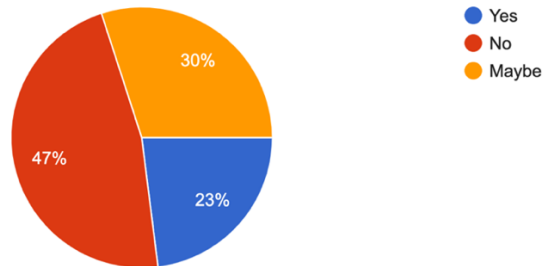
Do you believe the reuse and repurpose of the data can assist in additional research opportunities in the MENA region?

99 responses



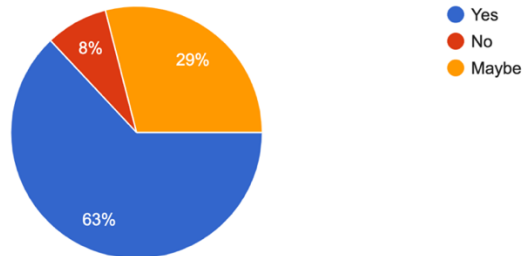
Do you think we have the necessary infrastructure that will facilitate and make open education practices possible in MENA region?

100 responses



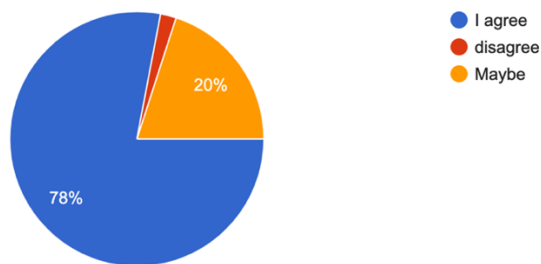
Do you think the future of research and the scholarly communication in MENA region is embedded under the full access of open sciences?

100 responses



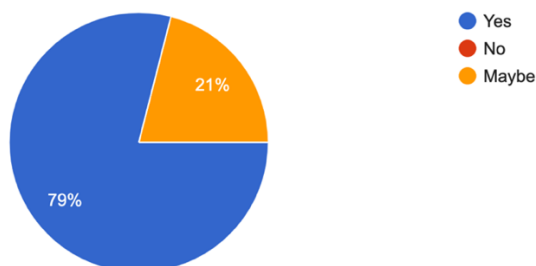
Do you believe that open sciences can empower the research framework in the MENA region?

100 responses

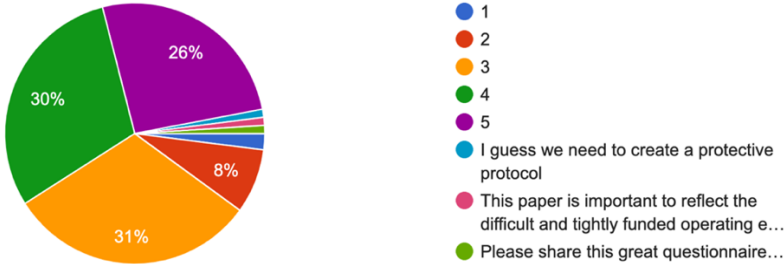


Do you think open sciences can promote sustainability?

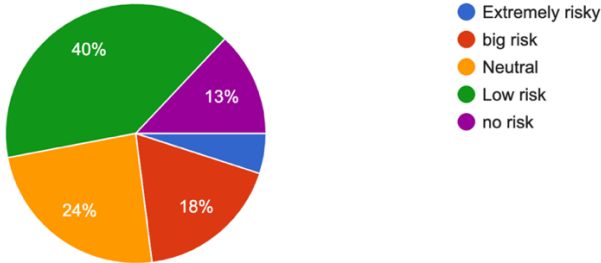
100 responses



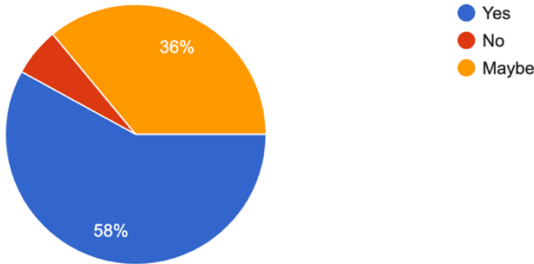
Do you support science papers and findings to be open access? rank it from 1 to 5, 1=should not be opened, 5= should be very opened
 100 responses



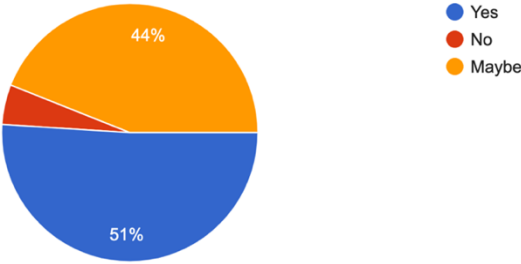
Do you think it is fair for science to be open?
 100 responses

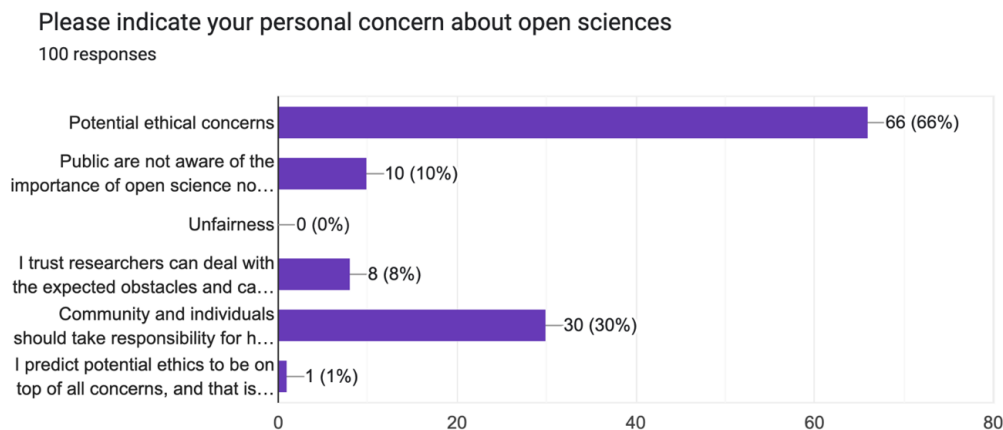


Do you think open access can affect funds?
 100 responses



As a researcher do you feel confident towards open sciences methods?
 100 responses





Results

Most respondents were postgraduate students who based their answers on aquaculture topics. Other major topics included biotechnology, environmental management, and other key topics (Duş and Simó 2019). On the other hand, about 96% of the students and the educators reported using online materials for their studies to prepare for the lessons, and about 36% of them uploaded their resources to be used by others online, depending on which region they accessed the materials. On the contribution, the usage ratio for all students was capped at 0.42, while the one for educators was at 0.13. Also, the intervals indicated that in Europe and Asia, the intervals were only significant on the uploaded and the usage rates. The other regions did not command a larger size to be used for the statistical results. Overall, more students were willing to share than those unwilling to share, regardless of the drivers.

Discussion

The findings from the policies and research are all crucial elements in the overall institutionalization of all the norms and practices of a research community. The methodology section entailed the data collected from USA, UK, and Canada. These three countries have shed some light on how OERs can benefit the MENA region in achieving their sustainable development goals regarding open education resources. From the findings, it is evident that there were three major realizations from the three countries. These include the government mandate, individual councils, and inter-council cooperation. Therefore, these can be the best pillars as the MENA region tries to venture into ways the OERs can be of great significance in attaining their educational goals (Duş and Simó 2019). Although their utmost willingness to improve the efficiency of the research process is embedded at the core of the efforts, open science policies have since gained momentum concerning accountability and the policies of innovation agendas. The MENA region needs to learn from the UK, where government support for openness has bolstered the efforts in developing the e-research infrastructure. Additionally, the US has also had its open science movement bring a lot of benefits to the economic agendas. All these are lessons that the MENA region can use to boost its sustainable development goals.

The intercultural dimension sometimes might hide the overall confluence of the organizational cultures (Conole 2018). Through this, the educational institutions will face processes that might be integral to the transformation. Hence, the movement that might be used to promote open education constitutes a major subculture that might

challenge the entire traditional academic culture. This is particularly when it is dominated by student-led teaching and the decentralization of self-directed learning and decision-making. Hence, the movement that aims at promoting open education comprises the subculture that offers challenges to the traditional culture of education. On the factors that facilitate the change, the OpenMed project has identified the different factors in adopting open education.

Conclusion

In a nutshell, from the previous questionnaire, the results reflect that open science policies and strategies will ensure sustainable development goals if the recommendations are implemented. The OERs in the MENA region will be of great significance since the options will have been weighed enough with the research on other countries done and compared. The research councils are always the primary agents in the debate on open science. Bearing in mind the future of ICT and the contemporary future advances, there are more new tools needed in the production and distribution of scientific information. Therefore, the research councils must remain consistent in navigating and implementing the efforts around the diverse stakeholders and their demands on governments. Various practical considerations also impact the policies carried out, including the barriers to adoption and all those documented.

Recommendations for Change in the MENA Region Concerning the OERs

The community's readiness to accept change to achieve their development goals needs to be aligned with what the researchers and scholars have proposed (Blessinger and Bliss 2018). In alignment with the UNESCO recommendations the integration of technologies in education brings with it organizational changes not only in traditional classrooms, but also in digital platforms, and invites to locate opportunities for educational innovation. Therefore, the community must be ready to deal with all the challenges and problems experienced, especially in leadership, shared knowledge concerning the problem, and the existing efforts. The major factor is awareness of the existing problem and the community's overall organization. Despite the obvious differences, similar factors exist in adopting open education practices. Through this, it is always good to look at the evaluation and the adoption of open education practices. Therefore, the evaluation and the adoption of the open education practices will always focus on the individual and the staff motivation.

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Current European Energy Architecture

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ABSTRACT: The current European energy architecture is in continuous evolution, considering environmental and climate priorities, but also the need to ensure energy security and accessibility for all citizens. Within this architecture, Romania and the Republic of Moldova face specific challenges and opportunities. Romania has rich natural resources, including oil, natural gas, coal, and hydropower. However, there is still a need to modernize and diversify the energy mix to make it more environmentally sustainable and reduce dependence on fossil sources. In recent years, Romania has made progress in the development of renewable energy, such as wind and solar energy, but there is still a long way to go to achieve the European goals of reducing carbon emissions and increasing the proportion of renewable energy in total consumption. As for the Republic of Moldova, the country faces significant energy challenges, including heavy dependence on energy imports, aging infrastructure and the need for modernization. The Republic of Moldova aims to diversify its energy sources and improve its energy efficiency to become more independent and sustainable from an energy point of view. Partnerships with other states and international institutions, such as the European Union, play an important role in supporting these efforts. In the European context, both countries are motivated to align themselves with European energy objectives and regulations, to facilitate their integration into the European energy market and to benefit from financial and technical support in the process of modernization and energy transition. Regional projects and collaboration between neighboring countries can also play a crucial role in developing energy infrastructure and ensuring greater energy security for the entire region.

KEYWORDS: energy transition, renewable energies, energy security, energy diversification, regional collaboration

1. Introduction

In recent years, against the backdrop of geopolitical changes and tensions in the Eastern European region, the global and regional security system has become increasingly complex and fragile. In the current context, the war in Ukraine is one of the major aspects influencing the dynamics and balance of power in this part of the world. This confrontation has caused significant changes in the way states, international organizations and non-state actors perceive and approach security. Today's security system faces multiple threats and challenges, both traditional and new, which can be categorized into a variety of domains, including political, military, economic, cyber, and others. Despite international efforts to promote peace and security, tensions and conflicts persist in many regions, and Ukraine is at the center of such a crisis.

The war in Ukraine began in 2014 when Russia annexed the Crimean peninsula, sparking an armed conflict in Ukraine's eastern regions known as Donbas. This escalation resulted in massive human losses and material destruction, having a devastating impact on the local population and destabilizing the entire region. Attempts at mediation and negotiations between Ukraine and Russia, under the auspices of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and other international actors, have made limited progress in resolving the conflict and restoring peace. As a result, the war in Ukraine has led to renewed debates and concerns about European and global security. The military incidents in the region have caused a reassessment of the defense and security policy of many states, including members of NATO and the European Union. Strengthening defense capabilities and developing military alliances have become priorities to deal with threats from aggressive state and non-state actors.

Moreover, this conflict has once again underlined the importance of international cooperation and diplomacy in promoting peace and security. Diplomatic dialogue and negotiations remain essential tools in addressing security issues and avoiding the escalation of conflicts in the Eastern European region. At the same time, the crisis in Ukraine highlighted the complexity of international relations and the interdependence of states in terms of security. The events in Ukraine had repercussions not only in the Eastern European region, but also globally, influencing the foreign policy, economy and energy security of many countries.

From an energy perspective, what happened to the electro-energy system in Ukraine should give us food for thought. It has been shown that there are critical points of the energy system that have been attacked by the Russian military in order to cut off the energy supply and that forces us to analyze the national system and identify the vulnerabilities and limitations in the most serious way. In this context of direct threats to Romania, in the conditions in which the European Union (EU) actively campaigns for the transition to green energy, there are opinions and analyses of the energy architecture that show that "not all the countries of the Union are alike in terms of consumption and production of energy because they have different geographical location, they have different resources, they have a different economic history that results in a different industrialization, with different transport networks, with different development of localities resulting from the life habits of the population (Pacuraru 2021). Also, each country has a different geography and different resources. Thus, a short and synthetic analysis emerges from the mentioned article: "Poland and Germany are rich in coal resources. Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, Denmark, the UK (out of the EU) and Germany are near the North Sea's offshore oil and gas reserves. Romania has reserves on its continental shelf in the Black Sea as well as onshore resources. Romania or France, having agricultural land, have agrobiomass (Cosmin Gabriel Pacuraru, 2021)." As elements of national impact but also of differentiation of the energy system, the different levels of economic history and industrialization, the national networks of highways, railways, naval or air transport or the different energy mix determined by urban or predominantly rural development should be taken into account and the lifestyle of the majority population. The EU is implementing the Green Deal which tells us that coal power generation will be curtailed to shutdown in the coming years. Coal represents approximately 17% of the electrical energy mix (a few years ago, it was over 33%) and about 18% of the primary mix. How will we produce electricity?

2. The energy system of the Republic of Moldova

The energy system in the Republic of Moldova faces numerous challenges, but there are also significant opportunities to make the transition to a more sustainable and safer model. Investments in infrastructure, promotion of renewable energies and energy efficiency,

integration into the European energy market and regional collaboration can play a crucial role in improving energy security and ensuring a sustainable future for the country. However, the analysis of the energy system in the Republic of Moldova reveals a series of specific challenges and opportunities, in the context of which the country is trying to improve its energy security and make the transition to a more sustainable and efficient model in terms of resources. A somewhat more detailed analysis brings to our attention the fact that the Republic of Moldova relies to a large extent on energy imports, especially natural gas, oil and electricity. This dependence exposes the country to risks related to international price fluctuations and political instability in supplier countries. Diversifying sources and reducing dependence on imports is an important objective for strengthening energy security.

Also, the energy infrastructure in the Republic of Moldova is outdated and requires modernization and significant investments to be efficient and resilient. Problems related to energy losses in distribution and transmission networks and high levels of inefficient consumption are important obstacles to a sustainable and robust infrastructure. On the strength side, we can quantify the fact that in recent years, the Republic of Moldova has started investing in renewable energies and promoting energy efficiency as part of its efforts to diversify the energy mix and reduce dependence on traditional energy sources. The development of the renewable energy sector, such as solar and wind energy, can contribute to increasing energy autonomy and reducing carbon emissions. The Republic of Moldova aims to strengthen its integration into the European energy market and align itself with European energy standards and regulations. This can bring benefits in terms of energy security, access to finance and technical cooperation, but requires sustained efforts to harmonize national legislation and policies with those of the European Union. In the regional context, collaboration and partnerships with other states and international organizations can play an important role in improving the energy security of the Republic of Moldova. Regional energy projects, exchange of expertise and experience, and financial and technical support from external partners can contribute to strengthening the capacities and resilience of the energy system of the Republic of Moldova.

In this sense, a general legal framework was established and adapted for the organization, regulation, ensuring the efficient and safe operation of the energy sectors and the monitoring of the electricity sector as well as for the efficiency of energy consumption (Law no. 107/2016 on electricity; Law no. 174/2017 on energy efficiency). According to the official website (Ministry of Energy of the Republic of Moldova n.d.), currently, approximately 20% of electricity demand is covered by domestic production, but the respective plants are dependent on gas for production energy and the interconnection with the electric power system in the west of the country is insufficient. Also, a series of investment projects in the electric power system are in the implementation period. Thus, the project for the development of the energy system in the period 2020-2027, worth 61 million dollars and 77 million euros, financed by the World Bank Group, with the main objective of increasing the capacity and improving the reliability of the electricity transmission system, is underway; the project for the development of the electrical transmission network of Î.S. Moldelectrica, in the amount of 45 million euros, financed by the European Union, EBRD, EIB for the rehabilitation of the internal energy transport network, the consolidation of regional networks and the development of the regional energy market completed with another major Energy Security project, in the amount of 59, 8 million dollars, financed by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and which runs from 2022 to 2026.

We can conclude that the investments in the previously mentioned major projects should have positive effects on the energy system of the Republic of Moldova, materialized in increasing the capacity and reliability of the electricity transmission system, in the rehabilitation of transport networks and the consolidation of regional networks, thus

allowing a more efficient distribution of electricity and better load management in the development of the regional energy market. Finally, the projects will contribute to the creation of an interconnected and integrated system at the regional level, which will increase the country's energy security. Also, improvement through projects dedicated to energy security, such as the one funded by USAID, will determine actions to reduce dependence on vulnerable or unstable energy sources, which will strengthen the resilience of the energy system in the face of unforeseen events or geopolitical disturbances.

The electricity interconnection between Moldova and Romania will accelerate the development of regional integration, given that Moldova will introduce a new route for the exchange of electricity and gain potential transit fees from transactions between Romania and Ukraine by building a new interconnection line with Our country. These investments will significantly contribute to the modernization and improvement of the energy infrastructure of the Republic of Moldova, bringing benefits, both in terms of operational efficiency and energy security.

3. The Romanian energy system

In traditional energy systems, fuels represent the largest share of costs. In future smart renewable energy systems, technology investments are a priority. The analysis of efficiency and costs (SEnergies n.d.) shows that investments of over 5 trillion euros are needed in efficiency measures in buildings, transport and industry, out of a total of approximately 9 trillion euros. More than €2 trillion should be dedicated to renewable energy and over €1 trillion should be spent on system redesign measures. While investments are higher in energy efficiency compared to redesigning the supply and measures system, it is important to note that all investments should be initiated and implemented simultaneously or almost simultaneously. Thus Europe will focus on energy conservation and energy efficiency, changes in energy supply and resource security, and will become fully decarbonised by 2050, using 100% renewable energy. The study concludes that a 40% reduction in final energy demand can be achieved by saving approximately 2 PWh in both - buildings and transport sectors - and 1.5 PWh in industry, out of a total final demand of 13.6 PWh, and the costs in the field of health, caused by air pollution, can be reduced to approximately 71 billion euros/year.

The transport sector can offer the same magnitude of energy savings (2 PWh) as the buildings sector or a reduction of around 50% in total expenditure. This also requires energy-efficient urban development with high levels of electrification and includes improving energy inefficiency in the use of hydrogen fuel (electric fuel) for heavy transport in aviation and shipping. This will reduce primary energy demand for Europe's transport sector by around 50% compared to the 2050 baseline.

On the other hand, although Romania currently has nuclear energy, it is not considered an option in the energy efficiency scenario, this type of energy not being a solution when the focus is energy efficiency. Nuclear fission processes produce large amounts of heat that cannot be harnessed. Thus, only one-third of it can be collected as electricity, the remaining two-thirds being the heat that cannot be used energetically for the time being. On the other hand, renewable energy from wind or solar sources has no such losses, is simpler to install and is cheaper than nuclear energy. These sources of renewable energy can thus reduce the number of operating hours for thermal power plants and implicitly the amount of fuel required when wind and solar production is insufficient. We can argue considering that because most of the costs of a classic energy system, like today's, is dedicated to fuels (Korberg 2024b).

From the Electric Transport Network Development Plan (RET) for the period 2016-2025 (Transelectrica n.d.) it follows that one of the main objectives is to ensure the necessary transport infrastructure for the good functioning of the electricity market, along

with the correlation of the European Plan for the development of the electricity transport network for ten years - "Ten-Year Network Development Plan (TYNDP), with the National Plan for the development of the electricity transport network for ten years (ENTSO-E)¹. Within ENTSO-E, six regional groups were created within which the European network development plan is analyzed and finalized, and Romania is part of the Continental Center East and Continental South East Regional Groups. In the last three decades, Romania has managed to reduce its fuel consumption, compared to 1989, by approximately 50%, most of this percentage coming from the massive restructuring of Romanian industry, and less from energy efficiency. However, until the year 2050, so in approximately three decades, Romania has the potential to reduce the consumption of primary energy by another 55% and that of final energy by 47% until the year 2050, according to the energy efficient scenario (Korberg 2024a).

From this perspective, the Ten-Year European Plan for the development of the electricity transmission network—"Ten-Year Network Development Plan (TYNDP) 2014," elaborated by ENTSO-E—includes the projects of European interest "The RET Development Plan - the period 2014–2023", elaborated by CNTEE Transelectrica SA and, respectively, the current edition of the Development Plan - period 2016–2025 and Project 138 "Black Sea Corridor" which integrates into the harmonized effort of all European Transport and System Operators, of to develop trans-European networks and ensure their interoperability.

4. Research methods

In order to achieve a maximum generalization analysis of the European electricity system, adapted to the current context, we used the following research methods: a comparative case study between EU member states and non-member states to evaluate policies, strategies and progress in the field of energy and energy security; an analysis of the geopolitical and regional impact of recent events by investigating the effects of geopolitical changes and tensions in the Eastern European region on the European energy system; a study of energy infrastructure projects and investments with a focus on electrical interconnectivity and the development of energy transmission networks. We have studied the financing, international partnerships and government policies that influence the development of energy infrastructure; we assessed the impact of these projects on energy security, the diversification of energy sources and the integration of the European energy market, which can provide insights into the evolution of the European electricity system.

5. Conclusions

In conclusion, through the new major projects for the development of the electrical system in the Republic of Moldova, a significant improvement in the capacity, reliability and efficiency of the energy infrastructure is anticipated. Investments in the modernization of transmission networks, the strengthening of the regional energy market and energy security measures should help create a sustainable platform for a more robust electricity system and more resistant to external disturbances. These projects can represent an important step in the direction of diversifying energy sources, strengthening energy security and improving the quality of energy services in the Republic of Moldova, for the benefit of all citizens and the national industry. The development of the energy system of the Republic of Moldova, together with the efforts to improve its interconnection with regional networks, promotes a

¹ The establishment as a cooperation group of European TSOs aims to promote the completion and operation of the internal electricity market and cross-border trade, as well as to ensure optimal management, coordinated operation and a sound technical evolution of the European energy transmission network electricity - established under the name "TenYear Network Development Plan" – TYNDP.

more robust, efficient and resistant energy system. The development of energy infrastructure and increased interconnectivity allow the diversification of energy sources, ensuring greater security of supply and reducing dependence on vulnerable energy sources. By strengthening interconnectivity, the Republic of Moldova can benefit from a better management of energy resources and the possibility to collaborate within regional energy markets, which contributes to its long-term stability and prosperity.

The energy interconnectivity between Romania and the Republic of Moldova represents a crucial aspect of the development of the energy system in the region. Through electrical interconnections between the two countries, a series of opportunities and benefits are opened: increased energy security, diversification of energy sources, facilitation of energy exchange, promotion of European integration. The energy interconnection between Romania and the Republic of Moldova is part of the broader European integration efforts of both countries in terms of the energy market. This can facilitate their participation in European energy markets and contribute to the harmonization of energy regulations and standards.

Overall, the energy interconnectivity between Romania and the Republic of Moldova can play a significant role in strengthening energy security, diversifying energy sources and promoting a sustainable and integrated development in the region.

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Gender Role Beliefs and Intercultural Relationships

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ABSTRACT: The main objective of this study was to investigate the relationship between gender role beliefs and intercultural relationship quality for individuals in committed relationships, and between gender role beliefs and willingness to date outside one's respective culture for individuals not in committed relationships. We also measured individual participants' willingness to cross cultural boundaries when dating. The survey was available in both English and Spanish to increase sample size and accessibility. We ran separate regressions for singles and couples to estimate the relationship between gender role beliefs and the quality of close relationships. The findings revealed no significant correlation between gender role beliefs and couples' relationship quality or between gender role beliefs and singles' willingness. Therefore, this study contributes to research on cross-cultural relationships, showing that differences do not seem to define the quality of the relationship.

KEYWORDS: intercultural relationships, gender roles, relationship quality

Introduction

With the degree of convergence of national, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, and religious traditions in today's society (Rotaru 2023, 62-79), our once clear delineations of "us and them" are being blurred. Globalization has brought differing cultures, nationalities, races, religions, and linguistic communities closer than ever before (Silva et al. 2012). This brings about many changes in society and in the way we live our lives compared to those of generations past. "Changing and evolving global demographic patterns, where different cultures are continuously exposed to each other beyond the continental divide, often propel intercultural relationships" (McFadden and Moore 2002, 264). Note that intercultural couples are a different conceptual category than interracial couples, because different racial backgrounds do not equal different cultural backgrounds. An intercultural couple is characterized by "greater differences between the partners in a wide variety of areas, with race, religion, ethnicity, and national origin being [some of] the primary factors" (Silva et al. 2012, 857). The extent to which intercultural marriage and intimacy are accepted in our global society is a function of the cultural parameters within which these dynamics occur, and these parameters are rapidly changing (McFadden and Moore, 2002). It is no surprise, then, that as the rate of globalization (Rotaru 2014, 532-541) has been steadily increasing, the result has been an increase in intercultural marriages—especially within the last three decades (Silva et al. 2012). The year 1967 is considered as year zero in terms of interracial (and intercultural) relationships since that was when interracial marriage was legalized in the United States, and since then, we have seen an increase from 3% of interracial couples in 1967 to 17% in 2015. However, many studies have shown that interracial and intercultural couples are more vulnerable to dissolution of marriage than couples of the

same background (Crippen and Brew 2007; Forry, Leslie, Letiecq 2007; Gaines and Leaver 2002; Kalmijn, de Graaf, and Janssen 2005).

Culture

The increasing frequency of intercultural marriages/relationships poses the question of what external forces are at play in the quality of these relationships, including the values and norms within each culture, family, community, and individual's worldview. These variables can be "social, cultural, ethnic, religious, political, anthropological, geographical, and/or economic" (McFadden and Moore 2002). These worldviews are shaped by many different cultural sources, whether directly or indirectly. Vontress and colleagues (Vontress et al. 1999; also discussed in McFadden and Moore 2002) identified five different overlapping cultures, which seem to shape a person:

- A universal culture (all humans have the same basic needs)
- An ecological culture (the seasonal and climatic conditions have forced people to act in specific ways different than those of other climates)
- A national culture (these conditions being the language, government, and economics of a place that impacts a person's attitudes or lifestyle)
- A regional culture (subtle forces such as dialects or traditions that differentiate people from different parts of their own country)
- A racio-ethnic culture (variables that separate minority groups from the dominant groups in their society).

While Vontress and colleagues have identified these five cultures, there are perhaps other cultural sources that may affect one's worldview. One component of culture that may have an influence on one's worldview is an individual's gender role beliefs.

Gender Role Beliefs

Gender roles can be defined as "beliefs regarding the appropriate roles for men and women" (Constantin 2015, 738). It is clear from studies done on both males and females that both genders participate in the definition and perpetuation of gender roles (Blee and Tickamyer 1995). But are gender role beliefs the same across cultures? Gender relations and gender roles are socially constructed, embedded in social context and different from one society to another, which would suggest that they vary from culture to culture (Constantin 2015; Blee and Tickamyer 1995).

One reason for cultural differences is the many factors that influence gender role beliefs. Role theory (Weitzman 1979) argues that children will model their behavior and attitudes around their mothers, as they are the primary caretakers of the children, suggesting that mothers exert a significant amount of influence on their children's later attitudes in life (Blee and Tickamyer 1995). Even so, education, socioeconomic status, or getting married young seem to have even more substantial effects on gender role beliefs than maternal influences (Blee and Tickamyer 1995). This suggests that gender role attitudes are a result of life course experiences, which are directed by overlapping cultures. In a study done by Henley and Pincus (1978), they found that sexism scores are related to the parents' education where the more education the less bias there is, however racism is not related to parental education. When examining the means for the three different religious identifications claimed they found higher racism, sexism, and homophobia scores for members of the major U.S. religions.

It is important to keep in mind that attitudes, defined as "different social realities in different cultural contexts", are a product of the time and space in which they occur (Constantin 2015, 734). However, attitudes towards gender roles are hard to measure simply because gender role beliefs are multidimensional, intersecting with at least two

dimensions. Namely, the dimension of the social context in which these beliefs are manifested (private versus public) while the second one refers to gender power balance (equality versus inequality). The first dimension deals with women's public involvement in roles outside of the home (education, politics, business roles) compared to the private with activities such as housework or caring for children. The second dimension has to do with the power balance between males and females, where women are assumed to be inferior to men and complementarity discusses gender specialization in performing different roles (Constantin 2015). As complex as gender role beliefs are in and of themselves, one can only imagine the other cultural dimensions that simultaneously interact with and affect gender roles and gender role expectations in society. However, many different cultures seem to be mingling at an increasing rate, and the rate of change has not been as drastic as one might assume. This perhaps can be explained by the social psychology principle known as the homophily principle.

Homophily

Homophily can be explained in layman's terms as "birds of a feather flock together" or more specifically as "contact between similar people occurs at a higher rate than among dissimilar people" (McPherson et al. 2001, 416). Initial homophily studies showed substantial similarity between people by demographic characteristics such as age, sex, race/ethnicity, and education but also by psychological characteristics such as intelligence, attitudes, and aspirations (McPherson et al. 2001). We tend to socially distance ourselves not just by age, but also by religion, and education, where the biggest divide is between those with/without college experience and between white-collar/blue-collar individuals. In general, what the findings on homophily suggest is that, in whatever demographic category we look at, if you are in the minority category for race or sex or whatever it is, you tend to have more heterophilous relationships than if you are the majority. So, if you are in an environment that is relatively diverse, you will tend to gravitate towards people who are more like you, given you have the option to. However, the less diverse an environment is, if you are the minority within that group, you will engage in relationships with individuals different than yourself on any demographic simply because of necessity.

Current Study

This study examines romantic relationships using the homophily principle from social psychology, which states that we are more attracted to people who are more similar to ourselves—this may play a role in the prevalence of intercultural romantic relationships. This project analyzes two relationships, namely (1) between gender role beliefs and intercultural relationship quality—within intercultural romantic couples and (2) between gender role beliefs and willingness to engage in intercultural relationships among single individuals.

Methodology

Participants

Participants for this study were recruited through the Andrews University Behavioral Science Research Pool, as well as through the researcher's social media using snowball sampling. Participants included individuals over the age of 18, fluent in either English or Spanish. A link to the survey hosted on the departmental LimeSurvey 3. 21.5+ installation was provided through the research pool, as well as on the researcher's Instagram and Facebook. In addition to the demographics used to characterize the sample, I also asked

participants to report their relationship status, religious identification as well as background, and political orientation. Total number of participants was 216, with a large majority (92.40%) identifying as part of the Seventh-day Adventist religion, 42% were in a relationship, 58% were single, 59% were female, 40% were male (with .90% other), and a great part of our sample was within the college age population with 84% of participants being within the ages of 18-22. Although the majority fell within that age category, I had good range from ages 18 to 51. There was a good distribution of race with 46% being white, 24% being African American, 24% Asian, 15% other, and 7% mixed.

Measures

The Experiences in Close Relationships Scale

The ECR-12 contains 12 items that assess anxiety concerning rejection or abandonment and avoidance of intimacy and interdependence (relationship quality or habits for couples). For the ECR, a meta-analysis showed that women report having higher anxiety yet lower avoidance than men do (Del Giudice 2011, as cited in LaFontaine et al. 2015). The anxiety subscale was composed of three aspects: fear of interpersonal rejection, disproportionate need for approval from others, and distress when one's partner is unavailable. The avoidance subscale encompassed excessive need for self-reliance and reluctance to self-disclose (LaFontaine et al. 2015). Items such as "I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners" and "I worry about being abandoned" are answered using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). I reverse scored the items so that higher values will indicate greater relationship quality. I modified item 1 from "I feel comfortable depending on romantic partners" to "I feel comfortable when I have to depend on romantic partners" to avoid the ambiguous interpretation this item may pose. Lafontaine and colleagues (2015) claim the Cronbach's alpha coefficients (for both avoidance and anxiety subscales) remained above .74 or higher for the ECR-12 demonstrating a strong reliability.

Gender Role Beliefs Scale (GRBS)

The Gender Role Beliefs Scale (GRBS) by Brown and Gladstone (2012) contains 10 items that assess gender role stereotypes. Items such as "It is disrespectful to swear in the presence of a lady" and "Women should have as much sexual freedom as men" are answered using a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (7). Higher scores indicate higher levels of feminist gender role beliefs and lower scores indicating more traditional gender role beliefs. According to Brown and Gladstone (2012), alpha coefficients were .81 for the 10-item GRBS, demonstrating strong internal consistency. Three items from this scale were modified: for item 2, "courtship" was changed to "dating", for item 8, "to run a train" was removed and replaced with "to work construction", and for item 9, the phrase "child-bearing" was replaced with "having and raising children" and "taking care of their homes".

Differences in Romantic Relationships

The last two sections varied depending on whether or not participants completed the questionnaire as in a romantic relationship (dating exclusively, engaged, or married), or as a single individual (including dating non-exclusively). This section consisted of a self-report measure on the similarities and differences perceived by the individual between them and their significant other's backgrounds in 7 aspects: culture, native language, ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, political orientation, and religious background. The participants were asked to rate their degree of similarity or difference on a 5-point scale ranging from completely different to exactly the same. Individuals who were single or dating non-exclusively were asked to what extent they consider similarities and differences in a

romantic partner's background when considering whether or not to date them, using those same 7 cultural aspects as the couples saw. That was answered on a 4-point scale ranging from definitely willing to definitely unwilling.

Procedure

This study was a non-experimental, exploratory survey design. After obtaining IRB approval (IRB #19-135), the link for the survey was activated on LimeSurvey and sent out. Once the study was selected, participants were given an informed consent form. This form notified subjects about the nature of the study, the number of sections to be completed, the time required to complete them, any known risks involved; that responses would be kept confidential; that all participants included in this study must be 18 years or older, and that all participants must be either native English or Spanish speakers. After reading the informed consent form, participants gave their informed consent through an electronic signature. Participants then completed the demographic questionnaire as well as the two common sections through Limesurvey (the ECR-12 and GRBS scales), and the follow-up sections based on whether they completed the survey as couples or singles. The study took approximately 15 minutes to complete. Couples were asked to create a code phrase for the purpose of pairing their responses. That code phrase would not be matched to their identities, as they would create it independent of the researchers. A Spanish version of the survey was created from the English version through translation and back translation.

Based on previous literature, we have formulated the following hypotheses in regards to gender role beliefs and their relation to quality in intercultural couples, as well as their relation to individuals' willingness to engage in intercultural relationships:

1) Individuals with stronger, traditional gender role beliefs and/or higher perceived differences in background compared to their significant other will have lower relationship quality, and the opposite will be true of those who have more progressive gender role beliefs and/or more similar backgrounds. 2) The second hypothesis is that singles who have progressive gender role beliefs will be more open to intercultural relationships.

Results

Separate regressions were conducted for singles and couples to estimate the relationship between gender role beliefs and close relationships quality. Within the sample of singles, an additional examination was made regarding the relationship between gender role beliefs and willingness to engage in intercultural relationships. Within the sample of couples, were examined the similarity of responses within couples, as well as the relationship between gender role beliefs and the reported cultural similarities within relationships. From the descriptive analysis of the data, no significant correlation was found between gender role beliefs and couples' relationship quality ($r = -.047$, $p = .659$) or between gender role beliefs and singles' willingness ($r = -.034$, $p = .711$). The correlation between Gender Role Beliefs and Relationship Quality was also not significant ($r = -.046$, $p = .611$). Four violin plots were generated to compare singles and couples in both categories of relationship quality and gender role beliefs. As can be seen below in Figure 1, there is good variance as there is a decent spread of the data in both gender role beliefs and relationship quality for both singles and couples. This indicates that there are some people with more traditional and more progressive gender role beliefs. There are others who have low relationship quality and those who have high relationship quality. However, there is very little shared variance between them. This is problematic because knowing one thing about gender role beliefs essentially tells us nothing about relationship quality as predicted. If the population at this university has a lot of diversity, yet this study does not find the same pattern of diverse relationships, what is the explanation for that?

Although none of the correlations found were significant, there was another pattern within the couples and singles group that could still be explored. From here the study became exploratory as other variables were examined in depth to see what could be found. In looking at the couples and singles groups, there was a great difference in the way they were answering the cultural similarity/willingness portions of the survey. It seemed that people are much more willing to date cross-culturally than the relationships they actually end up in. Looking at Figure 2, we can see graphs comparing how both the single and the couple participants answer the cultural willingness or cultural similarity questions. The singles graphs are labeled as A, while the couples graphs are labeled as B and we can see across all 7 of the factors how the singles and couples groups differed in the answers they gave. Single participants in this sample claimed to be either most definitely or probably willing to date someone who differs from them on the 7 different cultural factors listed above. Comparing that to the couples' data, we see that the majority of couples are either somewhat similar or exactly the same on those same 7 cultural factors. This descriptive analysis shows us that although many individuals report a willingness to cross cultural boundaries in romantic relationships, they actually end up in relationships with very similar cultural backgrounds.

Looking further at the couples' data, we noticed a split distribution, where even though the majority were either somewhat the same or exactly the same as their significant other, the rest were on the exact opposite side of somewhat or completely different. We decided to create a new transformed variable that split the couples into those two categories, thus allowing me to run a t-test on Gender Role Beliefs and Relationship Quality. Using Null Hypothesis Statistical Testing, the obtained statistic only indicated how unexpected the findings are, given our null hypothesis. Though the findings did not point in the initially predicted direction, they also did not tell us how likely it is that we could have found something given we had more subjects. Consequently, Bayesian Statistics were employed to determine whether the available data shows more evidence in favor of or against our null hypothesis. A Welch's t-test and a Bayesian t-test (using the default Cauchy prior; Wagenmakers et al. 2018) were conducted to compare the two split couples group (different versus similar) with Relationship Quality and Gender Role Beliefs as the dependent variable.

As listed in Tables 1 and 2 below, the Bayes factors for all 7 cultural factors show that our data provide mild to moderate evidence in favor of our null hypothesis. In Bayesian statistics, one compares two models; a null hypothesis, which states the absence of the effect, and an alternative hypothesis, which states the presence of the effect. Though the findings did not point in the initially predicted direction, Bayes Theorem allows us to update our prior beliefs about the effect before we looked at the data to our posterior beliefs once we analyze it. It helps us assess the probability in favor of either the null or the alternative hypothesis. So what this means is that by analyzing the data as we already have, we did not know for certain whether the null hypothesis is accepted or if we simply did not have enough data. However, it allows us to see how strong the evidence is in favor of either the null or the alternative hypothesis.

The way you interpret a Bayes Factor can be seen in Table 3 down below. Based on those numbers, we see that for relationship quality, almost all of variables except religion had a Bayes Factor of less than .33 meaning that it would put us in the mild side of moderate evidence in favor of null hypothesis. Unfortunately, we did not have a big enough sample size to get stronger evidence. This tells us that the evidence we do have points in the direction that there is no relationship or no effect of any of these cultural factors on relationship quality. Another thing to look at is at the means for both the similar and different groups are at about a 5. On the relationship quality scale a 5 is pretty high (with 7 being max) indicating a decently high level of relationship quality. Therefore, although we

might not have as much evidence as we want right now, what the data does indicate is that having a relationship that varies on these multiple cultural factors does not seem to lead to a better or a worse relationship quality than if you do not have those differences. Looking at Table 2, we see the same patterns for Gender Role Beliefs. This had even fewer factors that had moderate evidence in favor of our null hypothesis, the other factors were simply too small and were anecdotal. Looking at the means for this table, we can see that there is a small difference between couples who have more similar or different cultural backgrounds. The ones with more similar backgrounds seem to have slightly more progressive gender role beliefs than do those who come from different cultural backgrounds.

Discussion

There are quite a few conclusions we can draw from the results that were found. If we go back to the difference between couples and singles groups, we can see how attitudes did not reflect behavior too well (Horne and Johnson 2018). We can clearly see here that people's attitudes towards intercultural relationships seem to be positive and very open, however their behavior shows something very different.

Another conclusion we can draw from this is that relationships don't seem to be better or worse off if there are more similarities or more differences. What seems to be important are grasping onto the things you share with your partner rather than focusing on the differences. As I mentioned before, Seventh-day Adventism was the large majority religion for our sample, and it was also one of the factors that couples report being most similar on. Based on that descriptive observation we can speculate that perhaps all these people are very similar in religion and perhaps that is why their intercultural differences (gender role beliefs) may not play as big of a role in relationship quality as I at first had assumed. This is not totally unexpected, as social psychology has studied this exact effect and how it seems that it is only necessary for one strong, unifying bond or commonality between people to override what may seem as irreconcilable differences. Therefore, it would not be surprising if a factor such as religion could be strong enough to bring different cultures and people together, especially due to how strict of a religion Seventh-day Adventism is, which influences an individual's lifestyle pretty heavily.

One of the biggest limitations of this study was that our sample was not quite as diverse as we would have hoped. In general, there did not seem to be many couples that reported being in an intercultural relationship. In total, there were about 17 couples with whom we could match their data together and compare their answers, and across the board (except for one couple), their answers were all within one or two numbers away from each other. This means that they all agreed that they were more similar to each other on the 7 cultural factors. This is good because that allows us to trust that people will generally do a good job of self-reporting, however it is unfortunate as it seems as if the couples filling out the survey were actually not in intercultural relationships, as they reported being more alike than dissimilar. This aforementioned reason was one of the biggest limitations for this study, as we did not have enough individuals with differing religions and couples in actual intercultural relationships with which to make a comparison and draw stronger conclusions.

Future research could focus on examining the factors involved in motivating people to enter into intercultural relationships, as well as exploring the factors involved in intercultural relationship quality and satisfaction. It would also be interesting to see how strong of a factor the homophily principle is on influencing the kinds of relationships people engage in. Because of its limitations, this study would be interesting to replicate outside of the Adventist community and with a greater range of age categories to see if this effect remains the same or if there is some evidence for the original hypotheses. This asks us to consider more the kinds of social networks young adults create, as perhaps the opportunity

for diverse relationships is there (and people seem to be willing). However, individuals may still gravitate towards similarity rather than difference based on the diversity of their environments and the opportunities they have in engaging in intercultural relationships. By conducting Bayesian statistics, this project contributes to the evidence that people should not be afraid to enter relationships that are different, as differences do not appear to define the quality of the relationship.

Conclusions

To summarize, this study analyzes the effects that gender role beliefs play in the quality of intercultural relationships, as well as in single individuals' willingness to cross cultural boundaries when dating. Although this study's biggest limitation being that the couples in the sample were not as diverse culturally as we had hoped, findings still indicate that the differences do not play as big of a role in predictors of quality of the relationship as we might have hypothesized. These results provide a basis for further examination of what those predictors may be, and what could be the motivating factors for entering into intercultural relationships. With more and more intercultural diversity and interconnectedness, this topic of predictors of success in intercultural relationships is of increasing importance for all of us as we engage in and navigate relationships with individuals that may be very different than ourselves.

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Figure 1. Variance for couples and singles on gender role beliefs and relationship quality

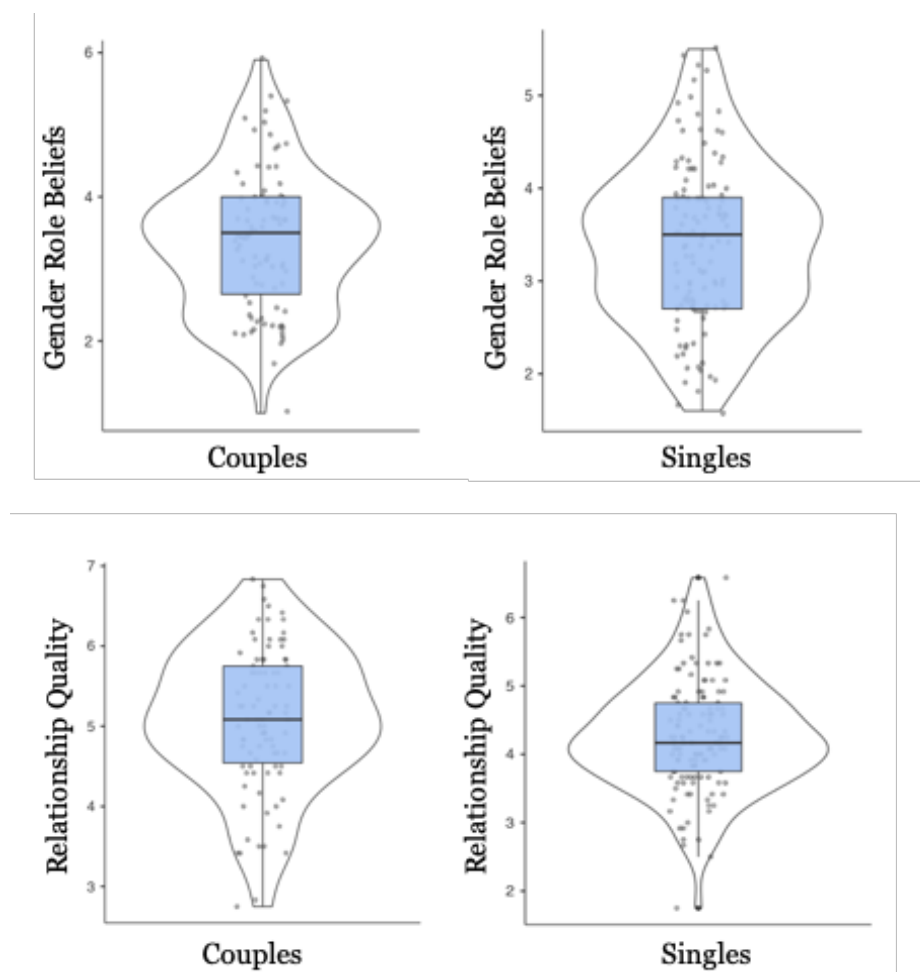


Figure 2. Comparison between singles and couples on Cultural Willingness/Cultural Similarity



Note. Compares the single and couple participants on their responses to the cultural willingness (for singles) or perceived cultural similarity to significant other's background (for couples). Singles graphs are labeled as 1, and couples graphs are labeled as 2 in comparing the 7 different cultural factors.

Table 1. The relationships between the 7 cultural factors and Relationship Quality

Cultural Factors	N (Similar)	N (Different)	Mean (Similar)	Mean (Different)	Welch's t	p	BF ₁₀
Culture	55	34	5.10	5.08	.0853	.932	.228*
Language	67	23	5.06	5.23	-.806	.425	.326*
Ethnicity	52	36	5.15	5.04	.569	.571	.259*
Race	62	27	5.10	5.06	.245	.808	.244*
Socioecon	45	36	5.11	5.05	.317	.752	.242*
Political	53	18	5.12	5.22	-.415	.681	.296*
Religious	68	22	5.02	5.30	-1.40	.170	.501

Note. Bayes factors marked with an asterisk (*) indicate factors that are in the mild-moderate category for evidence in favor of our null hypothesis.

Table 2. The relationships between the 7 cultural factors and Gender Role Beliefs

Cultural Factors	N (Similar)	N (Different)	Mean (Similar)	Mean (Different)	Welch's t	p	BF ₁₀
Culture	55	34	3.41	3.29	.563	.576	.262*
Language	67	23	3.43	3.26	.732	.468	.311*
Ethnicity	52	36	3.46	3.23	1.20	.234	.412
Race	62	27	3.48	3.20	1.25	.218	.470
Socioecon	45	36	3.48	3.33	.743	.460	.297*
Political	53	18	3.26	3.57	-1.18	.249	.508
Religious	68	22	3.42	3.19	1.01	.317	.393

Note. Bayes factors marked with an asterisk (*) indicate those that reached at least a mild-moderate level of evidence in favor of the null hypothesis.

Table 3. How to interpret Bayes Factors

Bayes Factor	Evidence Category
> 100	Extreme evidence for alternative hypothesis
30 – 100	Very strong evidence for alternative hypothesis
10 – 30	Strong evidence for alternative hypothesis
6 – 10	Moderate evidence for alternative hypothesis
3 – 6	Mild to moderate evidence for alternative hypothesis
1 – 3	Anecdotal evidence for alternative hypothesis
1	No evidence
1/3 – 1	Anecdotal evidence for null hypothesis
1/6 – 1/3	Mild to moderate evidence for null hypothesis
1/10 – 1/6	Moderate evidence for null hypothesis
1/30 – 1/10	Strong evidence for null hypothesis
1/100 – 1/30	Very strong evidence for null hypothesis
< 1/100	Extreme evidence for null hypothesis

Life in Freedom after Detention for Former Convicts in Italy

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ABSTRACT: This article presents the work of rehabilitation and social integration of prisoners and former prisoners in Italian detention facilities. It describes the efforts of voluntary associations and the Catholic Church, in collaboration with territorial cooperatives, to mediate between the restrictive system and the real world of work. The article describes how churches in Rome and Bologna, in partnership with local industries, employed and trained prisoners, providing them with job opportunities after imprisonment toward real integration into society. The Church is concerned with the moral aspect, without which the temptation to return to a life of ease and immediate gain would be almost impossible in the society of Italy in an economic crisis. The missions of the Orthodox Church in Italy follow these models to help Romanian prisoners with prize permits and other facilities towards release.

KEYWORDS: rehabilitation, reintegration, former convicts, church mission, good practices

Introduction

In the proximity of release from detention, inmates need a tool to orient themselves upon leaving the prison system. Exiting prison represents a moment of solid disorientation, especially for those without resources or contacts in the territory. The Antigone Association, which monitors detention conditions within penitentiary institutions in each Italian region, has set out to provide a detailed guidebook based on the most felt needs and requirements of those released from prison (Gentile and Sbraccia 2020, 19). The association has been active since 2001, and monitoring is done through the internal magazine *Osservatore*, published on the website of the Antigone Onlus Association (www.antigone.it). These guiding and informative tools were intended to aid various social workers in penitentiaries involved in reintegration. Two other essential guides would be: "Taking Freedom: What to Do Once You're Out of Prison" (Antigone 2019) and "Once Outside: A Guide, Paths, and Opportunities in Bologna After Sentencing", which present all the most suitable steps for initial reintegration into society, attempting to provide answers to all potential primary needs that a former inmate may have at the time of release: job search, economic assistance, dependency issues, health, parental education, document and certificate creation, or ongoing legal matters.

These guidebooks aim to make these subjects aware of what they can and cannot do, whom they can turn to, and especially what rights they have to apply. Some guides consider the essential nature of the orientation issue for ex-inmates, providing helpful guidance on finding a general practitioner with advice aimed at both Italian and foreign individuals (Antigone 2019, 4-21). There are also sections dedicated to those seeking practical

information for obtaining services and benefits available to those who are or are about to become parents. The guide explains finding a municipal nursery and accessing various bonuses, allowances, or tax deductions (Antigone 2019, 68-88). In many situations, inmates often find themselves with unresolved legal issues and prison without being aware of it. For example, a former inmate may request a certificate of criminal charges from the court, which allows them to become aware of ongoing judicial proceedings against them and any possible defences.

Additionally, they can address the Supervision Court for rehabilitation to expunge their criminal record. Knowledge of the legal situation can be obtained by requesting the following documents: Certification of registration in the crime information register, providing knowledge of registrations against the individual for criminal offences; Certificate of criminal charges regarding any ongoing criminal proceedings; Certificate of criminal record, allowing knowledge of final judgments and specific provisions regarding the limitation of civil capacity; certificate of completion of sentence, a certificate of serving a prison sentence requested from the Penitentiary Execution Office located at the Prosecutor's Office; viewing of records present in the criminal record, to view records against the interested party at the Criminal Record Office (Antigone 2019, 56).

These guides help those in marginal states avoid falling back into criminal dynamics. However, this possibility depends not only on individuals but also on the context of acceptance or rejection surrounding them. In this sense, Antigone's guide allows them to have a tool to lean on and escape from the perspective of selection and rewards promoted by penitentiary institutions and to enter into the perspective and concreteness of real and equal possibilities. Associations aim to raise citizens' awareness about the guarantees and rights of detainees within the penal system, so they perceive the importance of punishment as implemented beyond the walls of prisons (Gentile and Sbraccia 2020, 96).

Research Methodology

We initiated this research from a guide that reveals a mapping of offers and services dedicated explicitly to former inmates or individuals serving sentences and, to a greater extent, marginalized subjects. One of the projects that developed a guide was based on funding granted by the Fondazione del Monte from Bologna and Ravenna, starting in September 2019 and ending in December 2021. Various institutional references were involved, such as the director of the "Rocco d'Amato" Penitentiary in Bologna and the director of the educational area, regional and municipal Guarantees of Persons Deprived of Liberty, the municipality of Bologna represented by the counsellor for social policies, the director of the health area in prisons in the Emilia Romagna region, and the director of the penal execution area in the same region. Also involved was the contact person from the A.S.P. in the municipality of Bologna, Uiepe managers, and subsequently, various social workers divided into intervention areas: health, employment, housing, and volunteering. Then, through interviews, we contacted individuals in alternative measures and former inmates to directly understand their desires, expectations and needs during the transition from inside to outside as they approached the end of their detention period.

Prisons in Bologna and Rome are at the forefront, both regionally and nationally, regarding numerous projects implemented in favor of incarcerated individuals, such as continuing courses activated within the prison and investing in alternative measures. The perspective of the Church and volunteer associations is to involve as many restricted subjects as possible in the alternative method of serving sentences outside of prison, leading to a general increase in subjects under penal control. In this case, we are talking about the widening network effect, a concept introduced by sociologist S. Cohen, used to indicate the

risk associated with introducing new forms of punishment and expanding social control (Cohen 1985).

The Path to Release from Prison

The imminent release from the prison system represents a particularly delicate moment in the lives of inmates, underscoring the importance of inmates' connections with the outside world and social reintegration implemented based on individualized criteria tailored to the specific circumstances of each individual. Penitentiary treatment should aim to cultivate skills that can support social reintegration. However, before discussing the release of convicted offenders, there must be a scientific and spiritual observation of their personality, identifying moral and psychophysical deficiencies or other causes that led to the commission of the crime, and proposing an appropriate reintegration program.

However, in recent years, the personnel of psychologists and penitentiary educators has been severely reduced. According to the updated transparency records as of May 2023, the total number of effective educators is 803, compared to 923 in the staffing scheme. The national average number of detainees under the care of each agent is 71. There are 100 institutions out of 191 with a detainee/educator ratio higher than the average and far from the target of 65 established by D.A.P. Chaplain priests, even though they are not officially part of the institutional system for monitoring inmate behavior, are best positioned to observe "scientifically," from a perspective of psycho-spirituality, the causes and motivations that led the offender to commit the criminal act. It is also chaplains who most assist offenders in reflecting on the consequences of their actions, especially for the victim, and any potential reparative actions. Time, introspection through models of repentance from the Bible (Rotaru 2015, 318-322) and the lives of saints, as well as the illumination of conscience by the Holy Spirit through prayer, formulate the best indications regarding rehabilitative treatment and establish a corresponding program that integrates or adjusts according to the needs that arise during the execution of the sentence.

Research conducted on the topic of recidivism reveals how, among individuals sentenced to imprisonment, those who take advantage of treatment opportunities during detention are less likely to return to crime. The chances decrease even further among those subjected to alternative measures without remaining within prison walls (Antigone 2017, 25-27). The duration of the sentence can influence the interest and participation in these training courses. One factor is a sentence of over ten years, while another is less than five years (Antigone 2020, 16).

Rehabilitation and integration projects can be destabilized by the discomfort of overcrowding and the lack of legal-pedagogical staff. Due to the large number of inmates (overcrowding) and the shortage of personnel, young people who enter penitentiary structures for the first time, who should serve around one year of detention without educational-rehabilitative support, have exacerbated the criminal activities they had committed. If the penitentiary educational system does not take care of young people, another "system" does, the internal-criminal system, where other "educators," the "veterans" of the place, convey an interpretation of events and facts, not from the point of view of justice or God's law, but from the perspective of "criminal law," where everything is justified according to antisocial mentalities, blaming society as unjust and justifying the most socially disadvantaged, namely themselves (Gentile and Sbraccia 2020, 72).

Another aspect that can condition the success of the intramural setting is the subjective situation of the inmate: Italian prisons are often inhabited by individuals who come from circuits of severe marginalization, for whom the absence of employment, adequate education, or the presence of dependency issues or irregularity are closely linked to the process of criminalization and the experience of detention. Prior to the deprivation of

liberty, such a pre-existing situation can sometimes influence not only the way of "doing time" but also the possibility of activating paths within the prison that can continue outside of it (Mosconi 2001, 3-35).

In this regard, the social resources held before incarceration are evaluated based on risk management. They are sometimes more important than the trajectory within the institution, betraying the principle of "individualization" that underpins penitentiary treatment. The result is a mechanism of selection by the penitentiary institution itself, which is compelled, also due to the persistent shortage of resources, to preferentially invest in those who not only demonstrate a willingness to adhere to the offer but also possess personal and social resources capable of reducing the hypotheses of project failure or the particular precariousness of trajectories. This element has become apparent in interviews with individuals who have been released from prison and are currently in alternative measures. They assert that few benefit from a rehabilitative journey. One must have an extraordinary will to obtain this privilege. Differentiation, not to mention discrimination, begins even in restrictive conditions; there are preferential differences between Italian inmates and others. Once released, the differences are further amplified, and the opportunities for them to find work or social integration are almost non-existent (Gentile and Sbraccia 2020, 12).

Within the rehabilitation program, it becomes evident whether the convict becomes repentant or not. It can be seen if they engage in self-criticism or consistently absolve themselves if they have understood and assumed their mistake in a reparative manner or stubbornly justify it. Some individuals have received many benefits from educators, social workers, and parents, but due to a lack of self-critical introspection, after a few months, they return to detention. They perceived only what they received without giving anything in return. They enjoyed privileges without any obligations or corrections. They realized the comfort of prison and how easy it is to leave. This type of person suffered more than those who did not have support in prison but changed for the better. The most pitiful were those who remained imprisoned without change (Gentile and Sbraccia 2020, 14).

Benefiting from the proposed treatment, even if limited to certain activities or managing to establish a few significant relationships within the institution (such as volunteer organizations), can be the premise of a path oriented towards subsequent reintegration (Antigone 2021, 33-35).

Subjects burdened by addiction problems and never intercepted by Ser.D.P. (pathological addiction services) or foreigners without a stable residence permit, paradoxically, prison represents the first moment where they can start rehabilitation programs or receive medical-therapeutic assistance. In this sense, the relationship between the prison and the territory is of fundamental importance, contributing to the consolidation of autonomy projects initiated internally (Giorgi 2014, 18-32; Ronco and Torrente 2017).

Being present in a correctional facility can bring the benefit of residency. Through resident status, the inmate can receive support outside the prison, a prerequisite for accessing fundamental rights and services. Large segments of the detained population, generally foreigners in irregular conditions or individuals from significantly disadvantaged situations, establish residence within the institution where they are placed. After a certain period has passed since the release, their registration in the institution's records will be automatically cancelled, risking being left without a residency registration and unable to establish any connection with the territory.

Another critical aspect in the transition between the inside and outside, often directly related to residency, is medical assistance. From discussions with various operators, it has become crucially apparent that therapeutic paths started internally need to be continued externally: the interruption of therapeutic plans contributes to creating a strong sense of disorientation in the released individual and, consequently, the failure of programs initiated

by medical services. In most cases, those released do not have contact with territorial health services due to the neglect of the sick person and the lack of resources and projects within the regional healthcare system. There are individuals burdened with significant health problems or uncertified mental disorders who, upon release from detention, do not have access to a structure to receive them and need much time to readjust, unlike those who leave with an already structured therapy from/within the institution and thus are capable of achieving a certain level of independence quickly. These categories of individuals seem to be potential victims of the selection system, as they lack the necessary resources to rehabilitate themselves and cannot demonstrate tenacity, willpower, and credibility.

The territorial offer for people released from prisons relates to opportunities regarding primary needs (food, clothing, shower) and socialization. However, it needs to include the formational-professional aspect of ex-inmates and aspects related to housing, health, and employment (Giorgi, 2017, 83-120).

There are specific projects in Bologna, such as *Dimittendi* and *Together for Work* (in collaboration with the local Catholic archdiocese), which deal with individuals in need of exceptional support (employment) and follow them for six months after their release from institutions, aiming to keep them in the network and support them regarding various needs. The Municipality of Bologna offers an additional service for those needing support in finding employment through the Municipal Employment Office. The service is not a job centre but exclusively focused on career guidance. It can be accessed by individuals residing in the Municipality of Bologna, following a phone call and by appointment only. The office operators conduct individual interviews, supervise or provide assistance in creating a curriculum vitae, offer support for necessary training to acquire valuable skills in job search and help define a professional goal based on personal inclinations, skills, and local job opportunities. In addition to individual meetings, the Assistance Office organizes workshops for those with difficulty using I.T. tools, including facilitating online job searches. Access to these workshops is based on a preliminary evaluation by the operators.

Upon release, the formerly incarcerated individual needs two key elements to be met: moral support and professional guidance. Social workers and local cooperatives strive to create this mediation between the institutionalized environment and the real world of work. Additionally, this recommendation helps prevent the suffering of many failures due to the stigma associated with a criminal past. A successful social assimilation avoids the risk of potential relapses. After years of being confined in prison, the ex-convict no longer possesses the instincts, inspirations, or orientation needed for work. They do not know how to relate to others or convincingly propose themselves for a job, especially given the general economic crisis in Italy. Just as the inmates prepare themselves during detention, they will succeed in coping outside prison. The moral aspect, the faith, is also crucial (Rotaru 2012,5). Those who consider God as a Father do not worry (Mt. 7:7). And how one prepares professionally is also crucial. No one is willing to invest in professional courses for someone who appears "uncertain" and "doubtful". However, morality and professionalism can surpass any limits of prejudice and reservations (Gentile and Sbraccia 2020, 18).

Another ex-convict with a long criminal history behind him believes that a necessary aspect upon release from prison is the desire for change, regardless of the opportunities that may come from the outside. Upon crossing the threshold of imprisonment, each person must question what mindset they should use to take that step. He believes only 5 or 10% break free from criminal inertia (Gentile and Sbraccia 2020, 105). The problem is that most receive assistance in the initial phase, orientation and social integration. However, after the "transition," they enter the autonomy phase, where the mindset and real change are assessed for the better. That person's independence is evaluated by themselves, whether it is beneficial or has criminal tendencies.

All that has been stated so far highlights that, despite the heterogeneity of experiences and regardless of the specific needs of each inmate, what seems to unite many upon release is the need to understand the external reality; those interviewed agree in attributing this task to the prison institution, namely its ability to establish and maintain functional relationships with the outside world. "In this regard, the relationship between the prison and the territory is of fundamental importance, helping to consolidate autonomy projects initiated inside and to prepare for release especially those who come from and risk returning to situations of particular fragility" (Gentile and Sbraccia 2020, 109).

Reintegration: outside walls

Research has been conducted on reentry (recidivism), analyzing primarily the needs and concerns of individuals released from detention. Researchers Baccaro and Mosconi (2002, 69) attempted to establish a different observation point regarding studies on recidivism in the Italian context. They emphasized the degree of social marginalization to which former inmates seem to be relegated. Possible relationships and exchanges occur exclusively between former inmates and convicted offenders, maintaining a clear separation between the prison world and the outside world, even with the territory. Observing the frequencies related to quantitative and qualitative relationships with people, we observe how former inmates are part of a well-structured marginal category and are not integrated into society (Baccaro and Mosconi 2002, 72).

Analyzing the work environment of inmates before entering prison, researchers have identified a high percentage of precarious employment among them, compared to lower estimates of stable regular work and unemployment. In general, there is a low professional profile, emphasizing the poor specialised training of inmates, which, if not supplemented by prison work services, risks being a significant limitation to employment outside. Furthermore, it can be observed how former inmates, once free, pursue the same work activities as before and express a general sense of dissatisfaction (Baccaro and Mosconi 2002, 74). This seems to confirm a behavioral pattern in a situation of non-integration. When they leave prison, they find everything as they left it, which is why they are disappointed. They encounter the same poverty, being forced to behave as they did "before," only with a little more cunning to avoid being detected. In this sense, the question arises: What value can vocational training courses within the prison have, and how effective can they be for actual employment placement (Baccaro and Mosconi 2002, 85)?

It is observed that former inmates face tremendous difficulty once they return to society. The greatest challenge for foreigners regarding their residency permit is that they can only adapt to everyday life with one's residency permit, namely, obtaining employment, social integration, finding housing, and others. Talking about arrests, detention, sentences, and legal procedures is more accessible, codifiable, and socially shareable. However, the same cannot be said for the end of punishment and reintegration concepts. "Just like committing a crime, social reintegration poses a challenge to the established order. It is a journey full of obstacles and opportunities" (Baccaro and Mosconi 2002, 91).

The ISFOL project (2013-2019) - the Institute for the Development of Vocational Training for Workers, is a public research institute supervised by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policies - has developed a Compendium that explains best practices encountered in Italy regarding social reintegration. This project focuses on individuals intersected with various difficulties and discriminations, emphasizing the reintegration of former Romanian inmates with cultural, economic, and social disadvantages. Project managers put themselves in the shoes of individuals who do not have or have lost familiarity over the years with specific social, networking, or purely practical tools (such as internet searches or specific computer systems).

The state is aware of the prejudices and difficulties that former inmates may face, which is why the prison population is considered one of the disadvantaged categories for which a series of facilities are provided. Social cooperatives must have 30% of their employees belonging to these categories. Additionally, the state promotes the establishment of social cooperatives consisting of inmates and former inmates through subsidies in the form of contributions. Lastly, the state supports orientation and training activities for inmates and former inmates in cooperation with the regions within the employment centres (Antigona 2019, 27).

Regardless of the type of services and projects, the risk that should not be assumed is the prolongation of a paternalistic attitude towards these individuals. This is a practice they have become accustomed to inside prison and which tends to continue outside. On the contrary, the attempt should be to provide initial assistance and then move towards progressive accountability. In fact, "While, on the one hand, the community offers numerous opportunities for basic needs (food, clothing, washing) or, more recently, opportunities for socialization, learning, or training, on the other hand, the greatest difficulties are always found in addressing certain indispensable aspects to be able to effectively begin paths to reintegration: housing, health, employment" (Gentile and Sbraccia 2020, 40). The individual must necessarily break free from the mechanism of continuous and constant correction and care.

The involvement of the Church in those who have been released from detention

In Bologna, the Catholic Church is involved in projects of alternative measures to detention, offering job opportunities to those released. One such project is "Fareimpresa" in Dozza (FID), which was born in the prison of the same city. The project has provided jobs for over 50 detainees ("Doing business in Dozza"). It has given horizon to those who had none. The mechanical engineering company FID has allowed detainees to acquire technical skills, work in teams, and relate appropriately to the field of work. It has been and continues to be more than a job opportunity; it is a project that connects the restrictive and free worlds.

The president of FID, Maurizio Marchesini, says that individuals with relatively long sentences can participate. Therefore, they often have benefits and can leave on a semi-liberty regime before their sentence expires. Consistently, between 14 and 15 people work there. Cardinal of Bologna Matteo Zuppi, in the presence of Mauro Palma, the National Guarantor of the Rights of Persons Deprived of Personal Liberty, stated that there are very few initiatives compared to the number of detainees in the current prison system. "There should not be any detainee without their project because, in this way, the prison is only punitive and discriminatory. Civil society must get involved in helping the prison system work better. It is part of a shared responsibility. "With little, we can accomplish much, and everyone must do something" (Berto 2022, 7). Not only inside the prison but also when the inmates are released, because, as the president of FID says, the real difficulties arise when inmates are released, as they find themselves facing the chain of companies, struggling with integration, in a society that changes rapidly and continuously. Additionally, there is the stigma attached to them as former inmates, which often causes them to lose the friendships they had before entering prison, risking finding themselves alone. Despite this, due to job placement, the recidivism rate among those within FID is meagre, at 14%" (Berto 2022, 8).

The CEIS group also contributed to the reduction in recidivism. The Center for Solidarity CEIS, established in Modena in 1982 and later becoming the CEIS ONLUS Foundation, has always coordinated Associations, Cooperatives, and Organisations dealing with the planning, development, and management of socio-educational and socio-sanitary services in the fields of addiction minors, and assistance. CEIS manages over 600 people every day in over 40 residential services, including Italian and foreign minors, people with

mental disorders, people with AIDS, the elderly, people with eating disorders, drug addicts, and others. Through the reception centre "Don Giuseppe Nozzi" in the Corticella area, managed by Catholic priest Giovanni Mengoli (the group's president), many inmates on work permits or former inmates transitioning to freedom are hosted. It is estimated that this hospitality centre, which facilitates the penalty of alternative measures, has reduced the recidivism of incarcerated offenders from 66-70% to 16-18%. More opportunities for similar accommodation-work arrangements (alternative probation) should be created, as this would drastically reduce the costs of maintaining inmates in prisons (by two-thirds) (Berto 2022, 8).

The local church has provided an excellent opportunity for citizens to be released from the "citadel of confinement" (Berto 2022, 8). Journalist Massimo Selleri suggests that the prison in Bologna could judge Italy (Selleri 2022, 4). The Q.N. Society, *Quotidiano Nazionale*, is the brand that identifies a consortium of four daily newspapers led by Monrif Group SpA. It brings together four historic Italian newspapers: *Il Resto del Carlino*, *La Nazione*, *Il Giorno*, and *Il Telegrafo*. Q.N. conducts its production activities within the prison walls, and there is a newly created structure that hosts those who, in the final part of their sentence, can request probation at social services and where they work until their release date. The tutors are retired workers, and this solidarity between generations has impressed Cardinal Matteo Zuppi. "When I saw the relationship between a Tunisian boy and his tutor – the archbishop observes – I understood that this project worked. We must remember that we can do a lot with little and that everyone must do something. We must overcome the logic of throwing away the key" (Selleri 2022, 4).

The tutors are not just professional guides but, in most cases, they are a kind of adoptive parents, moral references, especially for the young ones. Mayor Matteo Lepore appreciates the activity of the Italian Solidarity Center, which hosts foreign inmates in the "Don Giuseppe Nozzi" house, whom the mayor intends to grant honorary citizenship, and their children to acquire *ius soli*. Priest Mengoli argues that involving inmates and granting them civil rights drastically reduces recidivism. The Catholic Archdiocese of Bologna is directly involved, assuming responsibility for eight individuals in a residential setting (Bettazzi and Raimondo 2019, 9).

The Catholic Diocese of Modena, through the association Sant'Annna, and other Italian dioceses urge companies in their pastoral areas to bring more work into prisons. A donation from the archdiocese funded the first twelve months, but the goal is for the cooperative to become sustainable, and for this, more companies are needed. Approximately 550 inmates, including women, are working. They all ask to work, to train, and to have a support point in order to be able to reborn (Rotaru 2016, 29-43).

Conclusions

The Church must collaborate with penal institutions (Rotaru 2017, 57-76), as well as with societies and production cooperatives. It cannot be just one of them. Justice must stand together with the moral aspect of spirituality, as well as with the workforce. If there were only punishment and work, people would not morally recover; they would remain in the closed circle of delinquency, often encouraged by material opportunities and advantages (Mosconi 2001, 3-35). As an Orthodox mission in penitentiaries, we are interested in this mode of serving a sentence in freedom, seeking to understand how we could contribute, together with the offer of local social services, by analyzing the paths of leaving prison, starting from the biographical ones, of those who live or have experienced the restriction of freedom. The Church has the role of helping those who have erred become aware of their criminal deeds and their consequences. The Church promotes and encourages the free reparation of deeds through its chaplains and volunteers.

The mere suffering of the sentence itself is counterproductive; it must be given an expiatory meaning, namely, to deal with the injured party or their family. The fact that the will of the offender to provide reparations to the victim is not cultivated demonstrates a lack of legal common sense and a violated justice; it is a deficiency and a gap in the interest of doctrine and fidelity to the fundamental principles of criminal law strongly urge us to rectify (Parente 2007, 48).

Everything revolves around the offender, with the victim's part missing from the legal equation. When the Church's reparative conscience is absent, the focus is on investing in and recovering the offender, regardless of the individuals who have been offended, the prejudiced groups; justice is not complete. It would be correct for detainees to work, and a portion of their earnings should be allocated to those harmed or prejudiced by them. The Bible conveys this concept of restoring the balance of relationships broken by delinquency, thus corresponding to the intention to restore violated order and to do so in a personalized and humanized manner (Parente 2007, 49). With this statement, we can agree with Ulpianus in the fragment preserved for us at the opening of the Digest: Public law is protected by the sacred, priests, and magistrates (Ulpianus apud Parente 2007, 189).

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Beyond Crisis: Unveiling the Untold Saga of Family Businesses, Resilience Chronicles, and the Roadmap for Future Prosperity

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ABSTRACT: This research investigates the capacity of family companies to absorb, renew, and adapt in the face of crises, notably the pandemic crisis. By using theories of organizational finance, this research evaluates the influence of these capabilities on the potential for resilience among family-owned enterprises. This study has practical applications such as shedding light on the capabilities of family companies and allowing policymakers to develop incentives that encourage the establishment of such organizations to safeguard and promote economies. The article's novelty is in its analysis of three organizational resilience dimensions and the possibility that empirical research may be conducted to validate this theoretical framework.

KEYWORDS: business, family, resilience, sustainability, development

Introduction

Crises, including economic and financial aspects as well as others, have considerable influence on key balances and prices (Feldstein 2002). The global health crisis that occurred lately brought to light specific adjustment processes and the instability of economic systems. The inadequate resilience and feeble robustness of some economic structures have been criticized. Amidst the many ways in which the crisis has impacted each organization or group, it is vital to acknowledge that some configurations of labor (and capital) organization have fared more well than others. We may thus reasonably inquire as to whether sorts of businesses are resilient to economic crises and unanticipated circumstances. The topic of resilience, with a specific focus on family enterprises, has captivated writers who have examined it from several perspectives. Amann and Jaussaud (2012) conducted a financial analysis of their potential for resilience. Resilience transcends this perspective. It transcends financial crises, since family-owned enterprises often encounter a multitude of crises throughout the course of their life. These crises may originate at the junction of these subsystems, in the shareholder and family relations, or inside the entrepreneurial organization itself. These businesses will need to develop their resilience on several fronts—entrepreneurial, emotional, social, and financial—to surmount the threats, they encounter. The literature has also examined their capacity for absorption and rejuvenation considering the 2008 financial crisis, which exemplifies their resilience to crises (Bauweraerts and Colot 2014).

This research emphasizes the effectiveness of family-owned enterprises in managing exogenous circumstances that emerge inside economies. The objective of this essay is to draw attention to family enterprises with the intention of generating or providing justification for the possibility of a potential reevaluation. The primary issue addressed in this article is to the theoretical concern over the capability of family companies to withstand the challenges posed by the COVID-19 epidemic. This concern is framed in terms of their

ability to absorb, regenerate, and appropriate resources. This will enable us to articulate our views about the suitability of family enterprises as a business typology capable of showcasing resilience and sustainability to maintain growth throughout crises. Once the concepts have been elucidated, an examination of the theoretical justifications for the resilience potential of family companies in times of crisis will follow. A conclusion will restate the arguments presented.

1. Defining the concept of management development in an era of crisis

When professionals from various disciplines, such as psychology (referring to the "development of intelligence"), mathematics (development of an equation), photography (development of a film), gynecology, and midwifery (development of a fetus), etc., employ the term "development" in a clear and distinctive manner, all practitioners within the same field agree on the same definition. Regarding the abbreviated term "development," which has gradually become commonplace, it can refer to either a condition or a progression, carrying with it the meanings of economic expansion, individual satisfaction, social equity, ecological equilibrium, and well-being (Martínez-Alier et al. 2010).

All the technological, social, geographical, demographic, and cultural changes that follow the expansion of production are referred to as "development." It may be linked to the notion of economic and social advancement and expresses the structural and qualitative essence of growth. Following an extensive period of emphasising quantitative metrics, most notably the expansion of wealth output (GDP), the notion of development has evolved to include a multitude of facets of welfare, including educational attainment, living circumstances, and the general health of communities.

2. Managerial resilience: a factor that promotes the ability to face the challenges of crises

The correlation between the progress of our states and the viability of the firms that propel our economy seems indisputable. This sustainability is cultivated via the firms' and the economic environment's respective resiliency in the face of adversity. It is one thing to establish businesses; it is quite another to guarantee that these businesses endure the challenges of their journey to sustainably expand and contribute to the growth of the national economy. The initiatives undertaken by governments, particularly those in sub-Saharan Africa, to promote entrepreneurship, particularly among the youth, to combat the growing issue of unemployment, are readily apparent (Fall 2022).

Nevertheless, a disparity exists between efforts to foster the establishment of novel enterprises and those aimed at consolidating and rescuing struggling firms. On the contrary, development entails the perpetuation of progress and the consolidation of accomplishments. Africa, which is already grappling with the challenges of youth employment and decent employment more generally, should be proactively vigilant and defensive regarding the closures of operational businesses that are squandering a portion of job seekers, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. The closure of each SME exacerbates the issue (Fall 2022). While this assertion is contingent upon certain contexts and methodologies, it remains valid considering the practicalities shown by specific business structures within times of worldwide economic challenges and conditions (Fall 2022). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), for instance, are seen as institutions that provide economies with an efficient means of combating unemployment due to their dynamic, flexible, and agile nature, which enables them to adjust to crisis circumstances (Bragard and Van Caillie 1994). Others refer to huge corporations that own ample reserves and substantial financial resources to endure periods of falling sales and turnover. Further illustrations, legal statuses, or forms might be referenced. They will be preserved within this framework. It is worth

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noting that family enterprises have an inherent quality of resilience and great adaptability, which contributes to their current development.

3. The family business: a unique and resilient structure to face the challenges of crises

During the COVID-19 epidemic, the higher financial, environmental, and social performance of family enterprises relative to their non-family competitors was expected. The Credit Suisse Family 1000 analysis validates the findings of prior research that examined the conduct of family-owned businesses across several crises in the past (Labaki 2020). The evaluation of the resilience of family companies and the reasons supporting their capacity to confront development obstacles will be assessed in terms of their resilience capabilities, which are a component of their longevity.

3.1. Family business: What is it?

A family enterprise exists at the nexus of the commercial and familial spheres. In a broader sense, this junction gains ownership. The management component is an additional element that affects others. In practice, overseeing a family SME necessitates engaging in an ongoing dispute about the concepts, values, standards, and goals of these subsystems. According to Mahmoud-Jouini and Mignon (2009), the family business is conceptualized as a system comprising of the following subsystems: 1) "business," which comprises structures and strategies serving to, and 2) "family," which is defined by its history, traditions, and life cycle; and 3) "individuals," who are family members each possessing unique interests, knowledge, and abilities, and whose degree of influence on the organization is evident in their degree of participation in the control of the business.

The notion of a family company is multifaceted and challenging to precisely describe since it encompasses entities that possess distinct qualities. Nonetheless, a degree of convergence exists across the various definitions, allowing for the distinction to be made between family firms and non-family enterprises. The writers have used various criteria to describe it, with some using single-criteria definitions and others utilizing multi-criteria definitions. Therefore, certain individuals consider it adequate to refer to an enterprise as a family business if it is owned by a single individual or a group of individuals from the same family; if the firm is controlled by one or more families; if there are significant interactions between the family and the enterprise; or if the transfer of the enterprise is executed or planned for at least one member of the next generation of the owner-family (Koffi et al. 2014). Authors that prefer multi-criteria definitions stipulate that for an organization to be classified as a family company, it must satisfy a minimum of two of the requirements (Koffi et al. 2014). A family business is an enterprise that is wholly or primarily controlled by individuals related by blood or matrimony, with at least one member of the family circle overseeing management while other family members work in the business. The managers of the family business express a powerful desire to transfer the company to the following generation of the family.

3.2. Organizational resilience of family businesses

Bernard and Barbosa (2016) define resilience as the capacity of a given entity to manage unforeseen circumstances. For academics, operationalizing organizational resilience has been a formidable obstacle. Bernard and Barbosa (2016) deconstruct it into three aptitudes or dimensions: the ability to absorb, replenish, and appropriate. Thus, organizational resilience signifies an establishment's capacity to assimilate, react to, and profit from circumstances that arise due to environmental fluctuations (Bauweraerts and Colot 2014).

The durability that distinguishes resilient businesses is an attribute that the family company strategy likewise seeks to identify or appreciate.

3.3. Organizational sustainability of family firms: The future of family management

Permanency, which is also known as survivability or longevity, is the condition of an object or entity that endures over an extended period. The concept of sustainability is multifaceted and confusing. Mignon (2009) identified two distinct forms of permanence based on an examination of managers' perceptions: the perenniality of power, which pertains to management and control by patrimony; and the perenniality of the project, which encompasses production processes, activities, products, brands, and services; and the perenniality of the organization. Common sense dictates that when one discusses sustainability, one is referring to the concept of an entity being present.

Even though a corporation may not have ceased operations, it has still forfeited the fundamental aspect of its identity: sustainability is also emphasized in this context. Similarly, even after a business has ceased operations, its innovation persists under the same name and composition. Dwarf may always be a topic of discussion. In general, organizational sustainability refers to the durability of structures, processes, and organizations that include the individuals who possess the tacit knowledge required to execute the many projects and activities.

3.4. The impact of family structure on the resilience of organizations facing crisis challenges

Family-owned firms are distinguished by their unique attributes or by being at the forefront of their industry. Our article's theoretical analysis categorizes these attributes into a typology that confers benefits in the pursuit of economic development in Africa, where, at best, we still find ourselves in a transitional or traditional phase. These advantages accrue from the resilience of family businesses, particularly when confronted with crisis situations.

3.4.1. The absorptive capacity of family businesses: A form of organizational resilience

Strategic intelligence refers to an organization's capacity to assimilate and use valuable information from the external environment, particularly during periods of instability and emergency, to ensure its continued existence. During a crisis, this necessitates that an organization has the capability to recognize and address the limitations imposed by its surroundings to secure its continued existence. Family firms has certain capabilities and benefits that enable them to absorb this information due to a variety of intrinsic qualities.

- About the capital structure of family-owned enterprises: The discourse around the financial structure of family enterprises necessitates an examination of the notion of property rights. The primary objective of this theory is to demonstrate how various definitions of ownership (public or private) influence the conduct of agents and the nature of a framework that facilitates coordination among agents (Beech et al. 2019). Certain family business resources are unique, difficult to replicate, and difficult to substitute, according to research, since they are intertwined with complicated social ties, such as those often seen among family members (Mahmoud-Jouini and Mignon 2009).
- As per the resource hypothesis, favorable member engagement inside an organization may result in enduring competitive advantages. This engagement is fostered by the prevalent trust and participation culture that characterize family-owned enterprises. Additionally, it is emphasized that family enterprises possess a "family capital" that consists of more robust, enduring, and intense connections than are often found in non-family organizations. Loyalties that span several

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generations exemplify the fundamental tenet of social resilience. Rania Labaki (2020) reported in September 2020 that their research on family businesses, by applying the notion of "invisible loyalties" from family psychoanalysis, revealed that families tend to extend these allegiances beyond the intergenerational family sphere to encompass stakeholders. Family capital contributors' claims, credits, interests, and dividends are less urgent in terms of stakeholder impact than those of other company structures.

- Labaki (2020) further posits that stakeholders develop trustworthy connections with the family core over time, affiliating themselves with it or even passing it down from generation to generation. The organization benefits from these developed affinities, which provide consistent support in the form of attentiveness and assistance throughout transitory challenges. Family enterprises are safeguarded within a climate of reconciliation via the assistance of stakeholders who are forgiving. This facilitates the establishment of a natural understanding during times of crisis, allowing the organization sufficient time to recuperate and rebound.
- To preserve control of their firm via capital and management and achieve power sustainability, family managers often accumulate reserves during prosperous periods so they may expel equity during periods of turmoil. Additionally, family firms are more likely to have readily convertible funds to mitigate the risks associated with more precarious financial arrangements (Amann and Jaussaud 2012). Family businesses are adept at using familial capital, including both financial and human assets, to guarantee the uninterrupted operation of potentially mobilizable resources during times of crisis.
- The ambition of the family business's CEO is to ensure that the company continues to operate in a profitable and sustainable manner for future generations (Miller and Le Breton- Miller 2005). This results in enhanced crisis management of family-owned enterprises. Amann and Jaussaud (2012) propose and illustrate that the integration of family enterprises' distinctive capabilities and resources with their long-term perspective results in enhanced performance during periods of turmoil.
- From the standpoint of frameworks and criteria for decision-making: Family enterprises have an unorthodox organizational structure and a propensity for emotive and emotional decision-making about the criteria and foundation of such choices. Instances of private conversations, unanticipated meetings, and personal ties that result in choices hinder the establishment of formal organizational structures and hierarchies. However, the agility of communication and the inefficiency of bureaucracy expedite decision-making, enabling a prompter reaction to environmental changes (Beech et al. 2019).
- From a competitive and competitive standpoint: The interplay between the family and business systems enables the family enterprise to develop distinctive competencies that provide enduring competitive advantages (Beech et al. 2019). Additionally, they possess competitive advantages due to their extensive networks of connections and the collective commitment of each member to the betterment of society, which therefore undermines their personal ties inside the family company. This ensures that they are also kept informed. The unique characteristics of the capital used by the family firm serve as a barrier to entrance into their industry and promote the establishment of a sustainable competitive edge (Mahmoud-Jouini and Mignon 2009).
- Additionally, knowledge transfer and management provide family firms with a competitive advantage. Knowledge, albeit intangible, is an asset, and family

companies get substantial value from the self-management of this asset in an era of intensified competition (Wachelke 2012).

- From a natural standpoint, one may argue that during periods of severe economic crises, family businesses have often been the last resort for economies. This phenomenon may be elucidated by the role of the family company in the economic structure, given that entrepreneurs are risk takers. An entrepreneur may be an individual, a partnership, or a group. A "partnership" (company) assumes the business's associated risks. However, such dangers involving third parties need the establishment of a relationship of trust in advance, even if it is a rudimentary one (Beech et al. 2019). In contrast, the family serves as the first furnace in which trust is forged among members: between spouses, siblings, cousins, and so on. During a crisis, there is an increased exposure to economic and financial dangers, which necessitates the involvement of reliable personnel. Thus, it is not surprising that the family firm emerges as an optimal type of organization and environment where crises and risks are more effectively shared and endured.

3.4.2. The capacity for renewal as a form of resilience of family businesses in emerging contexts

Resilience refers to an organization's capacity to provide inventive resolutions in the face of atypical circumstances. Being resilient entails the capacity to endure adversity while endeavoring to rectify inefficiencies or ineffectiveness in current procedures or activities by innovative ways, and/or establish novel endeavors. Family enterprises provide an appropriate structure for these exercises.

Family firms are a stimulus for innovation due to their robust, transparent culture, which is founded on principles that are transmitted from generation to generation. Family company owner-managers are driven by a sense of compassion, a collectivist perspective, and a long-term outlook (Davis et al. 1997). These factors influence their unique decisions about innovation. Additionally, family-owned businesses are more likely to test out novel concepts due to their organizational structure being more favorable to innovation than that of non-family-owned businesses (Calabr et al. 2019). Innovations serve as the progenitor of industrial revolutions, innovations, and thus, sustainable development. Family enterprises, according to researchers, are more aggressive, inventive, and creative than non-family firms (Basly 2005).

Family managers tend to allocate funds towards assets that primarily benefit the next generation, with the expectation that ownership will continue to be familial (Gedajlovic et al. 2012). This results in their making suboptimal investments with less risk. The expectation that the company will be transferred to a family member in the future motivates FE decision makers to make long-term strategic choices that enhance the firm's sustainability (Basly 2005). Family-owned enterprises are characterized by a long-term perspective that centers on the success and prosperity of the current generation. Consequently, the long-term perspective of this union also motivates them to establish a family of distinction that generates value that transcends generations (De Massis et al. 2012).

Cultural attributes within this company are highly consistent due to the intergenerational transfer of values. These ideals, which provide an immutable foundation, are the attributes of a sustainable enterprise. However, this paradoxical stability enables the family company to improve its flexibility. The family's distinct identity and cultural values, which impact the family business despite their relative stability, simultaneously function as analytical filters (Mignon 2001) and a collection of dynamic capabilities (Uhl-Bien and Arena 2018), which influence or shape global strategy and strategic decisions. Critical conditions place significant emphasis on this capacity as a means of ensuring survival.

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A family ownership structure influences the company's overall strategy by encouraging continuity and a focus on the long term. Family businesses exhibit a comparatively diminished propensity for risk compared to non-family businesses due to their prioritization of safeguarding the company's long-term viability by preventing harm to the assets of future generations, which supersedes adherence to formal and methodical decision-making processes. The owner-manager exhibits a preference for low-risk investments and financing due to the absence of diversification in the family businesses and his personal and financial investment in the same organization. This inclination stems from concerns regarding potential job and financial investment loss resulting from his decision-making. This degree of risk tolerance provides family businesses with a strategic edge in ensuring employment, especially during times of crisis.

3.4.3. Family ownership structure vs. organizational resilience

Ownership refers to a corporation's capacity to capitalize on insights gained from previous disasters. Since the family company is comprised of many generations and the influence of Ephemera, it is possible to draw from memories and experiences when confronted with fresh challenges. A family firm is managed by a formal or informal collective, while a single proprietorship is operated by an owner-entrepreneur who is often hesitant to relinquish even little amounts of authority. Notwithstanding the evident delegation of managerial authority to a single individual, the other members retain the authority to petition for an injunction against the business's choices. This injunction serves to reframe and limit the flexibility of an individual's capricious choices, so functioning as a strategic force. Therefore, a variety of information sources, experiences, and analytical perspectives are used to fortify the family business's ownership (Beech et al. 2019).

Few individuals can make decisions, even unexpected ones, which simplifies the process and eventually decreases the expenses associated with governance. Consequently, these advantages of governance are unquestionably advantageous from an economic standpoint. In addition, ownership may exert influence at several tiers, including management, the board of directors, and the owners themselves, all of which contribute to the organization making more prudent choices. Therefore, family business governance promotes collaborations throughout the entire system, enabling the implementation of long-term solutions that may prove more efficacious, notwithstanding the current expenses or dangers involved. Although the variety of functions performed by the family contributes to the system's complexity, it also establishes vital connections between the many spheres of government. In general, the arguments put up in support of this kind of company are founded not just on its distinctive attributes, but primarily on the significance of its socio-economic contributions to our economies. While these jobs may not confer a direct folding capability to the three preceding ones, they do provide an indirect and formidable capacity of support to the environment, both internal and external, particularly in the face of external shocks. This may be considered a kind of resilience that can be associated with the ability to appropriate (Beech et al. 2019).

Family companies, in fact, exemplify an exemplary model for the future from a social standpoint, especially due to the elevated level of participation they demonstrate in their local communities and the values they uphold (Aronoff and Ward 1994). It is believed that family enterprises participate more actively in social and societal governance. Additionally, they contribute to the enhancement of life quality by exhibiting a heightened sense of accountability towards their staff and the local community by providing several forms of assistance to socio-cultural and public health institutions and organizations (Astrachan 1988). They invest in sustainable growth while ensuring that the interests of stakeholders and the environment are adequately protected. They actively engage in the economic and psychological development of the communities from which they originate. It is important to

acknowledge that the family serves as a protective barrier for its members against the risks and uncertainties of the economic and social environment. Their interventions with the members of the fault line remain steadfast even during times of stress. In a similar vein, their community actions, which are intricately linked with those of the family proprietor, persist even during times of difficulty. Thus, social responsibility and sustainable development benefit from this.

They are economically significant in two ways: by producing jobs, they contribute to national output and aid in the battle against unemployment (Swamy 2011). Administration, the natural division of labor, incubation with young family members, funding of start-up capital for family members who also aspire to start enterprises, low-cost human resource management, and other services are performed by businesses in economies. Family enterprises contribute to the stability of our economies via their long-term strategy. They are the ones who fight during times of crisis when multinational corporations and their branches relocate to the country of their parent business or to other frontiers, so exacerbating the crisis in the country of relocation. They are the most invested in regional development, while the entities repatriate most of their income. Nevertheless, during times of crisis, it is these organizations that employees are willing to compromise on their compensation until the crisis subsides.

Lansberg (1983) examines the issue of human resources management in family companies and emphasizes the capacity of such enterprises to navigate the conflict between norms specific to the family unit and those that pertain to the overall operations of the company. Even if simply for an internship, a recently graduated family member finds employment in a family firm virtually invariably. Therefore, they serve as a support system for recent graduates who are unable to get work due to the uncertain job market conditions, and they foster the development of an entrepreneurial mindset. Family managers are, as it turns out, compensated less highly than managers of non-family enterprises.

Between 1994 and 2000, Sraer and Thesmar (2004) analyze the operational performance of family-owned companies that were publicly traded on the Paris Stock Exchange. According to their analysis, family-owned businesses outperform publicly traded companies. Additionally, they observe that heir-led enterprises have lower salaries and employment that are less susceptible to sectoral shocks. They propose that this may account for the observed variations in performance. Family enterprises either compensate its staff at a lower mean salary or first hire and educate less-skilled personnel to match their productivity levels with those of more competent personnel. Family firms can be identified by the fact that employees (particularly those who are related through blood) consent to lower pay (relative to the market rate and their level of education) or even temporary wage reductions during economic downturns or crises, than they would have accepted in a conventional firm where their only contractual obligation would be salary.

Additionally, family enterprises profit from an unpaid labor force (working time), which is sometimes highly qualified. This pertains mostly to the spouses and some children under the legal working age of the owner-manager. Indeed, certain informal interventions of administration, training, regulation, conflict resolution, strategic and operational advice (both directly to the spouse in bed or at home, as well as in the enterprise during a visit) rendered by the spouse(s) are a capital advantage for the family businesses; the same interventions can be paid for heavily if entrusted to an external consultant or specialist. Consequently, this interweaving of family businesses may benefit macroeconomic expansion and contribute to the success of the family businesses. In the family business, there is greater responsibility and commitment (as opposed to investment), sacrifice and loyalty (because each of the workers or members of the family and the business reacts by considering the business as "ours").

Conclusion

Our contribution pertains to the development of the following conceptual framework about resilience in family businesses:

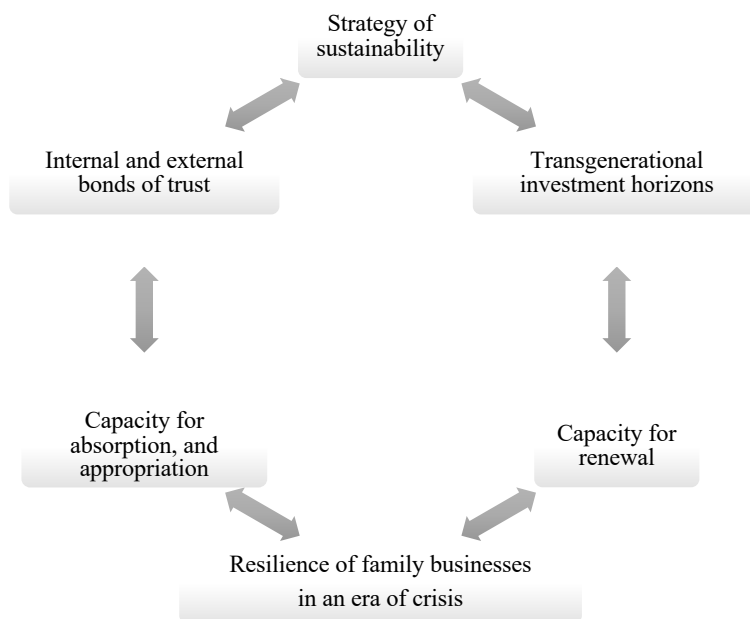


Figure 1. Theoretical contribution of our research
Source: Authors

Firstly, it underscores an often-overlooked organizational structure that has yet shown its value and continues to do so covertly. Secondly, it provides justification for the potential reassessment of family-owned enterprises. It is important to acknowledge that although the challenges identified and examined in the academic literature, family companies continue to be a kind of firm distinguished by its unique attributes. Their "transgenerational" investment horizons enable them to adopt a long-term perspective, which is crucial for upholding their obligation and commitment to their descendants and guaranteeing the ongoing operation and profitability of the family businesses. This dedication and long-term perspective are one of the family companies' assets, enabling them to demonstrate more resilience in the face of cyclical and structural crises or challenges than non-family firms.

Family-owned enterprises fortify their standing as forward-thinking corporations by their foresight, belief that they can endure any adversity, and capacity to establish trustworthy relationships both internally and outside. Anxious economies are supported by the low rate of migration found among family firms and the human resource sacrifices that always occur, often without compensation.

Further, African economies benefit from the ability of this sector to accommodate family job applicants. The pursuit of autonomy inside family enterprises to maintain authority and control enables them to release reserves and infuse family finances to support their recovery and resilience during times of crisis, therefore emphasizing their potential for absorption. They exhibit a notable degree of ingenuity and transformation, particularly momentarily in response to environmental disturbances, which empowers them to adjust and demonstrate a capacity for rejuvenation that is sometimes greater than that of non-family members. Furthermore, their potential for appropriation would be enhanced by the participation of many family generations in the enterprise and a sufficiently vivid memory that may function as a guide.

Therefore, family firms have remarkable resilience in both typical circumstances and worldwide catastrophes. This results in sustainability, which serves as a strategic goal for them and facilitates the tacit development of these capabilities. Nevertheless, it is critical to emphasize the need for further conceptual elucidation and the establishment of an institutional framework to bolster these structures so that their benefits may be fully realized. Additionally, additional empirical research might examine the indicated theoretical benefits for family firms.

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The Gospel and the Impact of Eschatology on the Life of Society

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ABSTRACT: Eschatology played an important role in shaping the life of society and the stability of the Roman Empire. Its role was to shape society, but also to form social identities. When examining the history of the first century, we see how three eschatologies intersect: Jewish, imperial, and Christian, each with its own social, political, economic and also religious goals. Christian eschatology, of those listed, proposes a new understanding at the social level in the way it redefines human identity in preparation for the parousia, but also to define how Christians will perform their social duties in a hostile environment. The apostle Paul's understanding, through the use of the metaphor of adoption, will offer new eschatological and social identity perspectives for Christians living in a social setting marked by rival identities, but will also offer perspectives that go beyond the earthly sphere.

KEYWORDS: identity, church, eschatology, social, parousia

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is not to present the eschatological conceptions of the entire religious history of thought (Erikson 2010, 983-1003; Walls 2010), but rather to understand how first-century eschatology functioned at the societal level. The goal is to create an overview of how it alters or transforms the social, political and economic components of society, but it is also worth noting the evolution of this thought when it interacts with certain streams of thought specific to a particular historical period and how it allows itself to be shaped or influenced by them.

The transformation of society and eschatology

Eschatological thinking has been part of the social structure of all ancient and modern societies, so it is natural to observe it in the early history of the Christian Church. It is motivated in its missionary thrust by these eschatological expectations, and these have to do with the social context of the first century and the urgency born of these expectations, as personal and collective problems to be solved in the distant or near future. The Apostle Peter, taking up the prophecy of Joel (2:28-29), when preaching on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-12), already adds that from his point of view, this prophecy is in progress because we are in the last days. Biblical thought has this eschatological thinking at its center in the first Christian century (Menn 2018). The events of the time are interpreted in accordance with the eschatological view.

Speaking of an essential component of eschatology, Prof. Laurențiu Moț tells us that it functioned as an interpretative framework of the times. “The imminence of the *Parousia* is generally fed by indicators of a geographical nature (wars, conflicts), religious (false prophets, anti-Christians), sanitary (plagues, pestilences) and by vagaries of nature (earthquakes, famines)” (Moț 2022, 228). From this point of view, important events that

occur in a society are understood through this lens. This should come as no surprise, as we are also talking here about a psychological factor that acts and gives meaning to events insofar as they fit into a frame of reference (Măcelaru 2011, 167-173; 2012, 27-79; 2018, 27-34). Thus, the present is interpreted through the future, which offers optimism and hope. In this way, we distinguish a first sense of eschatology, in which a certain kind of future is anticipated through present events.

Although we have this framework within which the world should be understood, Fredriksen (2023, 115) speaks of an important paradoxical stage through which the Christian church of the first century passed, namely that we are not only dealing with a means by which the meaning of the world is understood, but we can also speak of an ethic that motivates certain concrete actions. It says thus: “With these new or newly expanded messianic interpretations of Jesus, the community was finally able to formulate a plan of action, different from the passive expectation of the kingdom.” The main activity of the first-century church had at its center *didache* and *kerygma* (Caemmerer 1961; Oprean 2014, 203), preaching the message that Christ will return. This is how we can justify the way the early Christians considered that society should be prepared for Christ's coming in glory. As the early church grappled with the inexplicable delay of Christ's return, new understandings of the role Christians should play in the good of society emerged. The eschatology of the early centuries underwent constant evaluation out of a desire to adapt to the challenges within society, but also the need for Christians to remain connected to Christ's future kingdom. This bottleneck was overcome, as Petry (1956, 75) explains, when they saw things from a different perspective, in a new light, namely that “the world of Christian brotherhood in the next world, of which His disciples long to be a part, must be the determining ideal for the society in which they themselves are helping to establish on this earth.”

Theological thinking and eschatology

Throughout this formative period of the Christian church, looking at the life of the apostle Paul, we also see in the right of his efforts generated an ethic of violence in relation to the eschatology that defined his convictions. Wright speaks of important eschatological expectations based on Daniel's prophecies, placing the Jerusalem Temple and the Torah at the centre of Jewish hopes. To this belief, Wright (2020, 29-30) adds, “It was vital for Jews to observe the Torah with rigorous attention to detail and to defend the Torah and the Temple itself against possible attacks and threats. Failure on these points will hold up the promise, will stand in the way of the fulfillment of the great story. Therefore he persecuted them.” J.H. Wright (2016, 376) also develops this theme of Jewish eschatology - he talks about the centrality of important Jewish elements at the heart of eschatology of this kind, such as the rebuilt Temple, David's restored kingdom, and then the Gentiles who can be saved. We thus observe in the first century at least two conflicting eschatologies. One is a young, nascent eschatology, which by its creed embraces “all the world,” and one has a geographically and socially limited understanding, but is sufficiently powerful and deeply rooted because it aims at the restoration of a nation that was under foreign domination. Christian eschatology has been in conflict with various pagan ideologies. It is not only in Judea that we see such a conflict, but also in the rest of the Empire we see the promotion of a Christian-type eschatology that proposes a paradigm shift, when in ancient societies cataclysms were closely linked to a religious framework dominated by gods who showed their disapproval of what was happening among humans. This explanation is a referential one for how pagan societies functioned at that time. The good of society was marked by the relationship between people and local deities, spirituality and religiosity were the

primary way in which people secured the goodwill of the gods, and the gods were seen as having a socially determining role as well as a role in influencing events. It is in this context—in which the worship of the gods was essential—that the Christian view of the 'network of synagogue communities in the Diaspora' comes into play. They (Christians) asked Jewish listeners not for a significant adjustment of religion, but for a change of perspective. The God of Israel, they proclaimed, was about to end history” (Fredriksen 2023, 166). It was not only a change of perspective related to relating to the deity, but also that they encouraged “some behaviors, such as insistence on repentance, immersion in water in the name of Jesus for deliverance from sins, receiving the Holy Spirit, were truly new” (Fredriksen 2023, 166).

Not to be omitted from the larger landscape of first-century eschatologists is the Roman understanding of the future. Although sibylline oracles were the main means, they turned to for knowledge of the future, the greatest fear of the ruling structures of the Roman Empire had to do with how they related to the prophecies circulating in the empire. These could destabilize the smooth running of Roman society (Balsdon 1979, 190), and as such, imperial eschatology, with the Roman Emperor at its center, addresses some of these shortcomings. This eschatology should be understood in terms of prosperity, wealth and health, as a result of loyalty to the Roman emperor, but also as a result of the fact that the imperial cult was supported by people of high social status, and thus they received 'blessings' that those in the lower social strata of Roman society would also benefit from. This is how social prosperity was seen at the time (Witherington III 1995, 295, 297). As a result of this understanding the imperial eschatological view supported and legitimized a certain social order that led to the stability of the Roman Empire, but it also affected the way the Christian church in the empire functioned socially because a certain social order was valued that was based on how people perceived themselves in relation to others. In this social, economic, and political context, Paul presents his Christian eschatology which brings to the fore a different understanding of human relations, not one based on favoritism and opportunities for social advancement.

Paul...associates salvation not with the coming of Caesar but with the return of Christ. It is no accident that when Paul addresses Christians in the Roman cities of Corinth and Philippi, he emphasizes most strongly that from Christ one does and will receive the benefits of real salvation. He refers to Christ's parousia in 1 Cor. 15:23 as opposed to Caesar's appearance and to Christ subduing all kings and kingdoms when he comes (1 Cor. 15:24), as opposed to Caesar's boasting that he has already done so in imposing the pax Romana. Paul counters this propaganda with his own brand of “already ... not yet” Christianity. For Paul, the right order (cf. 1 Cor.15:23) that really matters is in “Christ”. This is the only kind of social order that should really matter to Christians, not society's classification systems. The Corinthians should be concerned to be found “in Christ” when he returns, not to be found among the social elites of Corinthian society (Witherington III 1995, 297).

In this way, the apostle Paul criticizes the social and political structure of the Roman Empire by suggesting that loyalty and spiritual power should not be linked to an earthly political and social structure. The call that the Apostle Paul makes is primarily about the spiritual dimension and not so much about social privileges gained in a way that affects the church and relationships within it. The above situation is not limited to cities like Philippi and Corinth. Witherington III, speaking of Thessalonica, says:

It was an important city in many ways. It was the capital of the Roman province of Macedonia. For its support of Octavian, it became a free city in 42 BC and was not made a Roman colony. It minted its own coins (both imperial and autonomous), had its own form of government, but still had close ties to Rome and there is evidence of imperial worship in this city. This can be particularly highlighted in the coins with Julius Caesar's head, minted just before the time of Christ, which implied recognition

of Julius as a god, and the fact that Augustus replaced Zeus on the coins in the city. These coins reflect the continued blessings that Rome bestowed on Thessalonica, on which the city had apparently come to depend, and the rise of imperial theology and imperial eschatology that was part of the rhetoric of response in such a city. The essence of this theology was that the emperor was the universal saviour whose benefactions and help should be proclaimed as good news throughout the world (Witherington III 1998, 503).

What is new about this view is that we are not just dealing with loyalty or a form by which we can observe the political recognition Rome enjoyed from the various cities of the ancient world, but also that the emperor of Rome was seen as a messiah. In this well-defined Roman theology of a secular type, those who showed loyalty to the emperor were granted benefits, protection and various privileges that were seen as divine gifts (Mocanu and Ștefănică 2010, 69-90). Thus, through the various cities throughout the Roman Empire, we see the spread of the imperial eschatological message that had the messianic figure of the emperor of Rome at its center. On a deeper level, we see a conflict of eschatologies taking place on a social level, and this was causing concern among the elites of the Roman Empire. Balsdon (1979, 190) talks about the difficulties Rome had in trying to prevent the spread of alarmist messages about a historical end to the Roman Empire. They had difficulty controlling the spread of these messages because there were dissident populations who embraced them, such as Jews and Christians. They were capitalizing on their spread and using them to propose their own interpretation.

Social transformation and the new (missionary) horizons of Christianity

It is the eschatological foundation that shapes the future of the Christian church and its identity. There is no identity without eschatology. The relationship between the two establishes that identity is not rooted in the realities of the world and that Christian faith is rooted in a heavenly reality. The two planes of existence shape Christian behavior. “The reality that this world is temporary and that the Christian's true identity is in heaven helps Christ's disciples understand their place in the world and impels them to speak of eternal realities.... Belief in the temporariness of this world and in the work of the Holy Spirit are thus two fundamental beliefs for the maturation of faith” (Rheenen 1996, 149).

Moltmann (1967, 67) tells us how the relationship between eschatology and identity operates: 'Only in his coming out into the world does man experience himself. Without objectification no experience of self is possible. Man's understanding of himself is always social, material and historically mediated.' Since eschatology proposes a human identity related to a transcendent dimension, the present is seen as meaningful because it has the power to shape and transform. Thus, eschatological identity has the capacity to influence the present. If we are to refer to what Moltmann says, we see that the Christian is in a permanent relationship of evaluation and reporting between the two dimensions in which he believes and lives: the present and the future. Understood from another point of view, he suggests that because of having this eschatological identity, the Christian can engage in social life because the experience of self-awareness takes place in this space and that the self-understanding of the individual and the community takes place only in the context of an interaction of a social nature, therefore we observe a close relationship between the Christian eschatological identity and social engagement which has among other things the role of shaping new perspectives on the present and the future.

Eschatology and social ethics in first-century thought

Schreiner (2011, 812), in the book *New Testament Theology*, discusses this delicate relationship between the social world of the time and the theology that the early Christians

took from Jesus Christ. The central claim of the whole argument he builds is that from the beginning, “for all who believe in Jesus Christ, everything is influenced by eschatology.” Schreiner sees this interplay as extremely complex, challenging, and at the same time extremely challenging in terms of the impact Christianity can create. Of these believers, he says that they live in the tension of “already” and “not yet,” one that emphasizes that some of the promises and realities of salvation have already taken place through Jesus Christ, while others are to take place in the imminent future. In this context of this eschatological tension the experience of believers is marked by an understanding, recognition, and awareness of evil on the individual and social level, but at the same time, by an anchoring in the promises promised by Jesus Christ. Regardless of the historical period to which we refer, believers can neither deny nor ignore the negative realities taking place in society, but at the same time they recognize that the risk of being overwhelmed by the realities of evil is increased. While they are characterized by this perspective on the realities of society, they live with the conviction that God will bring about a new creation in the future in which the issues we face today will no longer find their place. This attitude leads to a realistic approach to the world, but at the same time it generates a hope that God's intervention in the workings of this world will eradicate evil as it manifests itself now. If we are to refer to Ernst Troeltsch (2009, 85), a respected Protestant theologian and philosopher of culture, talking about how Christianity has influenced social life, he says that the model implemented by the Apostle Paul's theological ideas about relating to social problems is a very good example until the advent of the modern age. He observes that religion is undergoing a spectacular transformation, marked by a shift from religious doctrines to an ethical religion with redemptive values, which implies embracing an ethical and universal ideal that transcends social conditions. On the other hand, the whole world, the whole universe is placed under God's guidance, despite the evil that exists. And this makes everything that happens socially ordained by God. Troeltsch also says that while proposing the living of an ideal that transcends this world, the apostle Paul also promotes an obedience to social ordinances. The fundamental element that holds everything in balance has to do with God's role in this world. He makes his point when he says that through Christianity social life is influenced in two ways: one having to do with the postulating of a transcendental ideal and the other with the way in which love manifests itself, namely through submission to the social order or hostility to it.

Schreiner sees a close relationship between the present and the future when he says “the future world of righteousness is also the ultimate and final reality” and focuses in his study on five aspects of the social world that mark New Testament theology, among them: wealth and poverty, the role of women, marriage, divorce and children, the relationship with state authorities, and slavery (Schreiner 2011, 816-862). This kind of reporting has led to ideological conflicts because Paul's advice (Schreiner 2020, 317) does not promote an escapist view of life, but an assumed one, in which we are responsible in all areas of life's influence, except that “those who understand that the present age is passing quickly will have a new perspective on all events” (Schreiner 2020, 317). Another source of conflict is that in the New Testament period, the Gospel of Christ penetrated all social strata of the Roman Empire. There was no social class that was not touched by this Gospel that demanded a change in the social perception and role of the Christian in society. Holland, a noted historian, describes the missionary eschatological vision of the apostle Paul, saying:

Paul's conviction that the only true citizenship was that of Heaven was matched by his determination to exploit the manifestations of earthly authority as effectively as he was able. If the synagogues offered him a chance to win his fellow Jews to Christ, then he would take it. If the householders of Corinth or Rome provided him with financial support and meeting places for various converts and funds to help fight the famine in Judea, he would take full advantage of their generosity. If Roman power guaranteed the peace that allowed him to travel the world, then he was not going to jeopardise his

mission by encouraging his converts to rebel against it. There was too much at stake. There was no time to build a new structure of society. What mattered, in the short window of opportunity Paul had been given, was to plant as many churches as possible and thereby prepare the world for the *parousia* (Holland 2022, 111).

For an understanding of Christian eschatology, it is extremely important to note the balanced approach that the apostle Paul shows when he understands that its primary objective is to prepare the world for the *parousia*. With this goal in mind we see that he combines the eschatological expectation with the action of preparing society for the culminating moment of history as he envisioned it. From this point of view, Paul cannot be understood as a social activist, eager to change the foundations of the Roman society in which he lived, but rather to prepare the world and the church for the encounter with Jesus Christ. Paul's missionary strategy is rather a pragmatic one in which he aims to use the resources and social structures of the Roman Empire to achieve his theological goal of the *parousia*. This is why we do not see the apostle Paul as committed against a reformation of the power structure of the time, but rather we see him as one who takes advantage of the opportunities offered to him to spread the Gospel. The way the apostle aims to bring about transformation by working is through the church or through human communities rather than being in direct conflict with the power structures of the time. In a hostile climate, the apostle Paul's eschatology seems to have this goal, where social structures are influenced from within as people experience the new birth. The social context of the Roman Empire was profoundly affected by the penetration of the Gospel of Christ (Martin 1986, 110).

Senatorial and equestrian orders	= upper class
Decurions and local oligarchs	= the lower underclass of the upper class
Highly successful artisans (merchants, craftsmen, etc.) with aspirations to achieve decurion status	= lower middle class
<hr/>	
Medium-successful artisans etc.; e.g. most household owners	= middle class
Employed artisans or tenants etc.	= lower middle class
<hr/>	
Slaves	= lower classes
Farmers	= lower classes
Beggars	= lower classes

This Gospel, with its profound eschatological character, managed to penetrate the whole structure of Roman society and to propose to the new converts a new perspective which was not so much linked to the social or economic status of the person concerned, but to an ethic rooted in a future world in which relations between people would be determined by the expression which the apostle Paul uses so successfully. "In Christ" is found the whole of redeemed humanity (Oprean 2021, 133). From this point of view, the Gospel has not only brought about a change in an individual, but also a reconfiguration of the existing social structure that has often led to tension and conflict, but at the same time, it has also opened up the prospects of a society that can function on different principles.

Christian identity and social life

The idea that the apostle Paul proposes in a revolutionary way to give believers an eschatological identity is that of adoption (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Eph. 1:5). A term with a whole socio-cultural history (Burke 2001; Heim 2017) that aims to integrate new converts into the wider church family as they risk their future by embracing new Christian beliefs. Adoption was a procedure in the Roman world, particularly of the upper classes, whereby children were welcomed and integrated into the new family, with them having

equal rights to existing family members. The Apostle Paul uses this metaphor understanding very well the social challenges of converts and the danger of them becoming no-one's. Therefore, through this metaphor, he emphasizes that through Christ they are integrated into the wider community of the church, but also that the Apostle Paul understands the change of status they underwent when they were converted. For the apostle, it is important that they are anchored in a future reality; therefore, if we consider the metaphor of adoption in this eschatological context, we are talking about people who are promised not only earthly life but also heavenly life, towards which they must look. If we are to look at it sociologically, the metaphor of adoption is meant to convey to those who have been separated by conversion from their families that they belong to a community, and on a much deeper level, in a class-divided Roman society, the theology behind adoption shows that, in fact, there are no ethnic or social differences in God's thinking. Despite the apostle Paul's efforts, the social identities specific to Roman society cannot be annulled, but on the basis of faith in Jesus Christ, the apostle aims to offer believers in the Christian churches scattered throughout the Roman Empire a different identity perspective (Wehrle 2016, 34) that gives them a sense of belonging to Christ's Church on earth and in heaven (Rotaru 2012, 5).

Conclusions

The eschatology of the early Christian century revealed a complex web of religious, social, political, and economic factors (Rotaru 2006, 251-266; 2014, 532-541). In a significant way, eschatology changed the way the Christian community related to earthly realities, but it also gave rise to a tension that was observed at the social level, which brought to the fore a conflict with eschatological understandings specific to that period. Out of this confrontation, new visions were born because, at this time, Jewish eschatology focused on a restoration of the Jewish nation, while imperial eschatology brought to the fore a social hierarchy and stability in the Empire. All the while, motivated by anticipation of the future, the Christian church sought to shape social realities in light of the *parousia*. It proposed a supernatural dimension in relating people to the future as opposed to other eschatologies which were oriented towards earthly goals. It was also Christian eschatology that led to the formation of a distinct identity and had as its foundation the role of the Christian community in the world. The Apostle Paul demonstrates how it can shape social realities (Măcelaru 2016, 67-83), when he promotes through his message the role of Christ in the life of the believer, but also the value that the church can have in establishing a new identity. Therefore, by analyzing the eschatology of the first century, we learn how important it is to understand the role of the community, but also the role of the believer in relation to society (Rotaru 2017, 57-76).

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Migration: A Global Social Reality with Multiple Religious Implications

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ABSTRACT: Globally, migration is a social phenomenon that affects every country, either by sending migrants or receiving them. A closer look at history shows that since ancient times, this phenomenon has been closely linked to the human experience throughout its existence. At the same time, migration should not only be seen as a social phenomenon but also as the vehicle through which people, with all their values and beliefs, influence the society in which they live at any given time. This is also true for followers of the Christian religion who, either out of their own conviction or forced by the social order of the times in which they lived, came to influence people from all continents with their faith and values. Last but not least, attention will be drawn to the experience of the Son of God, who, by becoming incarnate in human nature, places himself in the position of one who is alienated from his native land.

KEYWORDS: migration, foreigner, Christianity, religion, social space

1. Introduction

In the recent history of mankind, migration has been a major concern for the world's states, which has resulted in some positions in favor of migration but also in attempts to limit it. In every corner of the world, migration is a reality, with a greater or lesser presence depending on the specifics of the country and the interests of those who can be classified as migrants. This is not surprising because "migration has been a part of human history since its inception. But today, thanks to the spread of rapid change brought about by globalization, many people are migrating more than ever before" (Groody 2009, 638; Rotaru 2014, 532-541). In this way, the explosion of migration can lead to cultural enrichment built on a foundation of diversity and pluralism but also to crises that are sometimes unmanageable. A review of the New Testament writings suggests that many Christians experienced this migration either because of persecution by the authorities (see the example of Aquila and Priscilla) or because of their desire to spread the Gospel message (Rotaru 2024, 141-151). Either of these causes has only helped this new group, Christianity, to grow in numbers and become the largest religious group in society today in terms of adherents.

In this paper the influence of migration on the development of Christianity will be analyzed, an influence which cannot be neglected and which can lead to a change of attitude towards this phenomenon in today's society. It will then be seen from the perspective of the experience that God Himself goes through when He chooses to become incarnate and an integral part of the world He came to save.

2. Migration - a favorable element for the expansion of Christianity throughout its development history

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus Christ tells His disciples, "...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in

all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1), setting before them the prospect of the migration through which they had to pass in order to be able to fulfill what He had told them. From then until today many of those who wanted to go and preach the Gospel message had to go beyond the borders of their own country and adapt to the new conditions of life in the country they were going to, so that in this way they could be instrumental in the development of Christianity to the ends of the earth. As one who had gone through this experience of migration the Lord Jesus Christ had every authority to ask his disciples not to be content with the comfort offered by their own country and to go beyond interstate borders. In the introduction to the book *Christianities in Migration: The Global Perspective*, Elaine Padilla and Peter C. Phan make a claim that may contradict at first glance by saying that "because of migration, temporary or permanent, internal or intercontinental/international, legal or undocumented, planned or rushed, Christianity has become an indigenized religion and a global Christianity" (Padilla and Phan 2016, 3). In doing so, the author want to set before the reader a challenging horizon in which Christianity develops through the social phenomenon of migration, which will lead to a worldwide dominating movement at some point.

2.1. Migration, the working matrix of the church in spreading the Gospel message

Looking at the dimensions that Christianity has reached today, it is interesting to note what those springs have led to it. By what means the followers of the new grouping have been able to provide the necessary impetus for the development of Christianity to take place. The spiritual and theological arguments behind the multiplication of Christian groupings across geographical territories cannot be ignored, but at the same time the social readiness of Christ's followers to move into new territories cannot be overlooked, even if this sometimes happened by force. Of this, in the aforementioned book, Phan states that "migration is...not only an ongoing reality of the church, from the beginnings of its existence through the ages and especially today, but also the significance of securing its continued existence and growth through worldwide expansion. In this way migration has played a pivotal role in the emergence of Christianity as a global religion" (Padilla and Phan 2016, 10). Thus, the willingness of Christians to migrate from one territory to another has been the space for movement to grow from a number of about 120 followers to over two billion in the contemporary period. This ensured the existence of this religious grouping and its development throughout centuries of history. How was it possible for this movement, which began among Jews, to become as global as it is today?

The existence of the church as an institution involves not only a spiritual component but also a social component (Rotaru 2017, 57-76), because the church is made up of people who interact with each other and move according to the interests they have at any given time. In this way the transition of people from one territory to another leads to reciprocal influences which affect the customs and beliefs of those who come into contact with each other. This was and is the experience that those of the Christian faith have gone through and are going through, and it is one through which the influence of Christianity has transcended the barriers of time and space.

At the beginning of its existence, the church was seen as another sect of Judaism, a proclaimed monotheistic religion trying to carve its own way through and increase its influence through those who adhered to its values and principles. To the rulers of the time, Christianity seemed to be a strange grouping, to say the least, one that, at first, they could not separate from its Jewish affiliation. They carried this label of ethnic belonging and were seen as "Jews who shared a common set of scriptures and a sense of belonging as God's chosen ones with an ethic of mutual aid and a purity of conscience contrasted with that of the Gentile societies that surrounded them" (Chadwick 2001, 5) and although this was the

perception of the people in society at the time about the church (Rotaru 2012, 5), it manages to transcend the boundaries of its own country and culture and make its message universal.

The universality of the message and its applicability was something that was intended not by the followers of Christ, but by their Teacher himself. This is confirmed by Luke in Acts 1:8. The Apostle Paul is also one who is fighting for the message he preached, which he says was entrusted to him by Christ Himself, to be accepted by the other Gentiles and not just the Jews. In Romans 9-11 he shows that this movement of salvation from the Jews to the Gentiles is God's intention and not some human claim. Speaking of this, Henry Chadwick says that "Paul...interprets the movement among the people as a fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy and as a parenthesis in the divine plan for human history, intended to challenge the Jews to realize the truth of Jesus' message and the authenticity of messiahship as it wins more and more converts around the world" (Chadwick 2001, 10). Analyzing the subsequent course of events it seems that Paul's mission was more successful among the Gentiles than among his Jewish people. It is interesting to note that in order to do this, Paul behaved like a migrant going from city to city, from territory to territory and from country to country depriving himself of the comforts of his home country and becoming an outcast and a prisoner, accused of disrupting the normal social order (this is what happens in the cities of Lystra, Philippi and Ephesus, but also in Jerusalem where Paul is caught, imprisoned and finally sent to the dungeon in Rome).

This being the case, the expansion of Christianity initially takes place within Jewish communities outside the borders of Israel. Under these circumstances, "the first Christian migration, on the path of Christianity's radical transformation from a Jewish sect into a global migratory institution, takes place within the Jewish diaspora" (Padilla, Phan 2016, 13). This statement is true when viewed only through a sociological lens, so to the human observer this movement is of Jews who had left their homelands. However, when the situation is analyzed from a biblical point of view (Acts 8) it can be seen that this migration of Christian-oriented Jews takes place against the backdrop of persecution directed against them by their fellow countrymen who did not agree with their message, and from the point of view of migration, these Jews who leave their homeland can be classified as refugees. Another observation based on the above quote is that these refugees interacted with Diaspora Jews who, in the collective mind, had this expectation, of the Anointed One of God who is to come and establish the Kingdom of God, so their message is initially received by an audience who is not unaware of this situation.

This period is followed by another in which Roman troops, under the Roman general Titus, enter Judea to put down the revolt of the Jewish insurgents. The Roman troops make no distinction between the inhabitants of the country so that even the Christian Jews are threatened by this invasion and, to save their lives, migrate to other territories. About what happened in this period, Padilla and Phan (2016, 14) state that "the departure of Christians from Palestine coincided with the evangelistic activity of the church...it seems that the Christian community, which at that time was on the order of thousands, emigrates en masse from Jerusalem and Palestine as a whole, either forcibly or voluntarily, to various parts of the world," a movement whereby, thanks to God's providence, the message conveyed by the church reaches an increasing number of people. For his part, the Roman historian Tacitus (2014, 379), presents the moment of the conquest of Jerusalem as one in which, in addition to the Roman troops, a large number of Arabs who hated their neighbors and wanted to oppress them joined them. This confirms the tensions that were in the region and which often resulted in armed conflicts that resulted in many personal and national tragedies.

As a result of these wars, Christians spread to new territories, but this does not happen under the auspices of a friendly welcome in these other territories. In Pliny the Younger's reply to the Emperor Trajan it may be seen how those who were accused before him of being Christians were received and treated. The Roman governor in letter 96 of book X writes the

following: 'In the case of those who were brought before me under the name of Christians, the procedure was as follows. I asked them whether they were Christians or not. In the case of those who confessed that they were, I asked the question a second and third time. Those who persisted, I ordered to be executed. For, indeed, I have no doubt, whatever may be the reason of their confession, that their obstinacy, at whatever level, and their inflexible obstinacy, ought to be punished' (Pliny Secundus 2014, 481). Reading this, one can see that the attitude towards Christians was a hostile one, and the charge for which they received condemnation was the name they bore, namely that of Christians. From the above account it is clear that simply belonging to that group attracted the death sentence for the woman who 'stubbornly' kept her testimony. Under these auspices, groups of migrant Christians from that region try to make their own way and survive the hostile living conditions and it is amazing that despite all the threats, both from the Jews and the Romans, they succeed.

Geographically, the migration of Christians in this period is towards five major regions, namely Mesopotamia and the Roman province of Syria, Greece and Asia Minor, the Western Mediterranean (Italy, France, Spain and North Africa), Egypt and East Asia (Padilla and Phan 2016, 14-16). In each of these regions persecution of Christians was present to a greater or lesser degree, but "they built a number of lively and mission-oriented communities" (Padilla and Phan 2016, 14), some of them willing to pay with their lives for their beliefs, and others abdicating those beliefs in order not to have their lives endangered.

2.2. Migration, a global phenomenon in which the principle of "love your neighbor" can be tested

As history has progressed, Christians have found themselves in a double position. The first was as migrants, a role that will probably not end until human history. The second is as receivers of migrants. In the second, Christian principles can lead to a solid basis of relationships in which love for neighbour, as demonstrated by Jesus Christ, can help to facilitate integration both for those who are forced to leave their own underdeveloped countries and choose destinations in Christian, more economically developed territories, and for those who are forced by conflicts in their own countries to leave their native lands and seek refuge in more peaceful places.

What has happened in recent decades has led to a generalisation of migration. Phan (2016, 845) states that "a seismic phenomenon in our contemporary world is undoubtedly migration. After the Second World War, migration has become a global phenomenon of unimaginable magnitude and complexity. There is virtually no nation on earth that has not been seriously affected by migration, either as a country of origin or as a country of destination." There is no doubt that the phenomenon of migration presents itself on such a global scale. It is enough to watch TV news bulletins or browse through a newspaper to encounter at least one reference to this phenomenon, many of them generating a lot of emotions through the people who are involved and going through real dramas them on a personal level. Sometimes it is even the case that people in refugee camps are used as manipulative elements in relations between states.

In the unfolding of this phenomenon, it is interesting to observe what the reaction of countries with cultures influenced by Christian principles is and whether these countries take into account the principle of "love of neighbour" when dealing with migrants. In the continuation of his article, Phan (2016, 847) writes: "In response to the migration crisis, political organisations such as the United Nations and the European Union have engaged agencies to study the migration issue from different perspectives as well as to provide emergency aid. Religious authorities, especially Pope Francis, have awakened our sense of solidarity with these victims and advised churches and religious communities to welcome them into their midst." These efforts and statements are commendable and they seem to

confirm the application of the aforementioned principle, but these initiatives have also met with opposition from other organizations and individuals, so that "anti-immigration rhetoric and policies, especially against Muslims, are on the rise lately, even in countries that have traditionally been hospitable to migrants" (Phan 2016, 847). These anti-immigrant discourses greatly influenced what happened in the UK when the referendum to leave the European Union was held and generated feelings of rejection towards all immigrants in some people. At the same time there were other organizations that continued to provide assistance to migrants, but most attention was paid to social aspects and less to relational or spiritual ones, and this was because "scholars have generally explained the phenomenon of migration only in social and economic terms, mostly reflecting on those kinds of questions designed by sociologists to understand the experience of migration" (Eppsteiner and Hagan 2016, 49), which is not surprising when one tries to explain the origin of life only in terms of matter and does not take into account the complexity of the human being. Undoubtedly, the phenomenon of migration goes beyond the boundaries of the social sciences and it can be observed that "not once does it make clear that historically migration has been a major catalyst for the realization of Christianity's eschatological dimension, so that migration is not simply an accident of history in the development of Christianity but constitutes the church's very nature as an eschatological community-that migrantness is an essential mark of the true church" (Phan 2016, 849). Phan sees migration as more than a social phenomenon of people moving between different geographical territories, or an accident of history, considering that for the church, the attitude of not being bound to a territory is a defining indicator of an eschatological community.

3. In the Christian vision - without Migration there would be no salvation

This statement might seem bold at first glance and could even create confusion. This is why the word Migration was capitalized, because it does not refer to the common experience of people going from one country to another on this earth, but to the transfer of the Son of God to the world on earth by incarnation. In this way He was able to assume the role of representative of men in condemnation and bring salvation.

In Phan's view, such an approach to theology also involves a slightly different way of doing theology than the classical one, according to which "in order to distinguish the signs of the right time, the most productive approach to building a theology of migration will be a multidisciplinary one. This means that alongside appropriate theological disciplines such as biblical study, church history, systematic and practical theology, migration theology must draw its data from secular disciplines such as sociology, geography, demography, anthropology, psychology, history, politics and migration law. As a result, the theologian will develop a "multi- and cross-cultural" epistemology of seeing reality from the margins and from below" (Phan 2016, 855). This proposal of Phan's is bold and it remains to be seen whether it is an appropriate and correct way of doing theology but, at the same time, it brings a perspective that should not be overlooked, namely that humans are not mere actors in salvation history.

Looking at the life of Jesus Christ through the lens of Migration, two directions can be indicated. The first is that in order to save his life until his "hour" comes (as mentioned several times in the gospels), Jesus Christ goes through the phenomenon of migration, so that "the gospel writers leave no doubt that Jesus' life experience includes the travail of a refugee, the pain of uprooting, the hostility with which an unwanted stranger is met, and the isolation of the homeless" (Padilla and Phan 2016, 40). In this way, Jesus also goes through this human experience of the one who must leave the familiar homelands and accept the life of a fugitive so that, in the end, God's plan for his life can be fulfilled with precision. The second is the experience of the incarnation through which Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of

God, migrates from heavenly glory to the earth under the curse of sin to bring about the liberation of the human race and creation from that curse and from the condemnation that came as a result of Adam's sin. Phan (2016, 861) believes that "the incarnation of God's Word in Jesus of Nazareth can be seen as a migratory movement of God" even though, in a sense, this is not a purely migratory movement of God because it all belongs to God, but only a picture of such a movement from a human perspective. Therefore, the salvation of man from a religious perspective was only possible when through the incarnation, the Son of God descended to the earth under the condemnation of sin and taking sin upon Himself brings salvation to man from his condemned state.

4. Conclusions

A careful analysis of the phenomenon of migration can lead to some conclusions that can be of great use to members of churches today. First of all, it should not be forgotten that in its development, Christianity has made full use of migration, going from a community seen as a sect of Judaism to the most widespread land religion of today. No doubt many Christians were forced to migrate, but this did not prevent them from influencing the countries they reached, even if for some of them the price paid was their own lives. The history of the persecution they have had to endure should generate a much friendlier attitude towards those who today bear the name of migrants.

The church is portrayed in the Bible as being on a journey to the heavenly homeland, which means that the place it now occupies is in a country that does not belong to it and to which it is migrating. In this place, Christians can show by concrete actions the materialization of the principle of "love your neighbor" so that those who visit it feel welcome. Last but not least, the attitude towards migration should take into account how God chose to come down to earth, to be an immigrant, to accept all the injustices from people, and in this way, to bring salvation to many people. It should not be forgotten that without Migration there is no salvation. Without Christ leaving His heavenly glory and coming to earth, man could not have paid for his salvation.

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Christianity - An Integral Part of European Culture and Identity

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ABSTRACT: Regardless of the point from which we viewed or felt the unfolding of the events of history, we found ourselves in a space where we coexisted socially, politically, or religiously. No part of our continent was more European than another. In this evolution of the new European identity, all the members participated and felt each new stage. Thus, European current affairs are, to the same extent, part of the European's concerns, and the upheavals, tensions, transformations are common aspects that correspond to the space of the "old continent." The calling card of Europe bears the signature of Christianity, which has made its way as a religion that has influenced social, political and religious life, with wide implications in areas of universal interest. The evolution of Christianity in history intersects with the historical evolution of Europe, an evolution that changed the whole world.

KEYWORDS: Christianity, Culture, European identity

1. Introduction

Europe was born, grew, developed and, in turn, formed other civilisations (Rotaru 2023a, 62-79). It presents itself as a model of integration because it has opened up to all. In this evolution of the formation of the new European identity, all its members have participated and felt each new stage. Thus, the current European situation is also part of the concerns of Europeans, and the fragmentation, tensions and transformations are common aspects that correspond to the "old continent".

European identity can go a long way hand in hand with Christianity. The present research does not aim to dismantle reality, but rather to establish whether - after decades in which Romanians have looked full of dreams and aspirations towards the European West and joined in 2007 within the European Union - the Europe we have found is the one we expected to find (From the conference held by Horia-Roman Patapievici on "The Suicide of Europe?" followed by a dialogue with Gabriel Liiceanu, event held as part of the conferences entitled: "About the world we live in").

European Christianity remains quite visible in the public arena, but any Christian familiar with the text of Scripture can see that there are differences between what the teaching and practice of Christ and his apostles meant and what the Church has carried out over time in its institutional form. In today's European context, a fairly common issue is the level and quality of the relationship between religion and the public sphere, or the Church-State relationship (Rotaru 2022, 585-595). Part of secular Western history and the experience of secularisation is tending to make more and more room for itself in Eastern Europe.

The increasingly frequent interventions by the Church and public opinion against certain decisions of the political apparatus, the forms of dialogue that have brought together representatives of the Church and of various minorities, maintain the image of the Church

as an institution present in society. Without setting out in negative terms the path of separation from traditional Christianity, Europe is also wearing the mantle of spirituality and a secular view of the world and life. The place of God is generic, but the dominant image of divinity is that of a personified portrait, associated with what society believes about God rather than what divinity reveals about itself.

Europe's calling card bears the signature of Christianity, and it has made its way as a religion that has influenced social, political and religious life, with broad implications in areas of universal concern. The evolution of Christianity in history intersects with the historical evolution of Europe, an evolution that has changed the whole world.

2. A brief history of the formation of Europe

The charm of Greek mythology takes us in the footsteps of the Phoenician princess Europa, daughter of King Agenor, a young girl whose beauty attracts the attention of Zeus. Zeus transforms himself into a proud bull to make it easier for him to kidnap her, and takes her to the island of Crete, where, having regained his godlike appearance, he seduces the young woman whose name will be linked to this new continent. Once she learns the truth about the handsome man's identity and marital status, the young Europa decides to commit suicide by throwing herself off a cliff on the island. Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, saves the princess, and the land she will take her to live on will bear her name.

However, it is not the mythical aspect of the legends of Olympus, not the deeds of capricious gods, but the visible and genuine part of a footprint that can be found from one end of the continent to the other, in the form of the arts discovered in today's world in literature, music, painting or architecture. So, whether we stay in the Byzantine area, and admire what is today Hagia Sophia, built by Emperor Justinian, and St Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, or whether we travel through central and western Europe to St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, the Cologne Dome, Notre-Dame de Paris, St Paul's Cathedral in London, or down to the Iberian peninsula, in Barcelona, to the Sagrada Familia, whose construction we can still see, and then to the Italian peninsula, with Santa Maria del Fiore, the Duomo in Milan and finally the Pope's residence in the Vatican, to see the Basilica of St Peter, all of which, and more, are the facade of a territory touched by a common element, Christianity.

The fascination of Europe with all its range of events and cultures, with all its spiritual births awaiting the uplifting moment of triumphs, but also the torments of its sufferings, with all its troubled course, but at the same time with its lines of relaxation, offers the image of a work whose introductory part comes to trace the overall picture of a construction that is to unfold majestically. The joy of discovering its mysteries is left to every European interested in his or her roots of identity, but it is also open to anyone who wants to enter the friendly door of Europe to get to know it and seek its specificity within its borders. The image that is revealed before them is the one carved by the paths of peoples who have had and still display differently nuanced cultures, but who support Christianity. This ensemble adds to the image of a Europe that does not need gratuitous artificial presentations of a unit that has earned the right to exist and, moreover, the right to become the standard bearer of humanity's civilisation. As Noica (1993, 35) remarked: 'Europe owes its justification in law to what it has in fact become: the spokeswoman of the globe'. The history of Europe records what Horia Roman Patapieviçi calls the "European exception", referring to the role or impact of Christianity on its development. Patapieviçi also states that, "just as Egypt could be seen as a gift of the Nile (the expression belongs to Herodotus), Europe can be thought of as a gift of Christianity" (Guéritée 2015, 23). Thus, Christianity as a religion cannot be bypassed when trying to establish the origins of Europe, nor can its influence and contribution in establishing moral-spiritual values and social relations be

overlooked. Noica considers the starting point for the formation of Europe an event in the common history of Christians, namely:

The year 325 AD, at the Council of Nicaea, convened by the emperor, continuing with 6 other meetings until 787 AD [...] meetings that brought together spiritual leaders even from Spain or France, which proved the existence of a system of contacts and communications, control of roads, good administration and bureaucracy, in a word the civilization that the West would later make so much of (Noica 1993, 67).

This evolution on the map of European history would not have been possible without what Valéry (2016, 260) calls "the three essential conditions that can define the true European, a man in whom the European spirit can dwell in all its fullness." In attempting to define Europe, he links Christianity to two other conditions that contribute to what Christianity was to develop over the European space. Valéry cannot exclude the presence of two influences that he considers inseparable in this evolutionary process, which all peoples have endured and whose path has been marked by them. Thus, he says that "every race and every land that has been successively Romanized, Christianized and subjected to the spirit of the discipline of the Greeks is absolutely European" (Valéry, 2016, 260). However, the striking factor in this set of exceptions, as Patapievici calls it „the Greek exception, the Roman exception, the Jewish exception and the Christian exception" (Guéritée 2015, 24), is Christianity, which makes what we know today as Europe to have been called, for almost 1600 years, Christianity (Guéritée 2015, 49). Theodorescu (2018, 32) creates the European space with its origins "at the foot of the Athenian Acropolis in the heart of the Balkan East [...] of the union of the Eurasian space with the Euro-Atlantic space, the Black Sea with the Rhine, the Mediterranean with the German world." The formation of Europe was by far the normal course of a revolution in terms of sharing common elements of religion, Roman law and an influential Greek culture. These elements were then voluntarily assimilated within the Roman Empire, which could ensure and contribute to their development.

3. The spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire *(from Pentecost to Constantine's decree)*

In the Great Commission, Christ commissioned the disciples to spread the message of the Gospel to every creature, and this message was to spread throughout the Romanised world, as was also announced before his ascension: "witnesses to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The message of the Gospel was to be indiscriminate, universal, equally addressed to all people. The way this message would be perceived would change the face of the continent and the world. Christianity was never intended to be a state religion, encompassing only one nation, one language, but in His plan God had in mind people of every nation and language, thus reaching all spheres of humanity. The presence of the apostles after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, however, is a local one, although Christ had anticipated the missionary process in which they were to be part, a process which was to reach "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

The appearance of events in the apostles' routine means that, in the path of the message they preached, especially to the Jews, there are also episodes in which groups of Samaritans, an Ethiopian woman, a Roman centurion accept the message of the Gospel and of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Acts 9 already points to an extended Church community in Judea, Galilee and Samaria. Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus, commissioned to bring bound to Jerusalem those who were walking the Way of Faith (Acts 9:1, 2), opens a new chapter in the life of one who had an impressive biography in what he calls "the religion of the Jews". From a persecutor of the Church, God transforms him into one of the Church's most passionate servants. His mission was to fulfill God's intended

missionary purpose throughout Scripture: to "bring [Christ's] name before the Gentiles, before kings and before the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Biblical scholar Thomas R. Schreiner sums up Paul's life this way:

The prophecy that the Gentiles would be blessed in Abraham was not fulfilled in the days of David, Isaiah or Jeremiah. Now that the Messiah Jesus has come, these prophecies have found their fulfillment. Paul was called by God to advance God's mission in the world, especially by extending God's saving grace to the Gentiles. To support his mission, Paul had to demonstrate theologically that the mission to the Gentiles was the fulfillment of the Scriptures (Schreiner, 2001, 85).

The church in Antioch bears the mark of a Christian community with missionary perspectives, and Antioch becomes a missionary centre, with a predilection for the evangelization of the Gentiles. The Church of Antioch stands for all time as an example of an effective local church. The mission's success in evangelizing the Gentiles marked a turning point in history. The true Church of Jesus Christ on earth today is the spiritual legacy of this mobilization (MacArthur 1996, 11).

The spread of Christianity in Europe in the first century took place under the influence of Judaism. Schmidt (2018, 29) says that "before 64 AD, the Romans did not distinguish between Christians and Jews. The former were regarded as a Jewish sect and thus tolerated along with the Jews." The persecutions that followed were motivated by Christians' refusal to comply with official practices within Roman institutions. For example, Christians suffered for refusing to grant the emperor the title of Lord (and by implication worship), or for the simple fact that their lives were morally different. Persecutions did not thwart the spread of Christianity, but actually led to an increase in the number of Christians, which led Tertullian to state that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" (Schmidt 2018, 37). Schmidt reinforces Tertullian's words, and points out that "many pagans became Christians only after seeing the death of the martyrs" (Schmidt 2018, 37).

In 311 AD, Emperor Galerius signed an edict of tolerance to end persecution of Christians. Then, in 313, Emperor Constantine issued *the Edict of Milan*, in which the two provincial emperors, Constantine and Licinius, decided to stop all persecution of Christians. The Edict guaranteed full freedom of service to all, Christians and pagans, throughout the Roman Empire. It also retroceded confiscated churches and lands without delay and without cost" (Schmidt 2018, 42). The freedoms gained by the Church as a result of its relationship with Emperor Constantine allowed the Church to flourish, to gain more and more authority and influence, to expand territorially, but at the same time gave way to numerous gaps and mismatches between what should have been the message of the Gospel of Christ and the life of the Church seen as an institution. Christianity has become expansive, but it has lost the original character that defined it. The acceptance of nominal faith has been imposed at the expense of an inner life transformed by the Gospel. All this could not stand as a bulwark against attacks on the new religion. However, Christ's promise to His Church that "the gates of the tabernacle of the dead shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18) was to be fulfilled in the course of history.

4. The influence of Christianity on European culture and identity

It can be said that Christianity enriched European culture and shaped its identity. It also provided the spirituality around which European culture was woven and developed, with all its diversity as a unity of material and spiritual values. It is Christianity that is actually changing the face of Europe, and giving new meaning to a community that is developing on the basis of common elements and values. The image of spirituality is the one around which the "way of living in community with the Spirit" is rediscovered (Boari 2018, 23) and implicitly the acceptance of the existence of a reality called "spirit". In context, „the word

spirituality, when it concerns the field of religion, signifies [...] both a certain religious attitude, a way of living the relationship with God, as well as a set of practices aimed at fostering or nurturing this relationship" (Boari 2018, 23) The continuation of this first step of accepting spiritual reality leads to the existential experience of this reality that humanity can express as a factor of religious experiences. The fact for which, Veilleux concludes:

If these premises are accepted, it follows that all spiritualities will correspond to a way of living this spiritual experience, of expressing it in concepts, of preserving its memory in religious traditions and customs, and of interpreting it within various systems of thought (Boari 2018, 24).

The image of Christianity and its contribution to the overall European identity should not be seen as additional elements added to a system that could function without its implications. On the contrary, everything that is built up as a system of thought, moral and spiritual values, the profile of freedoms of thought and expression come as a result of the evolution of a European culture in its spiritual development. With its evolution, Christianity assimilated European culture and thus created multicultural diversity and intercultural variety. Infiltrated into the spheres of European mixed culture, Christianity has made itself felt without annihilating its senses and reason, which leads Andrei Marga to state that „it is not faith that paralyses the will, nor the hope that simple faith solves everything" (Marga 2016, 290). What Christianity brings new in all this framework in which it contributes significantly to the formation of the European identity space is this proposal that Christianity makes and that is imprinted in all areas of European life. In the words of Valéry:

Whether it is about the value of testimonies, the criticism of texts, the sources and guarantees of knowledge, whether it is about the distinctions between reason and faith, acts and works, whether it is about freedom, servitude, grace, about spiritual and material powers and their mutual conflict, about equality between men, about the condition of women - and much more - Christianity educates, impels, makes act and react millions of minds in the succession of centuries (Valéry 2016, 257).

The course of Christianity in Europe lies not only in the transcendent profile, i.e. of the relationship with God from which realities of faith experience or congruent values set in the right spheres of thought or cultural unity are derived, but also in the fact that:

The Church gave Western Europe a common language (Latin) and doctrine, as well as a common liturgy [and] the sense of belonging to a community was born out of the fact that the institutions throughout Europe were very similar. Especially the ecclesial network, with bishops, archbishops, etc., a structured Europe, from the Scandinavian world to the Mediterranean (Willy 2015, 76).

Even if it occurs sporadically, this refusal of association with Europe's original roots are origins, influences, results that cannot be denied or ignored. Such a refusal can be considered an abuse of one's own foundations and a denial of one's own identity. Romanian analysts point in turn to the influence of Christianity. Tătaru-Cazaban (2015, 91) believes that "Europe cannot fail to recognize its historical originality: it owes to Christianity both the principle of unity (especially visible in the first millennium) and the current confessional division," and Theodorescu insists that "the unity of our continent resides in a single point, which is also the only bond: It is its traditional Christianity" (Theodorescu 2018, 24), Europeanness remaining above all the belonging to the traditions of the Church (Theodorescu 2018, 25).

European Christianity has not only given rise to a specific spirituality. An important contingent that the Church had was in the social field through the emergence of hospitals, universities, the development of science and the arts in deciphering the social status of

minorities. Epistolary writings refer to overcoming ethnic, racial or gender barriers. The Apostle Paul concludes this aspect of equity in his epistle to Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor slave-owner, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Christ's message has always been about the marginalized of society, the sick and the powerless. The early church took up Christ's model by extending social ministry among ordinary people. "Whether we are talking about founding hospitals, creating hospices, professionalizing health care, or establishing the Red Cross, behind all these humanitarian achievements lie the teachings of Christ" (Schmidt 2018, 234). In Boari's synthesis, "Christianity has given a profound spiritual, cultural and moral identity to two continents: Europe and North America, continents that have played an essential role in human culture and history" (Boari 2016, 86). The difference between Christian doctrine and other doctrines or forms of political ideology that have influenced the course of European history is that the roots of this form of spirituality stem from the Christian's relationship with Jesus Christ. Christianity has always had at its centre man's relationship with his Creator.

5. The first signs of Europe's secularisation: the Enlightenment

The image of Europe and its epochal destiny can be disseminated in the distribution of forms of thought, cultural values of identity with the preservation of authenticity and national uniqueness. At the same time, the distinctive mark of Christianity as an unmistakable signature of European identity has been preserved. But something fundamental changed with the emergence of the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment or Age of Enlightenment is an ideological, cultural and philosophical movement that developed during the 17th-18th centuries (Rotaru 2005, 350). The emergence of the Enlightenment was preceded by the presence of philosophers such as Francis Bacon, René Descartes and John Locke, whose ideas formed the basis of the new ideology. The Enlightenment movement, which gained ground especially among the bourgeoisie in England and France, mainly, „considered religion a form of superstition and ignorance that would disappear with the spread of culture and science" (Boari 2018, 23). As part of modernity, the Enlightenment carries forward the philosophy that conveys the need to break away from a defining past, to abandon the foundations that existed and generated traditions. Max Weber was one of the renowned classics who made a significant contribution through the amount of sociological research on the study of religions and their influences on society. He is also the one who introduces the term 'secularisation' into the discipline, and sets out three definitions:

The first would see secularisation as the loss of control by religious bodies over certain sectors of social life. Second, secularisation would mean the shift of a group from its religious version to its secular version. Last but not least, secularization would be identified with the overall diminution of the religious character of society (Mandache 1999, 3).

The Enlightenment, as an imprint of secular thought, also developed against the background of some shortcomings of manifestations present within the Church, which makes the beginning of a transfer from a mystical way of thinking to a logical way of thinking, based on rational arguments. Criticism of the Church, and particularly of its officials, was directed at the opulence of the clergy, their morality and questionable culture; objections were also made to freedom of thought and the way in which the lives of the faithful were controlled. Religious forms, obscurantism, mysticism were seen as obstacles to the acquisition and realisation of a society based on freedom and equality. These points will also be found on the agenda of the relationship between secularisation and religion, but this time in the form of denominational tolerance and acceptance. Given that everything can be explained

rationally, God Himself becomes the subject of investigation in which, although His existence is not suppressed, He is given qualifiers such as tolerant, forgiving, the One who ensures happiness and earthly good. The Enlightenment, then, was not anti-religious, but offered Christianity a space outside the social framework. This is why some Enlightenment thinkers embraced the deist theory, in which God is seen as the Creator but is not involved in the life of creation. Or, faced with two realities, one reality present in "the world of phenomena, of things, of being, and on the other hand the world behind the phenomena, considered to be the true world, of essences, of being and of the concepts of the intellect" (Adorno 2001, 2). Nietzsche, was to accuse metaphysics as, "a second world, lying behind this world, the *Hinterwelt*" (Adorno 2014, 44).

Concern for the common good, equality and the guarantee of people's liberties are found, for example, in Montesquieu's statements (Rotaru 2023b, 825-874). They can be ensured by a political system in which powers in the state are divided to such an extent that they are opposable precisely in order to limit corruption and abuse of power. While Montesquieu emphasizes aspects of governance, Jean-Jacques Rousseau considered that the starting point for a society governed by harmony and well-being starts from equality among people, from "a communion of citizens united in a social body for the establishment of the common good" (Stoica 2015, 156). Here, „the natural state described by Rousseau is one of harmony, prosperity and perpetual happiness, in which people are kind, candid and manifest feelings of compassion towards one another" (Stoica 2015, 156).

The particularity of the Enlightenment is also due to technological progress, industrial revolutions, agrarian development, discoveries, science, urbanisation, access to books and therefore to education - all of which developed the critical apparatus. These new aspects established new rational benchmarks with logical answers to life's problems. For this reason, the Enlightenment has also been called the Age of Reason. But what is notable, for Gabriele Kuby, is that "the French Revolution elevated autonomous reason to the status of a goddess, an emancipated woman who freed herself from God and his orders. The people were baited with beautiful words that targeted desires that everyone nurtures: *liberté, égalité, fraternité* - liberty, equality, fraternity" (Kuby 2014, 43).

The feeling that was conveyed was that all the Church could do over time was to slow down any process that was meant for human evolution. The new Enlightenment movement gained more and more ground, and people looked towards a future that opened up to happiness, but without religious concepts, without being influenced by the pressure of religion or the Church. Against the background of such premises, the distance between Church and State began to grow, and the effects were to be felt in both institutions. This move was also called *exit from religion* or *secularisation* (Rotaru 2006, 251-266).

The specificity of the French Enlightenment has always been its orientation against priests and the Church, not necessarily against Christianity as a religion. [...] At stake is a consistent *transfer of power* from the Catholic Church/Protestant churches to the secular republic. The latter is destined to be marked by the *myth of infinite progress*, the *fetishisation of science* and *hatred of the French clergy*. The power of French laïcité has so profoundly imposed itself in the collective mind of generations of French people (and Europeans educated in this spirit) thanks to the decisive contribution of two fundamental instruments: the *state educational system* and the *social influence of Enlightenment intellectuals* (Gavriliuță 2018, 29).

The Enlightenment concentrated all potential in man, capable of achievement and progress on the stage of earthly fulfilment and happiness. The idea of freedom and the construction of a society in which reason becomes normative and prominent places the European citizen in the position of being increasingly alienated from his Christian heritage, and by extension from God.

6. Clashes between Christian and secular institutions in Europe today

The emergence of the two opposing institutions, the State and the Church, has set the tone for debates that come to legitimize and authorize the importance of each in transmitting authority and sphere of influence in such a way as to shape conceptions of the world and life. The analytical development of the topics under debate has led to the formulation of views in which the institution of the Church and secular institutions often come into conflict. It all has to do with the sources of authority invoked. In fact, an analysis of common concepts will summarise that both institutions come with platforms designed to uphold the human good. The biblical Christian perspective clearly recognises the importance of the State. Vasile Boari says:

In the Christian view (doctrine), the duties of political authorities and politicians are established by God. These are two crucial tasks. The first is the good of the subjects. The political authority and the politician are in the service of God to do good to the subjects. The second task is to punish those who do evil by refusing to obey public authority (Boari 2016, 97).

The message relayed from the Christian perspective is not so much in the form of helpless docility, but rather an understanding of the relationship between Church versus State, precisely because the two have distinct missions and responsibilities. The signals given by the Enlightenment and the growing consolidation of distinct points of view are becoming increasingly strong in European culture, which is moving from a mentality imposed by faith to an individualistic psychology based on personal and rational functions.

The contemporary period is setting new coordinates in the context of these institutional relationships. These relations are seen differently, on the one hand because of the political periods, but also from an ideological point of view, issues that European countries have faced under different political regimes. These indicators lead to different forms in which these relations have manifested themselves. Democratic regimes have favored freedom of expression for the masses, and the relationship between state and church has begun to take on new epistemological contours. In this sense, the definition of the existence of evil in the world comes to be seen no longer as a consequence of sin, but rather as a result of human action. This is what Hans Blumenberg says:

The concept of evil present in the world has receded and continues to recede to this day: the evils of the world appear less and less as physical shortcomings of nature and more and more clearly as the results of human actions, justified by technique. In this way, the history of philosophy reflects a situation in which man suffers less and less from the shortcomings of creation and more and more from the creations of his fellows (Blumenberg 2019, 67).

On the other hand, totalitarian political systems, promoting Marxist ideology - strongly marked by atheism and dialectical materialism through the founders of this philosophical concept, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels - conspire to eliminate any state religious elements, and thus the concept of the Christian state. In this view, progress is achievable with the removal of any notion of faith from the collective consciousness. The Church, and religion in general, is a factor in thwarting the progress of humanity, and only the removal from society's consciousness of any notion of God and faith could bring prosperity to mankind. "In the case of totalitarian Marxism, it began as a political ideology, paradoxically metamorphosing into a secular religion (pseudo-religion) that is often more dogmatic and violent than many forms of traditional religious fundamentalism" (Rogobete 2016, 34).

The framework of relations between religion and state has improved in terms of mutual influence with the removal of what Winston Churchill metaphorically called the *Iron Curtain*, i.e., the states in Central and Eastern Europe. Apparently, in the democratic

apparatus, the State seems to make concessions and favors to the Church, and the Church seems to be satisfied with the role of manager of the power it has lost, while the State shows its powerlessness as an absolute authority. Although the extent of this relationship could easily be generalized to the European level, the relationship between the institutions remains a particular one, caused by their own national individuality.

We cannot talk about the role of religion in today's Europe without answering the question of whether there is a European model of state-church relations or whether, on the contrary, we are in the presence of models practised at national level which have their own individuality and are in no way harmonised at European level (Carp 2009, 79).

In relation to this European model of the relationship between Church and State, to which Carp refers, the presence of the three monotheistic religions must be taken into account, together with the major confessions present in the area of the Christian religion. The dialogue that is emerging in such a context must be able to respond to the diversity that is emerging in the religious sphere. But, as Rogobete points out, establishing criteria for assessing relations between religion and the state, between secular institutions and the Church, could sometimes be premature or even difficult to establish. The reason for such vagueness is the lack of a politico-religious analysis, which diagnoses the level of perception of the religious factor according to atheistic or fundamentalist policies. Here's what it says:

...we do not have [...] articulate analyses of secularization in its radical forms practiced by communist-atheist regimes, not enough has been said about post-secularization. We do not have studies on the impact of forced atheisation on beliefs and behaviours in the post-communist spaces of united Europe. We do not have empirical studies of how regenerated religious beliefs in these spaces influence the political factor, electoral processes, elite behaviour, constitutional construction, educational systems, respect for human and minority rights, etc (Rogobete 2016, 34).

For this very reason, the existence of a European model that expresses the voice of a single European authority in matters of religion is considered unjustified and, at the same time, inappropriate, so the European Union positions itself as a representative identity in terms of transparent dialogue and permanent cooperation with churches and Christian organizations, while respecting the specific features of the Member States.

7. Conclusions

The challenge of the present time is built around concepts that, although they bear Christian undertones, are global influences. Thus, around Christianity, a series of other currents and ideologies are taking shape which, without much effort, are being assimilated under common aspects that give Christianity equal forms or at least promote the same goals with similar values. The uniqueness of Christianity, which has inspired cultural, social and religious life while marking the passage of the stages of history and preserving its transcendent unified meaning, remains Europe's calling card, despite the evolution of European society open to a diversity which gives religion a generic term.

European society is undoubtedly subject to the changes that have occurred with the transition from ecclesial authority to authority transferred to the State. The institution of the Church may gather a number of criticisms and disapprovals of many of the decisions to which the critics refer, particularly concerning the practice of the Church, but history confirms the impact that Christianity has had in all spheres of European society. That is why we believe that when we refer to Christianity we are referring to the whole system of

values and traditions that are specific to the Christian message and to which we must relate without any apology and without hesitation. Scripture remains the only source that transcends time and civilizations, with a message that comes from the nature and holiness of God. Its quality remains unchanging, without the need for adjustment or adaptation to changing times. This is why we have the presence of the Christian message that transforms culture and not a culture that borrows Christian values.

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Exploring the 'Feminization of Christianity': Secularization, Gender and Power Shifts in 19th Century Religious Dynamics

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ABSTRACT: The concept of gender has grown from a marginal concern to a pivotal element in historical research on Christianity, particularly through the lens of the 'feminization of Christianity' narrative. This term describes the nineteenth-century shift in religious life where women emerged as pivotal figures, amid a broader context where secularization was also taking place. The applicability of 'feminization' to Catholicism in Belgium is examined, considering Belgium's unique position between France's acceptance and Germany's resistance to the theory. While the paper explores variations, elements, and causes of 'feminization' from other studies, it does not conclude definitively due to the novelty of this thesis in Belgium, suggesting further research to address this gap.

KEYWORDS: the feminization of Christianity, secularization, gender and religion, Belgian Catholicism, historical research

Introduction

In recent decades, the significance of 'sex' or 'gender' for the power, impact, or even existence of Christianity has shifted in historical research from a barely examined factor to a crucial foundation for developing various theories (MacLeod 1988, 144). Emblematic of this focus is the dominant narrative of 'the feminization of Christianity'. This concept signifies a change in perspective within historical research and is often critiqued alongside 'container' concepts such as 'secularization' (Rotaru 2006, 251-266). Debates suggest the need for a clear definition of 'feminization' across different national contexts and denominations. This paper concentrates on Belgium, intriguingly situated between France, where the feminization of Christianity is generally accepted, and Germany, which has shown considerable resistance to the theory. It seeks to ascertain whether theories of 'feminization' applicable in other studies are also relevant to Catholicism in Belgium, questioning whether 'feminization' is a factor or if male involvement was so pronounced that the existence of 'feminization' or its aspects in Belgium can be altogether questioned. Given the novelty of this thesis in the Belgian context, no definitive conclusion is reached, but suggestions for future research to address these gaps are provided.

The 19th century transitioned from a secular era to one characterized by a flourishing religious life, with women as its main pillars. However, the secularization thesis was not entirely set aside, and 'the feminization of Christianity' was seen as an aspect of 'secularization', complementing this thesis. The argument posits that, although men were enticed by 'secularization', Christian culture did not vanish entirely as women ensured its ongoing existence and development (Rotaru 2023, 62-79). Opinions on whether this development is positive, or negative vary. Some views associate it with Christianity's decline and reduced influence in public affairs, echoing complaints from 19th century

contemporaries. Susan Juster, however, regards it as 'more a convenient fiction than historical reality'. Other interpretations are more positive, linking the 19th-century renaissance of Christianity (ultramontanism, pietism) to this 'feminization' (Juster 1997, 334). At the same time, an increasing number of critical voices reject the notion that this responsibility is borne by one gender alone (Meiwes 2000, 19).

Exploring the Interplay of Gender and Religion: The Shift in Identity and the “Feminization of Christianity”

Gender and religion are key elements of identity, both being in constant change and reciprocally influencing the formation of masculine and feminine identities (Blaschke 2000, 39, 47). It is emphasized that religion cannot be fully understood without considering the gender dimension. In 1998, Geert Hofstede published "Masculinity and Femininity. The Taboo Dimension of National Cultures", aiming to challenge Western thinking through gender theory and comparative international research, indicating that the ratio of masculinity to femininity is crucial in the study of secularization, affecting more the subjective side of religiosity than institutionalized religious practices (Hofstede & Verweij 1998, 187). The article focuses on the need to define the concept of "feminization of Christianity", which includes four notions varying by confession and geography.

Defining ‘Feminisation’: ‘Feminisation’ of Religious Personnel

The concept of "feminization" in a religious context can be defined as the numerical dominance of women in places of worship and across the religious field. This encompasses both professional clergy and laypeople. An indicator of the "feminization" of religious personnel is the notable success of female congregations and communities, as well as the expansion of their activities into areas such as hospitals, youth homes, and maternity wards (Abrams 2002, 35; Pasture 2012, 135). Schneider (2002, 126-129) noted that ecclesiastical charity wore a "female face," while McLeod (2000, 137-138) has dubbed the 19th century as "the century of the nun." Norbert Busch offers a different interpretation of "clergy feminization," using the term to refer to the "feminine characteristics" displayed by the 19th century German Catholic clergy in its daily routines, marking the disappearance of beards, the habit becoming regular attire, and the clergy's cessation of frequenting inns, which were typical gathering places for men (Busch 1995, 214). From the 19th century, female religious congregations in Belgium saw significant growth, reversing the previous male dominance in religious orders. By 1900, there were four times as many female as male clergymen (Tihon 1976, 122-123), a shift partly attributed to the roles women played in education and healthcare. Despite a notable number of men joining religious orders between 1884 and 1903, the rise in female congregations contributed majorly to the overall growth of the religious sector (Art 1979, 296-300). This increase was supported by societal preference for congregations engaged in practical services over contemplative ones (Maesschalk 2004, 151). The expansion of primary education in the 19th century further facilitated these activities, with many women in religious orders contributing to the feminization of the teaching profession (Depaepe 2004, 980-981).

In Belgium, the increase in female religious personnel, a trend evident since 1976, is undeniable. Tihon, building on Claude Langlois' research in France, labeled this trend as "une féminisation," highlighting the significant growth of female over male clergymen. Despite noting the challenge in linking the rise of female congregations to the dynamism of 19th century religious life, the text agrees with the feminization thesis (Tihon 1976, 122-123). It suggests that the shifts in gender ratios among religious personnel in Belgium signify a broader societal evolution.

Feminization in the Church: The Role and Impact of Women in Religious Life in Belgium

Beyond the 'feminization' in religious contexts that transcends the realm of professional clergy to encompass the lay faithful, it is predominantly women who have become increasingly active in church affairs and religious life across various denominations. It highlights how women have taken on significant roles in church-related volunteer work, missions, Sunday schools, and charitable activities within both Protestant and Catholic traditions (Schneider 2002, 132). Bock (2002, 114) notes that religion was "feminized" across many countries, with women mobilizing in various religious movements and activities, including pilgrimages, joining confraternities, and fulfilling confession obligations predominantly observed in Catholic practices.

Curtis (2002, 122) points out that historical research has paid more attention to the expansion of female religious orders than to the broader feminization of the faithful. She criticizes the reliance on certain ecclesiastical documents, like decanal visitation reports and annual Easter reports, for measuring religiosity, arguing that such sources reproduce a narrow ecclesiastical definition of religion focused solely on behavioral observance, thus neglecting the significance of these behaviors for different societal groups and individuals (Art 1988, 175). The text further explores how, from the 19th century, the failure to attend mass on Sundays was increasingly seen as a problem by the Church, with men being the majority of those absent. Studies from the dioceses of Ghent and Bruges indicate higher Sunday mass attendance (Rombouts 1985, 450) and religious observance among women, including the practices of annual confession and communion, which were particularly observed by women (Verbeke 1988, 241). With the Church's push for more frequent communion and confession in the early 20th century, these practices became predominantly upheld by women, posing a challenge to Belgian clergymen (Verbeke 1988, 242-243). Efforts were made to encourage male participation in religious practices, but the discrepancy in religious observance between men and women, underscored by comparable gender ratios in the general population, highlighted a significant gender gap in religious engagement (Rombouts 1971, 99).

In the analysis of modern religiosity, it is crucial to consider the phenomena of pilgrimage and pious fraternities, which, though long-standing, gained significant popularity in the middle of the 19th century (Lehoucq 1989, 260-264). The Church recognized these expressions of popular religious culture as means to attract the masses, attempting to institutionalize them as much as possible. The official recognition of intense devotion to the Virgin Mary, through her apparitions at La Salette and Lourdes, and the dogma of the Immaculate Conception highlight this effort. In Belgium, Marian pilgrimages saw tremendous success, revealing a quantitative feminization of Catholicism, with women constituting the majority of pilgrims (Therry 1982, 93-95). Fraternities dedicated to the Mother Mary, initiated in the 17th century, became efficient organizations for the faithful, surpassing the strict duties of religious practice. These fraternities contributed to the beautification of ceremonies and performed acts of charity, with a majority of members being women. However, the crucial role of men in fraternities in the 18th century evolved, with women taking on various initiatives from the 19th century onwards (Cloet 1984, 236-238). The analysis of Catholic volunteer work in Belgium reveals significant differences between the contributions of men and women. Men focused on establishing patronages and assuming political roles, fighting for a preferential position of the Church in society and cooperation between Church and State (De Maeyer 2001, 191-192). On the other hand, Catholic women addressed society's needs through philanthropic and charitable works, considering these activities as extensions of their domestic tasks. This marked difference in Catholic volunteer activities underscores an opposition between man and woman stemming from the acceptance or rejection of external authority (De Maeyer 2001, 119).

Feminization of 19th Century Religious Devotion: Shifts in Theology and Iconography

The concept of 'feminization' in religious contexts, beyond mere quantitative dominance, involves a shift towards a more 'soft' religious content and 'sentimentalization' of 19th-century devotion forms. This notion is characterized by the transition from the image of a vengeful, stern God to a loving deity, a change sometimes described metaphorically as God becoming female (Giorgio 1991, 172, 186). In Catholicism, this shift is highlighted by the emotional and sentimental elements of 19th-century ultramontanism, paralleling a similar movement in Protestantism from Calvinist rigor to anti-intellectual sentimentalism (Ford 1993, 167-168). The transformation in the representation of Jesus and the enhanced focus on Mary during the 19th century are cited as evidence of this 'feminization'. Jesus's portrayal with traditionally female attributes, such as long hair and a passive stance, and the significant devotion to Mary, leading to the term 'Century of Mary', signify a broader androgynisation and feminization of religious imagery. This includes the increased popularity of female saints and the prevalence of female figures in religious art (Juster 1997, 345-346).

For Belgium, the content and icons of Mary and Christ devotions serve as primary indicators of theological 'feminization'. The 1854 dogma of the Immaculate Conception elevated Mary as a figure free from original sin (Perquy 2005, 78), embodying purity and piety, aligning with societal sensibilities towards hyper-feminization. Post-WWI, the devotion to the Sacred Heart, linking Jesus and Mary, evolved to incorporate patriotic themes, reflecting a shift from a focus on suffering to a more socially aware spirituality (Perquy 2005, 79-80).

These changes are significant for historical research, illustrating the substantial role of devotions in 19th-century religious life and their reflection of societal shifts towards femininity and sentimentality (Marx 2005, 111). Devotional images, particularly of the Holy Family and the child Jesus, propagated models of family life, obedience, and devotion, appealing especially to girls and embodying a softening theology through iconographic representation (Pirotte 1991, 38). This shift towards a more accessible and tender portrayal of divine figures marks a departure from their previous inaccessibility, with much of this sentimentality and iconography being influenced by French religious discourse (Nissen 1995, 147-148).

Defining 'Feminisation': Discursive Shifts in 19th Century Christianity

The concept of 'feminization' within Christianity in the 19th century signifies a shift towards associating piety intrinsically with femininity, leading to societal re-evaluations and a 'sacralization' of women. This transformation is marked by the transition from viewing women as seductresses to perceiving them as embodiments of piety and virtue (Schneider 2002, 133; Ford 1993, 167, 169). In this period, women, now seen as the moral heart of the family, assumed roles that contrasted sharply with medieval portrayals of masculinity as the core of piety (Olenhusen 1995, 11-12).

The Catholic Church in Belgium played a significant role in this shift by involving women in its secular dialogue, emphasizing the importance of Christian education (Rotaru 2021, 87-92) and spirituality within the family (Juster 1997, 345). Bishops saw women, particularly mothers, as crucial in transmitting religious customs and values (Westerkamp 1999, 133-134). This vision contributed to both the 'sacralization' of women and an increase in women's self-confidence, positioning women as discreet, self-sacrificing, and modest figures central to family and religious education (Simonton 2006, 206).

This discursive feminisation is also reflected in Belgian realist and impressionist art of the 19th and 20th centuries, where expressions of popular piety often featured women

and children in domestic and outdoor religious activities, such as pilgrimages and processions (Schoonbaert 1986, 20,102,108, 109, 112, 113, 131, 141, 145, 146). These artistic depictions, while not direct proof of historical realities, indicate a prevalent discourse that linked piety with femininity (Simonton 2006, 252).

Moreover, the association of women with piety had implications beyond Christian circles, influencing socialist and liberal views on women's roles in politics and education (McLeod 2000, 134). Socialists resisted granting women voting rights due to fears of clerical influence, while liberals sought to distance women's education from the Church's influence, aiming for emancipation from prejudice and superstition (Schneider 2002, 142). This dialogue reflects broader societal concerns about women's religiosity and its implications for education and political participation (Anderson 1995, 654).

Chronology and Sexual Dimorphism: Key Aspects of the Feminization Thesis in Religious

'Sexual Dimorphism'?

In the landscape of religious engagement, a notable gender divide is observed, where women are more actively involved than men across various Christian denominations in both Europe and North America. This gender disparity, termed "sexual dimorphism," highlights women's crucial roles in leading religious revivals and movements. Despite their significant contributions, women often find themselves marginalized within the formal hierarchies of religious institutions (McLeod 1988, 8,144). The article also points to geographical differences in the religious disengagement of men, indicating a broader cultural and societal impact on religious practices (McLeod 2000, 125-127).

Setting the Historical Stage: Chronology of 'Feminisation'

The historical examination of religious feminization reveals a complex interplay between societal, political, and economic factors, pinpointing the 19th century as a pivotal era, although its roots can be traced back to the 17th and 18th centuries (Bederman 1989, 432-465). The French and American Revolutions emerge as significant milestones, accelerating the process of feminization within Christianity. This shift towards female dominance in religious practices was shaped by various historical contexts, reflecting the evolving roles of women in religious spheres across Europe and North America (Curtis 2000, 124).

Polarising 'Men' and 'Women'

The feminization of Christianity, largely recognized in the 19th century, was influenced by the emergence of distinct gender roles and identities. This period saw the development of the two-sexes theory, attributing specific natural and cultural characteristics to women and men, respectively (Busch 1995, 208). Piety became seen as inherently feminine, with irreligiousness paralleled to masculinity. These perceptions were reflected in societal norms, legal frameworks, and religious expectations across Europe and America, reinforcing traditional gender roles and the association of women with natural piety (Hagemann 2004, 122-127).

'Separate Spheres'?

The 19th century saw a polarisation of gender roles, contributing to the 'feminization of Christianity'. This period embraced the 'separate spheres' ideology, dividing male and female roles into public and private domains, respectively (Ford 1993, 173). Industrialization and societal changes reinforced this division, assigning women the responsibility for religion and family (Busch 1995, 207). Despite the notion of separate

spheres, the influence of Christianity and women's roles in it continued to intersect significantly with public life, challenging the notion of strictly divided gender roles in religious contexts (Olenhusen 1995, 27-28, 34-36; Horne 2004, 22-40).

"Feminization of Christianity: Exploring Trends and Shifts in the 20th Century"

The phenomenon of the 'feminization of Christianity' has been attributed to various factors including the polarisation of gender characteristics, the concept of separate spheres, and the French and American Revolutions. However, there is less research on whether this feminization continued into the 20th century and what factors may have influenced its decline (Hagemann 2004, 243). Some scholars suggest that the gender gap between men and women widened by the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century in several countries. Others point to events like World War I as turning points, where the feminine character of certain religious traditions was overshadowed by nationalistic fervor (Walter and Davie 1998, 640-660).

Research on the British case suggests that by the 1960s, changes in moral values led to a decrease in the prominence of gender imbalances within Christianity (Brown 2006, 14, 30-31). However, despite these shifts, the gender gap remains a significant aspect of religious practice and belief in Western societies influenced by Christianity, with women generally exhibiting higher levels of religiosity compared to men according to various studies (Walter and Davie 1998, 642).

Unveiling the 'Femina Religiosa': Insights into Christian Feminization

Research on the 'feminization of Christianity' marks a shift towards understanding women's roles within religious contexts, prompted by the emergence of women's studies. However, there remains a tendency to focus solely on women, neglecting men's experiences. Caroline Ford highlights diverse archetypes of Christian women in the 19th century, while distinct ideals of masculinity also existed within Catholicism (Heller 2004, 610, 612). Despite primarily studying women, there is a need to explain why men show higher religious 'infidelity' and why women maintain and reinforce their religious practices. Explanations often revolve around societal perceptions of women as the 'weaker sex' but also consider motivations like self-confirmation and socialization (Ford 1993, 167).

"Self-Realization: A Driving Force in Women's Attraction to Religion"

Women's attraction to religion in the 19th century stemmed from its potential for self-realization, as seen in both Catholicism and Protestantism. The concept of the 'sacralization of woman' strengthened women's faith in their abilities and contributed to the appeal of Christianity (Blackbourn 1991, 786). This could manifest in active involvement in charity or in passive roles reflecting Christ's sacrifice. Participation in religious rituals allowed women to assert their piety, gaining respect and access to public circles. The rise of European Catholic congregations during this period highlighted the growth potential for women in active religious life, offering them control and authority (Liogier 2016, 204-205). French female Catholic congregations, in particular, provided varied job opportunities and responsibilities, contributing to their success. Similarly, German congregations appealed to women for their involvement in the Christian society project (Langlois 1984, 48-49). Anglican and Protestant deaconesses emerged to meet the need for total involvement among women, though they lacked access to pastoral ministry. Catholic sisters enjoyed more autonomy compared to Protestant deaconesses due to their ability to elect their Mother Superior (Bock 2002, 114).

Empowering Women: Religious Engagement in 19th Century Europe

Research into 19th century French and German Catholic women highlights their limited opportunities for socialization, independent action, and public power compared to men. The Church and its associated organizations provided one of the few outlets for social interaction beyond the household, contributing to their success. However, it is crucial to note the influence of the male hierarchy in guiding and leading women's activities, suggesting a relative degree of "feminization" rather than complete independence (Brown 2006, 59). Similarly, Protestant women also found appeal in religion as a means for independent action and socialization. Religion offered opportunities for personal growth, leadership, and adventure, beyond purely spiritual refreshment (Curtis 2002, 156).

Crafting Feminine Appeal: Clerical Strategies in Religious Engagement

Pat Starkey's analysis delves into the activities of women within both Protestant and Catholic domains, revealing a dual tendency. The first trend suggests that female congregations served as platforms for women to establish their presence in public spheres (Starkey's 2006, 206). Conversely, the second tendency underscores the restrictive nature of clerical oversight, portraying the support offered by the Church (Rotaru 2017, 57-76) as contingent upon compliance with its regulations, potentially stifling discussions on female emancipation. This dynamic is often interpreted as a deliberate strategy by the clergy, particularly evident in the qualitative feminization of content, predominantly within Catholicism (Starkey's 2006, 193, 194).

Here, the reevaluation of women's roles and the emphasis on themes appealing to them were strategic efforts to prevent their disengagement from religious institutions. For instance, the proclamation of the Immaculate Conception doctrine aimed to retain women's allegiance by highlighting their pivotal role as mothers in perpetuating Catholicism (De Maeyer 2001, 41-42; 119). However, Schneider (2002, 145-146) contests the notion of these content shifts as calculated manipulations, arguing that bishops remained committed to the traditional patriarchal model and did not relinquish control over religious education to women entirely.

Navigating Faith: Belgian Women's Religious Engagement

In 19th century Belgium, women's involvement with the Catholic Church and its affiliated organizations represented a fertile ground for self-realization and, to some extent, emancipation, despite the constraints of a predominantly patriarchal society (De Maeyer 2001, 111). This participation was not merely a means for women to assert themselves within the strict confines of traditional roles but also provided a platform for the subtle undermining of patriarchy, giving women an active voice and role in society, even in a context where power and authority were predominantly male (Reed 1988, 199-238). While involvement in philanthropic and educational activities was seen as a path to self-fulfillment and brought a certain degree of emancipation, it still operated within socially acceptable limits, in some cases perpetuating traditional gender norms (Loontjes 1951, 210).

Interestingly, despite these limitations, women managed to use the ecclesiastical structure as a vehicle for extending their influence beyond the domestic sphere, highlighting a balance between conforming to society-imposed roles and the desire to transcend them. Additionally, women's participation in religious congregations offered alternatives to traditional family life, paving the way for forms of independence and social recognition in a context that would otherwise confine them to the private sphere (Wynants 1989, 146).

Conclusions

In conclusions, the trajectory of women within the Catholic Church in 19th century Belgium illustrates the complexity of their social position, navigating between gender constraints and the search for spaces for self-expression and social action. This endeavor reflects a delicate dance between accepting and challenging patriarchal norms, underlining the complex dynamics of female emancipation within a given religious and social context.

Drawing upon the discussions presented in this article, it is clear that the feminization thesis offers a critical departure from the androcentric lens that has long dominated Christian historical studies. It serves as a corrective measure, attempting to balance the scales by bringing women's religious experiences to the forefront. However, this reorientation comes with its own set of challenges (Rotaru 2016, 29-43). The potential risk of swinging the pendulum too far, focusing solely on women and femininity, must be acknowledged and consciously avoided to prevent a new gendered imbalance.

The Belgian case, with its unique pillarized social structure, provides a fertile ground for both quantitative and qualitative analysis, presenting clear evidence of feminization within religious institutions. However, the research often stops short of a deep dive into the qualitative nuances of gender differentiation in religious identity. A more granular examination is necessary to elucidate the intricate dynamics of how men and women navigate and shape their religious spaces.

As the article comes to a close, the imperative is clear: we must forge a path forward that allows for a comprehensive exploration of both male and female religious lives. The feminization thesis should not become a catch-all category, but rather a finely pointed tool for dissecting and understanding the complex interplay of gender within the fabric of Christian history. This approach will not only refine the concept of feminization within religious studies but will also enhance our broader understanding of gender roles within the historical narrative.

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The Relevance of Bebbington's Patrullater in Defining Evangelicalism

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ABSTRACT: D. W. Bebbington's Patristicism occupies a prominent place in defining the evangelical movement, although initially the four distinctive characteristics of evangelicalism (conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism) were only stated out of a desire to best summarize what was considered common knowledge. Over time, however, the model proposed by D. W. Bebbington, modifications and adjustments have been proposed, aimed at: separating historical evangelicalism from contemporary evangelicalism, mentioning the historical moment of the movement's emergence and the Christian traditions from which it originates, including the role of the Holy Spirit's involvement in the convictions and ministry of the movement's initiators, the dynamic analysis of the movement, but also the conviction that among the basic elements that unite evangelicals is the struggle to meet the demands of personal faith in an increasingly secularized world, accompanied by a careful concern for affiliation to the body of the community. So, while D. W. Bebbington's quadrilateral has its merits, a current definition of evangelicalism must take into account not only the current state of the movement or the different forms the movement takes in various parts of the globe but also its evolution over time.

KEYWORDS: Bebbington's patristic, evangelicalism, conversionism, activism, biblicism, crucicentrism

1. Introduction

In this paper, we will analyze Bebbington's Patristicism, its contribution to the definition of evangelicalism, and proposed adjustments to that definition, with the aim of showing the relevance of Bebbington's patristicism in defining the evangelical movement. Since Bebbington summarizes the main characteristics of evangelicalism using a quadrilateral model, the four proposed components will be briefly analyzed, providing brief descriptions by D. W. Bebbington in the introduction to *Evangelicalism in a Modern Britain: A history from 1730s to the 1980s*. In the same section, I will show how his patristicism helped define evangelicalism, becoming the working definition for many subsequent studies. In the second part of the article, I will consider the relevance of patrullater to the general evangelical landscape, as well as contemporary, noting some of the modifications and adaptations proposed by other scholars.

From a methodological point of view, we will start from D. W. Bebbington's definition and briefly follow how the researcher described each component of his definition. We will then try to find out how this definition has been perceived, by looking at its relevance from the perspective of others, over the period of time that has elapsed from its emergence to the present. In the second part, we will try to identify, again through the lens of other scholars, possible modifications and adjustments that can be made to this

definition. All this, with the aim of observing how relevant this definition is still in the current evangelical context; and if it is no longer sufficiently relevant, what elements need to be added.

2. The quadrilateral Bebbington and its contribution to defining evangelicalism

In terms of initial attempts to define evangelicalism, early in the movement's emergence, the notion of evangelical meant in the main "of the gospel," though some outside the denomination did not consider the label valid (Bebbington 2015, 1). Specifically, the term "evangelical" which derives from the term Gospel or Good News was intended to affirm the relevance of the Gospel to this religious movement (Noll 2019, 13). Although in the beginning, a few key concepts were outlined to define the movement, of course as the movement evolved, there were differing views as to the importance and relevance of these key characteristics. For example, in the cent. 20th century, in the view of the General Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, the pillars of evangelicalism were: the need for evangelism, the need for conversion, trust in the Holy Spirit to sustain the new life and the priesthood of all believers. In the view of others, but especially conservatives, there have been instances when more authority has been attributed to biblicism (Bebbington 2015, 4).

Through careful and extensive research into the history of evangelicalism in Britain, D. W. Bebbington has become one of the leading interpreters of the history of evangelicalism (Harris 2008, 202). In his study *Evangelicalism in a Modern Britain: A history from 1730s to the 1980s*, he establishes a close link between the context and the expression of evangelical faith (Harris 2008, 202), explaining how evangelical religion was shaped by the environment in which it developed. At the same time, it has also paid attention to how evangelicalism itself has changed over the historical period under analysis (Bebbington 2015, VI). The research that underpinned the definition of the concept is supported by a significant and important body of literature. From monographs, biographies, and periodicals generated by the evangelical movement, the author also drew on experience gained through direct observation of worship services (Bebbington 2015, VII).

D. W. Bebbington himself mentioned that when he wrote the introductory chapter of the book in which this concept is explained, he wanted to summarise what he thought everyone already knew. He did not wish to formulate a new concept, but rather he sought to capture the consensus of opinion among scholars of the movement on the subject (Bebbington 2019, 175-176). Moreover, as evidence of this, immediately after the book's publication, although most reviews acknowledged the value of the work, it seems that few were aware of how influential the definition he proposed in the introductory section would become over time. Thus, of the forty-four reviews of the book tracked by Timothy Larsen, fewer than five highlighted the value of the quadrilateral as a possible functional and working definition of evangelicalism. However, it seems that no other definition is as generally accepted, and sometimes it is considered "the most useful general definition" (Larsen 2007, 1-2). In short, the four notions proposed as key components of evangelicalism are conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism.

As for conversionism, D. W. Bebbington suggested that it was both the collective purpose of evangelical churches and the purpose of individual members, and was one of the main themes of evangelical literature produced at the time. With this in mind, gospel preaching was focused on conversion, sometimes even appealing to the fear of hell. As a procedure, conversion was linked to major theological convictions such as 'justification by faith' or 'assurance of salvation', seeking to give converts a firm belief that through Christ their reconciliation with God is achieved. In terms of the age of conversion, it can be said that the period of adolescence or youth was considered optimal (Bebbington 2015, 6). There was no consensus regarding the process of conversion, as some approached it as a one-time,

short-lived moment, while others always considered it long-lived (Bebbington 2015, 7-8). However, regarding the means of conversion, in general, the primary role fell to the Holy Spirit, although the idea of a kind of self-conversion was occasionally embraced, thus reducing the mysterious involvement of the Holy Spirit (Bebbington 2015, 8).

Their activism involved a great emphasis on service, which meant in particular preaching the Gospel and participating in charitable work. The average religious service during the period analysed by the researcher, was 2.52 services/Sunday, with the followers of Wesley (one of the evangelical denominations that emerged in the British space) expected to work a 90-100 hour week (Bebbington 2015, 11). Their attention was directed to the mission fields but also to the unconverted in their own parishes (Bebbington 2015, 12). Their activism was also felt through their involvement in campaigns that sanctioned the slave trade or other actions considered morally unsound. As evidence of this, they were involved in numerous attempts to change the legislative framework, which was not always favourable to them (Bebbington 2015, 12).

As for biblicism, D. W. Bebbington argued that respect for the Bible, occupied a central place in their thinking, and there was generally agreement among all evangelicals that the Bible was fully inspired by God (Bebbington 2015, 13). They were convinced that its pages contained truth, but also that their own interpretation was most faithful to the intent of its authors. For this reason, D. W. Bebbington stated that the respect accorded to Scripture generally kept them from doctrinal extremes (Bebbington 2015, 13). As preferences go, it seems that New Testament passages were in great demand, especially the texts of the Gospel of John, although the most used verse, according to a survey conducted in 1896, was Galatians 2:20 (Bebbington 2015, 13). According to D. W. Bebbington, in the early days of the movement there was no question of the need to develop a theory of the infallibility or inerrancy of Scripture, since no doubts hovered over the text either (Bebbington 2015, 12). It was only later that the first views questioning its infallibility appeared.

As for the crucifixion, D. W. Bebbington points out that for them the doctrine of the cross was the central point of the Gospel. For this reason, some outside the movement felt that they had made the atonement an obsession, one that eclipsed even the incarnation (Bebbington 2015, 14-15). Christ was considered to have died as a substitute for sinful humanity, which made human beings valuable not on the basis of their status but rather on the basis of their potential to be saved. Moreover, there was a close connection between atonement and the pursuit of sanctification (Bebbington 2015, 15-16). Disputes between those who did and did not embrace Calvinist convictions also raged in this area, as some accepted Christ's sacrifice only for the elect and others attributed it to all. According to D. W. Bebbington, it seems that the dispute began to be abandoned in the early nineteenth century on the grounds that they considered it unproductive in producing new converts, and at the same time considered it too mysterious and impractical (Bebbington 2015, 16-17).

In terms of the evolution of the patristic over time, some eighteen years after the volume's publication, Timothy Larsen notes that he has identified no fewer than ninety-seven books that cite D. W. Bebbington's definition of evangelicalism. The same researcher notes that if one were to count all those who have explored this approach, the list would be very long (Larsen 2008, 21-22). According to him, Bebbington's quadrilateral came to occupy a top position, and because various scholars who wanted to delimit the scope of their own studies needed a working definition of evangelicalism. This is why even those who are dissatisfied and who propose replacing the patristic acknowledge that the four proposed characteristics have the most citations (Larsen 2008, 23 & 26). Some thirty years after the volume appeared, D. W. Bebbington himself noted that most reviewers recognized the value of this synthesis of the movement.

3. Proposed changes to the Bebbingtonian quadrangle

Although most reviewers recognized the value of this synthesis of the evangelical movement (Bebbington 2021, 2), D. W. Bebbington's descriptive approach also generated controversy, which in turn generated an appropriate literature. In general, what has been proposed to the definition, has been the addition of new features to show more clearly the limitations of the movement (Atherstone & Jones 2019, 10-11). However, in D. W. Bebbington's view, those unhappy with the quadruplet have only raised a series of questions that stimulate much more reflection, but not significant change to the definition. In his view, there is no compelling call to add anything to the four elements of the patrullater (elements that reflect the nature of evangelicalism) and at the same time no reason to abandon any of them. He declared himself surprised because he discovered himself to be advocating a modern equivalent of the Vincentian canon, according to which Christian truth was what was believed *ubique, semper et ab omnibus* (everywhere, always and by all). Thus, in his view, he maintained the conviction that the emphasis on the cross, the Bible, conversion and activism reflected the reality of the *ubique, semper et ab omnibus* evangelical movement (Bebbington 2019, 187).

One of the other contemporary scholars of the movement, Timothy Larsen, felt that in attempting to define evangelicalism, it was imperative to keep in mind that it was tied to orthodox Protestantism and the tradition of global Christian networks resulting from the 18th century revival movements of John Wesley and George Whitefield. Following on from his proposed definition, he considered that within evangelicalism, a prominent place was occupied by the Bible, which was regarded as inspired and the final authority on matters of faith and practice. Furthermore, in his view, evangelicalism emphasized reconciliation with God through the atoning work of Jesus Christ on the cross and emphasized the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the individual to bring about conversion and a continued life of fellowship with God. Moreover, this fellowship also involves serving God and one's fellow human beings, including the task of all believers to participate in the proclamation of the Gospel (Larsen 2007, 1). Summarizing, we can note that T. Larsen, adds to D. W. Bebbington's four characteristics, the first two mentions and combines conversionism and activism as aspects of pneumatology.

Thomas S. Kidd, drawing on the history of the great revivals of the eighteenth century, discusses the involvement of and reliance on the Holy Spirit as a possible additional component of the quadrilateral. He shows that the work of the Holy Spirit has been one of the most controversial issues in evangelical Christianity since its inception. In his view, from the very beginning of the movement, "belief in the active and immediate ministry of the Holy Spirit" (Kidd 2019, 137) was what made evangelicalism as new and controversial as it was and is. Specifically, the originators of the movement daily tested the limits of all that could be expected of the Holy Spirit in terms of their assurance, comfort, understanding, and guidance. For this reason, Kidd even resorted to concrete examples. One of the examples he turns to is George Whitefield, showing that there was no newer and more controversial issue in Whitefield's ministry than pneumatology (Kidd 2019, 137-139).

But if we consider Mark Noll's view, he believes that we must distinguish between historical and contemporary evangelicalism. Therefore, he believed that when evangelicalism is conceptually defined as a particular form of Protestant Christianity with a number of interconnected and recurring characteristics, we are talking about an evangelicalism that has constituted a historical reality. If, on the other hand, the definition is concerned with actual theological movements, networks, groups, individuals, activities and convictions, we are dealing with a very great complexity of data and research directions. Therefore, speaking of the current attempt to define evangelicalism, he believes that the best way forward is to re-examine how modern histories of evangelicalism have been written.

This is all the more so because the landmark statements on the history of evangelicalism, in his view, reveal a remarkable combination of clarity and complexity, and they themselves provide an excellent vantage point for this endeavor (Noll 2019, 1-2). Therefore, Noll believes that past trajectories in defining evangelicalism must be related to recent debates about evangelicalism. In his view, the careful conceptual definitions that historians have used to write histories of evangelicalism relate only in part to the evangelicalism evoked so casually in contemporary polemics. Thus, in his view, what David W. Bebbington has described in his research analyzing a two-hundred-year period of British history overlaps to some extent with that popular use of evangelicalism, but not comprehensively, coherently, and completely with what evangelicalism is today (Noll 2019, 7, 13).

Molly Worthen, a historian of 20th century evangelicalism and observer of American religious life, also wondered whether the definition given by D. W. Bebbington covers the rise of the new evangelical-type groups. He admits that in his work investigating twentieth-century evangelicals, the distinctive qualities proposed by D. W. Bebbington did not always give him the tools he needed. Therefore, although the elements of the patristic have remained constant over time, in his view the current definition of evangelicalism needs a dynamic framework that identifies the agents of change. For this reason, he considered the definition far too static, at odds with the nuanced role it has played in UK evangelicalism. In his view, three elemental concerns unite Protestants labelled evangelical: the desire to repair the rift between spiritual and rational knowledge, the desire to have categorically salvation or a true relationship with God (in popular parlance: to encounter or know Jesus), and the resolution of the tension between the demands of personal faith and the constraints of an increasingly secularised public space (Worthen 2019, 171-172).

Darren Dochuk, associate professor of history at the University of Notre Dame, also pointed out that through emerging research on 20th century evangelicalism, another hallmark of evangelicalism that should be added to Bebbington's definition is fellowship and total commitment to the whole body of the community. Thus, in defining one's evangelicalism, but also evangelicalism itself, membership itself becomes a kind of existential, but also theological, very important threshold. Darren Dochuk refers to the National Association of Evangelicals' statement of faith, which specifies that the spiritual unity of believers in Jesus Christ is as indispensable a truth for the believer as absolute faith in the Bible, the cross, or the Trinity (Dochuk 2019, 150-151).

Following an analysis that takes as its starting point the question of whether the four descriptors of the movement remain valid today, Brian Harris considers that contemporary evangelicalism is best described as a movement of fervent piety, arguing that by claiming a holistic understanding of each of D. W. Bebbington's characteristics, it is possible to create an evangelical identity better suited to a postmodern age (Harris 2008, 201). His investigation examines evangelical identity both theologically and sociologically to ensure that it is not statically situated in the realm of theological theory, or in the world of sociology (Harris 2008, 202). In his view, for contemporaneity, it would be desirable for the title evangelical to define an aspiration rather than an identity, suggesting that it should be viewed beyond the four concepts proposed by Bebbington, understanding holistically their deeper meaning (Harris 2008, 213).

Although the list of possible additions or corrections proposed to D. W. Bebbington's definition could go on, it can be seen that these various working definitions of evangelicalism are often closely related to the researcher's source material and the object of research. For this reason, it is clear that the approach differs according to the perspective pursued or according to the elements that are taken into account. Therefore, if we analyze evangelicalism through the prism of revival and holiness movements, the results will differ from those based on the fundamentalist controversies of the twentieth-century evangelical movement (Atherstone & Jones 2019, 11).

In addition, we also find instances where some have lamented these perennial attempts to define evangelicalism. Either they have found them useless or impossible. However, in most situations it has been recognized that they are necessary and cannot be abandoned. Noll, in contrast, understanding the complexity and sensitivity of these definitions, considered the difficulties encountered in describing evangelicalism as manageable, of course if common sense prevails (Atherstone and Jones 2019, 11-12). And as Molly Worthen observes, no matter how many scholars complain about the problems with defining the term evangelical, and no matter how much it is suggested that it be dropped, "a lot of people, outsiders and believers alike, will continue to use the word" (Worthen 2019, 175). In his view, it is almost impossible to drop it.

4. Conclusions

Although the models for defining evangelicalism have differed, D. W. Bebbington, in his study, makes a thorough analysis, offering concrete and sound arguments in support of his claims, which make his analysis a serious starting point in the study of the concept. Thus, the four key concepts proposed for defining evangelicalism are conversionism, activism, biblicism and crucicentrism. The first of these was conversion, which was linked to major theological convictions and was the common goal of evangelical churches and their members. Activism, represented the great emphasis on service, with members of the communities expected to be heavily involved in serving others. Then, respect for the Bible and the firm belief that all of God's truth is contained within its pages was another basic element of the movement. And as far as crucicentrism is concerned, evangelicals saw in the sacrifice of Christ not only the central point of the Gospel but also the sufficient substitute of God for the salvation of the human being.

This model, in the form of a quadrilateral, occupies a prominent place in defining the movement, although initially the four distinctive characteristics of evangelicalism were only listed out of a desire to best summarize what was considered common knowledge. Over time, however, this brief description has become more and more widely known, becoming a kind of generally accepted definition that has garnered many citations. Its success, it seems, was also due to the concise way in which it was formulated, but also to the fact that many scholars needed a working definition of evangelicalism in order to delimit their own studies.

However, over time, the model proposed by D. W. Bebbington, has been proposed modifications and adjustments. Although D. W. Bebbington took them into consideration, he nevertheless maintained his conviction that the suggestions made, although thought-provoking, did not bring significant changes to the definition. In general, it was proposed to add references to the historical moment of the movement's emergence and the Christian traditions from which the movement originated. In addition, it was also proposed to modify the definition by including the role of the Holy Spirit's involvement in the convictions and ministry of the movement's initiators and continuers. Another view questioned the relevance of the definition, given the way evangelicalism itself has changed over time. It was therefore proposed to separate historical and contemporary evangelicalism. This is also because the current activities and theological beliefs of evangelicals differ significantly from the historical period considered by D. W. Bebbington.

In order to identify and locate these agents of the movement, a dynamic analysis of the contemporary evangelical framework has been proposed, suggesting that among the basic elements that unite Protestants labelled evangelical are other concerns. The desire to reconcile rational (Rotaru 2005,36) and spiritual knowledge, without losing sight of the real possession of a saving relationship with God, is one of them. In addition, the struggle to meet the demands of personal faith in an increasingly secularised public space secularizat (Rotaru 2006, 251-266), and fellowship with and affiliation to the whole body of the

community, have also been proposed as specific elements of contemporary evangelicalism. In addition, an in-depth holistic understanding of its components was proposed, taking into account the relevance of each from both a sociological and theological point of view.

For our part, we believe that Bebbington's quadrilateral has particular merit in that it sums up fairly well the most significant features of the evangelical movement. However, even those who propose changes to this definition need to be examined, since over time the evangelical movement has also taken on new forms of manifestation. Therefore, one of the essential factors in defining the concept is the historical period under analysis. And while Bebbington's quadrilateral has excellently summarized that historical period, we believe that a current definition of evangelicalism must take into account the current state of the movement. Another factor influencing the definition of the concept is the different forms the movement takes in different parts of the world. Since it is difficult to achieve uniformity, I believe that it is most appropriate that general definitions can be customised to the different variations of movement. And for a better understanding of the concept, we believe that contemporary evangelicalism should be put in relation to the original evangelicalism, looking not only at the evolution over time, but also at the perspective pursued by the protagonists of the movement over time.

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Achievements and Hazards of Contextualization in Theology: The Case of Christian Mission

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ABSTRACT: This article reviews the major changes in the theological approach that occurred in the second half of the 20th century. There is a naturalness of contextualization. It has to do with how the human mind interrogates reality and then particularizes the answers it receives into sets of truths that help it be the man of its own reality. However, contextualization is a risky approach. The particular does not always reproduce the general at the risk of losing the essence that gives meaning to everything. But the risk is worth taking and the winner is, finally, the Christian mission itself.

KEYWORDS: theology, contextualization, models, mission, objective truth, subjective truth, perspectival truth

1. Introduction

Christianity seems to be a religion that is constantly in transition. It evolves by taking up—somewhat mimetically—that agonizing dynamic of a world perpetually striving to reinvent itself (Pears 2010, 1). The unprecedented ontological, normative and hermeneutical changes that occur somewhere in the middle of the twentieth century, in a time of late modernity, are somehow linked to the adoption of new ways of perceiving truth and religious phenomena in general. These reorientations or inversions, as Delsol (2022, 35) calls them, will redefine the very essence and foundations of Christian civilization or what we call Christianity.

In pre-modernism, i.e., from the 5th century until the beginning of the Reformation (16th century), truth and knowledge were regarded as revealed, universal and totalizing. The authenticity of truth or knowledge in general was validated by the criterion of objectivity. To proclaim an 'objective truth' had the sense of conformity beyond doubt with a certain absolute reality, external to the human being. Human consciousness (Rotaru 2016,30-37) was thus placed outside the subject (the self), a zone in which it was possible to observe and measure with maximum autonomy.

Later, the period between the late Reformation and the mid-20th century, known as modernity, promotes a broad critique of the theory of knowledge, finally imposing methodical doubt and 'subjective truth'. This time, the truth will be perceived as a mentally constructed reality perfectly framed within the limits of the possibilities of human reason (Kant). Enlightenment modernism, therefore, rejects the premise of objective truth, which gives it the title of idealism.

Postmodernism, which follows in chronological order, will re-evaluate the concept of truth, applying a perspectival grid to it. The method is a self-reflexive and critical one, in which the subject looks at himself in the light of reality and social change by putting himself in tune with the subjectivity of the human community. In such a time, Pears argues, the idea that there can be universally valid statements that can be assembled in one particular context and then transported to any other context becomes a wholly unacceptable one (Pears 2010, 6). Pope Paul VI had publicly acknowledged that Christianity was not

always a beneficial element in the development of the world, but often a destructive factor (Pears 2010, 12). The moment marks an important shift in the approach to Christian theology and theological reflection in general. Subsequently, the liberation theology that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s provided space for contextual theologies by placing human experience alongside the concept in the epistemological toolkit of theological reflection (Bosch 1991, 303). Bevans (1992, 21) argues that reality is not just 'out there, somewhere'—the form of a conceptual understanding—but it is also one 'mediated by meaning', a meaning that we make in the context of our culture or historical period in the form of an experiential understanding.”

The concept of 'contextualization' first appears as a particular perspective in the field of education and training of church officers. Soon, however, it becomes an 'umbrella term' covering a wide variety of theological models (Bosch 1991, 358). Two models prevail that of indigenization and that of socio-economics. Both illustrate the intense efforts to rescue theology as an academic science. Schleiermacher was probably the first theologian to denounce the misguided Enlightenment perspective, in which science—and theology in particular—had been seen as a cumulative endeavor whereby the study of a text could lead to the recovery of the author's original intention, i.e., a kind of truth posited behind the text (Ricoeur), beyond any rational doubt. On the contrary, theology had to become a reflection of the Church on its own life and experiences, i.e., it had to place itself in front of the sacred text. Schleiermacher thus concludes that theology was influenced and perhaps even determined by the very context in which it evolved.

2. The mystery of contextualization

By the mid-20th century, there was an awareness of the significance of context. This contributed to the construction of a suite of cultural messages that became increasingly relevant in the perception of contemporary society. Contextualization could thus be recognized as a fundamental operation belonging to the process of human cognition or the way in which human beings interrogate reality with the aim of penetrating its meaning which is truth. Such a definition, for example, would place theology in a perpetual horizon of contextualization, with Christian thought depending directly on the theological context of the Christian community (Pears 2010, 1). Vanhoozer defined theology as attempting to evaluate the play of the world according to the criteria of God's Word. Theological inquiry thus constructs a double interpretation of the Word and of the world itself (Carson and Woodbridge 2006, 14). The world itself constitutes a sum of different contexts.

It is contextualization that continually aims to regulate the content of Christian theology, even if this sometimes demands a dynamization of the very foundations of theology (Tillich 2007, 8). The self-reflexive relationship established between the theologian and the Christian community will henceforth shape theological reflection itself. The conclusion, according to Catholic theologian Robert J. Schreiter, is that contextualization will thus succeed in keeping theology from the sin of neutrality, of falling into obsolescence or irrelevance (Pears 2010, 13).

When actors from the stage of Western Christianity came to 'perform' on the great stages of the secular world (Rotaru 2006, 251-266), they risked not being understood by local audiences. In fact, they had ceased to be relevant. Local cultures are texts that demand to be interpreted first. They have their own identity, just like the local cultures that gave birth to them. And they are not just any texts, for every culture, says the neo-orthodox theologian Paul Tillich, is at its core a religious one, since in one way or another, it preserves the ultimate concerns of an individual or the community of which he or she is a part. To translate one's role into the language of the new scene, but without altering the

meaning of the story, is to contextualize, and contextualization becomes a theological imperative (Bevans 1992, 21).

In the same vein, Wells (1997, 176) challenges theologians to recognize that the nature of biblical revelation is bipolar: revelation was communicated in a particular cultural context particular to the world 'back then', but it was also intended to be shared by every generation 'from then to now'. But for such a movement of revelation from the past to the present, it is necessary, Wells notes, that Scripture be first deconceptualized in order to proclaim its cross-cultural content. Then it must be reconceptualized so that its content fits the cognitive presuppositions and social patterns of our time (Wells 1997, 176). It is precisely here that we may have another support for contextualization, namely, the emergence of a new understanding of culture facilitated by the input of the social sciences of the contemporary world.

While those mentioned so far have the character of external factors, Bevans (1992, 31ff) also identifies some internal factors or evidences of theology that call for contextualization. The first is the incarnational nature of Christ. Bevans argues that God so loved his created world that he wanted to share his own Self with man. This is why Christ became incarnate, but Bevans sees it only as a beginning of the incarnation, because today, the Church, in a sense, is called to continue (through mission) this process of God's incarnation (Rotaru 2012, 5). The second factor is the sacramental nature of reality. The incarnation of the Son of God, Bevans points out, shows that God reveals himself first in concrete reality and then in ideas. Jesus made himself known to humanity in the fullness of his divine as well as human condition. So if reality in the context of revelation becomes something sacramental, it follows that the particular context of reality also acquires a similar, sacramental nature. A third factor that calls for contextualization is that change in the understanding of the nature of divine revelation. In pre-modernism and even in modernism, theology was written in the patterns of propositional truths. Revelation was received in the form of eternal, infallible truths received directly from the Lord Jesus and His apostles. Faith was counted as total intellectual assent to these truths. The problem is that this revelation stopped with the passing of the apostolic generation. These truths were then passed on from generation to generation, each age trying to understand as much as possible of the reality they described.

Finally, the fifth evidence is found in the very doctrinal heart of Christianity, in the doctrine of the Trinity. Contemporary theology has helped to revitalize Trinitarian theological thinking. The understanding of God as Trinity speaks of a dynamic God who is in specific relationship with humans. God acts contextually, this is the teaching of the doctrine of the Trinity, therefore contextualization is truly a theological imperative. These were some of those natural elements that characterize the normality of contextualization. Now, it is time to visualize what it promises.

3. The seduction of contextualization

The horizon of contextual theology is clearly one in its 'infancy'. However, some theologians believe that significant work has already emerged proposing already elaborated ways in which contextual theology should be understood and studied as a theological endeavor (Pears 2010, 2). In fact, its seduction, what it promises, is to respond to the challenges of a major paradigm shift in defining truth and the new goals of theory of knowledge. In this sense, contextual theology is neither an anachronistic nor an overly avant-garde enterprise. It is on the list of those methods that are perfectly adapted to the current epistemological foundation. Bevans is convinced that contextual theology is both a continuation of traditional theology and an innovative theology, if it is seen through the prism of three different sources: Scripture, tradition and human experience, to which a fourth, imagination, could be added (Bevans 1992, 21).

For Schreier, the nature of contextual theologies as local theologies, given that they reflect the cultural traditions of these communities, are tools for spiritual growth (Pears 2010, 17). Such theologies can also be seen as tools for remembering foundational community experiences (community anamnesis). They can therefore be counted as theologies of memory as well. They can be theologies of people of color, feminist, sexist, environmentalist, or even queer theologies.

Bergmann, (2003, xiii) analyses the contextual expression of the continuous revelation of God, observing that it is then fixed as the content of a theological memory of the religious community. For Bergmann, the opportunity of contextual theology is to be open to capturing God's revelatory presence in the very specific places in which people find themselves. Thus, God's self-revelation itself was and is contextual in nature (Pears 2010, 42). Moreover, Bergmann also argues, it is contextual theology that reveals that God's actions are both creative and liberating (Pears 2010, 42).

One of the most enthusiastic and, at the same time, seductive promoters of contextual theologies is Newbigin. Looking back at the exclusivism that characterized Christian theology until recently, he said, "It is as if we were actually engaged in the business of building barriers" (Newbigin 1989, 173). Newbigin is an eternal seeker of the middle way, of that direction which avoids both exclusivism and absolute pluralism. This inclusivist path, which Rahner also proposed at one point, "recognizes Christ as the only Saviour, but affirms that his saving work extends beyond the boundaries of the visible church" (Newbigin 1989, 173). This penetration outside the space of the visible church (a place identified by Rahner as belonging to an anonymous Christianity) is hoped to be achieved through contextualization.

Wells (1997, 189), looking a little from another perspective, notes the servant side of contextualization. He seems, however, to dissociate such contextualization from the one that made a real vogue in the academic circles of the 1980s. Taking the example of Jesus, who assumed the role of servanthood by becoming incarnate and then seeking and saving what was lost, theology must become incarnate in contemporary culture without losing its identity, with the aim of winning those who are lost in sin.

These newly emerging contextual theologies, taken as a whole, therefore promise a few things. First, they promised to keep intact the spirit and message of the gospel. Second, they wanted to take seriously the tradition of the Christian community as a history of interpretations given in ecclesiastical context over the ages. Another important point was to conform the new theologies to the content and specificity of local cultures. Last, but not least, is the promise of clarifying the effects of social changes in those local cultures (Bevans 1992, 15). Bevans, built a map by initially constructing five models of contextual theology, then, added the sixth. For Bevans, the only credible formulation of the theological approach is that of contextualization (Bevans 1992, 15). Contextual theology therefore represents for him a theological imperative, a perspective aligned in all respects with the Christian tradition. What Bevans adds to the 'classical' sources of theology, Scripture and tradition, is human experience, a proposition, Pears argues, with radical implications and far-reaching side-effects (Pears 2010, 21).

The model of translation is one posited at the 'conservative' end of the spectrum of contextual theology. It is the most widely used of the six models involving the translation of Christian discourse into particular or specific contexts. This translation, Bevans insists, incorporates not only the form but also the meaning of the gospel, which is thus translated into an appropriate set of cultural terms. The role of culture is subordinate to that of the pure gospel, but it remains of great importance in the case of a short and non-interrogable message whose value lies in content rather than form. The model insists on the idea of preserving Christian identity.

The anthropological model is a more radical one in terms of its valorization of the idea of culture. Its objective is to preserve the cultural identity of a person who professes the Christian faith. It is a person-centred model, with human experiences becoming important sources of theological reflection.

The *praxis* model refers to a particular context from which Christianity is viewed and aims to develop a way of expressing the Christian faith that is partial to that context. The model considers social change and affirms the important role that Christianity can play in contributing to social change. The use of the word 'praxis' refers to the idea of God's presence in culture, among people, in history and in historical action. Action is a fundamental element of this model. Calling the world to change implies action. Action presents the practical basis for change. The model cannot, however, be simply aligned with liberation theology, because it does not seek liberation but *praxis*.

The synthetic model includes features common to other models, being a 'middle of the road' seeker. The model claims the imposition of a balance between commitment and tradition, Scripture and doctrine, but also vis-à-vis the contemporary local context (Pears 2010, 28). The picture thus emerges of a dichotomy between Tradition on the one hand and cultural experience on the other.

The transcendental model focuses on the person engaged in theological inquiry or reflection. It is not important, then, that the local theology produced is the theology, but that the theologian producing that theology is a genuine convert. This is why Bevans believes that true theology does not first appear in books, but in the converted hearts of people (Pears 2010, 28).

The countercultural model is a radical model based firmly on both history and human experience. It focuses on social change, operating a hermeneutic of suspicion on the role of context, but also of context itself. The driving force within this model is the gospel and not human experience, culture or context. Bevans' criticism, Pears explains, of this model is that it tends to be an example of a more anti-cultural than a counter-cultural approach (Pears 2010, 28). It seems, therefore, that an alternative name for this model should be the prophetic model.

4. The anxieties of contextualization

The term contextual theology is certainly an elusive, polysemantic, polymorphous one, even having contrasting meanings. The situation becomes extremely complex in the case of liberation theologies, those justice-seeking theologies born out of a hermeneutic of suspicion, imposed as a result of the awareness of the horrors produced by the two world wars (the collapse of humanist ideals, however, wrongly associated by many with European Christian culture and civilization) and the dramas that continue to characterize Western Christian colonialism (Braidotti 2016, 46). This new kind of hermeneutics, some fear, may become a limiting one for contextual theology. The theological horizon could again be reduced exclusively to the context of other and other traditional theologies (some, often radical) outside the American-European space, which will henceforth become the main resources of theological reflection.

Another concern is expressed by Robert Schreiter, who acknowledges that doing theology at a local level, in a contextual way, raises serious reservations about the proliferation of local theologies that are totally different from one another and then dilemmas about their relationship to the Christian tradition (Pears 2010, 17). In other words, there is a danger that the meaning of the biblical narrative will come to differ from the text of the biblical narrative, as Hans Frei observes (Frei 1974; see also Wells 1997, 189). In this case, the theologian will no longer be the academic figure, the ordained minister, characters once separated from the rest of the community and endowed with a central authority, but a contextual local theologian who will articulate the concerns and hopes proper to his or her

community. The question is, however, whether there will not be a risk of losing the Christian foundations (*that theologia perennis*) because of an exclusive, blind focus on the needs and aspirations of local communities, eager mainly for freedom and social change.

Wells looked at contextualization through the prism of the process of affirming biblical doctrine in the particular situation of modernity. This perspective claims to distinguish and even disjunct the concept of doctrine from that of theology. In this way, the meaning of the Christian faith is freed from a number of biblical constraints and becomes an amalgam composed of social or political ideologies as well as scriptural content. The trajectory of revelation, Wells observes, shifts from the area of the authority of the Word to that of contemporary culture, from text to context, and the interpreter becomes the sovereign arbiter, a role once held by the Word of God. Christian continuity becomes a continuity of an awareness of the authority of context, rather than a preservation of the same doctrinal content. The great danger of contextualization is to assume that the modern context determines how the biblical narrative is to be read. In other words, the cognitive horizon of an interpreter can limit or determine the cognitive horizon of the text. To act in faith, Wells remarks, can become to act politically (Wells 1997, 191).

5. The praxis of contextualization: the Christian mission

Pears (2010, 10) sees the role of missiology as particularly important in the process of formation and ongoing development of contextual theology. Moltmann (1975, 7) states in turn, "Today, one of the most powerful impetuses for the renewal of the theological concept of the church comes from within mission theology." Walls said that Christian teaching needs a renaissance in missiological studies (Tennent 2007, 291). Missiology, as a practical approach to the theology of the Christian Church throughout the ages, had been accused by the post-colonialist critique of the mid-twentieth century of imposing, in the name of progress, a reductionist and exclusivist understanding of Western civilization in the pre-modern and modern periods, forcibly imprinting local cultures belonging to colonized countries. It is therefore the Western context that has shaped Christian theology of mission, while ignoring the specific contexts of the social locations/cultures in which the Church has missioned (Rotaru 2017, 57-76). Each era, pre-modern, then modern and post-modern, has visibly left its mark on theology, mission theology and by implication missionary practice.

Premodernism had kept intact until the Renaissance the missionary paradigm of the early church built on the support of biblical revelation, which will not be discussed here, but which appears as antinomian clichés in the other two periods. In modernism, as a result of its presupposition that reason is the only faculty that can facilitate man's knowledge, a number of arguments were formulated, each of which was applied equally to missionary theology. David Bosch, one of the most influential theologians and missiologists, sums up these arguments by showing that Christian religion was seen: 1) as a unique religious experience, 2) as a particular, private way of life, 3) as far more rational than science, 4) as the one most entitled to govern the whole of society, and 5) as the one that frees the human condition from any redundant religious attachment (Bosch 1991, 302). These characteristics attributed to Christianity shaped the concept of mission that remained in place until the mid-20th century, at which point the modernist/Enlightenment mindset regarding the concept of reason became inadequate.

The premise of the objectivity of truth, argue the followers of postmodernism, has crippled the approaches to human knowledge by imposing a reductionist pattern that has halted the development of scientific knowledge. One way or another, human knowledge had to expand, to penetrate new horizons. Rationality itself had to be expanded, and one of the ways proposed was to admit that language is not precise enough to define both the laws of science and the doctrinal truths of the theological disciplines. This led, Bosch (1991, 303) points out, to a reassessment of the role of metaphor, myth, analogy, mystery or incantation.

Northrop Frye also plays an important role in this period of paradigm shift in knowledge, arguing that fundamental doctrines can only be expressed in the form of metaphor. "Metaphor, symbol, ritual, sign and myth, long outlawed, are now rehabilitated. There is growing interest in narrative theology, theology as narrative as well as other non-conceptual forms of theology" (Bosch 1991, 303). Beyond these elements of language, true rationality will now include experience. This change will profoundly affect theological reflection itself. Moreover, the missionary vision as praxis of theological contextualization will undergo substantial changes, which will be legitimized not by the fact that the content of Scripture is changing, but by the fact that the Christian world understands, in the new postmodern grid, the Bible much better (Bosch 1991, 315).

Thus, in the new ecclesiology developing after the 1950s, the Church is seen as essentially missionary. The biblical model adopted is that of 1 Peter 2:9, in which the Church is not the sender, but rather the sent. The Church is then understood as sacrament, sign, or instrument (Bosch 1991, 321). This new perception, as might be expected, significantly altered the relationship between the Church and the world, and mission began to be seen as a turning of God's face towards the world (Bosch 1991, 322).

Another contextual nuance that emerges in the mission sphere is that mission is now not so much of the Church as the Body of Christ, but of the local church. It will no longer be about the mission agenda of the Church, but about the many and varied local mission agendas that will aim at the present salvation of people and not just the future. There are therefore two alternative soteriologies in the field of mission: one that still seeks God's mercy and another that begins to proclaim the mercy of people towards one another. Criticism of conservative evangelicalism has not been slow in coming, and so Carl Henry warns Christianity that "where once the gospel of repentance had a world-changing message, it has now narrowed to a message of resistance against the world" (Bosch 1991, 345). One of the ways to properly contextualize the role and way of doing mission is to understand the relationship between mission and evangelism. Bosch, in order to clarify this, resorts to a definition of the following three terms: mission, evangelism, evangelisation (see Bosch 1991, 349-351). By evangelism, one can understand all the activities carried out with the aim of spreading the gospel and the theological reflection that accompanies or animates these activities. Evangelism refers to the actual process or manner of spreading the gospel and then extending the mission field. There are also some who define evangelism as ministry to those who are no longer Christians, or preaching the gospel among those who have left the Church and live in a post-Christian age.

6. Conclusions

Looked at in depth, postmodernism is first and foremost a tragic age of *demolition* and then of the peroration of promises that remain unfulfilled to this day. Lyotard (1993, 15) considered that absolutely all the concepts of life imposed by modernism, those metanarratives, have in themselves an oppressive purpose. Each metanarrative should now be contextualized and then disseminated in the form of micro-narratives. But this has attracted the idea of *demolishing all narratives*. Derrida (Derrida 1976) turned his attention to the text, the fundamental support of any narrative. He saw it as a play on words composed according to grammatical rules that conceals no objective reality. Contextualizing the text by assigning the main role to the interpreter had the effect of *demolishing the text* by minimising the importance that the authorial intention had hitherto had. Mission theology has thus been deprived of the very foundation of its claims and practices conferred by the infallibility of the text of Scripture. Foucault (Foucault 1991), too, seeks to demonstrate that societal institutions are oppressive and proposes nothing less than the *demolition of institutions* by arguing that man must be free in all his manifestations.

In terms of mission, such a contextualization has diminished the role of the Church, the initiator of mission, and thus exaggerated the role of missionary organizations of all kinds. In the end, Deleuze and Guattari (1994) concluded that reality itself does not exist, only its signs. Truth thus becomes linked to what one likes. Science is a contextualization of tastes. Art and literature, through excessive contextualization, become devoid of any set of rules. Everything comes to be seen as a spectacle, religion itself. This *demolition of reality* proclaimed by the two French thinkers was followed by *the demolition of the religious act*, of worship, religion becoming a parade of all kinds of spectacles. This is the context of the contextualization of the Christian mission as a result of the paradigm shift due to the emergence of postmodernism. The purpose for which this critical perspective is useful is to avoid a possible *demolition of the Christian mission* by imposing wrong contextualizations on this extraordinary component of Christian praxis.

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