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**THE 1997 AND 2008 FINANCIAL CRISES
CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES COMPARED**

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Abstract

The article focuses on the evolution of two crises based on several decades of deregulation, speculation, privatisation and financialisation, logically connected with a gradual, but certain recess of controls over the financial economy. Solutions and crisis-management went from (possible?) system-maintenance to (indispensable!) system-refounding; from the industrial revolution-type of liberalism to the postmodernist-type of interventionism. One of the conclusions is that beyond the 'de-economisation' of the world lies its possible 're-politisation'.

Key-words: crises, interventionism, financial, policy

Introduction – the question of the nature of a crisis

Most commentators of the present international systemic crisis affecting the world banking dynamics tend to focus on the *intensity* of the phenomenon: its intensity or its scale. To be sure, we are into the hundreds or the thousands of billions of dollars of losses, bail-outs, etc. These amounts are such that the common mind cannot quite fathom them. They are close to many national budgets of States on the UN membership list.

However, the present crisis poses another main question: that of its *nature*. Is it an exceptional crisis or one set within the cycle of economic crises over, at least, the past century? Indeed, is a crisis some kind of unforeseeable surprise, of irresistible accident, of unavoidable upheaval? One tends to oppose this deterministic view, which alleviates human responsibilities. So, is a crisis, conversely, a recurrent, systemic state, in between two periods of accumulation of human errors in the management of societies? The man-made nature of crises such as the present one seems much more plausible.

This view can be demonstrated while looking at three stages of two very comparable crises, that of 1997/1998 in Asia and that of 2008/2009 in

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the world: what their causes reveal, what the reactions to them prompt and what their consequences trigger.

The causes: crises as ‘revealers’ of professional mistakes

In the case of both the 1997 Asian crisis and of the 2008+ world crises, we find strangely close causes. This closeness strongly suggests that recurrent mistakes were made by the professionals of the financial economy. Mistakes in the construction sector, in the management of liquidities and in the up-keeping of trust.

The unbalancing of the construction sector

In this respect, the two situations of crisis can be compared almost perfectly.

In 1997, the cause of the crisis is - already - a mismanagement: an over-building in Thailand of real-estate goods, office space and apartments, resulting in an excessive offer facing insufficient demand. This situation launched the crises in Thailand with ripple effects to South Korea, to Indonesia, etc. The crisis also revealed that building companies had borrowed widely in foreign currencies, mainly in US dollars. When it came to reimbursing as banks became more pressing, naturally, excessive borrowing in US dollars tolled the bell for a major loss in value for national currencies, making the crisis all the worse.

In 2008, the main cause is - again - a mismanagement of the real-estate sector, only much worse. Why? In 1997, it is building companies which over-borrow. In 2008, it is US banks, professionals of finance, which over-lend *knowingly* to US borrowers who offer insufficient guarantee. This risk-hungry attitude then turned into the disaster: the securitisation of toxic assets into the financial stock-exchange system world-wide. All knowingly done, all irresponsibly conducted. This time, the bell tolled for the stock exchange indexes, with ensuing destabilisation of the world financial system.

The magnified need for liquidities

The comparison is again relevant for the two situations.

In 1997, the crisis of the real-estate sector in Thailand created a sudden, almost instant multiplication of the need to refinance loans in a foreign currency, not just in Thailand but also in other Asian countries. Revelations proved even worse: companies in general and conglomerates also, such as Korean *chaebols*, etc., had over-borrowed. They were in debt

for over 400% of their own resources, when economists recommend a maximum of 60%. Suddenly, refinancing proved nearly impossible: national currencies such as the Thai baht, the Korean won and the Indonesian rupee, lost half of their value or more.

In 2008, the crisis not only proves multi-sectoral, affecting not just building companies and conglomerates but also globalised economies: all economies are touched through their finances as such. In 1997, banks could lend but stopped lending at excessive risks. In 2008, banks are stopping lending because they themselves are becoming insolvent or go bankrupt. The heart of the matter is: how to keep the lending system afloat or else ... watch the world economy stall. And, to be sure, without massive, public, governmental bail-outs, the banking system would have stalled.

The withering of banking mutual trust

In both crises, the bottom-line is an impossibility to go on trusting partners.

In 1997, the sudden, mechanical worsening of the situation caused by the building sector was due to a loss of trust. This loss of trust extended to the attitude of banks towards companies, mainly to small and medium-size companies, which were closed down, laying off tens of thousands of employees. Still, we were witnessing a phenomenon which worsened the crisis without making it multi-sectoral or global. Banks lost trust in *companies* but banks survived, at least the major ones, and continued to lend to each other.

In 2008, the fundamental characteristic is the loss of trust *also* among banks *themselves*. This is the beginning of the end for any financial system because banking is a chain-system, not a monolithic lender-borrower system. Lenders, banks, constantly need to refinance themselves, just as insurance companies re-insure themselves with major brokers. In 1997, banks lost trust in 'the Other'; in 2008, banks are losing trust in 'the Self'. This is a much graver, existential crisis which suggests that the banking system itself has become obsolete or inefficient or at least in need of a major re-founding, in addition to refunding.

To conclude on causes, the point is not to put the blame on such or such groups. I am not pointing to banks as scapegoats. I am suggesting that the evolution over a few decades of deregulation, speculation, privatisation and financialisation logically connects with a gradual but certain recess of controls over the financial economy.

The reactions: crises as 'prompters' of political awareness

Still, in the case of the 1997 and 2008 crises, the striking characteristic of economic crisis management was a political intervention. Here again, the dynamics included objective aspects: to act quickly and to 'rectify' and subjective ones: to reassure.

The determination to act quickly and politically

Both crises are comparable as to the strong will of the public authorities to move in, with one significant difference: action was more international in 1997 and more national in 2008, tolling the return of the State.

In 1997, international financial institutions intervened: the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank quickly decided not to let the situation worsen in Thailand, Korea, Indonesia, etc. These UN, liberal institutions, which have been created with that purpose, were in their role. The system was still functioning. All the more so since, in the case of Korea, the amount loaned – about eighty billion dollars ('only' - by comparison with today's amounts) - were reimbursed in just four years. Intergovernmental management such as this one had been experimented in the case of the Latin American crises. Nothing really new, safe, perhaps, for an interesting *regional* reaction: projects of an Asian Development Bank, of an Asian Monetary Fund, etc.

In 2008, national financial institutions intervene, not without a large dose of international consultation: G 20 summits – two of them! For the first time in the post 20th century, chronic instability, due to two kinds of causes: economic and military, the awareness is that a new system has to be invented, beginning with the out-challenging of the North-South divide. The G-20 summits signal the politically global nature of the crisis. But, more fundamentally than just a signal, national political institutions take over the financial economy. They criticise banks, they condition banks to change their management and they enter bank boards. Even if time elapsed between the first signs of the subprime crisis in 2007 and the first decisions in 2008, political decisions were taken and followed up.

The attempt to improve (*assainir*) economic structures

Help and bails-out are usually conditional. Without exception, in both crises, the philosophy is to ascertain that similar occurrences do not happen again.

In 1997, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank aid was accompanied by an incentive and an ardent obligation to restructure the economies that had failed to maintain balance. Thus, Thai, Korean,

Indonesian and Japanese companies were instructed to improve, make sound again (*assainir*) their financial managing, curing their toxic *debts* (banks have toxic *assets* because companies over-borrow). Even the large, multi-sectoral conglomerates were ordered by the political, national institutions, as relays of international conditionalities, to scrap their former habits. However, this was only partially obeyed. Old habits die hard, especially when *chaebol* managers, bank managers and high officials in the ministries of Finance belong to the same close social networks.

In 2008, similarly, aid was accompanied with governmental obligations to reform a banking system that had so blatantly failed. Remember that major banks actually *have* closed down, in the US, the UK, etc. Most to the point, governmental officials appointed by governments are entering the decision-making boards of banks. However, not in a systematic manner: more so in the UK, the US, etc., and almost not so in France, which not only is illogical, but also surprises and maybe shocks public opinion. However, we should appraise this development for what it means: it means the end of a system where banks were trusted to serve the economy and the public. A reversal is under way: the liberal banking regime is now more and more of an *ancient regime*.

The need to reassure citizens and nations

Subjectivity plays an important role in the economy. Rational anticipations can and do worsen negative downturns or, on the contrary, feed and fuel positive recoveries. Hence the need, in both crises, to reassure populations.

In 1997, this reassurance was addressed to citizens as to *company* managers. The crisis was caused by over-borrowing by company managers. The morality or rather the competence at stake was that of company managers with some degree of complicity from some banks and some government officials. The citizens lost their trust for economic decision-makers, not yet quite for public, political authorities. Over-borrowers and over-investors were in jeopardy. The general public felt concerned mainly with the bankruptcy of small businesses, mounting unemployment and social consequences of the crises. Still, there was hope that governments and social security systems could operate.

In 2008, this reassurance is addressed to citizens as to *bank* managers. The crisis was caused by a 'toxic-isation' of the world finance. The morality at stake is that of bankers, even beyond the question of their competence. Suddenly, the symbols of liberalism and capitalism, the banks, are destroyed and dethroned, and governments seem out-powered by the amounts at stakes. In 1997, the International Monetary Fund and the World

Bank loaned a few tens of billions of dollars; in 2008 governments had to find a few hundreds of billions – ten times more! To reassure citizens is proving a different thing. Governments had to guarantee ordinary citizens' savings, for the first time in over 60 years. Citizens lost their trust for all decision-makers: speculators in jeopardy are still getting golden parachutes. The general public does not know to whom to turn.

To conclude on reactions, the point is to bring a comparative perspective on the worsening of the situation. Crisis-management went from (possible?) system-maintenance to (indispensable!) system-refounding; from industrial revolution-type liberalism to post modernisation-type interventionism.

The consequences: crises as 'triggers' of State-intervention

Finally, again in both the cases of the 1997 and 2008 crises, what occurred was intervention and a return to interventionism, one step ahead of intervention. New conceptions are taking over, from a redefinition of solidarities and an emergence of new leaderships to a series of quasi-philosophical preoccupations.

The re-affirmation of solidarities

Both crises produced consequences of a social and societal type. Beyond the apparent technicalities of the situations, solutions had to be found in attitudes, not just in techniques.

In 1997, the vision and role of Asia changed. At first, this gradually dominant centre of economic dynamism seemed to fail: growth rates as well as the emergence itself seemed no guarantee for development. But Asia, South Korea in particular, recovered. Growth rates were negative for just a year or two and the centre of the world's economic dynamic remained in Asia. This 'recovered Asia', thus became the new Asia, still an economic leader, still an initiator of solidarities: Asian Development Bank, Asian International Fund, Asean +, the Shanghai group, etc. There was a certain neighbourly togetherness in Asia's reaction to the crisis, not a passive dependence on the world system. New solidarities meant that the revelations of economic weaknesses required popular support to the State's necessary intervention.¹

¹. Symbols also played a role: Korean citizens giving away jewellery and gold ornaments to sustain the country's reimbursement credentials; the Japanese firm managers admitting fault; etc.

In 2008, the vision and role of the North/South divide is changing. Dominance is now associated with, possibly, irresponsibility. The North is losing its status of model towards which to aspire. This loss of status is clearly one of legitimacy. The certainties of the model of advanced economies are also linked to illusions, mismanagement and uncertainty. Solidarities have to be found elsewhere than with the provisions of the Northern model. What we are witnessing is the end of a long-dating bipolar world order, the last manifestation of which was the divide between advanced economies and emergent economies. Thresholds are now blurred. And this is new. So new in fact that western governments seem unable to devise and publish comprehensive recovery programmes that would think anew all aspects of their economic systems. Such programmes are necessary and should make suggestions for the middle term.

The role of leadership and regional leaders

In the case of both crises, an interesting consequence has to do with leadership and therefore with legitimacy, especially regional.

In 1997, the roles of Asia and of China in Asia changed. Not only was China, as the growth leader, not as such affected, probably due to the limited internationalisation of her private sector, but mainly China's macroeconomic attitude was above all one of regional solidarity. If China had accompanied the loss of value in the Thai, Korean, Indonesian and Japanese currencies with a devaluation of the Chinese Yuan, then the modest comparative exporting advantage of those four countries would have been lost. The only asset left to those four countries for a short while, the chance to bring in currency from exports, would have been lost and their situation made all the harsher. China did not choose this unilateral attitude, which would have, though, corresponded to her long hesitation to devalue in order to boost her exports even further.

In 2008, the legitimacy of the USA is changing as the country is being identified with and blamed for the main cause of the crisis: the sub-prime securitisation of clearly-known toxic assets. The impact of this irreversible reversal in economic credibility is lessened, temporarily, by the change in presidential leadership, but only pending the demonstration of the efficiency of measures taken. When the US Congress votes in excess of one thousand billion dollars in bail-outs, this is not a manifestation of potency; rather an admission of weakness, especially in the subjective perception of many groups in the other countries. Suddenly, comparisons between the US public debt and the Chinese currency reserves come to mind. The question is raised of a 21st century without the US as a major

destination of world trade. No doubt that President Obama is having to succeed in the recovery of the US banking and social security systems if he is to be successful as a top executive.

The 'elevation' of economic questions

This is perhaps the most striking consequence of the crises. As if a crisis, as a systemic apex, served the purpose of making awareness braver.

In 1997, the paramount question was that of the financing of the real economy. This was in accordance with what an economy is. An economy is a system of production of goods as well as a system of distribution of these goods. A capitalist economy is a system of production which maximises productivity with capital re-investment and economies of scale. The industrial revolution made such a system technologically possible. The world financial machinery gave that system its necessary fluidity. What went wrong in 1997, for example in Korea, was not speculation but over-confident borrowing by actors of the *real* economy (company managers) and over-confident lending by actors of the fluidifying branch of the system (the bankers). Still, the system was supra-managed with the help of international financial institutions.

In 2008, the paramount question is becoming that of the respective parts of the *material* economy and that of the *financial* economy. This is a more fundamental question than in 1997. It is the question of the very finality of the economic system. Is that finality the provision of consumer goods, which human beings *need* so as to satisfy their material *needs*? or is that finality the provision of speculative profit, which an oligarchic elite *wants* in order to satisfy immaterial *greed*? I choose purposefully provocative words and simplifications. I could choose a terminology borrowed from political philosophy: is the achievement of the common public good still the objective of systems of political accountability? or have corporatist groups taken over the exercise of international regulations?

To conclude on consequences, what makes the present crisis exceptional is the fact that it is global also in the sense of raising global questions. It is suggesting that after a few centuries of *laissez faire, laissez passer*, the liberal economisation of the world is over.

Conclusion - the question of the autonomy of the political

Beyond the 'de-economisation' of the world lies its likely 're-politisation'. More fundamentally, this is the question of the relative place

of the economic and of the political. This question has been addressed by the early Marxians themselves, Marx and Engels, through their theory of 'the determination in the last instance', as well as by the neo-Marxians, such as Gramsci, Althusser, and others. The 19th century suggested the autonomy of the economic; the 20th century demonstrated the persistence of the political, at least until WW II; the second half of the 20th century liberated economic forces but let the world evolve politically towards global systems, first bipolar, then global. Today, clearly, the economic is yielding ground to the political.

Otherwise put, the theory of economic cycles (Kondratieff, Wallerstein, etc.) purports the *economic* determination of the political. But the recourse to the political decision-makers in the present crisis points to a *political* neo-determination of the economic.

And so, if we define the end of the cold war, twenty years ago,² as the withering of political borders but not as the withering of the State, it took just twenty years for the economic to demonstrate that it could not survive without the political. Governmental intervention is turning into State interventionism. Time will tell the extent of this upheaval in the making: a re-State-isation of the world, backed by global international financial institutions which would go forcefully against the ongoing regionalisation of the world: multi-regionalisation, inter-regionalisation, cross-regionalisation, trans-regionalisation.

By coincidence (?), at the very time when regions are establishing a new post-bipolarity order, a global world-crisis breaks out. After imperialism, colonialism, fascism, communism, regionalism, maybe something is taking over, which could be coined as State financialism ... or maybe trans-Etatism, maybe the best retaliation of States against Regions?

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². The Malta Summit, the collapse of the Berlin wall, all took place in 1989.

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SAISONNALITÉ ET RÉCURRENCE DES MALADIES ÉPIDÉMIQUES
ET ENDEMIQUES À MOKOLO (EXTRAÊME-NORD CAMEROUN)

SEASONALITY AND RECURRENCE OF EPIDEMIC AND ENDEMIC
DISEASES IN MOKOLO (NORTH-CAMEROON)

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Résumé

Face aux changements climatiques qui modifient le climat à l'échelle planétaire, on observe une hausse de la température, associée à des mutations du régime des précipitations. Il est important, à ce titre, de s'interroger sur les effets que pourraient avoir ces mutations sur la santé. La présente étude menée à l'échelle de Mokolo permet de comprendre la relation qui existe entre saisonnalité et les maladies épidémiques et endémiques récurrentes. Les enquêtes menées auprès des populations de Mokolo et des structures de soins de santé, les données pluviométriques, thermiques et sanitaires recueillies se traduisent par d'importantes fluctuations annuelles et mensuelles des précipitations et températures dont les corolaires sont des risques sanitaires significatives. Cette situation contribue à la prolifération de maladies directes telles que les cancers de la peau, les noyades et des maladies indirectes liées à la qualité de l'eau, à des agents vecteurs. Face à ces admonestations, les différents acteurs intervenants dans le secteur de la santé à

Mokolo doivent prendre des mesures pour protéger non seulement la population en augmentant surtout les efforts dans les programmes de vaccination, d'adduction d'eau potable, de renforcement du système d'assainissement, d'équipements sanitaires, mais aussi en créant une équipe de veille permanente pour répondre efficacement aux fluctuations des saisons ou aux variations des climats. Ceci passe par un processus de développement sanitaire par le bas (approche participative) et non par le haut.

Keywords: saisonnalité, risques sanitaires, maladies épidémiques et endémiques, Mokolo

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Introduction

La tendance climatique actuelle est le réchauffement de la planète. Ce réchauffement a des répercussions à des échelles différentes selon qu'on soit au niveau local, régional ou continental. La planète terre est actuellement en train de subir cette tendance climatique dont les corolaires sont les hausses des températures auxquelles il faut associer des variations du régime des précipitations.

Il est dès lors permis de s'interroger sur les conséquences que pourraient avoir ces mutations liées aux variations climatiques sur la santé des populations de Mokolo. Ces variations ont également des répercussions sur les saisons. Cette étude menée à l'échelle de Mokolo permet ainsi de comprendre la relation qui existe entre la saisonnalité et la récurrence des maladies.

D'où la nécessité de cette thématique «Saisonnalité et récurrence des maladies épidémiques et endémiques à Mokolo ». La saisonnalité à Mokolo se traduit par d'importantes fluctuations annuelles et mensuelles des précipitations et températures. Cette dernière contribue à l'augmentation des risques sanitaires qui nécessite d'être mise en exergue.

Objectif et méthodologie

L'une des préoccupations mondiales aujourd'hui de la planète, c'est le réchauffement climatique. Et la ville de Mokolo n'échappe pas à cette réalité. Les activités humaines dont la déforestation accélérée, l'agriculture, l'urbanisation et la poussée démographique entraînent la modification du climat.

Une étude géographique plus approfondie de ces activités humaines révèle qu'elles ne sont pas statiques, mais qu'elles ont évolué au cours des générations et de manière croissante ces dernières décennies; avec comme base la poussée démographique. Inquiétudes légitimes, face à des risques majeurs qui se précisent au fur et à mesure que les saisons se relayent, s'inscrivent dans la réalité et dévoilent déjà les prémices des chambardements redoutés tels que la perturbation des saisons et la multiplication des phénomènes météorologiques extrêmes, les climatologues estiment que «La Terre se réchauffe à un rythme effarant» (ONERC, 2007) et il se dégage des corolaires sanitaires qui nécessitent d'être élucidés.

Dans la ville de Mokolo la perception qu'on a de la variabilité climatique se traduit par des troubles dans la répartition annuelle et saisonnière des températures et des précipitations. Les pluies sont imprévisibles, les vents sont violents (harmattan) et la durée de la saison

sèche devient de plus en plus difficile à déterminer. Ces chamboulements de saisons entraînent des inondations et de la sécheresse qui bardent la diffusion de certaines maladies telles que le choléra, la méningite, la typhoïde. La question qui se dégage est celle de savoir comment les acteurs impliqués dans le suivi de ces perturbations se mobilisent pour faire face à ces risques sanitaires ?

La présente étude est une contribution relative aux fluctuations des saisons comme conséquences de la variabilité climatique dont les retombées sont l'exposition des populations de Mokolo à des risques sanitaires. Il sera question donc d'analyser les manifestations de la variabilité climatique à Mokolo, puis d'identifier les risques sanitaires liés à la saisonnalité auxquels les populations de Mokolo sont exposées.

La méthode entreprise pour mener à bien cette étude est une démarche hypothético-déductive basée sur l'hypothèse selon laquelle : la saisonnalité contribue à la récurrence des maladies épidémiques et endémiques à Mokolo. Pour y arriver, les données climatiques et sanitaires ont été à la base de ce travail. S'agissant de ces données climatiques (précipitations et températures), elles concernent une période de 20 ans seulement, soit de 1990 à 2010. Cette borne spatio-temporelle se justifie par la disponibilité des données. Elles sont issues des services météorologiques du Mayo-Tsanaga et de l'aéroport de Maroua-Salak. Ces données nous ont permis de mettre en exergue l'influence de la saisonnalité sur les risques sanitaires à Mokolo. Pour ce qui est des données cliniques, épidémiologiques, elles ont été obtenues dans les structures sanitaires et aussi dans les archives du district de santé de Mokolo et de la Délégation régionale de la santé de l'Extrême-Nord du Cameroun. Il s'agit de l'Hôpital de District et du Centre de santé de Mokolo. Ces données concernent précisément les statistiques sur les maladies liées à l'eau, les maladies à vecteurs et les maladies respiratoires. A ces données, il faut y ajouter les enquêtes menées auprès du personnel des structures de soins de santé et au sein des populations de Mokolo, dont l'analyse a permis de comprendre comment elles se comportent face à la récurrence des maladies. Grace à ces données, nous avons calculé les covariances pour voir les degrés de corrélations entre les précipitations, les températures et les maladies.

Les grands traits climatiques de la ville de Mokolo

La ville de Mokolo qui fait l'objet de cette étude présente certaines particularités physiques et humaines dont la description est préalable à la compréhension de la saisonnalité et des risques auxquels les populations sont exposées. Mokolo est le chef-lieu du département du Mayo-Tsanaga

qui s'étend sur 4 393 km², limité au Nord par Magoumaz et Koza, au sud par Zamay, à l'est par Souledé et à l'ouest par Mogodé (Figure 1).

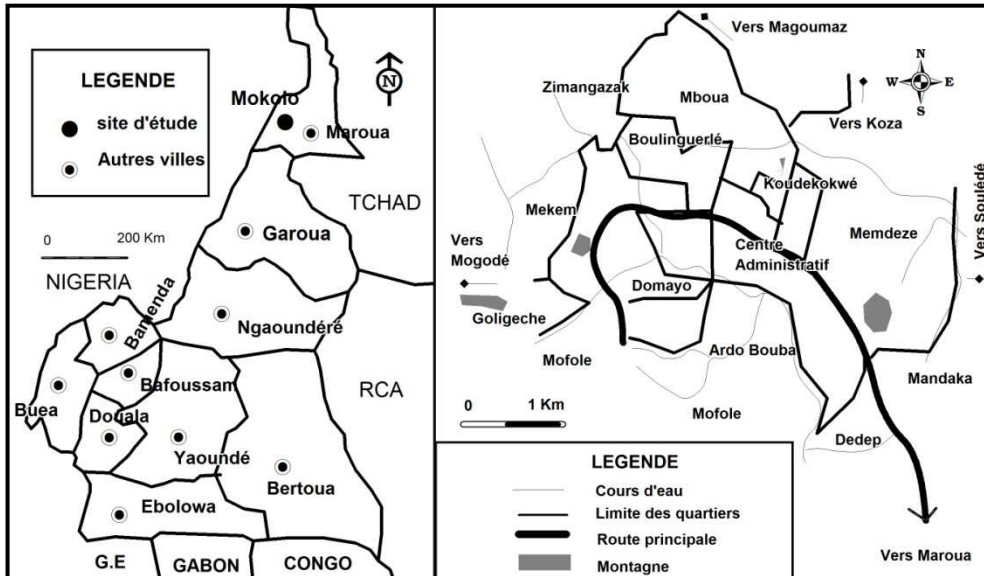


Figure 1. Carte de localisation de la ville de Mokolo
Source: Base SIG et Atlas administratif de l'Extrême-Nord du Cameroun, (adaptation Baska, 2011)

La région de l'Extrême-Nord est soumise à un climat de type soudano-sahélien (Seignobos et Iyébi-Mandjek, 2000). Ce climat subit des variantes en fonction de plusieurs paramètres dont les plus importants sont la pluviométrie et la température. A Mokolo, le climat est de type soudano-sahélien des montagnes. Située sur les Monts Mandara au dessus de 770m d'altitude, elle reçoit environ 1026 mm de pluie par an, selon le Chef de station météorologique. Ce climat se caractérise par l'alternance de deux saisons bien tranchées ; une saison de pluies qui va de mai à septembre et une rigoureuse saison sèche d'octobre en avril. On enregistre le maximum de précipitations en août. L'altitude constitue le paramètre le plus déterminant de la valeur de la température dans la ville. La température moyenne se situe autour de 25°C. Cette décroissance est la conséquence d'une variation des températures en latitude, combinée avec l'influence de l'altitude pour ce qui concerne le passage de la plaine vers les Monts Mandara. Le mayo Tsanaga avec ses principaux affluents (tels que le Mayo Ldamsay issu de Mokolo, les mayo Ndjoua et Fogom, le mayo Kaliao),

arrosent la ville (Seignobos, 2000). Mais les cours d'eau de la ville de Mokolo comme ceux de la zone sahélienne sont saisonniers. Dès la fin des pluies et des crues, ils tarissent rapidement mettant ainsi à mal les activités agropastorales et l'approvisionnement en eau des populations. Ainsi les changements climatiques que nous observons ici sont-ils des phénomènes naturels qui s'expliquent par l'alternance des saisons sèches et pluvieuses. Lorsqu'ils se traduisent par des perturbations dans le régime des précipitations et de la hausse des températures, ils entraînent de longues périodes de sécheresse ou d'inondations. Dans la présente étude, nous avons pris en compte deux paramètres météorologiques, à savoir les précipitations et les températures.

Des mutations constantes au niveau des précipitations

Le régime des pluies à Mokolo subit l'influence de la latitude et de l'altitude. Ici nous avons retenu deux paramètres qui permettent de percevoir les variations pluviométriques : une variation au niveau annuel et une variation au niveau mensuel. Les données pluviométriques utilisées se présentent sur la base des observations effectuées pendant 25 ans (de 1985 à 2010) (Figure 2).

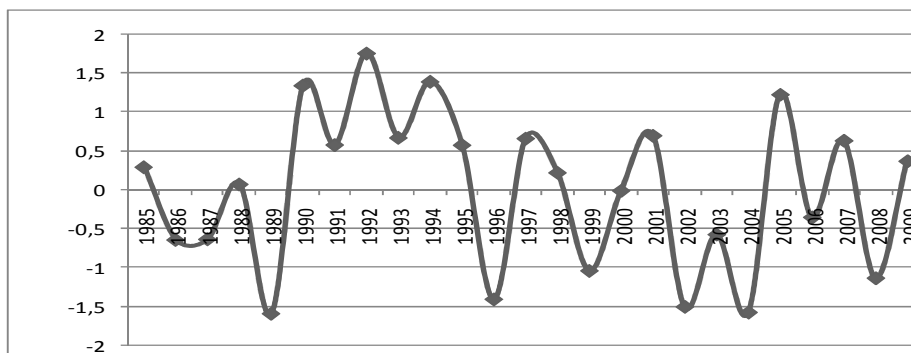


Figure 2. Fluctuations pluviométriques à Mokolo (1985-2009)
Source: station pluviométrique de la mission catholique de Mokolo
(station de Tada)

D'après la figure 2 ci-dessus, nous observons une grande fluctuation de la pluviométrie. Pourtant, la période allant de 1990 à 1995 est caractérisée par un excédent pluviométrique. La baisse ou augmentation de précipitations par rapport à la normale a un impact immédiat et prononcé sur le cycle de l'eau. Dans la zone soudano-sahélienne, le volume des pluies est faible et se caractérise par une irrégularité. Les fortes intensités et la

concentration de celles-ci sur un temps court entraîne parfois des inondations. La saison des pluies est très souvent caractérisée dans ces zones par des averses brutales et prolongées qui entraînent des inondations.

Les inondations à Mokolo sont celles dites brutales ou crues éclaires, occasionnées par des orages violents de courtes durées mais intenses. Ces crues éclaires sont brèves et localisées. L'essentiel des eaux responsables des submersions des quartiers (Moufwelé, Gada-Mayo et Pont-Douane) de la ville proviennent des précipitations importantes des régions environnantes.

La période de 1985 à 2009 fut marquée par plusieurs vagues d'inondations. Presque chaque année la ville est submergée par les eaux de pluies. Mais en 2007, la ville a enregistré 1103,4 mm de pluies, et les quartiers situés à proximité des cours d'eau ont été inondés et ont subis d'énormes pertes matérielles. Les inondations surviennent le plus souvent en juillet et en août qui sont les mois qui concentrent plus de 60% des précipitations annuelles.

L'enquête réalisée auprès de la population montre que sur 200 personnes enquêtées, 92% affirment être exposées fréquemment aux inondations.

Des mutations constantes au niveau des températures

Les températures moyennes annuelles ici vont en décroissant et cette décroissance est la conséquence d'une variation des températures en latitude, combinée avec l'influence de l'altitude (Seignobos, 2000). L'altitude constitue ici le paramètre le plus déterminant de la valeur de la température (figure 3). Mais cette valeur n'est pas restée statique pour la période de 1990 à 2010 comme l'indique la figure 3.

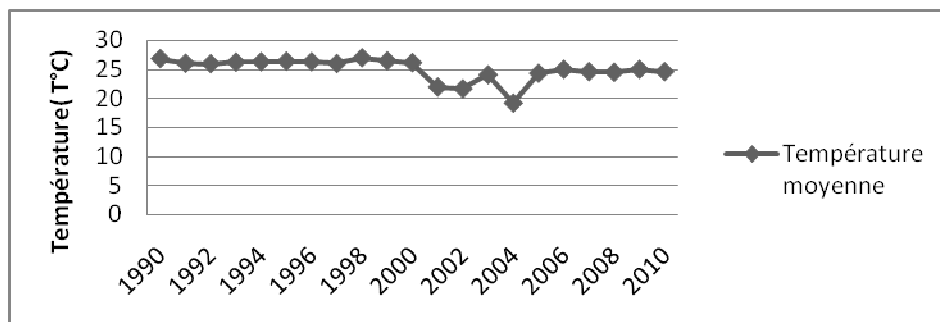


Figure 3. Fluctuation annuelle des températures moyennes à Mokolo
Source: Station météorologique de Mokolo

La figure 3 fait état de l'évolution des températures annuelles de 1990 à 2010. La première séquence qui va de 1990 à 2000 est celle caractérisée par des températures supérieures à 25°C.

La seconde période (2000 à 2010) présente des températures inférieures à 25°C. Au niveau mensuel, pour la même période, la température moyenne enregistrée est de 24,98°C. La plus forte température est enregistrée au mois d'avril (29,11°C) par contre, au mois de janvier la température descend à 21,92°C. Qu'il s'agisse des températures minimales ou maximales (Figure 3), il y a une variation d'amplitude importante entre le mois le plus chaud et le mois le moins chaud. En février, le mois le plus chaud on enregistre un maxima de 34,6°C et un minima de 18,15°C. Novembre, le mois le moins chaud, le maxima est de 27,6°C et le minima est de 10,3°C. L'amplitude thermique entre ces deux mois est élevée et varie entre 16,45 et 17,3°C.

Les risques sanitaires à Mokolo

Les effets sanitaires directement liés à la saisonnalité sont les plus certains et sans doute les plus graves, car ils mettent directement en péril les populations humaines concernées. Au-delà ou en deçà de ces limites, la vie devient impossible. Sans protection efficace, les conditions extrêmes ne peuvent donc qu'entraîner la mort de l'homme non seulement par hypo ou hyperthermie, déshydratation, dénutrition, mais aussi par choc ou traumatisme. On peut distinguer trois types d'effets sanitaires liés indirectement à la saisonnalité. Il s'agit des maladies liées à la qualité de l'eau, les maladies à transmission vectorielle et les maladies respiratoires.

Les risques sanitaires liés à la qualité de l'eau

Les êtres vivants ont besoin d'eau. Cependant, une eau de bonne qualité favorise un meilleur épanouissement tandis qu'une eau de mauvaise qualité crée de sérieux troubles sanitaires. L'accès à l'eau est souvent rythmé par les différentes saisons de l'année. En saison de pluies, les problèmes se posent avec moins d'acuité car certaines populations à l'aide des récipients recueillent l'eau des pluies qu'elles consomment le plus souvent sans traitement préalable. Par contre, en saison sèche surtout pendant les mois de mars et avril le manque d'eau est important. Les pluies viennent tardivement et cessent de manière précoce. Les Mayo sont fréquentables pendant la saison de pluies. La sécheresse peut aussi jouer un rôle dans la contamination de l'eau. En effet pendant la saison sèche l'eau est rare. Les femmes et les enfants peuvent parfois parcourir de longues distances pour accéder à un point d'eau (Seignobos, 2000).

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Le manque d'eau, lié à la sécheresse à Mokolo, est un facteur d'infection microbienne. L'apparition des maladies telles que le choléra, la fièvre typhoïde ne peut être évitée. Il y a donc contamination de la chaîne alimentaire.

De ce fait, les populations sont contraintes de faire des réserves d'eau dans des canaris, des bidons, des seaux. Ces réservoirs contiennent parfois une quantité très élevée de bactéries qui provoquent une souillure fécale. Le climat et l'hydrologie déterminent des conditions écologiques variées et imposent des éminences pathologiques telles que le choléra, la dysenterie, la fièvre typhoïde selon Kuété Fotie Chef centre de santé (Tableau 1).

Tableau 1: Evolution des maladies à Mokolo de 2005 à 2010

MALADIES	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010
Choléra	0	3	0	0	12	103
Méningite cérébro-spinale	59	9	24	3	57	25
Fièvre Jaune	0	0	0	0	1	2
Paludisme	2880	2712	2540	2644	2787	2862
Dysenterie Bacillaire	95	48	40	12	14	16
Rougeole	12	0	1	2	4	3
Tuberculose	141	162	209	234	0	1
Pneumonie	107	89	166	94	0	3
Fièvre Typhoïde	87	55	44	51	0	9
Effectif total	3381	3078	3024	3040	2875	3024

Source : Hôpital du district de santé de Mokolo, Rapport d'activité 2010

Les risques de transmission des maladies vectorielles

La plupart des maladies tropicales sont transmises par des vecteurs. On appelle vecteurs les insectes, comme les tics et les puces, lorsqu'ils propagent des maladies transmissibles aux animaux ou aux humains. Ce sont des organismes qui servent d'hôte à un agent pathogène et qui sont susceptibles de le transmettre à un organisme d'un embranchement différent.

Il sera plus question ici de l'anophèle, agent vecteur du paludisme et de l'Aedes Aegypti, agent vecteur de la fièvre jaune (Tableau 1). Les températures plus chaudes associées aux changements climatiques pourraient faire en sorte que les aires de distribution des vecteurs et des maladies qu'ils transportent s'accroissent et que leurs populations augmentent. Au fur et à mesure que les températures s'élèveront, les

risques pour les humains de contracter ces maladies pourraient donc aussi s'accroître.

Les risques de transmission des maladies respiratoires

La hausse des températures, due à la variabilité du climat, modifie le caractère saisonnier de certaines maladies. Ici il est question de la méningite cérébro-spinale et de la rougeole. La méningite cérébro-spinale est une infection causée par la bactérie *Neisseria meningitidis* très contagieuse et dont la transmission s'effectue par voie aérienne.

Le facteur climatique joue un rôle non négligeable dans la chronologie de l'épidémie, qui démarre en février pour disparaître au mois de mai, et dans sa circonscription géographique dans la « ceinture de la méningite » située entre 10°N et 15°N tel que définit par Lapeyssonnie en 1963. A Mokolo, la méningite est fortement dépendante de la brume sèche véhiculée par l'harmattan.

L'atténuation progressive de celle-ci et la naissance de nouveaux enfants non immunisés permettent alors une nouvelle phase de l'épidémie. Elle sévit selon un cycle assez régulier de périodes brèves avec deux ou trois années de virulence en raison de l'immunité acquise par les populations.

Plusieurs rapports administratifs signalent la présence de la maladie dans la région dès 1920. Depuis ce temps, l'épidémie de la méningite survient à Mokolo chaque année surtout en saison sèche. Elle tend à prendre un caractère endémique à cause des cas isolés qu'on trouve en saison de pluies (Tableau 1). La rougeole par contre est une maladie infectieuse très contagieuse classée parmi les maladies infantiles et caractérisée par l'apparition de petites taches rouges sur la peau.

A Mokolo, en 1979 on estime à environ 1000 le nombre de décès qui lui sont imputables. La rougeole dispute la première place à la méningite, parallèlement à laquelle elle se développe souvent. Ainsi lorsque toutes les conditions météorologiques favorables à la méningite sont réunies, la rougeole se répand également (Tableau 1).

Récurrences des maladies et saisonnalité

Il s'agit ici de mettre en exergue les relations entre les maladies, les températures et les précipitations, voire relever les différents types de risques sanitaires en fonction de chaque saison de l'année. Il s'agira de deux périodes: la saison sèche et la saison de pluie. Nous focaliserons notre attention autour de six maladies très récurrentes à Mokolo: paludisme, choléra, fièvre typhoïde, tuberculose, dysenterie bacillaire et méningite.

Certes, ces maladies ne sont pas l’apanage exclusif de Mokolo, mais sont toutefois très présentes et nécessitent qu’on puisse y jeter un regard d’investigation.

Rythme d’occurrence des différentes pathologies à Mokolo **Occurrence du paludisme et de la fièvre typhoïde**

Ici il faut noter que ces maladies ne sont pas forcément liées à une saison précise de l’année. On observe la présence du paludisme toute l’année. Il en est de même de la typhoïde. La saison de pluie va généralement de mai à septembre et ici on marque des précipitations abondantes par rapport au reste de l’année. C’est une période de saison pluvieuse et écologiquement favorable à la forte prolifération des agents vecteurs (Anophèle) du paludisme (Tableau 2).

Tableau 2. Répartition mensuelle du paludisme et la fièvre typhoïde dans la ville de Mokolo (2005- 2010)

MOIS	Jan.	Fév.	Mars	Avril	Mai	Juin	Juillet	Août	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Déc.
PALUDISME	860	946	942	830	821	765	978	1024	818	824	1063	869
FIÈVRE TYPHOÏDE	13	15	6,67	8,5	9,67	4,66	2,7	1,33	2,33	6,2	11,5	8
PRÉCIPITATION	0	0	0	29	82,13	109	240,1	351	146	53	0,3	0
T° C	22	20	29	29	28,4	23,7	23,8	21,7	22	22,2	23	21,6

Source: Rapport d’activités 2010 de la Délégation régionale de la santé publique de l’Extrême-Nord du Cameroun

Sur une période de 6 ans, nous observons que le rythme d’occurrence du paludisme varie mensuellement et selon les saisons. Il n’est pas le même au courant de toute l’année comme l’illustre le tableau 2. On remarque que pendant la période allant de novembre à avril, le taux de cas de paludisme et de tyhoïde est relativement constant aux autres mois de l’année. Ces périodes de l’année sont souvent caractérisées par une température moyenne basse et une présence abondante des moustiques (cas du paludisme) du fait d’un changement subite de température car on évolue d’une période froide à une période sèche. Or en saison pluvieuse, on note une nette diminution des cas de paludisme parce que la présence abondante des précipitations neutralise l’éclosion des moustiques selon l’avis des entomologistes. La fièvre typhoïde, quant à elle, confronte la population aux problèmes d’accessibilité à l’eau potable durant toute l’année. Toutefois, il est imporant de signaler que la saisonnalité n’est véritablement pas tributaire du paludisme et de la typhoïde car le seuil de covariance est de 0,06 entre le paludisme et les précipitations et de 0,08

pour la typhoïde. Ces deux pathologies, qualifiées « d'endémo-épidémique » par les spécialistes de la santé, sont présentes tout au long de l'année.

Occurrence de choléra et de la dysenterie bacillaire à Mokolo (2005-2010)

Chaque année, le choléra touche la ville de Mokolo, la frontière poreuse avec le Nigéria étant le principal contamineur des localités camerounaises. En 2012, de septembre à octobre, 395 cas de choléra dans 11 districts de santé de l'Extrême Nord ont été observés, dont plus de soixante morts. La saison des pluies est pour beaucoup dans la propagation de la maladie à Mokolo comme l'illustre la figure 5 ci-après.

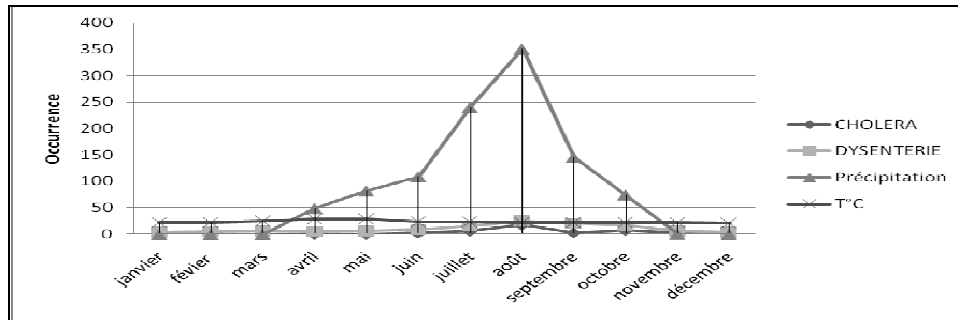


Figure 4. Rythme d'occurrence du choléra et de la dysenterie bacillaire à Mokolo (2005-2010)

Source: Rapport d'activité 2010 du district de santé de Mokolo

Cette figure présente l'évolution du Choléra et de la dysenterie bacillaire de mai à septembre en relation avec les précipitations et les températures. Elle permet de constater que le choléra apparaît pendant la période de la saison pluvieuse, notamment de juin à septembre. Comparée à la courbe des précipitations, on observe que le choléra suit l'évolution des précipitations. A Mokolo, la covariance est plus élevée (0,7) et explique davantage le fait qu'au mois d'août les pluies sont abondantes et le taux de choléra aussi élevé.

Quant aux températures, elles influencent moins l'émergence de ces maladies. La corrélation est inférieure à la moyenne, soit 0,30 pour le choléra et 0,42 pour la dysenterie. On peut ainsi affirmer que le choléra se présente plus corolé aux précipitations qu'avec les températures. Par contre, la dysenterie présente plus de covariance (0,47) avec les températures et se manifeste toute l'année. Mais en saison sèche qui va de février à avril, on constate que les températures sont élevées. Ainsi sur

toute l'année, le choléra n'apparaît qu'en saison de pluies contrairement à la dysenterie qui sévit toute l'année. L'épidémiologie du choléra est donc en fonction non seulement de la saison pluvieuse, mais aussi et surtout du niveau d'hygiène.

Tout comme le choléra, la dysenterie bacillaire est influencée par les précipitations. Mais, la corrélation entre celle-ci, les pluies et les températures est faible. L'activité du bacille de dysenterie est conditionnée par la présence d'un climat chaud et humide. Cette bactérie sévit dans des collectivités à hygiène rudimentaire. L'utilisation de l'eau sale issue des puits ouverts, de l'eau des mayo, la consommation des fruits mal lavés, des légumes mal cuits et l'insuffisance de l'hygiène individuelle sont les facteurs essentiels de la contamination. La ville de Mokolo est sous menace permanente de la dysenterie bacillaire.

Occurrence de la méningite et des gastro-entérites à Mokolo (2005-2010)

Tout comme le paludisme, le rythme climatique dirige totalement les variations périodiques des maladies gastro-enterites. Ces fluctuations périodiques de la maladie n'influencent pas forcément la forte présence ou non de la maladie comme le présente la figure 6 ci-après.

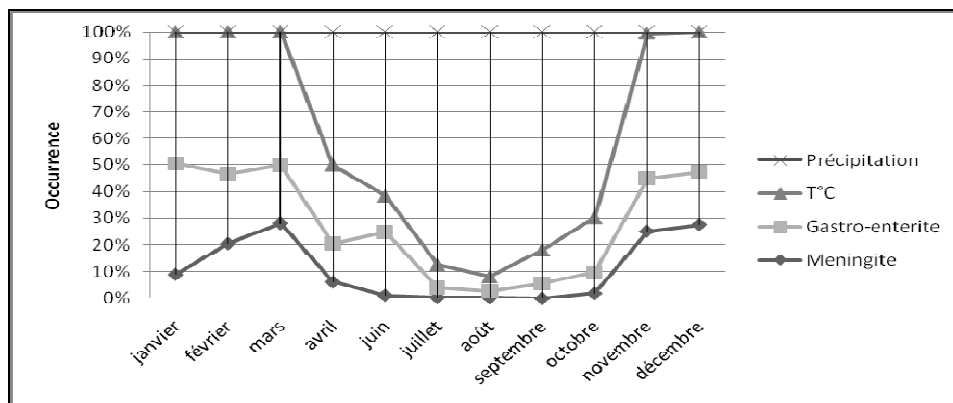


Figure 5. Rythme d'occurrence de la méningite et des gastro-entérites

À partir de la figure 5, on constate que les gastro-entérites sont présentes toute l'année mais avec un taux assez élevé de décembre à mars du fait de la hausse des températures. Pendant les mois les plus pluvieux (Figure 5), cette maladie tend à disparaître car l'humidité ne favorise pas de manière continue la circulation ou l'action des agents pathogènes responsables de cette pathologie.

Par ailleurs, on constate aussi que le nombre de malades atteints de méningite varie en fonction du temps qui règne au cours de l'année. Les mois de février, mars, avril, mai apparaissent comme les mieux adaptés au développement du meningocoque, agent responsable de la maladie. Ces mois sont marqués par une élévation des températures qui amplifient les tourbillons de poussière et de brume sèche qui irritent les narines. Mais pendant la saison pluvieuse (figure 5), la maladie disparaît pour ne revenir qu'en fin d'année, période marquée par une baisse considérable de la température.

On peut aussi constater que « la réceptivité immunologique de la population, un niveau socio-économique bas, la transmission d'une souche virulente et un contexte climatique particulier (saison sèche, tempêtes de sable) ont été identifiés comme les conditions les plus importantes » (Sultan, 2005). Ici, la méningite est fortement dépendante de la brume sèche véhiculée par l'harmattan. Elle sévit selon un cycle assez régulier de périodes brèves avec deux ou trois années de virulence en raison de l'immunité acquise par les populations.

Plusieurs rapports administratifs signalent la présence de la maladie dans la région dès 1920. Elle tend à prendre un caractère endémique à cause des cas isolés qu'on trouve en saison de pluie.

Conclusion

La saisonnalité et l'émergence des maladies sont étroitement liées dans le cadre de la présente étude. Les éléments du climat étant instables, nous avons pris en considération deux périodes de l'année: la saison pluvieuse et la saison sèche. Nous avons pu mettre en exergue le degré de dépendance entre ces saisons et les maladies. Grâce à cette méthode, nous avons pu montrer que certaines maladies ne font leur apparition que pendant une saison spécifique.

Ces maladies présentent des corrélations significatives avec les éléments du climat qui les caractérisent en fonction des saisons. Il est donc nécessaire pour tous les acteurs intervenants dans la santé de prendre des dispositions en fonction des saisons pour éviter que les risques sanitaires ne deviennent non maîtrisables et onéreux. Il est important de procéder à la sensibilisation des populations pour ce qui est de la lutte vectorielle et des conditions d'hygiène et de salubrité. Il s'avère aussi important de mettre en place des équipes de veille à l'approche de chaque saison pour pouvoir juguler rapidement le mal avant qu'il ne se transforme en épidémie.

Les populations se doivent de respecter les consignes de protection, de salubrité et d'assainissement qui leur sont prodiguées, car elles sont les premiers acteurs concernés par les risques sanitaires. De même, une

approche participative peut être envisagée, cette stratégie est fondée sur l'utilisation de plusieurs méthodes de lutte et intègre la participation des communautés.

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THE FIGHT AGAINST TAX FRAUD AND TAX EVASION

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Abstract

Collecting taxes and fighting against tax fraud and tax evasion are competences of EU Member States. In a globalised world, with globalised actors, Member States would often need more global means to collect taxes due.

The European Union provides a framework and offers instruments to handle cross-border tax issues including potential tax evasion.

On 2 March 2012, the European Council called on the Council and the Commission to rapidly develop concrete ways to improve the fight against tax fraud and tax evasion, including in relation to third countries and to report by June 2012. In April the European Parliament adopted a resolution echoing the urgent need for action in this area.

Keywords: tax fraud, tax evasion, global means, fight instruments.

On 2 March 2012, the European Council called on the Council and the Commission to rapidly develop concrete ways to improve the fight against tax fraud and tax evasion, including in relation to third countries and to report by June 2012. In April, the European Parliament adopted a resolution echoing the urgent need for action in this area.

As a first response, on 27 June 2012 the Commission adopted a Communication 1 - the "June Communication" (COM (2012) 351 final of 27.06.2012 Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on concrete ways to reinforce the fight against tax fraud and tax evasion including in relation to third countries) which outlined how tax compliance can be improved and fraud and evasion reduced, through a better use of existing instruments and the adoption of pending Commission proposals. It also identified areas where further legislative action or coordination would benefit the EU and Member States and demonstrated the added value of working together against the increasing challenge posed by tax fraud and evasion.

The June Communication announced the preparation, before the end of 2012, of an action plan setting out concrete steps to enhance administrative cooperation and to support the development of the existing good governance policy, the wider issues of interaction with tax havens and of

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tackling aggressive tax planning and other aspects, including tax-related crimes.

In this action plan, the Commission is presenting the initiatives that the Commission has already taken, the new initiatives that can be progressed this year, the initiatives planned for the next year and those requiring a longer timeframe. In sequencing these initiatives, the Commission was mindful of the need not to overload the Member States and to take account of their capacity to take the necessary actions. In essence, this action plan contains practical actions which can deliver concrete results to all Member States and lend support in particular to those Member States to whom Country Specific Recommendations (Country-specific recommendations have been addressed to Bulgaria, the Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Malta, Poland and Slovakia. Note that Member States currently benefiting from financial assistance under the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF), the European Financial Stabilization Mechanism (EFSM) or under the provisions of Article 143 of the Treaty are recommended to implement the measures laid down in their respective Implementing Decisions and further specified in their Memorandums of Understanding and possible subsequent supplements. This concerns Greece, Ireland, Portugal and Romania), on the need to strengthen tax collection have been addressed, in the context of the 2012 European Semester exercise.

Member States and stakeholders were consulted on the content of the action plan and priorities to be given to each item. The plan takes into account their views. The strong message from the Member States was that top priority should be given to actions already under development and to the full implementation and application of the newly adopted legislation on administrative cooperation and the fight against tax fraud. The Member States also emphasized the need to adopt quickly the pending proposals in the Council and to pay particular attention to the fight against VAT fraud and evasion (Council conclusions of December 2011 (doc. 9586/12 - FISC 63 OC 213).

Future work on these actions will be guided by the need to reduce costs and complexity of tax systems for both the taxpayers and the tax administrations. For taxpayers, decreasing costs and complexity would encourage better tax compliance.

For tax administrations, the development and full use of automated tools and risk management techniques would release human and budgetary resources to concentrate on achieving the targeted objectives.

The Commission will also continue to promote the most effective use by all Member States of practical IT tools for all taxes. It will also promote a more joined-up approach between direct and indirect taxes and

between taxation and customs by making appropriate use of the FISCALIS and CUSTOMS programs to enhance communication and promote a more systematic sharing of best practices and tools, where appropriate. This can help to improve the efficiency of audits and controls and reduce the burden on taxpayers.

All the actions proposed to be taken up by the Commission in this document are consistent and compatible with the current Multiannual Financial Framework 2007-2013 and the new Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020.

Tax fraud and tax evasion have an important cross-border dimension. Member States can only address this problem effectively if they work together. Improving administrative cooperation between the Member States' tax administrations is therefore a key objective of the Commission's strategy in this area. A number of important steps have already been taken.

1. New framework for administrative cooperation

In the past two years, based on a proposal from the Commission, the Council has adopted a new framework for administrative cooperation (Council Directive 2010/24/EU of 16 March concerning mutual assistance for the recovery of claims relating to taxes, duties and other measures (OJ L 84 of 31.3.2010, P. 1); Council Regulation N° 904/2010/EU of 7 October 2010 on administrative cooperation and combating fraud in the field of value added tax (OJ L 268 of 12.10.2010, P. 1); Council Directive 2011/16/EU of 15 February 2011).

This set of new legislative on administrative cooperation in the field of taxation and repealing Directive 77/799/EEC - OJ L 64 of instruments paves the way for the development of new tools and instruments by the Commission and Member States. The June Communication highlights that their effective and comprehensive use by Member States is still to be attained. The Member States must ensure a full and effective implementation and application of these instruments in particular by engaging in enhanced exchange of information.

2. Closing Savings taxation loopholes

Adopting the amendments proposed by the Commission in regard to the Savings Taxation Directive (COM (2008) 727 final of 13.11.2008) will permit the closing of loopholes in the Directive and thus improve the effectiveness of this instrument. This will help Member States to better ensure effective taxation of cross-border savings income. It is now up to the Council to adopt this proposal and give a negotiating mandate to the Commission to seek corresponding changes to the existing savings taxation agreements with third countries. The vast majority of Member States have

identified this issue as a high priority. The Commission therefore urges the Council to adopt these proposals without delay.

3. Draft anti-fraud and tax cooperation agreement

Similarly, the Commission invites the Council to sign and conclude the draft of the antifraud and tax cooperation agreement between the EU and its Member States and Liechtenstein which was presented to the Council in 2009 (COM (2009) 644 final of 23.11.2009 and COM (2009) 648 final of 23. 11.2009). The Commission also invites the Council to adopt the draft of the agreement for opening similar negotiations with four other neighboring third countries. This will allow the Commission to negotiate agreements that ensure that the same instruments to fight fraud and high standards of transparency and exchange of information are available to all Member States.

4. Quick Reaction Mechanism against VAT fraud

On 31 July 2012, the Commission presented a proposal for a Quick Reaction Mechanism against VAT fraud (COM (2012) 428 final of 31.07.2012). If adopted, this proposal would enable the Commission to very quickly authorize a Member State to adopt derogating measures of a temporary nature in order to tackle cases of sudden and massive fraud with a major financial impact. The Council is urged to swiftly adopt this proposal which it has identified as a high priority.

5. Optional application of the VAT reverses charge mechanism

In 2009, the Commission presented a proposal regarding an optional application of the VAT reverse charge mechanism in relation to supplies of certain goods and services susceptible to fraud (COM (2012) 428 final of 31.07.2012). Only the part of that proposal relating to greenhouse (11.3.2011, P.1); Council Regulation N° 389/2012/EU of 2 May 2012 on administrative cooperation in the field of excise duties and repealing Regulation (EC) N° 2073/2004 (OJ L 121 of 8.5.2012, P. 1) gas emission allowances was adopted in March 2010 (Council Directive 2010/23/EU of 16.03.2010 amending Directive 2006/112/EC on the common system of value added tax, as regards an optional and temporary application of the reverse charge mechanism in relation to supplies of certain services susceptible to fraud (OJ L 72 of 20.03.2010, P.1)). The adoption of the remaining part of that proposal would allow all Member States to apply the reverse charge mechanism under the same conditions in those sectors where it represents the most efficient tool against 'carousel fraud', instead of adopting individual derogations to the VAT Directive which could have an adverse impact on the fight against fraud in other Member States.

6. EU VAT forum

Both business and tax authorities acknowledge that the current VAT system is burdensome to manage and vulnerable to fraud. With a view to improving the governance of VAT at EU level, the Commission has decided to create an EU VAT forum (Commission Decision (2012/C198/05) of 3 July 2012 on setting up the EU VAT forum). In this dialogue platform representatives of large, medium and small businesses and tax authorities can exchange views on practical cross border aspects of VAT administration, as well as identify and discuss best practices that could contribute to streamlining the management of the VAT system, aiming at reducing compliance costs, while at the same time securing VAT revenue.

The Commission invites Member States to participate as widely as possible, for the EU VAT forum to attain its objectives. Together with this Action plan, the Commission is presenting a series of new initiatives that respond to some of the needs identified in the June Communication.

These initiatives constitute an immediate response to the identified needs to ensure a coherent policy vis-à-vis third countries, to enhance exchange of information and to tackle certain fraud trends.

7. Recommendation regarding measures intended to encourage third countries to apply minimum standards of good governance in tax matters

The Commission's analysis of the current situation is that Member States recognize the potential and actual damage caused by jurisdictions not complying with minimum standards of good governance in tax matters, among which jurisdictions commonly considered as tax havens.

All Member States have responded in a different way to this situation. Taking into account the freedoms awarded to them when operating in the internal market, businesses may structure arrangements with such jurisdictions via the Member State with the weakest response. As a result, the overall protection of Member State's tax revenues tends to be only as effective as the weakest response of any Member State. This does not only erode Member States' tax bases but also endangers fair competitive conditions for business and, ultimately, distorts the operation of the internal market.

With a view to tackling this problem, the Commission recommends the adoption by Member States of a set of criteria to identify third countries not meeting minimum standards of good governance in tax matters and a 'toolbox' of measures in regard to third countries according to whether or not they comply with those standards, or are committed to comply with them. Those measures comprise the possible blacklisting of non-compliant

jurisdictions and the renegotiation, suspension or conclusion of Double Tax Conventions (DTCs). To avoid promoting business with back listed third countries, the Commission invites Member States to take additional complementary actions but in full respect of EU law.

Furthermore, Member States should consider ad hoc detachments of experts to assist tax administrations in third countries that commit to complying with minimum standards but are in need of technical assistance.

This Recommendation is an important practical first step to align the attitudes taken by Member States in regard to jurisdictions not applying minimum standards in the area concerned. To assess the need for possible further initiatives, the Commission will re-evaluate the Member States' approach and actions in this area within three years after the adoption of the Recommendation.

8. Recommendation on aggressive tax planning

The Commission considers that there is a need to ensure that the burden of taxation is shared fairly in line with the choices made by individual governments. Currently, some taxpayers may use complex, sometimes artificial, arrangements which have the effect of relocating their tax base to other jurisdictions within or outside the Union.

In doing this, taxpayers take advantage of mismatches in national laws to ensure that certain items of income remain untaxed anywhere or to exploit differences in tax rates. By paying taxes businesses can have an important positive impact on the rest of society. Aggressive tax planning could thus be considered contrary to the principles of Corporate Social Responsibility (Communication on a renewed EU strategy 2011-14 for Corporate Social Responsibility – COM (2011) 681 final of 25.10.2011).

Therefore, concrete steps are needed to address the problem.

Concrete action by all Member States intended to remedy such problems would also improve the operation of the internal market. In the light of this, the Commission recommends that Member States take common effective action in this field.

Specifically, the Member States are encouraged to include a clause in Double Tax Conventions (DTCs) concluded with other EU Member States and with third countries to resolve a specifically identified type of double non-taxation. The Commission also recommends the use of a common general anti-abuse rule. This would help to ensure coherence and effectiveness in an area where Member State practice varies considerably.

The EU tax Directives (Directives on Interest and Royalties, Mergers and Parent- Subsidiary) already allow Member States to apply anti-abuse safeguards. While respecting the EU law, Member States can use these possibilities to avoid abusive tax planning.

Furthermore, the Commission is willing to contribute to work in international tax *fora* such as the OECD to address the complexities of taxing electronic commerce by developing appropriate international standards.

9. Creation of a Platform for Tax Good Governance

The Commission plans to establish a Platform for Tax Good Governance composed of experts from Member States and stakeholders representatives to provide assistance in preparing its report on the application of the two Recommendations, and in its ongoing work on aggressive tax planning and good governance in tax matters.

10. Improvements in the area of harmful business taxation and related areas

In line with what is set out above and as indicated already in the Annual Growth Survey 2012 (Annex to the Annual Growth Survey 2012 "Growth-friendly tax policies in member states and better tax coordination in the EU", COM (2011) 815 final, VOL. 5/5 – Annex IV, par. 3.1) the Commission further points out the urgent need for a new impetus to be given to the work that is currently discussed in the context of the Code of Conduct for business taxation (OJ C 2, 6.1.1998, p. 2) (Code).

Over the past years, making progress and achieving tangible results in the Code of Conduct OJ Group charged with the assessment of tax measures that may fall within the scope of the Code (OJ C 99, 1.4.1999, p. 1) has become increasingly difficult. This relates in part to the fact that more and more complex issues are being addressed but also to a need to refine and sharpen the expected results, the timetable for such results and the means of monitoring their implementation.

The Commission therefore calls on the Member States to consider actions to improve the effectiveness in achieving the Code's original goals, for example by more rapidly taking topics to Council level when political decisions are urgently needed. The Code of Conduct Group currently also discusses the issue of mismatches where solutions are rapidly needed. If such solutions to remove mismatches are not agreed and implemented in line with clear deadlines, the Commission stands ready where appropriate to make proposals for legislative action instead.

In addition, in cases where existing Directives are found to provide opportunities for aggressive tax planning or prevent appropriate solutions by allowing double *non taxation*, the Commission will act. Work should also intensify on special tax regimes for expatriates and for wealthy individuals, which are harmful for the operation of the internal market and reduce overall tax revenues.

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For its part, the Commission will continue to assist the Member States in ensuring the effective promotion of the Code of conduct for business taxation in selected third countries and to promote fair tax competition globally by negotiating good governance provisions in relevant agreements with third countries and by assisting developing countries in line with the Commission's standing policy on tax and development (COM (2010) 163 final of 21.04.2010)

11. "TIN on EUROPA" portal

The Commission also presents today a new practical instrument to improve administrative cooperation in the area of direct taxation.

Proper identification of taxpayers is essential to effective exchange of information between MS' tax administrations. Today the Commission officially launches the new application "TIN on EUROPA". This application provides samples of official identity documents containing national TINs (tax identification numbers). It thus allows any third party, and in particular financial institutions, to quickly, easily and correctly identify and record TINs in cross-border relations. In addition, an on-line checking system similar to VIES (VAT information exchange system) makes it possible to check whether the structure or the algorithm of a given TIN is correct.

This new application could be a first step towards a more consistent approach to TINs at EU level and will contribute to a more effective automatic exchange of information.

12. Standard forms for exchange of information in the field of taxation

Directive 2011/16/EU adopted on 15th February 2011 provides for the adoption of standard forms for exchange of information on request, spontaneous exchange of information, notification and feedback. Today, the Commission has adopted an implementing regulation providing for such standard forms that will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of exchange of information. The Commission has also developed an IT application for these standard forms in all EU languages that has already been put at the disposal of the Member States and that will be deployed as of 1st January 2013.

13. A Euro denaturant for completely and partly denatured alcohol

The modifications that will be adopted in December in the area of denaturants (Commission Regulation (EC) No 3199/93 of 22 November 1993 on the mutual recognition of procedures for the complete denaturing of alcohol for the purposes of exemption from excise duty (OJ L 288 of

23.11.1993, P. 12)) encompass a common EU formulation for the complete denaturing of alcohol (CDA). The main objective is to reduce opportunities for fraud. It is also intended to simplify and harmonize administrative burdens for licit movements, reduce manufacturing costs and improve market access for producers of denatured alcohol (EU and global). It will be explored whether the same approach, with similar results, could be envisaged in regard to partly denatured alcohol (PDA).

All of the world's financial centres, under the impetus of the G20, and adopting the standards developed by the OECD, made a commitment in 2009 to putting an end to tax-motivated bank secrecy. Against the exceptional backdrop of today's deep financial, fiscal and political crisis, there is no longer any excuse for tolerating tax evasion or aggressive tax avoidance.

Banner headlines should not overshadow the major strides that have been made, even if much still remains to be done. We did not wait for the latest revelations of *Offshore Leaks* to undertake far-reaching efforts in this area.

All financial centres in the world that had committed themselves, under pressure, to putting an end to bank secrecy have in fact kept their word. In addition to the "lists" published in 2009, the laws of all of the countries concerned have been scrutinised closely through "peer reviews".

The 120 countries of the **Global Forum on Transparency and Exchange of Information for Tax Purposes** are indeed assessed on the basis of precise and exacting criteria. The progress made has been substantial: all of the countries now consent to exchange bank information on request; over 900 bilateral agreements to exchange such information have been signed; and a great many opaque schemes have been dismantled. And yet major progress must still be made, and hundreds of recommendations have already been formulated. Several countries such as Lichtenstein, whose legislation had been deemed insufficient, have amended their laws in response to these demands. Others have been invited to speed up their reforms as a prerequisite to more extensive review. Ultimately, the Global Forum will examine how each country has actually implemented exchange of information, and each country will be given an overall rating that will sanction its behaviour. An initial series of 50 ratings will be available this autumn, so that those that comply with the rules and those that do not can be identified clearly.

Like Luxembourg in recent days, a growing number of States nevertheless deem it advisable to go beyond the qualitative leap in transparency that was constituted by the exchange of bank information. Now the next step is to move on to automatic exchange of information. We are actively working to achieve this. The G20 countries have decided to be

exemplary in this area, and the G8 have asked us to implement a multilateral platform whereby states can exchange information in a secure and effective manner. In order to satisfy the new requirements of the United States, under its Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA), many countries, such as Switzerland recently, have signed agreements calling for far-reaching exchange. In co-ordination with the European Union, it is up to us to ensure the effectiveness of these agreements and to make them accessible to all interested parties.

Many countries, such as Saudi Arabia, Belize and Morocco, are preparing to sign the OECD multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative Assistance in Tax Matters, which calls for all forms of exchange of information, and even for assistance in collecting unpaid taxes. Over 60 countries will then have joined in what is becoming the benchmark instrument for a more transparent world in which it will no longer be possible, tomorrow, to conceal one's wealth or income so as to avoid tax.

In addition to tax evasion, we can no longer tolerate aggressive tax avoidance, which public opinion massively rejects. No country can stem this global scourge on its own. Collective and co-ordinated action by governments is essential.

Here, too, the G20 has asked us to review international tax rules in order to put SMEs and multinationals on a level playing field. Combating the **erosion of tax bases and the shifting of profit** has become a priority now that taxpayers' trust in the effectiveness and fairness of their tax systems depends on it. Eliminating double taxation of transnational investment is necessary for growth and employment. While this objective must be maintained, it is also necessary to do away with "double non-taxation" and the shifting of profits to tax-free jurisdictions where no real activity takes place.

Lying at the core of the sovereignty of states, the acceptance of taxation must remain one of the cornerstones of our democracies. Today, this is threatened by insufficient co-operation between states, which has made massive evasion possible. It is also threatened by delays in tailoring our international tax rules to the globalisation of the economy and business enterprises. If we are to restore the confidence of our citizens and taxpayers, we must win the battle for transparency and the establishment of fairer global rules.

Conclusions

It is important to take effective steps to fight tax evasion and tax fraud, particularly in the current context of fiscal consolidation, in order to protect revenues and ensure public confidence in the fairness and effectiveness of tax systems. Increased efforts are required in this field, combining measures at the national, European and global levels, in full respect of Member States' competences and of the Treaties. Recalling the conclusions adopted by the Council on 14 May 2013, the European Council calls for rapid progress on the following issues:

1. priority will be given to efforts to extend the automatic exchange of information at the EU and global levels. At the level of the EU, the Commission intends to propose amendments to the Directive on administrative cooperation in June in order for the automatic exchange of information to cover a full range of income. At the international level, building on ongoing work in the EU and on the momentum recently created by the initiative taken by a group of Member States, the EU will play a key role in promoting the automatic exchange of information as the new international standard, taking account of existing EU arrangements. The European Council welcomes ongoing efforts made in the G8, G20 and OECD to develop a global standard;
2. further to the agreement reached on 14 May 2013 on the mandate to improve the EU's agreements with Switzerland, Liechtenstein, Monaco, Andorra and San Marino, negotiations will begin as soon as possible to ensure that these countries continue to apply measures equivalent to those in the EU.

In the light of this and noting the consensus on the scope of the revised Directive on the taxation of savings income, the European Council called for its adoption before the end of the year;

3. Member States will also give priority to the concrete follow-up to the Action Plan on strengthening the fight against tax fraud and tax evasion;
4. in order to counter VAT fraud, the European Council expects the Council to adopt the Directives on the quick reaction mechanism and on the reverse charge mechanism by the end of June 2013 at the latest;
5. Work will be carried forward as regards the Commission's recommendations on aggressive tax planning and profit shifting. The Commission intends to present a proposal before the end of the year for the revision of the "parent/subsidiary" Directive, and is reviewing the anti-abuse provisions in relevant EU legislation.

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The European Council looks forward to the OECD's forthcoming report on base erosion and profit shifting;

6. It is important to continue work within the EU on the elimination of harmful tax measures. To that end, work should be carried out on the strengthening of the Code of Conduct on business taxation on the basis of its existing mandate; [Conclusions – 22 May 2013, EUCO 75/1/13 REV 1 8]
7. Efforts taken against base erosion, profit shifting, lack of transparency and harmful tax measures also need to be pursued globally, with third countries and within relevant international *fora*, such as the OECD, so as to ensure a level-playing field, on the basis of coordinated EU positions. In particular, further work is necessary to ensure that third countries, including developing countries, meet appropriate standards of good governance in tax matters;
8. There is a need to deal with tax evasion and fraud and to fight money laundering, within the internal market and vis-à-vis non-cooperative third countries and jurisdictions, in a comprehensive manner. In both cases the identification of beneficial ownership, including as regards companies, trusts and foundations, is essential. The revision of the third anti-money laundering Directive should be adopted by the end of the year;
9. The proposal amending the Directives on disclosure of non-financial and diversity information by large companies and groups will be examined notably with a view to ensuring country-by-country reporting by large companies and groups;

Efforts are required to respond to the challenges of taxation in the digital economy, taking full account of ongoing work in the OECD. The Commission intends to assess these issues further, in advance of the October 2013 European Council discussion on the digital agenda.

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MEDIA AND BRANDING STRATEGIES IN CULTURAL TOURISM.
THE CASE OF THE REGION OF MOLDAVIA

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Abstract

The present article analyses the increasingly important role played by cultural tourism seen as a dynamic sector of global tourism and the impact of branding strategies in the development of tourism at a regional level. The aim of the research is to prove that cultural tourism may be a key factor in regional development given the great tourist potential of Romania, in general, and of the region under analysis, in particular. The article starts with a presentation of the factors that caused the rapid evolution of cultural tourism and its 'expansion into the everyday life' a trend that favours a shift of the tourists' interest from the 'iconic' and 'the staged inauthentic' to the local and authentic aspects of a community's daily life. This preference, as it is argued throughout the article, has to be exploited in the elaboration of branding strategies that have to concentrate on the promotion of Moldavia as home of a genuine and well preserved cultural patrimony and traditional lifestyle.

Keywords: cultural tourism, regional development, media and branding strategies, event-based tourism, territorial marketing, brand, cultural patrimony

1. Introduction

In the past decades, cultural tourism has developed rapidly, emerging as an important sector of global tourism. This newly acquired status has had a beneficial influence in both economic, social and cultural terms. At the same time, cultural tourism has progressively gained the attention of quite a good number of researchers, specialised in different fields of activity, who made cultural tourism into the focus of their studies, as the extensive literature in this domain may prove. Starting from these assumptions, the present article analyses the ways in which cultural tourism's great potential may be exploited for the benefit of local communities, favouring regional development. The main objective is to prove that cultural tourism may represent a positive solution, an alternative tool to the classical ways of economic development, marking a new trend in the passage from the heavy industries of the 'economies of production' to the creative industries of the 'economies of symbolic consumption' (Smith and Robinson 2006: 5).

Given the huge variety of Romania's cultural and historical heritage, it seems necessary to call attention to the importance of the country's cultural patrimony for the economic progress, first at a local level and then, by the joint effort of the various regions, at a national level. The article also intends to prove that Romania's cultural treasury in general, and Moldavia's in particular, since this specific historical region forms the subject of the applied analysis, may be best spotlighted by the use of carefully planned media and branding strategies.

In order to accomplish the aforementioned objectives, the paper presents various definitions of the main concepts and then applies them in the analysis of the historical region of Moldavia and its cultural particularities which may become focal points for territorial marketing.

2. What is cultural tourism?

As already stated, cultural tourism is considered by many researchers as a rapidly evolving subdivision of global tourism, if not as 'the fastest growing and possibly largest segment' of it (Smith and Richards 2013: 3). With culture that 'has come to be seen as a tool for economic development', cultural tourism has turned into 'an important vehicle for political narratives, tourism and cultural policies initiatives and local ... development' (Smith and Richards 2013: 63). This major evolution has been reflected and investigated by a great number of studies dedicated to it, which presented the phenomenon of cultural tourism. Some of them have made efforts at including as many of its thematic sections as possible (for instance *Key Concepts in Tourist Studies*, 2010, by Melanie Smith, Nicola MacLeod and Margaret Hart Robertson, or *The Routledge Companion to Cultural Tourism*, 2013), some others, have devoted entirely to one thematic aspect of cultural tourism (for instance *Cultural Heritage in the Developing World: a Regional Perspective*, 2009, edited by Dallen J. Timothy and Gyan P. Nyaupane; *Food and Wine Tourism: Integrating Food, Travel and Territory*, 2010, by Erica Croce, Giovanni Perri; *Wine, Food and Tourism Marketing*, 2013 by Michael Hall), to name but a few.

In these studies (and elsewhere), researchers in the domain of cultural tourism have endeavoured to present definitions of both culture and tourism which are used as key concepts. Defining such complex notions seems from the outset fraught with problems, an aspect emphasised by many of the specialists in the field. They point out the numerous meanings attached to these notions and the difficulties with which the theorist is confronted in the process. For instance, the social critic Raymond Williams (1958) pointed out that culture is one of the most problematic words to define and considered culture as being about a whole

way of life, as well as the arts and learning. Along the same lines, Melanie Smith states that there is still no general consensus about what culture really means, '...as it has both global and local significance and it can be deeply historic or highly contemporary. It can be represented as physical and material, tangible or intangible; as political and symbolic, or as the practices of everyday life' (2009: 2). Culture is also seen as a 'constructing power' and 'transformational process', whereas tourism is viewed as 'an expression and experience of culture', but also as a factor which 'assists in generating nuanced forms of culture as well as new cultural forms' (Smith and Robinson 2006: 1).

Besides the necessary effort at defining culture and tourism, the studies outline the fundamental trends in the evolution of cultural tourism. These significant developments (which are closely interconnected) may be summarised as follows: the first refers to the growing importance of cultural tourism and of the region in the economic development of a community; the second, concerns the so called expansion of cultural tourism into 'the everyday life'(Richards 2011; Smith and Richards (eds.) 2013).

The main reasons that determined the evolving of cultural tourism into a fast growing subdivision of global tourism seems to have been the economic turn in the support of culture (Smith and Richards (eds.) 2013: 63). This shift is characterised by the recognition of the economic benefits that may be brought by various cultural activities and events organized for touristic purposes and must be seen in its turn as the outcome of a series of factors. Among these factors are: the development or the improvement of the neo-liberal ideologies in parallel with the decline of traditional welfare state regimes, in Western European democracies, and the emergence of new and various stakeholders who have become more and more interested and more and more involved in the process of policy making at the level of the communities and their regions. As a consequence, the number of public-private partnerships meant to ensure private finance into the economy has considerably increased, as has increased the complexity of these partnerships and of the necessary policies to be applied for the benefit of the regional development. This evolution is considered by Smith and Robinson (2006) a distinctive phase of 'mature capitalist systems' that, in recent decades, have re-created 'the economies around the symbolic value of culture(s)' (3). ... 'In this vein, the concept of cultural tourism seems to be taking hold everywhere. Former heavily industrial centres have moved from being economies of production to economies of symbolic cultural consumption' (5).

Closely connected with this conceptual shift which acknowledges the role of culture as a tool for economic development, there are the

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phenomena of globalisation and so-called ‘commodification’ of culture which have caused certain developments in cultural tourism itself, over the last decades. Postmodernist thought has brought about notions such as the dissolution of boundaries (in language, religion and even identity), the proliferation of *simulacra* (Jean Baudrillard 1981), the disturbing time-space compression which brings about a collapse of both history and geography and the transformation of the whole world into a ‘global village’. Mark Currie sustains that:

Postmodern social theory has taken the spatial compression of the globe into a global village, the theme of globalisation, as a key area of cultural change, suggesting as it does, that is not only history which has been compressed, but geography. Traditionally, travel may broaden the mind, but it also compresses the globe in the sense that, at jet speed, the temporal gap between places is reduced to a co-presence, encouraging us to think of the planet as a simultaneous unity, an effect obviously enforced by the simultaneity of other forms of electronic communication (1998: 104).

Certainly, all the new technologies of communication have made the rapid exchange of information possible; equally they have brought new, ever faster ways of travelling. Today, places that in the past seemed for ever separated by huge geographical distances are brought together within the same sphere, the global network, and seem no longer so distant from one another. Although distances between places and between people and cultures appear no longer that important, there are other kinds of differences which matter and have become increasingly significant for cultural tourism. Many social and cultural theorists have emphasised the fact that globalisation cannot be viewed as a total homogenisation of cultures, and the survival and rapid development of cultural tourism stands as a proof. In recent decades, scholars have talked about a re-conceptualisation of the notion of globalisation that must be viewed more as a process of diversification than of unification. In a paradoxical way, confronted with the dangers (all the negative aspects) of globalisation, communities have developed various forms of resistance to the standardisation tendencies of globalisation and committed themselves to the preservation of the local, the authentic, the unique, against the inauthentic and standardised global. Currie humorously points out in a few words that: ‘Europeans have become more and more aware of the diversity of the European sausage’ (1998: 104) when faced with the ongoing attempts to globalise it.

Other researchers have called attention to the artificiality of global tourism whose main tendency is to replace ‘real authenticity’ with a ‘staged

authenticity' by a commodification of local traditions which are 'manufactured and simulated for tourist consumption' (Reisinger 2013: 40). Global tourism may be characterized by the production of 'non-places', like Disneyland, 'non-things' (the mass-produced souvenirs) and 'non-people' (people losing their identity within the mass or being simply the clerks in the souvenir shops) (Ritzer 2004). In this context, people become more and more aware of the fact that the world they live in is not a 'culturally homogenized totalitarian world' but it is one represented by 'different cultural powers' (Reisinger 2013: 41). As a reaction against globalisation, on the one hand, people tend to remain attached to place, to region and to tradition and heritage, intending to use their 'localness' in order to produce unique cultural items. On the other hand, tourists avoid the simulated and staged authenticity seeking the uniqueness and originality of the local traditions, products and customs. Consequently, it is considered that in recent years, cultural tourism has creatively evolved and continues to evolve creatively, '...becoming far more inclusive, breaking away from some of the more established notions of culture as loci of symbolic power and elitist expressions of apparent good taste' (Smith and Robinson 2006: 8). Tourism is changing into an experiential activity expanding into the everyday life. It has been observed that tourists prefer less and less the 'formalised' and iconic cultural settings (like museums, galleries or places considered as symbolic in the target, observed culture) and spend more and more time in restaurants, cafes, bars, shops, and other 'everyday', common places. People feel more and more attracted by the local colour and want to know and explore the host's culture in its everyday aspects and behaviours. In this sense, it may be stated that the main trend in the evolution of cultural tourism is its 'domestication' and 'glocalisation' (Reisinger 2013) which allow people around the world to exchange knowledge about their lives, to communicate and understand signs and cultural meanings.

3. Branding and territorial marketing

The so called domestication of cultural tourism or its expansion into the experiences of daily life has been a gradual process taking place in recent years and as a result of the growing need to preserve local customs, products and values within the communities. Local communities have become more and more aware that the only way to fight against the negative effects of globalisation is to conceive and apply policies that enhance the value of their local products. Their policies included well targeted branding campaigns and the organization of events such as folk music festivals, arts and crafts festivals and food and wine festivals meant

to present the everyday life of a local community and to attract tourists interested in these particular aspects. Clichéd places and values that have been given the status of the iconic and the 'spectacular' (Smith and Robinson 2006) are abandoned and rejected by tourists and representatives of the communities in search of the original, the authentic. This is why the branding and media campaigns focus on those elements that are an integrant part of the local life. It is a known and accepted fact that many famous countries have overused some of their symbolic settings in their branding campaigns which had in the end a negative impact. One of the best examples in this sense would be a country like Jordan whose branding campaigns have focused too much on the promotion of its Greco-Roman vestiges and of the city of Petra considered as 'must-see places' (Smith and Robinson 2006: 6). Jordan appears to be 'locked', frozen in this cliché which, although being an important element of the marketing strategy for promoting Jordan's image abroad, does not testify for the complexity of the country's culture as it has been influenced for centuries by the Ottoman, but also by the Western culture. There are certainly other very famous countries which have used and over-used very famous settings, so that today images of the Eiffel Tour or the Greek shores with their white buildings have become common place.

This is the main reason which transformed branding campaigns by shifting their focus from the iconic to the local, the original, the unique. At present, branding and territorial marketing are seen as a means of promoting and revealing the very essence of local culture and identity. Territorial marketing may be defined as a set of strategies conceived and applied in order '...to attract new economic and productive activities into a specific area or territory, to encourage the growth of local business and to promote a positive image. The success of territorial marketing comes from its ability to discover the needs of actual and potential tourists and to develop incisive actions to satisfy them' (Simeon and Buonincontri 2013: 149).

In territorial marketing great attention is paid to the communication and promotion of the territorial supply system. Communication and promotion, the two main pillars of the territorial marketing strategies, are realised through advertising, the elaboration of a tourism brand, the creation of Web sites and the organization of cultural events. The organization of events is more and more frequently used as a tool and part of territorial marketing and this fact led to the emergence of a new concept, namely 'event-based tourism', referring to tourism that is based on the organization of events (Simeon and Buonincontri 2013: 149).

Brand and web sites play a fundamental role in territorial marketing having in mind the ways in which the contemporary human psyche is

influenced and shaped by the image and the iconic. The brand represents a medium for communicating the most valuable features of a territory and has to express the quintessence of local identity. According to Kerr (2006: 277), a brand may be defined as: '...a name, symbol, logo, word or other graphic that both identifies and differentiates the destination; furthermore it conveys the promise of a memorable travel experience' which is 'uniquely associated' with that place. The most important advantages of the brand are, on the one hand, the fact that it guides the tourist's choice both emotionally and economically and, on the other hand, that it facilitate the transmission of intangible factors difficult to transfer to consumers (Clarke 2000).

4. Branding and cultural tourism in the Region of Moldavia

Romania has a huge touristic potential ensured not only by the great diversity of its forms of relief, its climate and avifauna, but also by its impressive and unique cultural patrimony inherited from generation to generation.

The region of Moldavia is one of the most beautiful in the country, preserving a great and unique cultural heritage. Geographically, the region is hilly, being situated on the most part of the plateau and including a space with medium altitudes (summits and plateaus, separated by large valleys with terraces at 50-200m), with a high density of rural and urban settlements. The natural environment is favourable for touristic activities with accessibility in all directions. The climate is continental, with aridity touches, which allows touristic activities along the four seasons (Ielenicz, Comănescu and Nedelea 2010: 35-36). There are also a large number of lakes and vegetal formations like forests, a characteristic feature that transforms Moldavia into an attractive place ensuring the best conditions for various recreational activities. Moreover, in Moldavia there are several mineral springs and local balneal resorts. Added to its natural beauty, there is Moldavia's cultural and historical treasury. Its centuries-old cultural heritage includes: original architecture, traditional costume, popular music, artistic and crafty creation, naive painting and ceramics. The two main elements - nature and cultural heritage - have to form the hard core of every branding policy intended at developing local cultural tourism. Features like the persistence of traditions and rituals and the unequalled, for their taste and quality, home-made products have to be emphasised and used to attract tourists.

Every branding strategy should begin by the identification of a cluster of fundamental characteristics of local identity. Besides being a province with a great historical past, the Region of Moldavia has also the

benefits of uniting in itself various geographical and cultural zones, each with its unique status. It is probably one of the regions with the greatest tourism potential, having in mind that it is also the home of some of the most famous Romania's vineyards, Cotnari and Odobesti. Thus, media and branding campaigns should be based on the well known advertising strategies, including the internet and television, but also and mostly on the organization of festivals or events that celebrate local wine and food and local tradition and lifestyle. Another strategy would be the advertising of local crafts made visible by the organisation of workshops where tourists can be initiated in the art of pottery, for instance, by local artists.

A remarkable dimension of cultural tourism that holds a particular place in this region is the hospitality of the people, which may become a brand in itself. On many occasions, foreign tourists have appreciated not only the beauty of nature and of traditional ways of life, but also the kindness with which they have been received by the locals. Hospitality may be thus considered a specific feature of local identity and may become a strong point of any advertising and branding strategy.

The World Tourism Organization has elaborated and presented various materials and documents that analyse key topics relating to tourism, including cultural tourism and its forms. For instance, a document that refers to domestic tourism emphasizes the importance of a series of strategic actions that can be taken in order to develop tourism and these statements may be considered applicable in the case of local tourism as well. First of all, it is emphasized that 'There is no magic formula and everything depends on the national and regional context'. Then, several actions are identified as strategies, and special attention is given to the developing and diversifying of the tourist services quality and of the infrastructure, namely the roads and the accommodation. Direct reference is made to the development and improvement of the transport means and roads of access at regional and local level, like the railway network and the network of roads and highways which play a very important role in the choice of a destination. Another key point is the improvement of the accommodation services by creating newer, more original means of accommodation which preserve the local peculiarities of a region. In this sense, actions that can be taken also in the case of cultural tourism are: the development of family-run hotels and chains of independent hotels; the creation of residences where catering is ensured by families; 'original' accommodation - for instance, old buildings that can be made, after their renovation, into rural inns.

The improvement of accommodation services has to be accompanied by strategies that ensure the creation of tourism offices (at

regional and local level) and activities of marketing in which branding and promotion enhance the impact of the image created.

Conclusions

Cultural tourism, in its various forms, including what may be termed as food and wine tourism (in the article also referred to as local cultural tourism) and event-based tourism, can be an important tool and a beneficent force in the process of economic growth at a local level. Romania, in general, and the region of Moldavia, in particular, have a real tourist potential offered not only by their natural beauties of a huge diversity, but also by their unique cultural patrimony that includes millenary customs and traditions, popular costume and crafts, folklore and delicious local meals.

The policies for developing cultural tourism have to be based on the development of both the 'hard' and 'soft components' (Baleanu, Irimie and Ionica 2006) of the tourism industry. The hard elements are the quality of products and services and the creation or improvement of the infrastructure at a regional level, whereas the soft ones are represented by the marketing strategies which have to lead to the creation and promotion of 'destination images' and local brands with a strong impact on the tourism market.

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**IMPACT FACTORS IN ASSIMILATION AND
OPERATIONALIZATION OF THE CONCEPT OF E-GOVERNMENT**

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Abstract

Governments around the world are making significant efforts towards assimilation and operationalization of e-governance. These efforts are not only focused on the digitization process itself, but also on a broader reorganization process of public services and participation processes based on new information technologies. This paper presents in a synthetic manner, contributory factors and barriers in the process of assimilation and operationalization of e-governance platforms in the practice of public entities.

Keywords: e-governance, new information technologies, e-governance platforms

1. Introduction

According to the existing theory, the term ICT is defined primarily through new Internet technologies and their specific applications. But, this concept also includes network technology, databases and electronic flows system which promotes independence and flexibility in time and space. Further, the time and space features have the ability to significantly improve working processes and audience participation or even to completely redesigne them. Thus, e-government refers not only to the provision of public services (e-government), but also to aspects of democracy, because it makes possible the manifestation of new forms of active participation of stakeholders.

2. The maturity of public services

The implementation and upgrading of e-government follow certain routes, maturity levels, stages or phases. Each Government which uses e-government aims at different goals and objectives, the development of these platforms having some unique levels of service maturity. In fact, each of these involves the operationalization of a single model (Holden, Norris and Fletcher 2003), different levels of technological sophistication, various orientations to stakeholders, different types of interaction, specific security requirements and particular redesign processes (Dorner 2009). These levels describe, in fact, a sequential approach to development and progress of online services.

Taking as a starting point the coordinates of conceptual framework of e-government development, many theories have attempted to define the maturity level of online services, such as:

- a service model that is developed by a Government, successively increasing its interactivity and offers it for use of stakeholders while modernizing technological complexity and functional characteristics (Shareef, Kumar, Kumar and Dwivedi 2001);
- the levels of sophistication of e-government in terms of technology, approach aimed at improving the integration of data and applications, as well as extensibility and flexibility;
- a service model whose fundamental objective is to obtain the citizens' satisfaction (Lee and all 2008);
- a model for the renewal of the role of the Government aimed at fundamentally redesigning the services system to generate satisfaction at the level of constituencies - citizens, businesses, public administration (Zhang, Guo, Chen and Chau 2009).

According to these theories it becomes clear that the literature is divided: on the one hand, there are scholars who argue that the maturity of e-government platforms involves only the technological changes and, on the other hand, the authors claiming that the purpose of this process is the stakeholder's satisfaction.

Despite these differences, most researchers (Al-Shehry, Rogerson, Fairweather, Prior, 2006; Chen, Thurmaier, 2005. Kumar et al, 2007) have pointed out that e-government maturity involves more than integrating the new technologies because this process is influenced by many factors, such as: organizational, human, economic, social and cultural, etc.

This perspective provides a solid theoretical basis in the analysis of the structure of e-government because besides the fact that it reflects the nature of government and its responsibility to society (Carter, L., Bélanger, F., 2004), it offers relevant information about factors or barriers in the operationalization of online services in its various stages of development.

3. Accelerating factors and barriers to e-government

Besides the influence of technological factors (integration of new technologies in the efforts to rethink and redesign government), whose influence is widely accepted, in the literature and practice of developed countries there is a debate related to the impact of non-administrative factors in the assimilation and operationalization of e-governance. It is about a wide range of factors, from the politico-administrative and infrastructure to the demographic, social, economic, cultural factors and so

on, whose impact is crucial, both in terms of encouraging potential and that of braking ability of e-government.

The politico-administrative system, seen as a whole (macro level), is one of the most important factors in the process of assimilation and operationalization of the concept of e-government. Political stability and experience in administrative reforms are crucial in the development of e-government platforms. In this sense, the practice in developed countries has shown that the entire procedure of implementation and development of online services is an easy one in those states who have previously completed organizational changes in public structures and in those which enjoy a stable political environment.

Decisive in the process of assimilation and operationalization of e-governance are the values, attitudes and rationality of the population in relation to the political-administrative system. In fact, administrative action models based on openness to stakeholders have the ability to stimulate or brake feed-back, shaping the attitudes and behaviour of the population. There are many situations in which there is a risk that online services may not be accepted by the population; there may be certain deficiencies in law enforcement, poor outward orientation or underdevelopment of the levers of interaction and communication with stakeholders. For example, when integrating in the online system services like the payment of fines, if the platform does not allow real interaction with stakeholders, there is a high risk of rejection of this service is high. Moreover, in the present instance, citizens can motivate online service rejection by the desire to negotiate with government officials or to defend their position.

In the specialty literature the influences exercised by the politico-administrative system over the development of e-governance are highlighted by various authors. In this sense, it can be mentioned an article proposed in 2005 by Vassilakis, Lepouras, Fraser Haston and Georgiadis. These authors mention a number of politico-administrative factors that have the potential to facilitate the offer of online services or to slow this process; it is about the existence of a coherent legal framework favorable to work for the adoption of laws, regulations and appropriate directives.

The existence of a legal framework is essential for the success of e-government, exerting a direct impact on the assimilation of online services in government organizations (Gasco 2005).

The literature in the field (Ozturk, Swiss, 2008; Shih, Kraemer and Dedrick 2007) mentions instances where administrative factors constitute real barriers to assimilation and operationalization of e-government platforms, namely: lack of adequate business models, unjustified costs of e-government, complex policies, lack of monitoring methods, lack of qualified personnel, lack of cooperation, the existence of a highly

bureaucratic system based on strict hierarchy; traditional organizational culture, size of governments etc.

Elements of infrastructure and connectivity represent another significant factor that influences the development process of e-government. They have the ability to generate high levels of inequality between states. The reduced rate of penetration of Internet and low level access of the population to computers are factors that hinder the process of assimilation and operationalization of e-governance in the developing states.

Moreover, there are cases that reveal the existence of inequalities even within a state. For example, in Africa, according to research studies conducted in recent years (Nakafeero 2005), young people, especially men, use the Internet more often, so the result is a one-sided concentration which favours further systematic exclusion from online services of women and of those from lower social classes.

The gap between the countries of the world, through the rate of assimilation and use of new information and communication technologies can be also explained by means of cultural elements such as power distance (Erumban, The Jong 2006) and uncertainty avoidance (Straub, Loch and Hill 2001). Cultural elements specific to each state directly influence both the level of accessibility (Carter and Weerakkody 2008) and population IT skills (Mao and Palva 2006). In other words, there are a number of technological barriers that are associated with the user. It is the cultural elements that may adversely affect attitude towards online services, namely: lack of information, lack of confidence regarding privacy, language differences and multiculturalism, maintenance costs, technological competence and not least the lack of accessibility. This list can be extended, according to Gilbert, Balestrini and Littleboy with other potential predictors of use of e-government, namely: trust barriers, financial security, quality of information, and the benefits in terms of time and savings of the adoption of e-government platforms (Gilbert, Balestrini and Littleboy 2004).

The low availability of new information and communication technologies and the high standards of infrastructure required by them and which are absolutely necessary to implement, the development and use of online services can constitute real barriers in operationalization of e-government platforms.

Along the same lines, mention can be made of the article by Shih, Kraemer and Dedrick (2007) identifying potential technological barriers in the way of operational platforms of e-government. According to these authors, closed economy, excessive size of government and lower levels of education are factors that may explain the low level of IT investment in developing countries.

The influence of tertiary education in the adoption of new information and communication technologies and in widely disseminating online services is sustained by many authors (Kiiski and Pohjola 2002; Boyer-Wright and Kottemann 2009). According to them, education has the ability to ensure cognitive consistency and build skills needed for large-scale use of new information and communication technologies.

Relevant in making the e-government platforms operational are social and demographic factors, at least in terms of the acceptance and usability of online services. Age, gender, education, income distribution, linguistic diversity and the percentage of population living in rural areas are key factors in shaping behaviour.

Percentage of population living in rural areas is particularly relevant in the proposed analytical approach because highlights barriers for the development of e-government platforms; the poverty, the level of illiteracy and lack or poor development of infrastructure in rural areas explains the inadequate development of platforms of e-Government for developing states. If we refer to the case of Romania, where approximately 46% of the population is located in rural areas, the development of e-government becomes explicable.

This inequality between urban and rural areas in terms of application of online services is sometimes present even in the case of developed countries. Although their infrastructure for access to new technology is developed in rural areas, compared to developing states, the reason for the low use of online services is the fact that the inhabitants of these areas require additional training to overcome access problems (Sorj and Guedes 2005).

The gap between urban and rural areas in terms of access to online services has been sustained since 1977 by Michael Lipton. According to his theory, called "urban orientation", the factor favouring the widening gap between metropolitan and rural areas is the political system. The idea was taken up later (1987), and Elsenhans mentioned "corrupt politicians prefer to spend scarce resources on urban infrastructure and prestige items, instead of providing basic services to the rural population" (Elsenhans, H., 1987). Elsenhans also claims that at the state level, the maturity of e-government platforms is achieved only when online services are available and accessible in the poorest groups of the population.

To support his theory, Elsenhans proposes a structure of online services for the poor, known as "pro-poor services". According to this, the starting point in the development of e-government platforms consists of a coherent approach to segmentation of the poor, to identify all target groups likely to use these services. The approach is imperative if we consider that the information needs and expectations regarding public services are

different in the urban population compared to the poor rural areas. For example, poor farmers need services and different information compared to disadvantaged urban population. Subsequently, the approach proposed by Elsenhans involves the development of services for these target groups to improve the responsiveness of governments to the problems specific to each group of stakeholders.

The economic development is also a relevant factor in the operationalization of e-governance structures. Incorporating new technologies of communication and information within activities of the public entities require significant investment. In this context, at the level of those countries in which GDP per capita is very low, such investments are often subject to delays or to an insufficient development. Obviously, there are situations where the development of e-government platforms is supported by external funding sources, such as donations or EU funds.

Low level of economic development impact is felt in terms of access to online services of the population. The population of developing states in which income per capita is very low, cannot afford Internet access. This reality is compounded often by a failure in the liberalization of the telecommunications market (Osiakwan 2004), which involves access costs much higher than in industrialized countries. The existence of external service providers and economic liberalization in general, are essential prerequisites for the development of e-government, at least in terms of its operationalization.

The analysis proposed in this section cannot miss the influence of the socio-cultural factors on assimilation and operationalization of the concept of e-government. According to its supporters (Ma, Chung, and Thorson 2005), the theory of the influence of socio-cultural factors on the development of e-government involves consideration of a range of elements, namely: motivations for the implementation of e-government platforms, the amending power, positions and roles following implementation of the new system, resistance to change etc..

A study by Carter and Weerakkody in 2008 over the e-government systems in the UK and USA, revealed that cultural factors are essential to the adoption of online services. According to these authors “there are many situations where e-government programs are not sustainable in terms of political and institutional aspects due to human, management and cultural factors”.

In the same direction, developing state practice showed that, motivated by their own cultural values and practices, many government leaders use e-government platforms to accelerate the decentralization of public administration and / or to increase the government's ability to oversee key activities. In fact the long-lasting system of values is the one

that dictates both the motivations for implementing e-government platforms and their role in society - interior oriented such as the aforementioned (decentralization and control) or outside orientation (the active involvement of stakeholders in the democratic process).

The same idea of the decisive influence exercised by the value system on the development of online services is stated by Boyer-Wright and Kottemann (2009) who consider that “unlike economic prosperity, which is an important factor in the development of e-government platforms, but not limited to, the culture of a country is essential engine that can propagate or prevent it from achieving global competitiveness in ICT.”

At the same time, the literature offers a toolkit to quantify the potential of development of e-government platforms under the impact of cultural factors. Thus, following a study conducted over ten years, known in the literature under the name of Globe House (2004), it has been proposed to examine culture in two dimensions: one analysis from the perspective of the value system and one through the cultural practices. Thus, nine cultural dimensions have been identified: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, future orientation, institutional collectivism, collectivism at group level, humanity orientation, performance orientation, gender equality, aggressive attitude (House, R. J, Hanges, P.J, Javidan, M., Dorfman, P.W, Gupta, V., 2004), each of nine dimension being measured in terms of values and cultural practices.

If cultural values are characterized by resistance to change and they do not provide a foundation for economic development based on secondary values, cultural practices can become forecast factors for phenomena such as the variation in terms of availability of the assimilation and operationalization of e-governance.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the culture of a state, seen globally, can facilitate or hinder the adoption of e-government and required IT infrastructure, as well as the political, social and economic progress which are meant to facilitate e-governance. Therefore, both the cultural characteristics of providers of e-government, in this case public administration, and value system of users (citizens, businesses, other governments) are likely to influence the extent to which online services are running and accepted in society.

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THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF E-GOVERNANCE PLATFORMS IN
EUROPE: THE GAP BETWEEN DEVELOPED AND DEVELOPING
COUNTRIES

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Abstract

In the last decade, the phenomenon of e-government in Europe has become a viable alternative in the provision of public services. Despite high interest for the assimilation approach and the operationalization of e-governance platforms, Europe is still fragmented in two categories of states. On the one hand, the developed countries are in the e-governance stage which has reached its maturity (single points of for services delivery and orientation toward citizens). On the other hand, there the transition economies which are still in the stage of recognition of the potential benefits of this new system. Based on global and European studies provided by authorized bodies, this paper aims to present Romania's position in relation to the rest of the Europe in terms of the development of online public services.

Keywords: e-government, online public services, operationalization of e-governance platforms

1. Introduction

Currently, most European countries have embraced e-government platforms, but many of them, especially developing countries focus on mere presence in the online environment (front office stage) with a very low impact of efficiency (Irani, Love and Jones 2008) and cost indicators (Weerakkody and Dhillon 2008). In fact, in this phase, the changes that occur are imposed by internal and external integration of new information and communication technologies, which implies further substantiation and implementation of complex programs of innovation (Beynon-Davies and Martin, 2004) and radical changes in administrative procedures regarding political, fiscal, social, strategic and organizational issues (Weerakkody, Janssen and Dwivedi 2011).

2. Impact factors in the operationalization of e-governance platforms

Literature and specialty practice provide numerous studies that try to identify the reasons that led to poor uptake and implementation of e-government platforms in emerging economies.

One such study was conducted by Rabaiah and Vandijck in 2009 and revealed as the main factor for the poor development of electronic governance the lack of a strategic framework (Rabaiah and Vandijck 2009). The same idea has also been highlighted in research by Zara and Ghapanchi (2008) and United Nations (2010), stating that despite the efforts made by governments in developing countries, the progress in the provision of electronic services is insignificant.

Other studies considered the management style as an obstacle to the progress of platforms of e-government in the developing countries (Roztocki and Weistroffer 2008; Kuhlénbrück, Meyer and KE Hitt, MA, 2003). This consideration appears as valid, given the fact that for most of the Central and Eastern European countries, the remains of centralized government had a significant impact in terms of the capacity to reconstruct the economy on the principles of knowledge society.

Poor operationalization of e-governance platforms in the developing states is also caused by the low interest for innovation and research approaches. Studies between 2005-2007, on developing states, show that another factor that has hindered the progress in the operationalization of e-governance is the poor orientation of research towards the new information and communication technologies (Arogyaswamy and Koziol 2005), in favour of traditional areas like chemistry and physics.

Some studies also reveal, as deterrent factors in the progress of e-government, the wrong use of ICT strategic models implemented by developed countries and the lack of a coherent policy framework. In this regard mention must be made of a study by Roztocki and Weistroffer in 2007 which shows that the strategic models and tools related to the process of e-government in the developed countries cannot be applied to transition countries (Roztocki, Weistroffer, Monar and Nasirin 2007). Despite its value, the results of this study have been seriously questioned in the specialty literature. On the one hand, we can find theories that deny the veracity of this information. These theories sustain the universality of information and communication technologies and their adaptability to any economy, regardless of the level of development (Weerakkody and Dhillon 2008). On the other hand, we can find a study by Carter and Weerakkody (2008) which states the impossibility of ignoring differences in economic,

cultural and political areas, between the developed and developing countries, as well as the barriers posed by the digital gap.

The author who provides a compromise solution for these debates is Hovelja (2008). He proposes for the governments of developing countries a two dimensions approach for the implementation of e-government platforms: first, the diagnosis of the current situation from the perspective of private factors influencing the uptake and operationalization of e-governance platforms (to identify specific coordinates of their system); second, rigorous selectivity to deploy ICT solutions in order to avoid possible inoperability situations.

Regardless of their perspective, the above mentioned studies converge towards a common point, namely the need for a coherent strategy and a unitary vision regarding e-government processes. In this sense, specialized literature and practice provides various stages of the action to be followed towards implementing e-government in the developing countries:

- Lowery (2001) proposes a four stages action plan: 1. a clear definition of e-government to provide pertinent information regarding the areas of interest and potential categories of stakeholders 2. one understandable vision that express in a succinct way the concept and action plan for e-government 3. pinpointing specific targets that can be easily quantified and observed 4. identifying the policies and procedures that support the process of e-government.
- Starting from the various e-government models used in developed countries, Holmes (2001) suggests five steps to operationalize the plan, namely: 1. transfer all information and public services in the online environment 2. enabling stakeholder access to information and electronic services 3. continuous improvement of electronic service delivery capacity in terms of organizational structure, 4. operationalization of interoperable teams 5. eliminating barriers in making use of e-government platforms.

3. Romania's position in terms of development of e-government platforms

Beyond the above considerations, the differences between developed and developing economies in terms of operationalization of e-government platforms can be highlighted through statistical indicators. According to the latest available data supplied by the United Nations in the year 2012, the regional scores on the development of e-government platforms worldwide revealed the dominance of Europe (Figure 1.1), with

an index of development of e-governance of 0.7188, followed by the USA (0.5403) and Asia (0.4992).

The index of development of e-government platforms used by the United Nations is a composite indicator that quantifies the government's willingness and ability to use information and communication technologies for the provision of electronic services. The index is based on a comprehensive analysis of the presence in the online environment of the 193 countries, assessing the technical characteristics of portals, the policies and strategies applied to both global e-government at the national level and in different sectors of public interest.

Mathematically, this indicator is a weighted average of three normalized scores, based on the most important dimensions of e-government, namely: the scope and quality of online services, the state of development of the telecommunications infrastructure and human capital development. These three indicators are, in turn, compounds indexes.

The index for the first indicator - electronic services - is a weighted average of the opinions regarding online services in relation to the four stages of implementing e-government platforms (the presence in the online environment - the dissemination of information; interaction stage - information and downloaded documents, transaction stage - filling online forms, online payment etc., stage of integration - intra and inter-organizational services, active participation of citizens).

The index of the second indicator - the development of communications infrastructure - is a weighted average composed of five indicators: the number of internet users per 100 people, number of fixed telephone lines per 100 inhabitants, number of mobile telephone subscribers per 100 people, number of fixed Internet subscriptions per 100 people, number of wireless Internet subscribers per 100 people.

The index of the third indicator - human capital - is a weighted average composed of two indicators: adult literacy rate and gross primary, secondary and tertiary enrollment rate.

In addition to these three indicators there are other 2 categories:

- E-participation index (utilization of electronic services) which in turn consists of e-information (utilization of on-line information), e-consultation (interaction with stakeholders), e-decision (involving interested parties in governance).
- Environment Index.

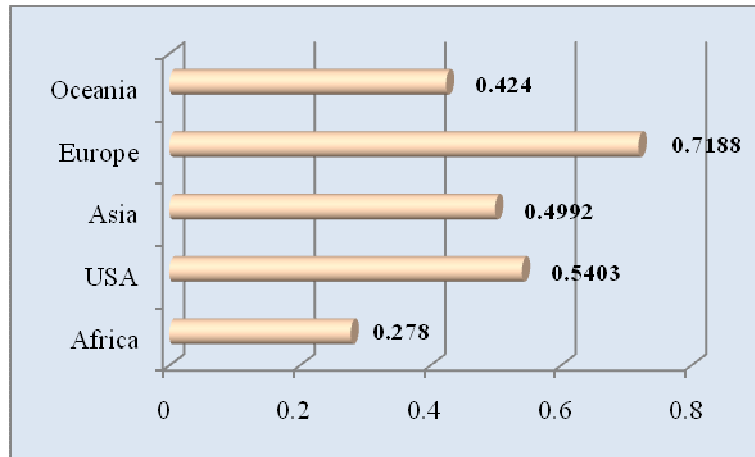


Figure 1.1. Indexes of e-government development in global regions
 Source: United Nations - *E-government Survey 2012. E-government for the people*,
 Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2012

Regarding the development level of e-government in the European regions, Western Europe occupies a dominant position (index 0.8142), closely followed by the Northern countries with 0.8046 (Figure No. 1.2.). Despite this ranking, as shown in Figure No. 1.3., the most accelerated growth of e-governance development in the period 2010-2012 was recorded by countries of the South (+18.11%), followed by Eastern countries (+16.22%) . This trend indicates both interest and efforts of the Eastern countries to accelerate the implementation of e-governance.

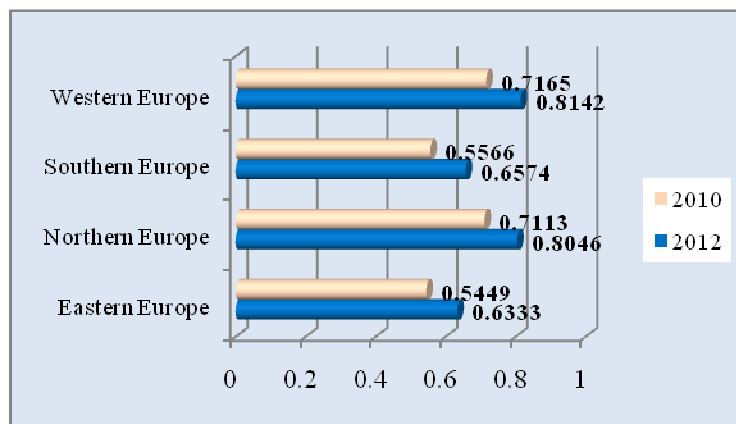


Figure 1.2. Indexes of e-government development in European regions

Source: United Nations - *E-government Survey 2012. E-government for the people*,
 Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2012

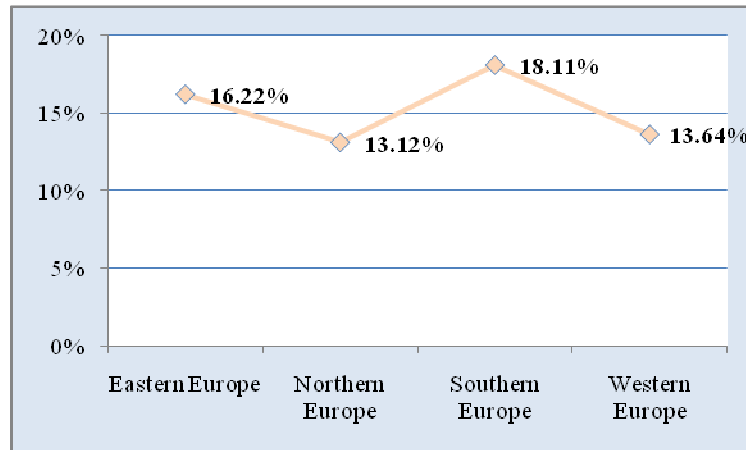


Figure 1.3. The dynamics of the development process of e-government by region (2012/2010)

Source: United Nations - *E-government Survey 2012. E-government for the people*,
 Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2012

At a European level, according to the index value of e-government development recorded in 2012, the level of maturity has been reached by the following countries: Netherlands, UK, Denmark, France, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland and Germany (Figure 1.4). Moreover, according to data from the United Nations, the Netherlands, UK and Denmark occupy positions 2, 3 and 4 in the world ranking.

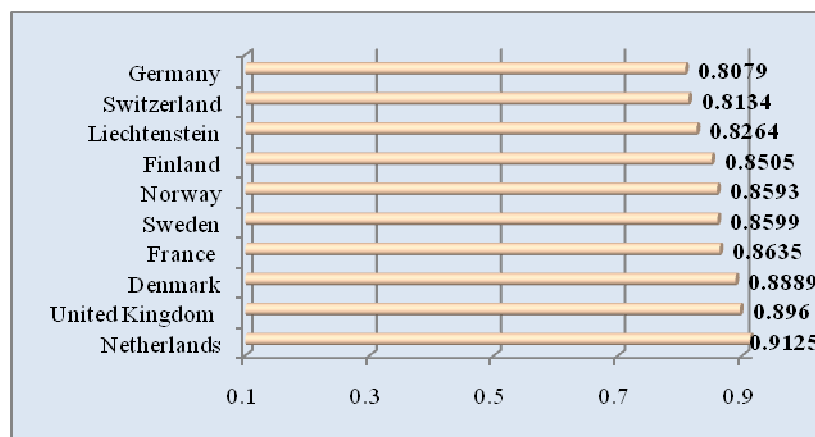


Figure 1.4. Top 10 Indexes of the development of e-government in Europe

Source: United Nations - *E-government Survey 2012. E-government for the people*,
 Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2012

From the perspective of the dynamics of the development of e-government (Figure 1.5), the highest increases were registered in Liechtenstein (+23.45%) and Finland (22.08%). From 2010 on, significant changes have taken place in countries like the UK and Finland.

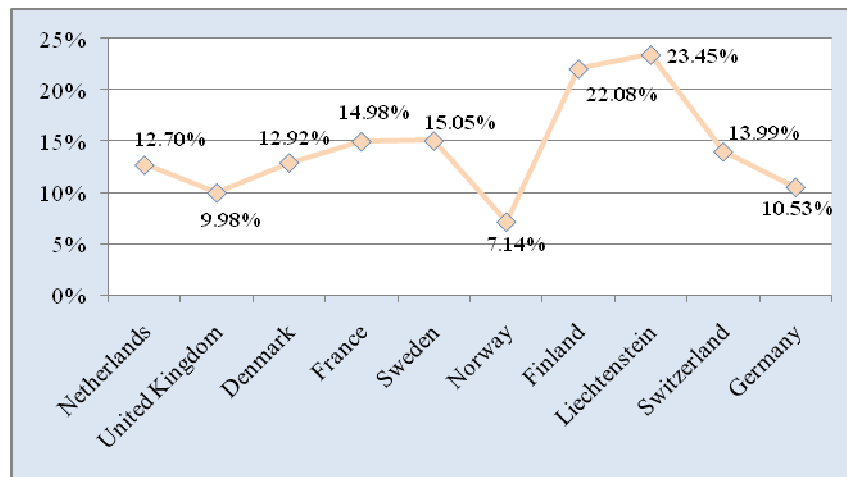


Figure 1.5. The dynamics of the development process of e-government in the top 10 countries in Europe (2012/2010)

Source: United Nations - *E-government Survey 2012. E-government for the people*,
 Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2012

Compared with other European countries placed in top 10, economically developed and in terms of implementation of e-government platforms, the economies in transition, located mainly in Eastern Europe, occupy a modest position in European and world ranking. In 2012, as it can be seen in Figure 1.6., in Eastern Europe the best position was occupied by Russia (index of 0.7345), closely followed by Hungary (index of 0.7201).

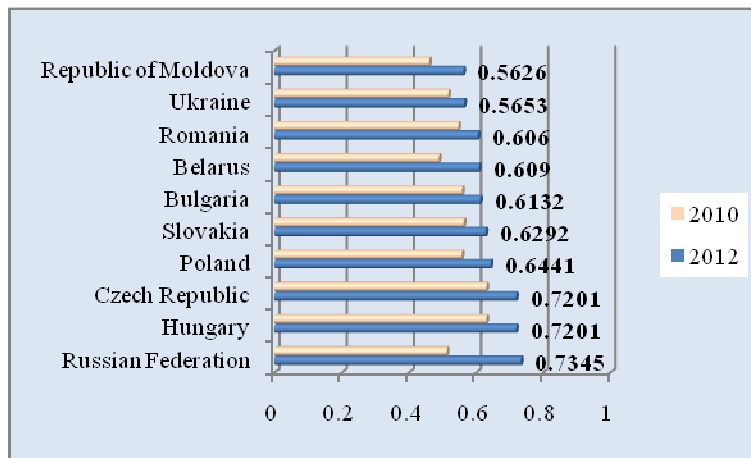


Figure 1.6. Indexes of e-government development in Eastern Europe
 Source: United Nations - *E-government Survey 2012. E-government for the people*,
 Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2012

In the light of new developments, between 2010-2012, most East European countries have registered improvements in the development for e-governance. In fact, as shown in Figure 1.7., increases have been substantial, Russia being in top (+43.01%) winning 32 places in world ranking positions (from position 59 in 2010 to position 27 in 2012). Significant increases have been also recorded by Belarus (24 295) and Moldova (+22.01%).

With the development of e-government index of 0.6060, Romania occupied in 2012 the 8th place in the ranking of Eastern European countries and the position 62 in the world rankings, fifteen places down, as compared with 2010, when Romania was ranked 47.

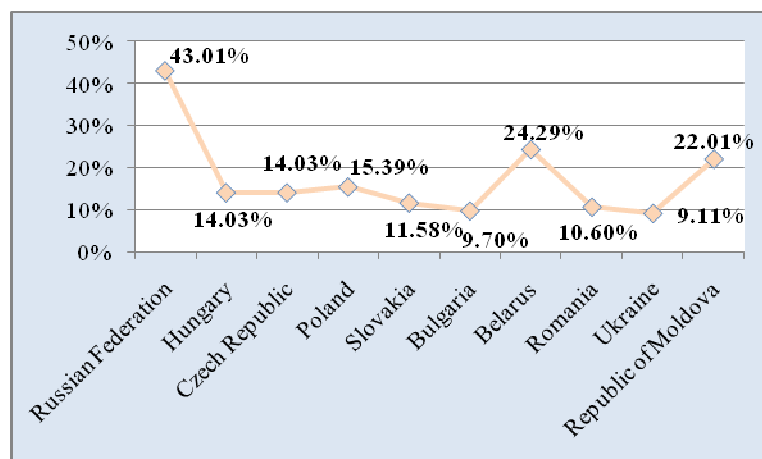


Figure 1.7. The dynamics of the development process of e-government in the states of Eastern Europe (2012/2010)

Source: United Nations - *E-government Survey 2012. E-government for the people*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2012

To highlight the existing gap in terms of e-government among developing and developed states we will present an analysis of the main areas of differentiation. In this regard, two countries were considered in the analysis: the United Kingdom, developed country, ranked 3 in the world ranking of e-government development, and Romania, developing state, the occupant of the 62nd position.

For the major components of the index of development of e-government, as shown in Figure 1.8, the major differences come from the implementation capacity of online services and the development of infrastructure necessary for the operation of e-government platforms. In fact, these differences come to back up those theories claiming that the development of a country is one of the decisive factors of the process of assimilation and operationalization of e-governance. On the other hand, the small difference between the 2 countries in terms of human capital components reveals the significant investments made in human resources in developing countries through the European support programs.

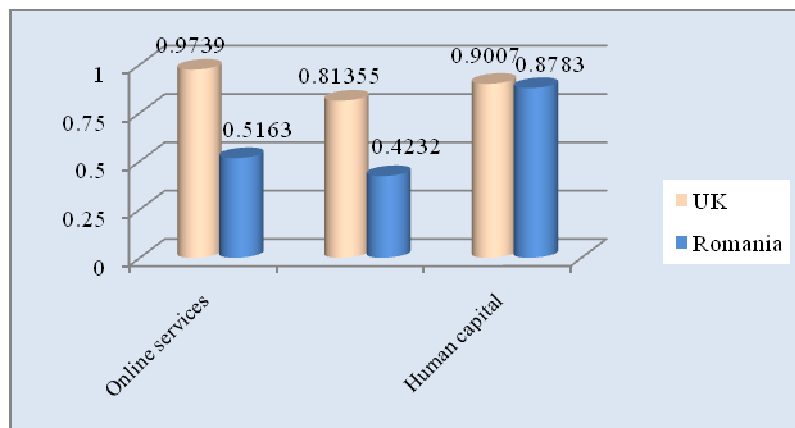


Figure 1.8. Comparisons between United Kingdom and Romania on major components of the index in terms of e-government development

Source: United Nations - *E-government Survey 2012. E-government for the people*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2012

The assimilation and operationalization of the concept of e-governance, measured by the stages of development of online services, as

shown in Figure 1.9, proves the degree of maturity reached by the United Kingdom, and that of the increase in Romania's case.

Great Britain is in the stage of radical transformation, which involves reconfiguring internal structures and rethinking traditional processes for full integration of e-government platforms (stage IV - intra and inter-organizational integration phase). This step involves the adoption of new ICT systems.

On the other hand, Romania is in the phase of minor transformations involving: the presence in the online environment in order to improve the process of informing stakeholders, an average level of interaction in order to improve communication with stakeholders; low presence of transaction. From the perspective of the stages model of e-government development, Romania is still in the interaction phase, without to be fully integrated (64%).

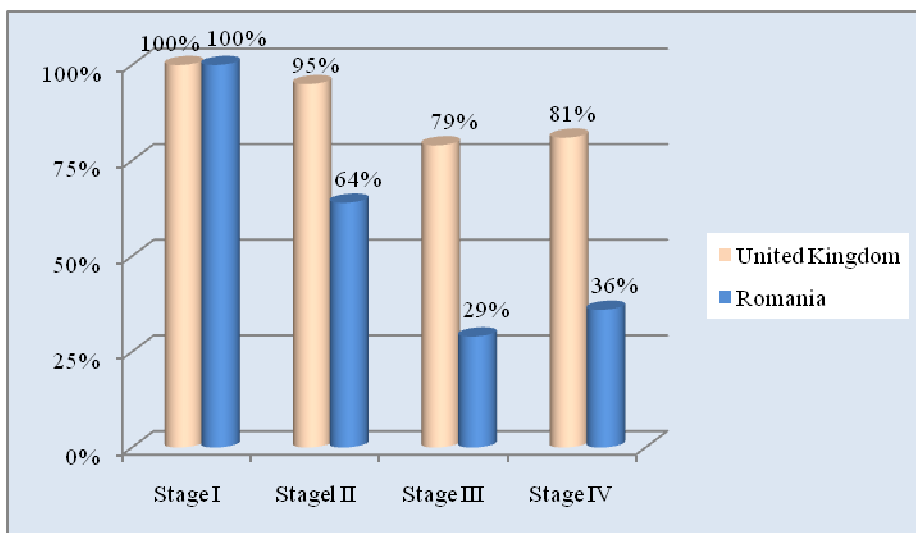


Figure 1.9. Comparisons between United Kingdom and Romania in terms of online services component

Source: United Nations - *E-government Survey 2012. E-government for the people*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2012

An examination of Figure 1.9 reveals the following aspects:

- both UK and Romania have fully operationalized the first phase of e-government - information phase (presence in the online environment);

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- If in the United Kingdom, 95% of institutions have assimilated the interaction phase, in Romania there are still many entities whose platform does not allow interaction with stakeholders. In fact, their platform is only a simple information portal;
- 75% of UK public institutions portals allow services and conducting transactions in online environment while in Romania only 29% of public platforms allow bi-directional interaction;
- intra and inter-organizational integration is operationalized in a proportion of 81% in the UK and 36% in Romania.

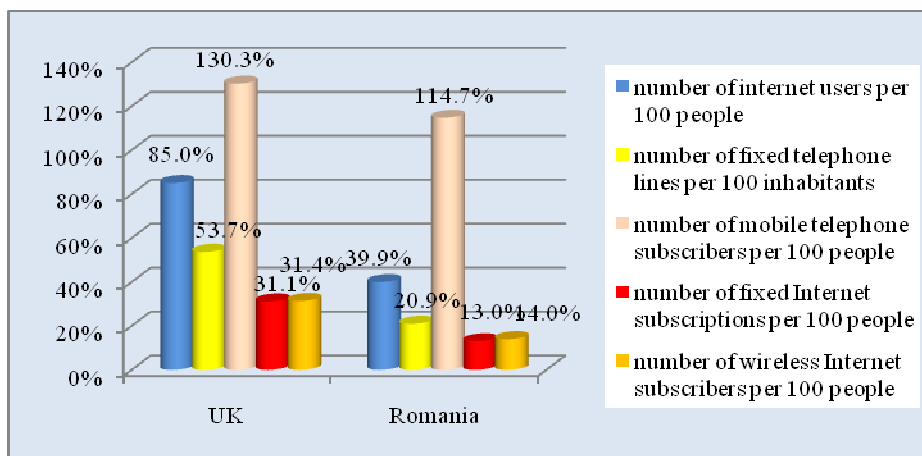


Figure 1.10. Comparisons between United Kingdom and Romania in terms of telecommunications infrastructure component

Source: United Nations - *E-government Survey 2012. E-government for the people*, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York, 2012

In terms of coordinates that facilitate operationalization of e-governance platforms, and thus stakeholder access to them, there are significant discrepancies between the UK and Romania. As shown in Figure 1.10, the penetration of Internet access (number of connections per 100 inhabitants) reached in the UK the ceiling of 85%, while in Romania was only 39.9%. The only indicator for which there are low differences between the two states is penetration rate of mobile access (number of mobile phone subscriptions per 100 inhabitants); about 130.3% in the UK and 114.7% in Romania.

In 2012 in Romania, it may be observed the population's orientation toward wireless Internet access networks (14%) at the expense of fixed (13%).

Conclusions

At the end of our analysis, we can conclude that the process of assimilation and operationalization of the concept of e-government is extremely complex, being under the impact of a wide range of influencing factors.

Each of the governments operationalizes the e-government with different goals and objectives, the development of these platforms going at some unique levels of service maturity. In fact, each of these involves the operationalization of a single model, different levels of technological sophistication, and various orientations toward stakeholders, different types of interaction, specific safety requirements and obviously private redesign processes. These levels describe in fact a sequential approach to development and maturation of online services.

While Romania has made significant progress in the operationalization of e-governance platforms, arguments in this sense is both structural and legislative changes made and good practice indicators registered global and in Europe, its path towards a maturity of online public services is a long one.

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