

# **(Non)European institutional and identity constructions in (re)presentations of violence against women in Romania**

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**KEY WORDS:** violence, women, europeanization, identity, (re)presentation

**SUMMARY:**

*People know what they (re)present; they frequently know why they (re)present what they (re)present; but what they do not know is what (re)presents what they (re)present.<sup>1</sup> Discourses that (re)present violence against women are potentially violent and construct the identities they (re)present. It is important how we present, re-present and represent this type of violence because we can simultaneously undermine or deepen the violence, deconstruct its causes or deposit it at social, cultural, economic and political (gendered) margins. And what people present, their rhetoric and their ideas, once posited, are institutionalized, become institutions, understood in the broader sense of the term as mechanisms and reference points which organize social, cultural, economic or political life; they become representative for the society that produced them in the first place and keep representing it as identity characteristics. Thus, not only the violence against women, but also its prevention and combating, are politicized. The present project sets out to offer a new perspective on the issue of violence against women in Romania. It shall be focused on a discursive point of view within a historical and sociological*

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<sup>1</sup> This utterance, which belongs to the author, is a variant inspired by the following quote from Michel Foucault: *People know what they do; they frequently know why they do what they do; but what they don't know is what what they do does*". See Michel Foucault, in H.L. Dreyfus and P. Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics*, Sussex: Harvester Press, 1982, p.187.

*framework regarding addressing the issue of violence against women on the political and public agenda in Romania. This way, the processes of institutional and identity construction brought about by these public and political problematisations shall be identifiable.*

I continue with this line of thought and state that people know what they construct; they frequently know why they construct what they construct; but what they do not know is what is constructed by what they construct. By construction I understand a broader sense of the term, a historical process, not an event, of creating, defining, organizing, developing, stabilizing, depositing. By institution I refer again to a more general sense of the concept, defining it as any location of power which organizes social, political, economic and cultural life. Therefore, a posited social, political, economic and cultural practice ossified in time or, on the contrary, instituted at a certain point. I make a difference between institution and identity, although I believe that identity, understood as the whole given by the intersection of certain ways of being and doing, can also be an institution or can be institutionalised, as this project will show. Thus, violence against women, as well as combating it, can be institutions or can be institutionalized. Identity can also be defined through these institution(alisation)s as being one way or another. For example, *non-EUropean or EUropean*<sup>2</sup>. It is important to mention that I don't (ab)use the premise that Romania is non-European and is undergoing a process of transition towards Europeanism. Rather, I am analysing the way in which such a transition is (re)presented on the political and public agenda in Romania.

By the discourse referring to a certain issue I understand the totality of 'locations' – and of the connections between them – in which it is addressed, it is approached repeatedly, recurrently, starting from the level of language to the level of institutionalization. By institution I refer here to the more general sense of a posited and ossified practice in a specific temporal and spatial context from a cultural, social, political and economic point of view. Therefore, the discourse is made up of the presentation, the re-presentation and, finally, the representation of the respective issue.

In this sense, I consider all the presentations, re- presentations and representations of violence against women on the political and public agenda in Romania as being a discourse on

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<sup>2</sup> I use the term "EUrope", "EUropean", "EUropeanization" in order to illustrate the often used, abused and/or misused conflation of the European Union- EU- with Europe as economical, political, social, cultural, even spatial, geographies.

the violence against women. It can be, of course, understood as a whole or as part of a whole depending on variables such as: time period, specific type of violence, discourse producers, frame of (re)presentation used for the problematisation of the respective violence and so on. The presentation, re-presentation and representation of violence against women may take place through mechanisms such as: parliamentary declarations, parliamentary debates, laws and legislative initiatives, emergency ordinances, government decisions, developing public institutions and policies, reports and websites of government bodies, mass media articles, positions and declarations of public opinion leaders or websites of nongovernmental organizations. These are the mechanisms through which political and public agendas are set in a country. They passively reflect a social, cultural, political and economic context (so, a fabric of social, cultural, political and economic discourses), they reflect the interests of the actors who can use these mechanisms in the respective context and can outline the public and political agenda – the elites (?). But, simultaneously, the respective mechanisms have an active component, they contribute, directly or indirectly to the perpetuating, altering or modifying, so to the re/de/construction of the respective context. These processes generally take place according to the interests of the actors who hold power in what the (in)formation of the public and political agendas are concerned.

I conceptualise these political and public agendas as “working agendas” of governments, parliaments, politicians, state institutions and of NGOs, civil society and mass media, respectively. The political and public agenda presents, re-presents and represents various issues, is made up of reactions or, more accurately, (re)actions to these issues, of problematisations of these problems in different manners by different actors. Throughout these processes, these issues are defined and re-defined.

Moreover, on the political and public agenda the problematisation of an issue takes place by relating it to the social, cultural, political and economic context, with the interests of the actors who set the agendas; so, by references which present, re-present and represent it on the respective agendas. Violence against women, especially domestic and structural violence – the most problematised types of violence against women in Romania, publicly and politically – is, for example, generally (re)presented as a matter of alignment with European and/or international norms. 90% of parliamentary declarations and debates, laws and legislative initiatives, emergency ordinances, government decisions, public institutions and policies, reports and

websites of government bodies, mass media articles, positions and declarations of public opinion leaders or websites of NGOs, analyzed as “texts” (240 of them) in this project, make references to the European Union, and, implicitly, to the alignment with EU policies or to international norms and practices. For example, one such practice is the political and public problematisation of violence against women on the 25<sup>th</sup> of November, the international day dedicated to combating this gender-based type of violence against women. Thus, the “texts” are encoded according to the (re)presentation frames used, that is to say according to the way in which violence against women is addressed by using (and abusing?) certain references. These (re)presentation frameworks answered the question: what is violence against women (re)presented to be in its problematisation on the public/political agenda? I have identified a series of frames constantly used both in the political and in the public agenda.

Therefore, in the public and political discourse in Romania I have identified the recurrent usage (measuring the recurrence as repeating the same frame in more than 10% of the analyzed “texts”) of the following frames of (re)presenting the violence against women:

- domestic violence is represented, both from a governmental and from a nongovernmental point of view, as an issue of aligning to European and international norms, used as standards for reporting Romania’s evolution in this field and considered to be the adequate combating and prevention mechanisms.
- domestic violence is represented as a matter of protecting the family by the state.
- violence against women is represented as a specific issue of the private space (both regarding the causes, the location of the act of violence and regarding the solving of the problem).
- violence against women is represented as a grotesque spectacle of corporal victimization of women, this case being especially recurrent in the media, but also appearing in political statements
- violence against women is represented as the responsibility of women to protect themselves
- violence against women is represented as being potentially solved at the intersection between governmental and nongovernmental efforts.

- combating violence against women is represented as a criterion of assessing governmental performance.
- violence against women is represented as the problem of economic and political, social and cultural margins/predicaments.

As one might notice just from a quick glance, there are connections between the aforementioned (re)presentation frames, two or more (the average being 3-4) are in most cases used simultaneously, completing each other when addressing the issue of violence. The present research shall be focused extensively, but not exclusively, on the first and on the last of the identified frames. Due to the fact they are used together in 32% of all “analyzed” texts and in 45% of all “texts” produced by political actors – with an 80% usage of the first in political texts and a 67% usage of the latter in public texts, in general – the intersection between them aroused an increased interest and proved to be important for analysis purposes, both from the point of view of the way it takes place, but also from the social, economic, political and cultural context which fuels this intersection and its positive or negative discursive and material consequences. Other identified (re)presentation frames shall be approached at a convenient time, according to their correlations with the two, which will be addressed carefully and significantly. These being said, the project shall also have the purpose of identifying the absent (re)presentation frames for violence against women, important from a feminist perspective.

For the continuation of the project I have chosen two (re)presentation frames to be analyzed extensively in an interdisciplinary context which combines discursive, historical and sociological institutionalism with feminist critical theory and post-colonialism/Orientalism. It is the frame in which domestic violence and violence against women in general are represented both from a governmental and from a nongovernmental point of view, as an issue of alignment with European and international norms, used as standards for reporting Romania’s evolution in this field and considered to be the adequate combating and prevention mechanisms. Thus, a frame directed at preventing and combating violence. In the second one, violence against women in general is represented as the problem/production of economic and political margins/predicaments. Thus, a frame directed at explaining the occurrence of violence.

These intersect in a suggestive manner for what I consider to be the construction of institutions and identities with dual, simultaneous or separate, European and non-European character. The crossway between their construction processes shall illustrate fluid, constructed

and imagined continuities and borders. This refers to the borders and connections between that which we conceive to be European and that which we conceive not to be European, between the national and the supranational dimensions of the policy regarding (combating) violence against women. The two frames intersect at two levels within the discourse. The first is the material one. The second is that of rhetoric. Simulated processes of Europeanisation of Romania take place between these two levels of the intersection between the two representation frames. By Europeanisation I understand institutional and identity constructions (re)presented as being European, which intersect and contribute to the processes of deepening and enlarging of the integration in the European Union. Such a perspective on the Europeanisation (and internationalisation) of Romania leaves the technocrat-institutional sphere and directs itself towards defining Europeanisation at the intersection between public policies development processes, legislation and institutions with (European) identity construction processes. The last ones, although reproduced by means of the first, afterwards legitimize them in a paradigm of understanding the institutional, legislative and public policies changes as being part of a larger European (trans)formation process. Simulated Europeanisation is materialised in institutions with European forms and Romanian (non-European) content and, beyond these, in (non)European identities constructed in Romanian discourses. Both these policies and these identities place Romania in a peripheral position regarding the problematisation of violence against women, at the margin of European order, neither inside nor outside it. The form-without-content institutions, legislation, policies are the ones which simulate a “European” change of Romania, borrow European forms in addressing an issue on the public and political agenda according to norms of combating violence against women defined *a priori* as being European, both in Brussels and in Bucharest. Actually, they maintain a Romanian character, context, content. A telling example is the institutionalization of the family council as a mechanism for solving domestic violence through the law 217. This council was included in the respective law, the MP who supported it presenting it in the parliamentary debates from then as “European”, although before this presentation, many of his colleagues opposed the inclusion of the family council in the law, describing it as traditionally Romanian. A second materialization of simulated Europeanisation is the one in which European identity and Europeanness are imported, but also constructed, discursively, as symbols of the prevention and combating violence against women. And in order to legitimize it, the non-European one or ones, inside or outside Romania, which

produce/deposit violence against women, are also constructed. In this context, Romania is either European, or non-European, or between these two poles, according to the interests of those who are addressing this type of violence. For example, if a governing politician addresses domestic violence, Romania is European because the issue is addressed in this state, one way or another, according to, or at least in the European direction. If a member of the opposition addresses the matter, Romania is non-European because domestic violence is not addressed efficiently. Beyond the extended problems of conceptualizing gender-based violence against women, in Romania, in this context, the present project aims at drawing attention to the fact that the evolution from acts of violence against women during wartime because they symbolize the ethnicity or the nation is reversed in the sense that a potential European supra-nation becomes symbolized by the fight against violence. This is problematic from a feminist point of view because it does nothing more than to instrument an experience of women in another way. The European post-nationalism ceases to be so post-nationalist. From this point of view, its release from the violence against women does not manage to liberate itself from the limits of discursive instrumentalising of women's experiences.

It might be a strategic categorizing of the respective issue in Romania's Europeanisation and internationalization processes. This is done in order to form and inform, explain and legitimize the problematisation of violence against women on the political and public agenda in Romania. As EU accession was a central issue on the political agenda in Romania in the 2000s, any matter which was more or less connected to this, even though peripheral on the public and political agenda, could benefit from the general importance of the accession for the advancement on these agendas. Therefore, defining violence against women as an issue connected to the European Union implies solving the problem by acknowledging it as a point of European interest. And this implies the necessity of addressing it at the level of public policies and institutions, governmental and nongovernmental, in Romania. Thus, for example, the law 217/2003 for preventing and combating violence within the family, was presented by Mona Muscă, Romanian MP, in the parliamentary debates regarding its adoption, as follows:

“I wish to bring to your attention the fact that there is a recommendation of the European Union, of the Council of the European Union regarding domestic violence. This is a very recent recommendation, from 2002, it is Recommendation no. 5, which clearly states that *each Member State of the European Union, therefore us as well, if we wish to become members of the European Union, will have to have a special law regarding domestic violence. That recommendation states very clearly what this law should contain. Well,*



one law was made from the three laws proposed to your approval and the initiative of making just one law, of elaborating one bill from the three belongs to the Juridical Commission, who gave us the idea and whom I thank for the respective idea, we managed to submit only one bill, *this one fulfilling all the recommendations of the European Union. I could safely say that it is currently one the most European laws*, I am referring to our bill.”<sup>3</sup>

Europeanness is, therefore, constructed in relation with violence against women through the development of policies, institutions and legislation dedicated to its prevention and combating. In this context, the references to the European Union legitimize discursively the adoption of a law regarding domestic violence in Romania, a new, but necessary domain of regulating and of developing public policies, this law being (re)presented as an alignment with EU norms and requirements, in the historical context of this state’s accession to the Union. A contribution to the construction of the significance of the Europeanness of the European Union as a symbolic location of combating violence against women takes place. Laurel Weldon remarks that what appears to determine the reaction of governments to violence against women is the presence of a movement of powerful women connected to the state institutions meant to improve the status of women.<sup>4</sup> This reaction may refer to bureaucratic actions or to any actions of governments and parliament, of state institutions in general. Nonetheless, in the case of Romania, the reaction of the political class, the governments and the parliaments during the 2000s to the issue of violence against women, especially domestic violence, was also a result of the fact that the Romanian state had to align to European norms regarding gender inequalities – gender-based structural violence – and their materializations in direct violence, for example. However, this reaction can be an institutional, material one, of combating and prevention of violence against women or a rhetorical one. If the reaction at the rhetorical level is stronger than the institutional one, then we are more likely dealing with an avoidance of a real and authentic problematisation of the issue. The (re)action to violence against women at a governmental level, and at a nongovernmental level as well, “does not automatically imply efficiency”, as efficiency refers to the impact of the policies developed for prevention and combating. Also, rhetorical reactions, when exceeding

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<sup>3</sup> Parlamentul României, “Dezbaterea Proiectului de Lege pentru prevenirea și combaterea violenței în familie; Propunerii legislative privind violența în familie și Propunerii legislative privind protecția victimelor violenței în familie”, în *Dezbateri Parlamentare*, București, 2003, disponibil online la <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=5394&idm=13&prn=1>, accesat la 12 decembrie 2010, sublinierea mea.

<sup>4</sup> Laurel Weldon, *Protest, Policy, and the Problem of Violence Against Women: A Cross-National Comparison*, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002, p. 5.

material reactions, may signify responses from governments, or even of civil societies, which are meant to avoid a real problematisation of the issue. Forms of addressing violence against women are created – or actually, borrowed and adapted -, forms which are a discursive alignment to its prevention and combating, without sufficient, consistent efforts to address the structural foundation of social, cultural, economic and political gender inequalities that fuel the violence in the first place. This approach to domestic violence, whose (re)presentation is a reactive one (to the requirements of the EU), not a proactive one (referring to the needs of women in Romania), is problematic precisely because it renders invisible the necessity to prevent and combat domestic violence as a lived reality and it materializes and instruments it into an indicator of the Europeanness in Romania.

Additionally, violence against women is encrypted (un?)intentionally in the Romanian political discourse as a specific problem of marginalized social, cultural, economic and political groups. This frame is focused on diagnosing the causes of violence, but it does so from a patriarchal, discriminatory perspective, which rehashes stereotypes and cultural and structural violence by means of public (re)presentations. In February 2010, in Iași, Romania, a man assaulted 12 women with a knife within a few days. Tudorel Butoi, expert criminalist, psychologist and professor, invited in a TV programme of a national news channel, offered his opinion on the matter. Thus, at the request of the reporter: “To wrap things up, tell us if women can protect themselves in any way from the point of view of an expert criminalist”, Tudorel Butoi replied:

“Women can and must be cautious. Women must know how to choose when to go by elevator and not overwhelm us because they were raped in the elevator. When and with whom. They must know to walk on well-lit, populated routes. Not to wander in parks at night like explorers and then come to the police station saying they were raped. To know whom they start a conversation with and with whom they agree to have relations and so on and so forth. Unfortunately, this Balkan floozie behaviour, with the exception of these victims.... uuuuh, who did not display such behaviour, is characteristic for bimbos (*pițipoance*) and uuh they become victims because they are provocative victims, most of them.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Taken from Realitatea TV news, February, 24 2010, 2 pm, between 07:02-07:49, available online at: [http://webtv.realitatea.net/jurnale/realitatea-de-la-14-00-24-02-2010?autoplay=true#ve\\_video\\_player\\_a](http://webtv.realitatea.net/jurnale/realitatea-de-la-14-00-24-02-2010?autoplay=true#ve_video_player_a), accessed on March, 1st 2010, my underlining.

In this context, violence against women is approached as being caused by women's behaviour, thus a perspective on this type of violence as a result of the lack of caution of women, not of men's responsibility, is adopted. Furthermore, the causes of violence do not reside only in the category of "woman", but they are discursively deposited between social, economic, political and cultural stereotype-borders of the identity position represented by the "Balkan floozie". The discursive positing of violence against women in social, cultural, economic (and even political - women) groups deepens the marginalization of already secondary and marginal socio-cultural and political-economic groups. Their exclusion is, thus, reiterated. This way, discursive deposits of violence are created, from which the causes of violence are eliminated each time it is necessary to explain the respective problem. One reason for this approach may be avoiding the problematisation of the role of men in this phenomenon. Additionally, in a vicious circle, the discursive creation of these deposits of violence marginalizes the violence against women on the political and public agenda, limiting its approach. Such a limitation is addressing this type of violence in the stereotypical dates of the 8<sup>th</sup> of March or of the 25<sup>th</sup> of November, for example.

When these two frames overlap, between diagnosing the causes of violence against women and presenting solutions rendered abstract in/by the paradigm of Romania's Europeanisation regarding this type of violence, processes of construction of non-European identities and, implicitly, a continuation of the EU Europeanness construction by relating it to these, take place. And we are not referring to the non-Europeanness of Russia or to the opposition with the United States of America. Rather, it is about the construction of the non-European either by reiterating European colonial or oriental identity positions and situations or by producing new alterities. Thus, in the sitting of the Chamber of Deputies on March, 22 2012, the MP Călin Potor presents the situation of the Romanian state in what the combating of violence against women is concerned as exceptional from the very title of his declaration entitled: "Romania, perhaps the Only Country in the World Not to Combat Violence in the Family!" According to him, Romania's disconnection from the international and European, and even national norms regarding this type of violence entails the positioning of the Romanian state in the non-European space of the Third World:

“[t]he phenomenon of violence in the family represents an issue addressed in all international documents regarding promoting and guaranteeing women's rights and gender equality (UN convention, recommendations, resolutions and reports of the

Council of Europe, decisions and programs of the European Union) and it is also included as a goal in the national strategy for equal opportunities for men and women. Taking into account these aspects, it would have been necessary for the particularity of the former National Agency for the Protection of the Family to have been correlated to the field of gender equality, which, until recently, had lain within the responsibilities of the former National Agency for Equal Opportunities between men and women. Unfortunately, these two entities, which were functioning under the authority of the ministry you lead, have been recently closed, therefore making it impossible to harmonize action strategies for the ceasing of dangerous phenomena related to domestic violence. In this context, we must not ask the relevant minister about the measures adopted to ensure the well functioning of the directions resulted from the closing of the two national agencies. It is obvious that important projects, such as the stage of the organization of the national network of assistance centres for victims of domestic violence, have been abandoned, and the phenomenon will be all the more present due to the lack of prevention structures. Nothing that comes from this *incapable government* surprises us, a government which turned Romania in a *third world* country, where people commit suicide out of hunger and beat their wives out of thirst...”<sup>6</sup>

The Third World is (re)presented as pathologically violent, and this pathology of violence against women is related to the political and economic situation. The stereotypical (non)Europeanness of an abstract third world is materialized, stereotypically, in the violence against women. Given the fact that the Council of Europe represents “Europe” in relation with the violence against women beyond the European Union, it is important to notice that one of the goals of the Convention of the Council of Europe on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence is to “strive to create a Europe free from violence against women and domestic violence”<sup>7</sup>. Beyond the (problematic or pragmatic?) coalescing of violence against women and domestic violence, this Convention constructs, institutionalizes a Europe defined by preventing and combating these types of violence. Furthermore, depositing violence in precarious groups from an economic point of view transfers the authorship and the responsibility of violence from “people” (to be read “men”) towards the “third world” characterized by “hunger” and “thirst”. The alignment with international and European norms, the institutionalization of combating violence against women and the economic stability become the

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<sup>6</sup> Romanian Parliament, Călin Potor – political statement: “Romania, perhaps the Only Country in the World Not to Combat Violence in the Family!”, in *Political Statements and Interventions of MPs*, in the Sitting of the Chamber of Deputies from March, 22 2011, available online at <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/steno/steno.stenograma?ids=6978&idm=1,048&idl=1>, accessed June, 11 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Council of Europe, *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*, Istanbul: Ad Hoc Committee on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVIO), 2011, available online at <http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/EN/Treaties/Html/210.htm>, accessed September, 15 2011.

universal panacea of solving this problem and the basic mechanisms of problematising it. The importance of being European/s is signified by the importance of not being non-European/s, and in the normalization process of these symbolisms and dualisms, both the two identity positions and the hierarchy between them are constructed, whereas the concept of marginalization receives new shades of meaning, referring to the orientalisation of societies and states that do not combat the violence against women or show poor results in this area. Thus, combating violence against women is politically and discursively instrumented in order to construct social, political, cultural and economic hierarchies between collective socio-cultural or political-economic identities. This is paradoxical, given the fact that precisely inequalities and hierarchies (of any kind – economic, cultural, social, political) between women and men need to be combated and made aware by problematising violence against women. These fuel acts of violence against the former by the latter or even against the former by masculine, patriarchal states and societies.

Additionally, a reason to undertake the present project is to signal the marginalization of violence against women in the political and public problematisation of gender inequality and its materializations in the lives of women. Thus, constantly when addressing inequality between women and men, issues which involve violence are noted at the end of the enumeration of the materializations of gender inequality. One example may be found in the press release of the National Council for Combating Discrimination following a meeting with a delegation of the Committee on Women's Rights and Gender Equality of the European Parliament:

“[d]uring the meeting, the following points have been touched upon: the access of women to the labour market, equal treatment in the area of social security, reconciling private, professional and family life, women in politics, domestic violence”.<sup>8</sup>

As if it were easier to accept that women and men receive unequal pay for equal work or their access to the labour market takes place in a different and unequal manner, towards both sides, depending on the field, that more women should get involved in politics than to publicly accept that the abuse of women by men is a real problem, equally important and equally necessary to address in the Romanian political and public space, so it could be efficiently prevented and combated. Moreover, the submitted analysis also draws the attention towards the ambiguities and

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<sup>8</sup>National Council for Combating Discrimination *Press Release*, June, 26 2008, available online at <http://cncd.org.ro/noutati/cauta/Comunicat-de-presa-53/>, accessed June, 11 2011.

ambivalences regarding the understanding and defining of violence/violent acts against women and of the causes that fuel them.

The intentional and unintentional recurrence of some (re)presentation frames in addressing violence against women in Romania has a creative, defining and redefining potential of this type of violence, of the structures that fuel it. But it has an inherently limited character, being just one (re)presentation frame from potentially many others and reducing the approach of the issue to only a certain perspective. Also, the ossification or the positing of a (re)presentation frame can alter its creative feature, turning it into a static, limited/ing frame. It is a discourse developed through the recurrence of using the European Union as a reference in addressing this type of violence, the discourse of the Europeanisation of combating violence against women in Romania. It is a new, innovative discourse until it ceases to be new or innovative in the Romanian context, becoming part of the (Europeanized?) Romanian way of being and doing.

Thus, it is necessary not only to remark upon the potential benefits of a frame, but also to question its possible limitations – for example, what sort of public policies mediate the understanding of combating the violence against women in Romania just as an alignment with EU norms. Furthermore, a frame may undermine stereotypes and can perpetuate the status quo, but it may also (re)produce them, as it is situated in a social, cultural, political and economic context which fuels it and which fuels its own reproduction – for example, addressing violence against women as a women’s issue, specific to some marginal social groups in the Romanian society.

The present project investigates, first of all, the public and political (re)presentations of violence against women. Secondly, it is oriented towards investigating the implications of the creative and limited/ing character of the “policy” of using, abusing and eroding the abovementioned (re)presentation frames on the Romanian political and public agenda. These will be the fundament for the final observations regarding the discursive void about violence against women in the political and public space in Romanian at the beginning of the 2000s and the way in which it has been and is reduced, solved, filled with problematic, superficial ways of addressing it which elude a real and authentic understanding of the social, political, cultural and economic complexities and inequalities from the basis of this type of violence. The

(un)intentionality of the problematic ways of addressing it is connected at the intersection between perpetuating a status quo (patriarchal and paternalist, Romanian) and modifying it (with Europeanising hues). This social, political, cultural and economic status quo is one in which the genderised relations (or in which genders relate) take place in a structure of inequality between women and men, the latter occupying positions of power and having greater benefits than the former. It is a status quo in which the structural violence against women is historically legitimized and materialized in direct gender-based violence against them. Finally, the project shall remark upon the necessity of reflexivity in addressing violence against women on the political and public agenda, so that the (re)presentation of this type of violence should not become (inherently) violent itself. This can occur both by (re)producing the unequal regimes and structures that are at the basis of violence and by (re)producing the arbitrarily situated identity positions in these structures and regimes, the point of reference being an assumed non-European character of violence while its combating is constructed as European.

In the analysis of violence against women, the qualitative approach is as important as the quantitative one and the other way around. Approaching the words of violence/violent acts against women is as important as approaching the numbers of violence/violent acts. Thus, its (re)presentations are an important aspect of its understanding, criticizing and, potentially, of its combating. Teresa de Lauretis concludes in the “considerations on the semiotic production of gender between the rhetoric of violence and the violence of rhetoric”<sup>9</sup> that “violence is engendered in representation”<sup>10</sup>, it is inherent to it. Moreover, Sally Engle Merry states that: „from a performative perspective, doing violence is a way of doing gender”<sup>11</sup>. We may further argue that violence becomes the defining frame of identities, not only genderised, involved in what is presented, re-presented and represented as violence. Thus, identity positions such as “aggressor”/violent and “victim”/violated or social group prone to violence – either as “aggressor” or as “victim”, for example, must be understood as also being violent towards the ones they identify and position accordingly when illustrating violence. This is due to the fact that they are (de)limited and the positioning inside them can occur arbitrarily. However, since presenting, re-presenting and representing violence is important for its prevention and

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<sup>9</sup>Teresade Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film, and Fiction*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 32.

<sup>10</sup> Idem, p. 33.

<sup>11</sup> Sally Engle Merry, *Gender Violence: A Cultural Perspective*, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009, p. 11.

combating, it brings about disregarding these indirect consequences, violent themselves. Also, the arbitrarily unequal relations of power between the one who (re)present and the (re)presented are also disregarded, which, in my opinion, stands at the basis of producing and legitimizing any type of violence.

Given all of the above, it is important to address an archaeology (in Foucault's sense of the term) of the (re)presentation frames of violence against women in Romania and to address the invisible genealogies of violence, mediated by these frames. Foucault's archaeological method refers precisely to this *dispositif* of laws, architecture, administrative practices and words<sup>12</sup>, positioning itself from a methodological point of view in the postmodern sociology<sup>13</sup>. This author is very well understood as a philosopher-historian whose theories are a source for sociological analyses. Thus, he approaches the production of knowledge and disciplines and discipline, the nature and effects of control practices, the creation of actors and identities. It moves away from the conventional sense of the central, coercive power, institutionally conceptualized towards the power we have over ourselves. The present project presents precisely perspectives on the ways in which candidate and member states internalise and normalise *European* norms, but also how in the institutional and rhetorical discourses surrounding these processes identity and status quo constructions and deconstructions take place. Addressing the issue of violence against women in Romania at the intersection between history and sociology, through discourse analysis, follows Foucault's ideas about the archaeological method of knowledge.

Moreover, it is necessary to deconstruct hegemonic narratives/discourses of addressing violence against women or its combating and prevention and to identify the potential violence within these narratives. These narratives, these discourses develop by recurrently problematising these issues by means of certain (re)presentation frames which become more conspicuous and more often employed than others. Eventually, the undertaken analysis shall address the semiotic production of identity positions (re)presented as participating at the production or, on the contrary, to the combating of violence against women, between the rhetoric of violence and the violence of rhetoric. This shall be carried out by investigating the violence inherent to the

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<sup>12</sup> P. Veyne, *Foucault: His Thought, His Character*, Cambridge: Polity, 2010, pp. 30-31.

<sup>13</sup> B. Agger, „Critical theory, poststructuralism, postmodernism: their sociological relevance”, in *Annu. Rev. Sociol.*, 1991, 17:105–31.



conceptualizing of combating and preventing violence against women as an action extensively or even exclusively oriented towards women as potential victims and not towards men as potential aggressors, turning the former into victims even before their being abused. The (re)actions of the state or of the civil society to violence against women, political and media discourses concerning this issue mediate what Elizabeth Stanko defined in 1990 as “everyday violence”. She means by it the intrusions in women’s lives meant to reduce their risk of becoming victims of violence. These intrusions try to make uniform the behaviour of women, supporting themselves by arguments according to which there is a socio-culturally accepted in patriarchal societies, which may reduce the risk of women becoming the objects of violence.<sup>14</sup> However, these arguments are based on and seek the reiteration of unequal structures which fuel the control over women by reproducing their quality of potential victims of gender-based violence. This conceptualization comes to support the one of a potential genderised and cultural violence, inherent to the presentation, re-presentation and representation of violence against women.

If problematising an issue in public policies, legislation, governmental and non governmental institutions, statements of opinion leaders or political representatives, discourses of political and public actors, media etc constitutes what has been said on the issue, then problematising its problematisation, its criticism aims at revealing the implications of what we say and, finally, at revealing what is not being said regarding it.

Thus, the (re)presentation of domestic violence in public policies in Romania by means of a *European* frame – the legal and institutional alignment to EU norms and discourses with “European” references – may (in)form (on) perspectives regarding this phenomenon, it may define is as an issue may legitimize changes in its approach, from accepting and staying silent to combating and preventing. These perspectives however are beneficial, having the potential to generate change in the sense of institutionalizing the combating of violence against women because of the political framework of the Union, inside which Romania must function. But the same perspectives, the same (re)presentation frame are limited, as all the other (re)presentation frames. In this case, the limitation refers to the fact that it limits the addressing of the violence against women to its connection with its combating in the script or working scheme of the

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<sup>14</sup> Elizabeth A. Stanko, *Everyday violence: How women and men experience sexual and physical danger*, London: Pandora, 1990.

European Union. But this holds true for every (re)presentation frame. Nonetheless when a certain frame is used repeatedly, it posits in a discourse – of the Europeanisation of the combating of violence against women, for example. And this discourse has a creative potential and contributes to identity constructions and to significances related both to violence against women and to Europeanization, but also to the intersection between the two. For example, (non)European identities which do (not) combat violence against women or because they do (not) combat violence against women.

That is why addressing an issue through certain (re)presentation frames, chosen over others, may limit the (in)formation (regarding) of the issues on the political agenda and may limit the understanding of the problem in its entirety, channelling its defining in only one sense. For this reason, “it becomes crucially important to scrutinize the ways in which ‘problems’ are represented in public policies. Having this aim, we must study the problematisations rather than the problems”<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, the preference for certain (re)presentation frames must be criticized, as it indicates contextual(ised) practices and processes, which mould, intentionally or not, the problematisation and illustrate the dynamics of the relations of power within a society. It is a genealogy as Foucault pictured it of the way in which the “problem” was “moulded in a certain way”<sup>16</sup>, because we consider that the discourse surrounding a certain issue addressed politically and publicly, made up of “structures of statements, concepts, categories and beliefs specific to a particular socio-historical formation” is productive in the sense that it can constitute subjectivities in a determined order of things, in keeping with the philosophies of Derrida and Foucault<sup>17</sup>. The actors of the political and public stage be they politicians, opinion leaders, experts or reporters and their political and public discourses produce meanings of public policies, institutions dealing with certain issues, but also of the respective issues, the subject of their discourses. In a particular social, cultural, political and economic context, policies, institutions and problems can be interpreted, understood and discursively framed in different ways and these interpretations, understandings and framings can be altered according to changes occurred in the context in which they are produced.

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<sup>15</sup> Carol Bacchi, *Analysing Policy: What's the problem represented to be?*, Australia: Pearson, 2009, p. 263.

<sup>16</sup> Idem 2009a, pp. 10-11.

<sup>17</sup> Vivien A. Schmidt, “Discursive Institutionalism: Scope, Dynamics, and Philosophical Underpinnings”, in Frank Fischer & Herbert Gottweis, eds., *The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice*, Durham&London: Duke University Press, 2012, p. 119.

The (re)presentation frame is anchored, exogenously or endogenously, to a lesser or greater extent, in the social, cultural, political and economic context in which the ones who carry out the (re)presentation operate; thus it relevant not only for the result of including, debating and proposing solutions regarding an issue on the public/political agenda through its (re)presentation. It is also relevant for the way in which this process is embedded and connected to a context which influences and conditions the (re)presentation and for the way in which this process has implications beyond its direct, intentional or unintentional results and which are connected to the context in which the issue is made public/political. In the case of violence against women, this context intersects the policy of the European Union regarding this type of violence, which is a context in itself, and the social, cultural, political and economic context in Romania.

Therefore, an issue which appears on the public/political radar and needs solving through public policies, shall always be (re)presented in different frames. It is important to identify and criticise these frames, apart from the (re)presentation itself of the respective issue, backward, towards the socio-cultural and political-economic context which mediates/favours certain perspectives on it and forward, towards the socio-cultural and political-economic implications of discursively addressing the issue depending on that context. These implications may illustrate the alteration of the context by giving up certain perspectives or by adding new ones, the changing or the maintaining of the context. Eventually, such critical analyses may offer the possibility to evaluate the potential, but also the limitations of using a certain (re)presentation frame and to make recommendations regarding this aspect of making a particular issue public/political.

Regarding violence against women, understood as the generalised problem of acts of violence directed against women, in Romania two such (representation) frames shall be criticised in this project. The first of the two is (re)presenting violence against women, especially domestic violence, by making references and connections to the specific frame of the European Union (and, more generally, to the international one). As gender equality, the violence against women, especially domestic violence, is legitimised in politics “in terms of democracy development, social growth progress or the acceleration on the Europeanisation of societies – cases which

occur predominantly in countries that have recently joined the EU”<sup>18</sup>. This (re)presentation frame is predominantly used (and abused?) on the Romanian political stage where, in a euro-pragmatic paradigm, the EU becomes the practical and symbolic mediator and legitimiser of breaching the imaginary delimitation between the public and private space – as a used and ‘abused’ location, as explanation and complication of the violence against women in general in the Romanian society<sup>19</sup>- by the Romanian state and its representatives with the aim of addressing this issue through public policies in Romania. Moreover, the European Union is considered an anchor, both practical and symbolic, for debates on sensitive issues for Romanian society and for Romanian political elites and that have been only recently visible on the political and public agenda in Romania. Thus, approaching these processes from the discursive perspective of politics, EU may be considered the symbol of combating domestic violence. For example, regarding domestic violence in Romania – conceived almost exclusively as a type of violence against women -, the Union becomes a (re)presentation frame which facilitates and legitimises transferring this problem from the personal to the political sphere. In addressing this type of violence in the political and public discourse, the European Union becomes an element which undermines “the private/public dichotomy which used to mystify relations between governments and individuals/families”<sup>20</sup>. Thus, a variation of the slogan “the personal is political”, mediated by the European Union as well in countries like Romania regarding this types of violence, takes shape. However, the convergence between the European norms/forms and the Romanian context/content shall not completely abolish the border between public and private, giving birth to public policies and laws which are problematic for addressing and effectively solving domestic violence, precisely because cultural significations and pre-existing power relations are disregarded. A void of (in)efficiency of policies developed in this area, without taking into account contextual limitations appeared at the intersection between Western/European forms of combating violence against women and the Eastern content of gender regimes and their materialisation in the lives of women as gender-based violence.

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<sup>18</sup> Lombardo *et al*, 2005 *apud* Vlasta Jalušič, “Stretching and bending the meanings of gender in equality politics” in Emanuela Lombardo, Petra Meier și Mieke Verloo, eds., *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, bending and policymaking*, London and New York: Routledge, 2009, p. 58.

<sup>19</sup> The section referring to “The Continuum of Violence against Women” contains a broader discussion on the matter.

<sup>20</sup> Olsen, 1985, in Bacchi, *idem*, 2009a, p. 13.

The connection between the European project, of the European Union and violence against women and combating it respectively shall be explored in this context. This shall be carried out by analysing the policies of the Union and of Romania regarding this matter, by analysing the connections between the two and by analysing the discourses surrounding these policies and their implication in (non)European identity construction processes. As R. Amy Elman argues in exploring sexual equality, ‘virtual equality’ in an integrated Europe:

“[i]n Europe, the rhetorical rejection of inequality may intensify and prevent concrete acts of promoting social justice. Also, committees on women’s status and legislation against or investigating sexual and racial inequality may be used as trampolines for a remedy or substitutes for substantial action. Not all EU efforts to *address* inequality are necessarily created to *stop* it. Addressing inequality is not the same as delivering a remedy, although it can be considered a first step. Differentiating between initiatives and rhetoric, on the one hand and effective steps towards equality, on the other hand, is a challenge. Verbosity is not a verb.”<sup>21</sup>

The present project addresses an instance of gender inequality, the violence against women precisely from this perspective of tensions between rhetoric and the development of public institutions and policies, of discursive institutionalism, in a historical and sociological context.

The second (re)presentation frame of violence against women, understood beyond the domestic one, is that in which this type of violence is stored, discursive, between the imagined borders of imaginary social geography and which are stigmatized *a priori* as violent. This discursive violence storage process produces imaginary violent (violently imaginary) geographies, (non-European?) alterities and is inherently colonialist and Orientalist. As if violence against women were specific to these social geographies and, implicitly, the public policies, the institutions, the political declarations, the political and public debates, the press articles etc. that approach this problem are oriented only? towards them. The violent character of these imaginary geographies is (re)presented as an effect of economic, social, cultural and political precariousness. Thus, their exclusion from the normal, political order, as being abnormally violent, is legitimate. And, consequently, does it involve the existence of a normality to which it is reported and to which it is opposed - the European Romanian society? However, the violent exceptions, attached in an arbitrary and visible way, of these imaginary deposits of violence against women, could also be the unseen normality of the society which has excluded it in order to be able to perpetuate a

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<sup>21</sup> R. Amy Elman, *Sexual Equality in an Integrated Europe: Virtual Equality*, Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, p. 2.

status quo based on cultural and structural violent acts and, particularly, on structural and interpersonal violent acts with a gendered character.

What if, however, these imaginary violent (violently imaginary) geographies, including places and people, are generally always already stigmatized and excluded in Romanian society one way or the other, what are the implications of the perpetuation of this stigmatisation and exclusion wedged into a multitude of uneven power relationships in, for example, the development and implementation of public policies or in the more general transfer of this type of violence from the public space - where it is also deposited and through which it is explained and understood, in the sense of comprehending, conceiving, as well as in the sense of accepting - towards the private one? Are we *also* dealing, actually, with a transfer of violence against women from the imaginary of the private space towards the imaginary of social, economic, cultural and political outskirts, even when the transfer should be made from the private space towards the political and public centre? An inefficiency of public policies and of the politicizing of combating violence against women in general, can be a symptom of this failure dimension of the transfer of this type of violence outside of the private area. Almost ironically, in most cases, at a national level and at Union level, multiple - gender, social, cultural, economic and political - inequalities, which fuel violence against women are not taken into consideration for solving the problem, but for explaining it, which, finally, only reproduces stereotypes instead of undermining them.

This second frame of (re)presentation of violence against women in public discourses in Romania is *also* used together with the first one when approaching this problem in Romanian public discourse and they lead to defining and positioning certain (non)European imagined identities. These are articulated and instrumented in the (re)presentation of violence against women in Romania, and Romania's positioning, either as European, either as non-European, indicates the fact that the two cannot be exactly conceived as a clearly defined binary system. It is actually a 'flexible and contingent attribution'<sup>22</sup> of Europeanism or non-Europeanism of certain societies, according to certain criteria. In this case, Romania and violence against women or, rather, combating violence against women. Thus Romania swings between the two positions, and this process unsettles and reproduces this binarism.

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<sup>22</sup> Merje Kuus, "Europe's Eastern Expansion and the Reinscription of Otherness in East Central Europe", in *Progress in Human Geography*, 28(4), 472-89, 2004, p. 484.

Due to the fact this overlap between the two frames illustrates the complexities of the intersection between the European Union norms and the Romanian, East European post(-)socialist space and time<sup>23</sup>, both (re)presentation frames are taken into consideration when organizing the current project. Moreover, from a sociological point of view, the research of such an intersection from the perspective of an issue that is less prioritized on the political and public agenda (except for the 8th of March and the 25th of November -sic!), it can prove to be more illustrative than if it had been made from the perspective of a mainstream issue on the respective agendas. This potential lies in the innovative character of a research that approaches marginal, niche aspects of social, cultural, political and economic arrangements, even a marginalized aspect of gender inequality, at least in Romania. Additionally, this intersection is taken into consideration not only at the level of public policies or of the usual suspects that bring matters into question at this level (politicians, for example). Actually, *starting* from these and from theoretical and constructivist methodology perspectives on the analysis of public policies, the current project proposes taking into consideration a more general frame of mechanisms which problematise violence against women in Romania, at a political and public level. This extension of research area and perspective, as well as the interdisciplinary theoretical frame, will offer the possibility of a broader analysis and of a theorization of the studied phenomena that understands their complexity.

Thus the criticism of this overlap of (re)presentation frames describes the tensions which appear at the respective intersection and the way in which they are solved by actions by the political and social area in Romania, which have resulted in producing 'texts' regarding the problem of violence against women. A close, careful reading of these texts offers the possibility of identifying, describing and analysing the above mentioned tensions, the context in which they appear and their implications, but also the continuity/connexions and/or divergences between this context and the implications. The social, cultural, political and economic context in which these

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<sup>23</sup> Here I am defining post(-)socialism as a temporal setting, with the sense of dilution/modification/interruption of processes that take place in a socialist paradigm, as a theorization of this dilution/modification/interruption. When discussing post-colonialism and colonialism, they state that: 'the [t]heory must be prudent and flexible enough to say: the post-colonial is dead: long live the postcolonialism'. I think that such an approach can also be useful for discussions regarding post(-)socialism, actually, specific post(-)socialisms, not a monolithic post(-)socialism, although post(-)socialisms can still be considered to be 'alive' and even if, in my opinion, it also has this premise (or this scope?) However, this direction of research is outside of the scope of the current project. See Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, "What is Post(-)colonialism?", in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*, London: Prentice Hall/ Harvester Wheatsheaf, 2004, pp. 276- 290.

(re)presentation frames are created is significant for the construction of European and non-European significations. The intentional and non-intentional, direct and indirect consequences of the above mentioned (re)presentation frames and of the intersection between them, shall be unveiled and critically analysed through this research project. The goal is to bring into discussion unequal, politicised power relationships, which (in)form significations and a belonging to collective identities. These consequences are unveiled at the intersection between formal and informal, between institutions and discourse, between parliamentary debates and media articles.

The three types of violence that we are problematise in this project in relation to each other are the direct one, the structural one and the cultural one. More accurately, we explore the structural and cultural consequences of (re)presenting direct violence against women on the political and public agenda in Romania - taking into consideration certain (re)presentation frames, due to the fact that an overall analysis is a much to extended project for the limitations imposed in this case. According to Galtung: 'direct violence is an event; structural violence is a process with ups and downs; cultural violence is an invariant, a permanence remaining essentially the same for long periods, given the slow transformations of basic culture'<sup>24</sup>. For the current analysis it is important to take the three types of violence the following way. What interests us in the first place is the public and political representation of the first type of violence. Then , we identify the structure of relationships which allow and fuel this type of violence, but, moreover, some of its (re)presentations. We also observe the de/re/construction of continuities in this structure before and after its problematisation and its approach on the political and public agenda in Romania. Finally, we explore the identity constructions intermediated by these (re)presentations and that we analyse from the perspective of a cultural critique in order to identify potential cultural violent acts (re)produced in this identity's building processes and their positioning, linked to violence against women, at the outskirts of the imaginary social maps.

As Nancy Fraser argues in 'Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory', 'cultural critique is political', with a necessary elaboration of a semi-Gramscian perspective, 'in which confrontations regarding cultural significations and social identities are confrontations for cultural hegemony, for the power to build authoritative

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<sup>24</sup> Johan Galtung, "Cultural Violence", in *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 27, No. 3 (Aug., 1990): 291-305, p. 294.



definitions of social situations and to give legitimacy to interpretations of social needs<sup>25</sup>. Such a cultural perspective critique of the (re)presentation frames of violence against women in Romania can bring out the policy - the political interests - of Europeanization of this type of violence in this state and the policy of storing violence in already marginalized identity categories, as well as the implications of these policies - identity construction processes, change or perpetuation of the *status quo*. At the intersection between the two, this project explores the ways in which ideas about violence against women and combating this violence, and their discursive and institutional materializations, describe and prescribe an 'elitist and exclusive imaginary of Europe'<sup>26</sup>, built, almost ironically, in a discriminatory paradigm. The patriarchal dimension of this imaginary resides in this *gender* of nuances that the EU Europeanism or the Romanian Europeanism can integrate.

I am referring to a discursive presentation and representation of violence against women by people or institutions that have the prerogative of forming and informing opinions in Romanian society, beyond the experience of this type of violence and its debate in restricted circles, in the community, or in direct interactions of the people involved in acts of violence with institutions or their representatives. My research refers strictly to the way in which violence is published via (re)presentations of the problematisation of violence against women in the Romanian political and public area. It refers to the way in which this type of violence is transferred from the (still) active private area towards the public one and, implicitly, to the political area through laws, institutions, parliamentary debates regarding these laws and institution, statements given by politicians regarding this issue in Romania, in the Parliament or in other settings, by covering this issue in the media.

Moreover, the problematisation of the two frames of (re)presentation will offer the possibility of a critical approach of the European Union's *Europe* as an empty signifier, who's connotations are de/re/constructed, regarding certain matters - such as violence against women - not only at a supranational level or only at the level of old member states. Krizsan and Popa state that: 'in the absence of clearly articulated EU norms of combating domestic violence, Europeanization takes place particularly through the evaluation of national processes of

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<sup>25</sup> Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices: power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Gail Lewis, „Imaginarities of Europe: Technologies of Gender, Economies of Power”, in *European Journal of Women's Studies* (London, Thousand Oaks and New Delhi), 1350-5068 Vol. 13(2): 87–102; 2006, p. 87.

developing public policies by reference to an *abstract notion* of "Europeanism"<sup>27</sup>. The European Union's Europe is a concept that is stretching and bending<sup>28</sup>), it is articulated at a supranational level, as well as at an international level, at a regional level, as well as at a national level, but, moreover, from the perspective of all matters that are problematised at these levels regarding the enlargement and deepening of European integration. It is a myth of unity and unification of differences and a myth of universality of principles and values. Also at a national level, of new member states, between the elites and the European institutions and the day to day life of European and Romanian citizens, for example. This level, approached in the current project, of de/re/construction of the connotations of the European Union's Europe, is the level of national elites and of a national media that have the power to, simultaneously, (in)form Romanian society; but who also represent this society. They put, at an official level and on a broader scale, the EU Europeanism in a Romanian context and either alter the context in order to align it with already existing European norms, or alter the European norms in order to keep the *status quo* in Romanian society. Or, in the third case, they act constantly in a hybrid, EU-Romania, European-Romanian paradigm of approaching certain problems in the political area or even generally in the public one. These processes take place according to certain intentions and, sometimes, even unintentionally or rather indirectly.

Klaus Eder suggests the idea of Europe as an empty signifier as a starting point for the analysis of identity construction processes that take place in Europe stating that there are certain 'ideas' that work as a proxy for Europe and that can be considered to be 'reference objects of a collective identity'.<sup>29</sup> The 'idea' of combating violence against women is, in my opinion, or at least wishes to be, such a reference object, a proxy for the European Union's Europe. However, this, although beneficial at first, suggests the instrumenting of combating violence against women in re/defining Europeanism or a collective European identity within the EU. We speak here about a Europe of combating violence against women, joint to a series of "Europes"

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<sup>27</sup> Andrea Krizsan and Raluca Popa, "Meanings and Uses of Europe in Making Policies against Domestic Violence in Central and Eastern Europe", in Emanuela Lombardo and Maxime Forest, eds., *The Europeanization of Gender Equality Policies. A Discursive-Sociological Approach*, Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012, p. 51, my underlining.

<sup>28</sup> I am using this conceptualization by analogy with the way in which it is used by Emanuela Lombardo, Petra Meier and Mieke Verloo, eds., *The Discursive Politics of Gender Equality: Stretching, bending and policymaking*, London and New York: Routledge, 2009 regarding gender equality, as an open concept which can take different meanings.

<sup>29</sup> Klaus Eder, "A Theory of Collective Identity: Making Sense of the Debate on a 'European identity'", in *European Journal of Social Theory*, 2009, 4(12):427, p. 435.

(plural)': 'a cultural Europe, a geographical Europe, a Europe of Human Rights, and a political Europe'<sup>30</sup>, starting from the idea according to which 'we should see identities as evolutionary products of processes in which stories are combined and recombined' Europe being an ideal case for such a perspective.<sup>31</sup> Moreover, in this Europe, combating violence against women (through laws, institutions and public policies, political statements) is instrumented as a criterion of discrimination and incrimination (of the *soft* kind, specific to the issue at hand!, through recommendations, country reports, eurobarometers, political statements) of states that do not develop mechanisms to tackle this type of violence.

Delanty states that there are more 'Europes', and the one that 'became predominant today is very much one of exclusion and not of inclusion'<sup>32</sup>, and that Europe is a contested idea with deep roots in history and should be treated as such, with reflexivity, so that it does not become dangerous<sup>33</sup>. The simultaneousness of exclusivism and inclusivism of the European project is an important aspect of the research on Europeanization and European identity. That's exactly why the presence of non-European identity construction processes in the problematisations of violence against women denote exactly these simultaneous inclusions and exclusions. Delanty argues that 'macro-identities [...] are more likely to be divisive, rather than unifying and are often the products of a violent and forced homogenization', this being a reason for reflection on the necessity of the respective identities<sup>34</sup> or, at least, of an increased reflection on building significations of these identities and their instrumenting in the political and public area.

From a theoretical and methodological point of view the project is positioned in an interdisciplinary frame. This frame is developed at the intersection between critical discourse analysis and political sociology, feminism and neo-colonialism/Orientalism, critically applied to theories in the area of European studies regarding Europeanization. Thus, this research will contribute to the literature regarding Europeanization from an innovative sociological-discursive perspective. The main research question that guided the development of the project was: *what are the direct and indirect, intentional and unintentional implications of political and public (re)presentations of violence against women in Romania in the 2000s?* Subsequently, the

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<sup>30</sup> Eder, *Op. cit.*, p. 435.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 442.

<sup>32</sup> Gerard Delanty, *Inventing Europe: Idea, Identity, Reality*, London: MacMillan Press Ltd., 1995, p. 156.

<sup>33</sup> Delanty, *idem*, p. 157.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibidem*, p. vii.

question was amended by including the adhesion to the European Union as a reference for this (re)presentation. The main hypothesis of the project is that, beginning with the 1990s, there was a transposition of violence against women from the private space to the public, European space, the issue being politicized in the EU political framework. This led, in the case of member states, particularly new ones and clearly Romania, to a political and often public problematisation of this issue through constant references to the European Union. My argument is that this fact has intermediated institutional and identity construction processes, defining European identity through the development of public policies, institutions and laws for combating this type of violence, which are positioned a priori as European, but also by reporting it to a non-European identity position, arbitrarily (re)presented as being inherently violent.

Having this as a starting point, the analysis made after this project contributes to theoretical debates regarding Europeanization, understood not only as including the enlargement and deepening of European integration. Actually, through a problematisation of Europeanization at the intersection between the development processes of public policies and the development processes of identity construction, the latter *also* taking place at a discursive level, through the (re)presentation of public policies. Thus, the initial hypothesis is that at the intersection between *l'Europe vécue* at a political level in Romania (in public policies and in the speeches of politicians regarding these and their object), meaning adopting a European identity as a form of conscience, and already existing or non-existing regimes/policies/perspectives (regarding this object), there are identity construction processes that require problematisation.

In view of making a criticism of this intersection, the project methodology will combine historical neo-institutionalism with sociological and rational choice neo-institutionalism in order to establish a basis for introducing discursive neo-institutionalism, in view of observing discontinuities between the politicization of (combating) domestic violence in Romania. Approaching (re)presentations that area in the area of Europeanization processes through an intersection between two or more of them widens its understanding from the convergence and conformation paradigm towards a more holistic, pluralist, socio-discursive approach, added to the technocratic one. I think that European identity is a void and utopian category until it becomes the significant of a tangible, defined, collectively accepted significante, when it has the potential to become a reference point for inclusion and undermining differences, from various points of view, simultaneously or not.

This perspective is one that intersects a discursive perspective with a historical perspective on European identity, connecting historical institutional contextualisation, institutional processes of solving certain interests and intentions of agents that can function as identity entrepreneurs, institutional processes of unintentional (re)production of pre-existing social norms and of (re)production of certain discourses and ideas that make the other legitimate and are made legitimate by them, being (in)formed by them and (in)forming them. Thus, my conceptualization regarding discursive institutionalism consists in the reciprocity between its legitimation and (in)formation with the other three institutionalisms. Having this reasoning as a basis, I think that a methodology that combines them, in different variations, is one that benefits from a more complete and complex understanding of these phenomena, from a temporal perspective, of the actors involved, of the context and discourses around all these dimensions.

Thus, identity is not reducible to objectively identify cultural, social, political and economic features, but refers to discourses, references, perceptions and significations of the latter. In the language of a Saussure-like semiotics, the label of 'European' is a significant that has a complex and problematic relation with its significate, in this case combating violence against women. What must be taken into consideration is the policy of identifying with this label or symbol, or, on the contrary, its rejection, the instances in which it is denied. The argument of this project is that the identification process *with* Europe/the European Union or the European Union's Europe does contribute to the construction and deposition of a European identity, of a European signification of combating violence against women.

Hereinafter, concerning this matter the policy of problematisation of violence against women in general, in this country will be approached. On a theoretical level, the goal is to identify the way in which the discursive policy around creating/recreating/dismantling public policies contribute to defining and positioning (non)European identities according to the issue of violence against women. What role does identity play in the politicization processes of violence against women in Romania as a member of the Union or what role do these processes play concerning the construction of a European identity at the political(?), economic(?), social(?), cultural(?) and geographic outskirts of the EU and/or Europe or of *Europe*?

On a methodological level, the goal of this research is also a descriptive one, but particularly a critical one. The analysis seeks to offer a critical deconstructivist reflection on the subject of the project, in line with the definition of critique offered by Michel Foucault. Thus, '[a]

critique does not consist in saying that things are not right the way they are. It consists in seeing what type of presuppositions, or familiar notions, unexamined, established ways of thinking are the basis of accepted practices<sup>35</sup>. Keenoy, Oswick and Grant state that critical analysts examine: 'dialogical conflict(s) as reflected in the way some discourses receive privileged status and other are marginalized'<sup>36</sup>. In this context, eventually, two paradoxes will be approached, associated with the two previously discussed frames of (re)presentation, emphasized during the research. Each of the two paradoxes discuss, one hand a consequence of a certain problematisation of violence against women in Romania and on the other hand, an invisible, marginalized, even untold, or silenced, un(re)presented aspect of this problematisation of this type of violence.

The first paradox, contributing to the feminist debate, still valid in my opinion, regarding the relation between violence against women and the defining/imagining of community and identity. Thus, in the case of Romania, the political framework of the European Union has contributed and was instrumented in the putting forward and approaching violence against women, especially domestic violence, on the political agenda in Romania. This frame of (re)presentation is one that is strategically used to put pressure in debates regarding this type of violence, so that its problematisation in a political and public space is justified. However, simultaneously, it is necessary to analyse to which extend combating violence against women contributes to a potential European post(-)nationalism<sup>37</sup> or, on the contrary, is instrumented in view of constructing a supranational or transnational European identity which uses a nationalist, patriarchal and historical pattern, altered only by inverting the perspective of this type of violence, on a 'European' scale?

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<sup>35</sup> Michel Foucault, "So is it Important to Think?", in J.D, Faubion, ed., *Power: Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984, vol. 3*, translated by R. Hurley & others, London: Penguin, 1994, p. 256.

<sup>36</sup> Keenoy, Oswick and Grant (1997: 147) in Frank Fischer and Herbert Gottweis, "The Argumentative Turn Revisited", in Frank Fischer & Herbert Gottweis, eds., *The Argumentative Turn Revisited: Public Policy as Communicative Practice*, Durham&London: Duke University Press, 2012, p. 18.

<sup>37</sup> I am defining post(-)socialism as a temporal setting, with the sense of dilution/modification/interruption of processes that take place in a socialist paradigm, as a theorization of this dilution/modification/interruption. When discussing post-colonialism and colonialism, they state that: 'the [t]heory must be prudent and flexible enough to say: the post-colonial is dead: long live the post-colonialism'. I think that such an approach can also be useful for discussions regarding post(-)nationalism, actually, specific post(-)nationalisms, not a monolithic, idealized, European post(-)nationalism, although post(-)nationalisms can still be considered to be 'alive' and even if, post-nationalism, in my opinion, also has this premise (or this scope?) However, this direction of research is outside of the scope of the current project. See Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, "What is Post(-)colonialism?", in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory*, London: Prentice Hall/ Harvester Wheatsheaf, 2004, pp. 276- 290.

The second paradox refers to the discursive depositing of violence in certain imaginary geographies, articulated and stigmatized as violent, excluded and, at the same time, included in the economic, political, social and cultural order of Europe, the European Union and, lastly, Romania. This depositing process is achieved by socially mapping violence via violence (re)presentation. Thus, violence (re)presentation is, inherently, violent in this context. Approaching this paradox by introducing gender perspective, will finalize the analysis in this research. Also, unequal power relationships that wedge these paradoxes and which open the possibility if approaching (re)presentations of violence against women from a colonialist and Orientalist perspective inside and outside of Romania's Europeanization processes will be taken into consideration. Paradoxically, violence deposits and producing violence are simultaneously alterities of Romania. Thus, the project methodology will add to a historical approach of putting forward violence against women on the political agenda, in particular, and public, in general, in Romania, a socio-discursive approach from a neo-colonialist and neo-Orientalist perspective.

The discourses on violence thus become a frame for the discursive construction and the material existence of subjectivities that they will unveil. This wraps the unequal power relationships wedged in (re)presentation, contributing to the perpetuation of the violence continuum and reifying the respective subjectivities, underlying them as violent and nothing more. In this context, it is important to problematise the archaeology, in the Foucauldian sense, of (re)presentations of violence against women and to problematise violence the genealogies of unseen violence that are inherent to these (re)presentations and are covered by the power of hegemonic narrations of combating violence. Thus, potential inherent violence inherent to the (re)presentation of violence must be problematised, so that recommendations to reduce it can be made.

In order to perform such an analysis it is necessary to scrutinize the social, political, cultural and economic context in which the respective discourses were created, how and why. Through a longitudinal socio-historical discursive approach, made in the post-modern interpretive tradition, we can unveil not only specific ways of constructing the significance through (re)presentation, but also the historical processes through which these specific ways were developed, as well as their historic implications, both discursive and material. Moreover, the analysed 'texts' in this case refer to violence against women first, defining a general discourse on this topic in Romania. Secondly, they refer to its combating and producing within European

and non-European communities/spaces, they are public 'texts'. The respective 'texts' are in a discursive network, are thematically interconnected on different levels (violence, then Europeanization, for example), but also argumentatively, according to the references used in the problematisation of the respective matter. We are talking about the (re)presentation frames mentioned earlier. All these connexions contribute to the construction of discourses about violence against women in Romania as a matter that is directly connected to Europeanization processes in its combating, or to social, economic, cultural and political marginalities in its production. These 'texts' are not independent from one another, but (in)form one another by virtue of the fact that they refer to the same issue. This continuum that exists between the (re)presentations of violence against women align to the idea of continuum regarding violent acts against women. In this context, I support the idea of an approach to violence against women in Romania, at a discourse level as rhetoric and institutional discourse that is first of all general. In order to have a clear picture of the interactions, relations and structures that model the identities born within these discourses.

A third paradox, identified in the last phase of the analysis of the two frames of (re)presentation, and of the connection between them, of violence against women is the exogenous character, external to producing violence, as well as to combating violence, in the case of Romania. Thus, the problematisation of this matter in Romania delimit, discursively, a potential European(?) Romania from the 'locations' where violence against women is created as a prerogative of the *Other* (the precarious one from an economic, political, social or cultural point of view, the Third World outside Europe or the European Third World - the Balkan world) Thus, violence against women in Romania is exported discursively *outside*, being enclosed in social, economic, cultural and social borders. But, simultaneously, the conceptualizations regarding the ways of combating violence have, as a standard, a European Union and its norms, which we import and to which we report constantly for legitimization or de-legitimization. In my opinion, this kind of externalization and endogenization of violence and combating violence can also denote a hegemonic discourse that penetrates the Romanian social, political, cultural and economic life, in order to deny or marginalize violence and its combating policy. These perspectives are only partially undermined, in my opinion, by the admission of the normality of violence against women in Romania - by how extended this problem is among the population, for example - or by the admission of the infusion of internal factors - non-governmental



organizations, for example - to the development of potential policies for the prevention and combating of violence against women in Romania.

Eventually, the project proposes a series of niche theoretical-methodological perspectives through which Europeanization processes will be approached in this project and which will offer the possibility to innovate during the analysis. These perspectives are: discursive policy, discursive institutionalism framed by historical and sociological institutionalism, (non)European identity, European identity from a peripheral perspective, neo-colonialism in the European Union and neo-Orientalism in Romania (self-Orientalization and re-Orientalization) in mapping social life, de/reconnection between violence against women and post(-)national or supranational identity. In this action the main points of reference are: violence against women, the European Union's Europe and the sociocultural deposits of violence. The material and discursive connections and continuities, built between these three through a policy of understanding - this time both with the meaning of knowledge, as well as the meaning of acceptance - and explaining the former through the other two, the implications of these connections and continuities - for example, processes of construction and mapping of (non)European identities - are based on the idea that are not and do not define fixed concepts, but fluid ones, that can be stretched and bent. Moreover, they contribute to this stretch and bend, in the directions proposed by the actors that take part in these processes. In this context there is a possibility of the European Union's Europe becoming the symbol of combating violence against women. And the adhesion also becomes an act of crossing non/European boundaries regarding this matter. The research, the critical analysis and the theorization of these processes is built on conceptual fluidities and, for this reason, a pluralist approach is the most suitable. Only in this way can the complexity of the political and public problematisation of violence against women in 2000s Romania and its critique be understood.

Lastly, it is important to problematise the way in which the problem of direct, interpersonal, brutal violence (beyond the cultural and structural one) against women in public discourse has become a criterion according to which belonging to the European Union's Europe could be disconfirmed or confirmed for different social, cultural and political entities on the European continent. These processes are produced in a context and create context, i.e. stereotypes, unequal power relationships and social, cultural, political and economic symbolisms. In the context of more and more clear political and politicized actions regarding the approach

(and solution to?) the issue of violence against women, my research will bring this type of violence up for discussion as an aspect to which building a European identity, of a way of being European is reported. This picture will be complicated when it is realized from Romania's perspective, which, during the 2000s, it was both inside and outside of the EU and on its way to the EU, literally, generally, but from the point of view of approaching violence against women. And this uncertain positioning gave birth to problematic policies and identities, in the processes of approaching violence against women in the (non)European or (non)Europeanized Romanian political and public discourse. Lastly, but not less importantly, three contradictions regarding approaching violence against women in Romania, that emerged constantly and repetitively from its problematisations on the public and political agenda will be problematised. We are dealing with the (re)presentation of women as an arbitrary deposit of the creation of violence against women. Additionally, I refer to the fact that in the problematisation of the creation of violence, the economic, political, social and cultural, and even gender and age status is significant. In its combating through institutions, policies, laws, these aspects are less emphasized. And it is about the similarities of constructing European post-nationalism of combating violence against women and those of building (non-European?) nationalism of violence against women, i.e. the nationalism of instrumenting women's experiences in the construction/imagination of European not so post-nationalist post-nationalism.

The intention of naming this policy of limitation/depositing of the causes of violence in the responsibility in social groups that area already discriminated on criteria of gender - women, ethnicity - the Roma, economy - poor people or mobsters, social status - the floozie, or culture - Balkan and so on, was not the reification of the 'Balkan floozie'. However, it reunites, in my opinion, a variety of social, cultural, political and economic (gendered) outskirts. This is the reason why for the focusing on this case in defining the respective policy of depositing the creation of violence. I assume, from an ethical point of view, any contribution to cultural violence that can be generated by the reiteration of this particular (re)presentation of violence against women. I'm trying to balance it through the deconstruction that I have offered regarding it, which I think problematised both the causes and the effects of handling, using and abusing such frame of (re)presentation centred on women's responsibility. More than that, from a feminist point of view I think that I have tried not only to problematise the in/equalities that must be taken into consideration in order to(in)validate such representations, but also potential

resistance mechanisms that can deconstruct and undermine it not only on a discursive level, but also on a material, institutional one. Such deposits of violence creation, its exclusion outside the normal(ised) social, economic, political and cultural order are themselves institutions. These are deposited practices of (re)presentation of violence against women that recreate the patriarchal gendered order, taking responsibility away constantly from the direct agents of violence, namely men - not exclusively, but extensively the abusers in these cases.

The 'Balkan floozie' can be correlated to the 'Third World' in the political statements of Romanian members of parliament who seek to illustrate a Romania in which women are abused, physically and structurally, within the family and outside of it. Moreover, this Third World is the non-European which, according to criteria of (not)combating violence against women, is at the basis of establishing the political, social, cultural and economic order in which the European Union's Europe is the normative power. And Romania swings, both institutionally and rhetorically, between the European Union's Europe and the Third World according to the capacity to develop institutions, legislation and public policies, to internalize international norms, to prevent and tackle violence against women. Beyond this aspect, another dimension of combating violence against women, is the one that intermediates (non)European identity constructions. These institutions and identities are intermediated in and intermediate themselves positions in hierarchies based on the 'staging' of norms transmitted by supranational and international entities, between national and supranational entities and vice versa, between governmental and non-governmental and vice versa, even between the Parliament and the media - political and public. And this staging of combating violence against women, problematised earlier from a national, as well as from an international perspective has, ultimately, effects similar to those of making a bodily spectacle of violence against women, encountered all too often in the media. Thus, through rhetorical - parliamentary or media -, institutional and legislative problematisations of public policies which lack reflexivity and real understanding of all the complexities that the (re)presentation of violence against women includes, problematic discourses and materialities are intermediated. This is also valid for the way in which its combating is institutionalised and politicized. These problematisations, as well as their consequences, be they institutional, legislative or public policy, governmental, as well as non-governmental, political, as well as of the civil society, constitutes discursive, epistemological, cultural and structural violent acts against women. Contributing (or rather not contributing) to the

prevention and combating of violence, these (re)presentations and the discursive violent acts that they intermediate, are materialized and continue the vicious circle of violent acts against women. They can intermediate the perpetuation of the *status quo* that treats this type of violence superficially, that only prioritize twice a year because then it's 'time' for its debate and the formal recognition of its status as a problem. But this formality too is the result of exogenous pressures, and their resolution determines tensions between their exogenous forms and a political, social, cultural and domestic economic context, that frame certain gender regimens. It is the matter of the context that creates the 'problem', the context of inequalities that cause it and fuel it.

Therefore, by problematising historical processes of (in)formation of prevention and combating violence against women on the public and political agenda, in the Romania of the European Union, we can see that, eventually, regarding this perspective on the violence against women, the forms of prevention and combating matter primarily... because they have existed before the background, built, in this case, *a posteriori*. And this is illustrated by the fragmentation, discontinuity, superficiality and sluggishness with which a real, authentic policy of preventing and combating violence against women at a national and supranational level... which can measure itself by its own context, not another one, in order to legitimise itself. And which, thus, could undermine these two nationalisms and open up the discussion towards post-nationalism of the combating and prevention of violence against women.

However, non-European Romania, (self)excluded from Europe along with the Third World, is antagonised by European Romania, that which has internalised, from the point of view of public policy, legislative or institutional discourse, but also from the point of view of public and political rhetoric, the international norms and those of the Union regarding the prevention and combating of violence against women. However, the arbitrariness with which violent, non-European identities, gendered, ethnicised 'deposits' of violence creation are constructed is opposed 'only' by the superficiality with which the European identity is constructed as a symbol of combating violence against women. It is the matter of a policy of prevention and combating that stimulates a presupposed/imagined European character - democratic and egalitarian regarding the gender dimension of social, cultural, political and economic life - of the approach of gender inequalities. Those structural historical inequalities, i.e. structural violence on the basis of gender, which fuel and legitimise direct, interpersonal violence on the basis of gender, against

women. In Romania, the European Union and its membership in the European Union's Europe was, particularly before 2007 (re)presented as a myth of modernisation, civilization and inclusion in an exclusive club where members have extended benefits. Specifically, a club of equal opportunities and gender equality. Moreover, the European Union's Europe is (re)constructed symbolically, from the centre, as well as from the outskirts, as a symbol of prevention and combating of violence against women, on a rhetorical level, as well as on a practical level; despite the fact that rhetorically, as well as practically, the EU policy in this area is still fragmented and incoherent.

Nevertheless, integration in the European Union's Europe requires approaching these violent acts against women in Romania. As a matter of fact, the integration in the ranks of the international community that at the turn of the millennium became more and more focused on this problem and its material instances or the socio-cultural and economic-political institutional discourses that they fuelled as well. In this context, violence against women enters the public agenda in Romania and, moreover, on the political one. These were meant to be the locations for the (in)formation of the public, of the public policies, of the governmental and non-governmental initiatives, of the institutions regarding the problem on gendered violence against women.

The problem *problematized* on these agendas, however, used to be not subtly made invisible until recently by an imaginary historical division between public and private life, whether it was in the house or in the street, in a couple or among strangers. Its publication required legitimising references. And they were found in Western conceptualisations, international norms and norms of the European Union. In this context violence against women was problematized using various frames of (re)presentation. Two of the most frequent in the analysis of the political and public agenda from the perspective of approaching violence against women starting with the year 2003 were: alignment with the European norms, in particular and international, with the purpose of preventing and combating violence against women; depositing the causes/the creation of violence against women in imaginary geographies excluded from the political order of European Romania, *non-Europeanized*. Thus, combating violence against women in Romania, especially the structural and domestic one, were becoming, in the context of institutional discourse, as well as in the context of discourse understood as rhetoric, fields of the Europeanization of Romania. Europeanization is understood in this case as an intersection of the

processes of institutional construction with processes of identity construction, from a methodological perspective that combines a longitudinal historical approach of these processes with a sociological-discursive one, centred on the identities involved in them and their setting in structures.

In this context, at the intersection between the two above mentioned (re)presentation frames, there is more than a development of public policies and institutions with European forms that lack the required Romanian background. The 9 year span between the first law regarding the prevention and combating of *family* violence (defined by the Parliament at the time of its debate - 2003 - as 'the most European law') and the one that amended it in order to have efficient mechanisms to approach the problem, not only a legislative admittance of the problem, is illustrative for this type of politicization of violence against women in Romania. Also, at this intersection we have processes of creating a European identity that condemns violence against women, by measuring it against the non-Europeanism of accepting this type of violence. Thus, the Romanian patriarchy leaves its mark on the Europeanization of Romania from the point of view of preventing and combating violence against women and the status quo is extensively perpetuated or very slowly undermined and modified. Moreover, it recreates the Romanian paternalism, according to which this type of violence can be prevented by supervising secondary, marginal, social, cultural, economic, political and gender categories - in particular women, poor families, unsuitable 'Balkan floozie' behaviours - that put Romania in the third world. Paradoxically, in the singular situation in which misogyny is considered to be the cause of violent acts against women, this (re)presentation too re-colonises the much too handy third world category with the creation of this type of violence on gendered criteria. These aspects shine another light on Romania's Europeanization regarding violence against women, rather simulated, that (ab)uses European references to legitimise itself, but which is not sustainable (intentionally?) This simulated Europeanization is intermediated by a superficially imported and implemented policy, somewhat similar to the European one, but more extendedly incorrectly and laconically (in)formed. It is a matter of, in the case of Romania, as well as in the case of the European Union, applying strategic and superficial institutional bandages to serious abuses against women.

Thus, combating violence against women becomes the prerogative of Europeanism, while violence against women re-colonises the non-European, particularly on a rhetorical level, and their identity positions are socially mapped arbitrarily, intermediating cultural violence processes that only fuel the continuum of violent acts, in general, and against women, in particular. Moreover, all these (re)presentations through which violence against women in Romania is problematised, beyond using specific frames that explain it and define it, also have an opposite effect. Thus, violence against women becomes instrumental(ised) in defining the non-European, and combating it in defining the European. However, this instrumentalisation of women's experiences is an act of violence in itself, against women, beyond the cultural violence implied by the creation of these categories and establishing hierarchies among them. And this (non?)intentional instrumentalisation is added to the continuum of violent acts against women, although, paradoxically, it is born in the locations meant to undermine it and interrupt it.

Thus, it is important to sound the alarm regarding the reflexivity of approaching violence against women on the political, as well as on the public agenda in Romania. This reflexivity, or lack of thereof, is due, in my opinion, to an incomplete and incorrect (in)formation of those who problematise it, regarding the complexities of the causes of this type of violence and of its political and public (re)presentation. As long as the purpose, at least the declared one, of approaching violence against women in institutional discourse and in rhetoric - beyond making a spectacle out of it, protecting the family etc. - is understanding, preventing and combating it, I think that it is important not to create other violent acts during the process that proposes its deconstruction. However, we must ask ourselves at the same time why is (in)formation regarding violence against women so superficial and problematic and which topics would a more correctly (in)formed problematisation of violence against women, its prevention and combating bring forward? Maybe the responsabilisation of men, most often the aggressors in this kind of situations and of the (Romanian) patriarchal norms and institutions?