

Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca

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Doctoral Thesis

The role of the territorial studios of the Romanian Television

Case study

(ABSTRACT)

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Summary:

In the present doctoral thesis I investigate the functions and roles of the Romanian Television's territorial studios, the case study being the studio from Cluj, for a simple reason: since 2003 I've been working here, first as an external collaborator, then as an internal collaborator, regular employee. This studio, the first territorial studio of public service television in Romania was born in the last days of December 1989 and the very first broadcast took place on January 3, 1990.

The motivation for choosing this research topic came from a personal experience that impacted my perspective during the ample restructuring process organized in 2012-2013. In the course of that restructuring, the territorial studio, with a very low staff number to start with, had to say goodbye to 43 collaborators, precisely when having for three years already (since 2009) broadcasted on their own television channel, with an increased broadcast time. In those days I seriously asked myself: why should the restructuring process mean a drastic cut in staff numbers also in the case of territorial studios, just the same way as it was done in the case of the central studios, which were known to work with incomparably higher human resource numbers. I turned the question into a scientific research, in order to demonstrate: the five Territorial Studios of the Romanian Television have certain essential functions that ensure their right to further exist among the mass media in the country.

The central question of the paper is the following: what are the basic functions and roles of the territorial studios of the Romanian Television?

Starting from this question two hypotheses emerge.

First hypothesis:

I assume that by researching and studying certain functional units, programs, program grid, video-graphic particularities of the studied territorial studio, respectively by analyzing the material in the archives and the memories of the collaborators I will be able to demonstrate the existence of some essential functions that establish the framework of the institution and it will be possible to demonstrate the need for the existence and functioning of this studio, both in the context of local media and the national media.

Second hypothesis:

I assume that the functions and roles undertaken by the Territorial Studio at the beginning of the activity did not change over time, but certain aspects - such as technical factors, trends in editing and style, globalization, presence in the virtual space, the need to meet the public media expectations in public service, etc. - could change. I start from the presumption that the first period, which in the case of Cluj's territorial studio means the 1990s, and the present moment differ quite significantly, both regarding the transmitter of the message and from the point of view of the receiver of the message. But even the message has changed somewhat, both in the formal aspect and in the content. So we assume that the functions and roles that were consciously or implicitly adopted in the early years did not necessarily change, but have undergone some additions and slight adaptations over the past decades.

The main objective of the research is to demonstrate the veracity of the two hypotheses, while the secondary objective involves presenting the historical background based on the analysis of the collected data. The secondary objective can not, however, take control over the research process. The attention paid to the hypotheses, of primary importance, presupposes though the assumption of a risk in case of gaps in historical information, in the process of determining the functions and role of the territorial studio in the mass media in the country.

The research process was slowed down somewhat by the fact that there was nowhere to be found a relevant bibliography concerning the life and work of the Cluj studio, considered the case study of the paper. There are far too few studies to even mention this studio, no matter how superficially. Therefore, I can say that I am the first researcher to be preoccupied by the subject of the television studio from Cluj, and that is why I had to face all the challenges and difficulties of such a pioneering and uncharted task. In the efforts to gather the necessary data, I was assisted by the collaborators from the studio's administrative department, but in the chronologies of different events in the life of the institution, I had to rely on the anniversary programs, based on which I could finally draw up a relevant statistic for the establishing, development and further orientation of the TV studio in Cluj. I think this chronology is in fact an absolute premiere, because these data summing up almost 30 years of activity have never been collected and processed in this form of synthesis before.

The paper is structured in three major parts. In the first two parts one can find the revealing research data that provide a solid basis for a comparative study included also in the first part. In the course of the research, the historical frames of the subject of the study are identified, the bibliographic references are researched and specified, the notions and the concepts are defined and cleared up, so the comparative study can finally demonstrate the national and European relevance of the case of study, meaning the regional studio, pinpointing the similarities and differences identified in the process. An important source of information in this context is the legislation and the rules in force regarding the case, respectively the different databases with relevant information.

In the part presenting and analyzing the relevant literature, there is included and studied the idea of television in the service of the community or the concept of "public service", in the context of state television. An extensive study deals with local, regional and national aspects and classifications of the audiovisual media. I have formulated my own definition in this regard and I demonstrate that despite the fact that the current legislation uses the term "territorial studios" when referring to the non-central units of the Romanian

Television, in the current language and in the scientific discourse the adopted and presently used term is "regional studio". Of course, I offer the definition of both expressions, and provide a detailed analysis of the appropriate term to designate a non-central studio of the Romanian Television, and why we should opt for that term.

This part that reviews the specialty literature includes the legislative framework as well. There are presented international and European precedents of the establishment of public service television, after which I analyze the legislation in force from our country, in the light of the European audiovisual norms, in a comparative study. I also pay special attention to the institutional norms that influence the activity of the Romanian Television and those of the international implications of the territorial studios, which determine the belonging of these studios to different European professional forums and their significance in the functioning and development of these.

In the second part there is a chronological presentation of the history of the Romanian Television and of the first territorial studio, the one from Cluj, synthesizing their evolution from the very beginning. The importance of archives is emphasized also here. In the archives of the TV studio from Cluj one can find a huge amount of audiovisual material, stored in the form of cassettes and digital recordings, which keep memories of the cultural, social, political, economic, etc. events of the entire region since 1990. Considering this material, a supposition emerged: also this warehouse of material can be considered as some sort of historical monument, and perhaps one of the roles of this regional, territorial studio resides here: citing the French historian Pierre Nora's expression, the studio would create a "lieu of mémoire", becoming a kind of "lieu of mémoire" of the population.

Talking about this archive, we mean an audiovisual warehouse that stores the evidence of the past. Cassettes, magnetic tapes, modern digital data capture the events of relevance in the region. Beyond evoking the memories of what's happened in this part of the world, presented in the programs of the territorial studio in Cluj, which addresses precisely this region, this material also preserves the activity of the institution itself, such as the events

of the first days of broadcast. Consequently, the researcher should not settle for just the personal recalling of the events, as told by the participants, the so-called "oral history" methodology (which carries the risk of more subjective interpretations), having all these objective information and data.

This part of the paper also includes a presentation of the current situation in the institution with statistics on the number of contributors, the broadcasting space and time, the program grid, the length of broadcasts (in minutes) prepared for national channels, etc. I think that this data on the actual situation of the institution can be of great help to all researchers who will deal with the situation of the media, as this work contributes significantly to the creation of an ample perspective on the media in Transylvania.

The theoretical and historical basis as presented in the first two parts provides a framework for **methodological research** in the third part to facilitate understanding of the evidence that demonstrates the veracity of the proposed hypotheses.

Research has been conducted on the basis of three well-developed methodologies.

- archive content analysis - sometimes complete with semiotic methods
- interviews - oral history
- personal observations from the perspective of an active participant in programs.

I conducted four partial researches each with the objective of identifying certain functions and roles. The first partial research carries the title of *Ample perspective on the media through the methodology of oral history - the territorial studio from Cluj of the Romanian Television 1990-2015*. In this study the research is based on interviews recorded in 2015 to be included in documentary films meant to celebrate the 25 years of work in TVR Cluj. For research purposes I used the original of the materials, where the collaborators of this studio speak, because only these pre-cut versions offer a complete and realistic picture of the situation to be presented in the study. The editors of these interviews cut a lot of material, depending on the available time frame, selecting from the full discussion only

certain parts deemed relevant to the show. For a scientific study, however, the entire discussion of each participant is needed, in order to form a relevant and defining conclusion for my research. Thus I proceeded from the premise that if in the memories of all those who evoke certain events subjectively and independently of each other, similar information is found in a convincing quantity, then those details can be considered valid, almost as objective data, when coming to the final conclusions. These interviews were classified into three categories, depending on their style and content. Essentially, I have identified memories with many objective-oriented information, with many concrete data, memories based on impressions and emotions, and opinions based on personal experience. In conclusion of this partial research, I was able to draw interesting conclusions, presented at the end of the paper, together with the other results of the study.

The other partial researches referring to the methodology: *Definition of functions and roles of the TV based on the analysis of the program grid*, *The face of a media organization: the brand as a promise*, respectively *The analysis of news as broadcasted by TVR Cluj*. In the case of research on the program grid, I relied on the specialty literature as well, that also stated that the grid of programs contributes to the definition of television functions, has ideological and relevant aspects for the orientation of the respective institution. If we accept the idea that functions, roles and operating principles are best reflected by our own grid of programs, we need to analyze in detail the program grid in TVR Cluj, on which the case study is based. In the context of this analysis I present those European norms, which regulate the classification of broadcasts. These are regulations adopted by the European Broadcasting Union, and as all Romanian TV studios are subject to these regulations, the shows broadcasted by TVR Cluj are classified according to them. From these statistics one can deduce the ideology followed by TVR Cluj and from which we can derive relevant information about the functions and roles assumed.

In the analysis of the brand, I demonstrate that a well-defined identity is needed in the media world so that the products can be easily recognized and accepted and so that the audience could watch the shows in the sense that they represent an image, a principle, an

idea with which the viewer or listener can identify (in best case). Watching several promos from the identity package of the territorial studio of the Romanian Television, I came to the idea that these also define the role and functions assumed by the studio. Putting it bluntly, the institutional function reflected by this identity package could be summed up as something "for Transylvania". This statement may be found at the end of the essays, promos, generics, and flashes that are part of this identity pack. Quoted literally: "TVR Cluj for Transylvania". Partial research on these issues highlights that beyond a seemingly simple message many constituent and defining features and roles are to be found. The analysis presents the entire Romanian TV brand package, with its accompanying guide, called TVR Styleguide, after which I detail how the region-oriented brand of the territorial studio from Cluj is constructed on this base, paying special attention to the region in which it operates.

The analysis of the news as presented by TVR Cluj aimed firstly at the exact determination of the extent to which this information concerns the region. Knowing that TVR Cluj produces news and broadcasts on national channels, such as TVR3, TVR1, TVR Moldova, I was interested in the extent to which the focus is or is not shifted towards information of national interest and the exact proportion of news of regional focus or interest. Of course, in the study I considered many other criteria, so in the conclusion of this partial study there is to be found a complete analysis of the TVR Cluj news broadcast.

In the synthesis of the paper I listed those functions that could be identified due to the researches carried out and which are validated by the demonstration process. Among the functions assumed by the territorial studio of the Romanian Television, besides the ones established by the laws in force and which can easily be identified, such as to inform, educate and entertain the general public, one can also mention the following:

- The explanatory, defining function
- The function that carries systematization and orientation
- The function that influences the rules of conduct and reasoning

- The informative function related to what happens beyond the immediate entourage
- The socializing function
- The educational function related to tolerance
- The function of presentation of uniqueness aspects
- The function of creating a society able to think together
- The function that serves the interest of a community
- The function to create and mediate a common experience for the community
- The function to form and establish the regional community - my own definition
- The identity preservation function
- The mirror function that triggers self-reflection
- The function to present, promote, characterize certain subjects
- The reminder function
- The function to save and store values
- The function of a cultural and scientific lighthouse
- The function of a regional media factor
- Transylvanian function
- The function of a local-regional news agency
- The function of public service television
- The media education function

I think these functions can not be listed in order of importance. All of them are of extraordinary significance. I also think that this territorial studio of Romanian Television can take on many other functions and can assume many other roles, alongside with the other territorial studios. The conclusions of this paper are not valid only for the case study, TVR Cluj, these functions characterize all five regional studios of the Romanian Television. In the conclusion of the paper, I could state that since there undoubtedly exist essential functions carried by these regional institutions, as being proven by the research, and these functions are of vital importance for a community or of the whole society, these functions result in the right to existence and operation of the respective studios.