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## Digital Civic Activism in Romania: Framing anti-Chevron Online Protest Community «Faces»

### Activismo cívico digital en Rumanía: La comunidad de Facebook en las protestas on-line contra Chevron

**Dra. Camelia Cmeciu**

Associate Professor at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies, University of Bucharest (Romania) (cmeciu75@gmail.com) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5533-8274>)

**Dra. Cristina Coman**

Full Professor at the Faculty of Journalism and Communication Studies, University of Bucharest (Romania) (cristinacomman2004@yahoo.com) (<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9803-7033>)

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#### Abstract

This article presents the results of a quantitative analysis of two Romanian Facebook communities' self-presentations during the online and offline anti-fracking protests in Romania. In 2013 Romanians started to protest against the gas exploration of the US giant Chevron in the village of Pungești. The online and offline Pungești Resistance Movement turned within one month from a rural to a national mobilization tool meant to help the Romanian peasants affected by the proposed shale gas exploration operations of Chevron. Since the online engagement desired to finally turn into an offline participation is highly dependent on the informing practice, we consider that a framing analysis of the Facebook posts will reflect whether they are culturally compatible and relevant for the protesters. Using the framing theory in social movements as our theoretical background, we provided a comparative content analysis of two Romanian Facebook communities' postings (October, 2013 - February, 2014). We focused on identifying the verbal and visual framing devices and the main collective action frames used for the shaping of the online communities' collective identity. The findings revealed a dominance of «land struggle» as a collective action frame followed by «conflict» and «solidarity» and a salience of photos and video files used as framing devices of cultural relevance for Romanian protesters and of evidence of offline anti-fracking activism in Romania.

#### Resumen

Este artículo presenta los resultados del análisis cuantitativo de las auto-representaciones de dos comunidades rumanas en Facebook durante las protestas on-line y off-line en contra del «fracking» en Rumanía. En 2013 los rumanos comenzaron a protestar contra las explotaciones de gas del gigante energético norteamericano Chevron en la aldea de Pungești. Este movimiento de resistencia pasó, en poco más de un mes, de ser una herramienta de movilización rural a una de alcance nacional cuyo objetivo era ayudar a los campesinos afectados por las explotaciones de gas planificadas por Chevron. Dado que el óptimo grado de implicación on-line para pasar a una participación off-line depende mucho de las prácticas informativas, consideramos que un análisis de textos publicados en Facebook reflejará si éstos son compatibles y relevantes para los manifestantes. Nuestra premisa teórica está basada en la teoría del encuadre en movimientos sociales e informa nuestro análisis de contenido comparativo de los textos de dos comunidades ruma-



nas de Facebook desde octubre de 2013 hasta febrero de 2014. En el trabajo se identifican las estrategias de encuadre verbal y visual, y los marcos de acción colectiva utilizados para formar la identidad de estas comunidades on-line. Los resultados obtenidos muestran el predominio de «la lucha por la tierra» como principal marco de acción colectiva, seguido del «conflicto» y la «solidaridad», e indican la preeminencia de fotos y archivos de vídeo como recursos de encuadre de relevancia cultural y como pruebas del activismo fuera de Internet en contra del «fracking» en Rumanía.

## Keywords/ Palabras clave

Protestas on-line, teoría del encuadre, encuadres de la acción colectiva, dispositivos de encuadre, lucha por la tierra, conflicto, solidaridad.

Online protest, framing, collective action frames, framing devices, land struggle, conflict, solidarity.

## 1. Introduction

Cyber-protests as «extensions of a social movement into a new media space» (Zimbra & al., 2010: 49) are mainly linked to political protest movements or to social protests of minorities or marginalized groups. Lately digital activist groups have also protested against corporations either to claim a reduction in the influence of corporations on politics (Occupy Wall Street movement) or to stop oil companies from oil drilling (the Lego and Greenpeace «Save the Arctic» community or the oil subsidy removal protests in Nigeria). In 2013 the Romanian Government's decision to pursue Chevron's hydraulic fracturing in a Romanian village was the opportunity factor which triggered cyber-protests. The anti-fracking protests reveal that Romanian citizens have gradually started to build a protest culture. We will place the analysis of the online social movement against Chevron in Romania within the theoretical context of framing processes because the online protesters used Facebook posts as a means of shaping and generating «collective action frames» (Benford & Snow, 2000) through which they succeeded in informing and mobilizing other Romanian citizens

This study of the Romanian anti-fracking online protests has a twofold objective: (a) to provide a comparative analysis of the framing devices and of the collective action frames used by two Romanian online communities in their presentation of the anti-fracking movement; (b) to determine the visual and verbal categories used by these communities for the most dominant collective action frames.

### 1.1. Insights into protests 2.0

The social media supporting protest movements provide the benefits of quickly and cheaply mobilizing a wide audience, overcoming geographical distance or of pluralism of information (Passini, 2012; Soengas, 2013). Cyber-activism turns common people into «netizens» (Franklin, 2010) who become important members of a civic engagement community with a minimal participation. The rise of social networks (Facebook) as sites of digital civic activism allows the shaping of a collective identity since the SNS users are united by a common bond, sharing the same grievances concerning a political, social, educational or cultural issue. Mercea (2012: 155) identifies «digital prefigurative participation» as «a specific genre of digital participation in activism». Formed of three distinct levels (mobilization, identity-building, organizational transformation), «digital prefigurative participation» is prior to offline social movement engagement and involves the interaction of individuals through computer-mediated communication.

Within the process of identity-building, the online communities favor the development of «the new social movements» (Diani, 2003), whose features are decentralization, dynamism, the lack of a formal hierarchy, and a group of participants identifying themselves with the movement's perspectives and objectives. Castells (2012) states that online communities construct themselves through a process of autonomous communication. Thus the cyber-protest communities create a new public



space, labeled by Castells as «a space of autonomy», which is the networked space between the digital and the urban space. Within this new hybrid space of freedom, the online affordances allow a trajectory from outrage to hope and finally to action. This last behavioral component of protests 2.0 should not restrict itself to the offline mobilizing actions. The research (Schultz, 2008; Petray, 2011; Castells, 2012) shows that protests 2.0 become effective if they occupy an urban space, by creating an external site, where the online community members may meet when they want to become more involved in the movement. Although the publicly open structure of Facebook provides a high degree of self-presentation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), it is not designed to activism and it provides false consensus and conformism (Schultz, 2008; Passini, 2012). The opaqueness of dedication levels may be counterbalanced by linking online and offline tactics and by creating real-world actions (Schultz, 2008). Passini (2012) agrees that the social networks are the engines of the latest Facebook and Twitter revolutions, but he also emphasizes that the online protest movements should adopt offline civil resistance techniques in order to bring some social changes.

## 1.2. Digital civic activism in Romania

After the 1989 revolution, Romania has been going through a transition period from communism to democracy which has not led to not lead to a high level of post-communist civic engagement (Bădescu et al., 2004; Mercea, 2012). There are two main reasons for Romanians' lack of trust in civic associations (Bădescu et al., 2004): (1) the economic gain that many NGOs set up by entrepreneurs seem to pursue, and (2) the establishing of such NGOs by political parties as a screen to illegally raise campaign funds.

Although the Romanian NGOs claim that they are the citizens' voice and although the budget cuts and all sorts of austerity driven reforms may have been the triggers of social movements in Romania (Presadă, 2012), Romanians have not been very active protesters against the government by January 2012. «The protests in January were a lesson given by the un-organized civil society to the organized civil society» (Presadă, 2012) since the citizens spontaneously gathered themselves without any support of the organized civil society. We consider that the protests in January 2012 were a turning point for Romanians' civic engagement. Protesting against the President Băsescu's proposal to reform the healthcare system and against the resignation of the Romanian Secretary of State for Health (Raed Arafat), Romanians used Facebook communities to organize themselves. The 2012 protests in the University Square in Bucharest were important for the development of digital civic activism in Romania for three main reasons: (1) they were the first social movements where Facebook was used as a tool to mobilize citizens; (2) the offline site (University Square) was used as the reference point of protesters' meeting for other uprisings, such as protests against the Anti Counterfeiting Trade Agreement and against fracking; (3) they constituted the social movements with immediate institutional changes, such as Raed Arafat's re-instatement, resignation of the Government and of the public TV station news director.

One year later, the January 2012 protest was followed by the social movement against the gas exploration of the US giant Chevron in the village of Pungești (Vaslui county, North-East Romania). These protests against fracking initiatives should be included in an international context of social movements against Chevron. In 2012 Polish villagers from Zurawlow succeeded in blocking the US company's intention to drill but one year later the company filed a civil lawsuit against the villagers claiming that they had violated its lawful right to access the site. Since 2013 Argentinians have been protesting against Chevron after the government allowed the company to drill more than 100 wells.

In 2010 the Romanian government and Chevron signed an agreement which stipulated that Chevron would own more than two million acres of land in Romania. On October 3 2013, Chevron obtained all the necessary authorizations to start the shale gas explorations in the village of Pungești. Romania's decision to pursue the hydraulic fracturing whereas some other European countries



(France, Germany, Bulgaria) refused, was the opportunity factor triggering the offline Romanian villagers' uprising and the Romanian citizens' cyber-protests.

On October 12, the first Facebook community, Pungești-TV was created. Two days later the Romanian newspapers presented the protests of 150 villagers who occupied the road leading to Chevron's construction site. Then almost 500 protesters gathered at the University Square in Bucharest, as a sign of solidarity with the Pungești villagers. They protested against the Romanian government, the public TV station and the Minister of Public Affairs, calling them thieves and trying to mobilize more protesters. On October 23, the second Facebook community (Pungești-Resistance) was created. As Merca (2012) and Garrett (2006) highlight, identity building in the online communities is essential for digital participation. The logo created by community members and posted as profile pictures constituted a means of uniting the online participants. The Pungești-Resistance community used the image of a bull destroying a well as a connotative representation of protesters. The bull with horns having the colours of the Romanian flag has a historical significance. The bull's head is represented on the flag and coat of arms of Moldavia (the region where the protests took place). The use of the bull as the logo of this online community is appropriate since it may provide a high level of cultural identification among members due to its historical connotation. Throughout the following months, more citizens from Romanian cities joined the movement at the offline site (The Resistance Camp of Pungești). The two locations external to Facebook (University Square in Bucharest and the Resistance Camp of Pungești) show that the anti-fracking protests 2.0 in Romania have become an integrated part of the overarching social movement, which Petray (2011) considers essential for any successful protest. An issue which may have seemed local (anti-fracking protests in the village of Pungești) has gradually been framed into a national one (Romanians against hydraulic fracturing), turning into an uprising against the Romanian governmental and presidential corruption (Coman & Cmeciu, 2014). The online events reflect the concept of «digital prefigurative participation» (Mercea, 2012) since they triggered the presence of protesters offline. The online and offline protests brought an immediate change: Chevron stopped its search for shale gas in the village of Pungesti.

### 1.3. Protests and collective action framing

The new values and goals produced through social movements trigger a change within the institutions of a society since these institutions should create «new forms to organize social life» (Castells, 2012: 9). Thus protesters turn into «social movement entrepreneurs» (Noakes & Johnston, 2005). By selectively punctuating and encoding events, experiences and sequences of actions, protesters become signifying agents of meaning construction (Snow & Benford, 1992). They generate, elaborate and diffuse what Benford and Snow (2000) identify as «collective action frames». To resonate with social movement participants' common and shared values and beliefs, collective action frames should have three qualities (Benford & Snow, 2000; Noakes & Johnston, 2005): to be culturally compatible (the compatibility of frames and symbols with the «cultural tool kit» - cultural narratives, cultural heritage and symbols), to be consistent (the internal consistency and thoroughness of the beliefs, claims and actions promoted in the frames) and to be relevant (the capacity to make sense of the participants' experiences within the respective society).

In their reviewing study of social movement frames, Benford & Snow (2000) mention that collective action frames have an action-oriented function and that they involve interactive, discursive processes. The action-oriented function refers to three core framing tasks: diagnostic (problem identification and attributions of responsibility), prognostic (solutions, plans of attack) and motivational (socially-constructed vocabularies of motive). This action function is achieved through two discursive processes: framing articulation and framing amplification. In the frame articulation we will include different types of verbal and visual framing devices. Corrigan-Brown & Wilkes (2012) consider that alongside texts, images of collective action also shape public understanding of social



movement campaigns and issues because they will be remembered longer and may convey a greater emotional response than textual accounts.

The frame amplification as part of the alignment process «involves the idealization, embellishing, clarification, or invigoration of existing values or beliefs» (Benford & Snow, 2000). The analysis of the socially constructed vocabularies of motives beyond every social movement may reveal a cultural insight into a society's narratives or folk wisdom.

Another aspect to be taken into account is the relation between the framing of collective action and digital spaces. Highlighting the sporadic, dynamic and fluid nature of online social movements, Sádaba (2012) considers that this blending between the new formations of collective action and new technologies brings forth two important aspects: (a) specific tools which may be accessed and used for representation with a mediation function; (b) these tools of sociological information production provide more insightful accounts into the local collective actions than other common techniques, such as surveys, interviews, or focus groups. The two Romanian Facebook communities formed in order to represent the collective actions against Chevron are a clear example of the power that this social network service played in the framing of a local action which gradually turned into a national and international issue.

## 2. Material and methods

We employ a framing analysis of the Facebook posts of the two online communities during the four months (October 12, 2013 - February 22, 2014) following the beginning of the anti-fracking protests in Romania. Our sample included 409 posts (294 Pungești-Resistance and 115 Pungești-TV).

### 2.1. Visual and verbal framing

The study employs both a deductive and an inductive method. We used a deductive method by seeking to find the types of verbal and visual framing devices within the online communities' Facebook posts. Starting from the literature on visual and verbal framing (Gamson & Lasch, 1983; Parry, 2010; Corrigan-Brown & Wilkes, 2012), we adapted each framing device to the discursive specificity of the anti-fracking Facebook communities' posts. A content analysis of a sample of online posts ( $n=15$ ), randomly selected from each online community, was conducted to determine the framing devices. Another sample of posts ( $N = 61$ ), approximately 15% of the total number (409) was double-coded to determine inter-coder reliability (Kappa) and the agreement between the two coders was .91 on average.

We included the following categories in the coding scheme for the verbal framing devices:

- 1) Catchphrases: a single theme statement, tag-line, title or slogan that is intended to suggest a general frame (Facebook post titles and slogans used to mobilize other citizens)
- 2) Depictions have a threefold aspect:
  - General Description: information provided by the online community members about their reasons to protest or about the protest development.
  - Statistics: reports about the damage that fracking may cause, about the injured people during the protests or the statistical evidence of the governmental mismanagement.
  - Testimonies of a third party in the description (different categories of supporters: celebrities, elites, politicians, representatives of social movement organizations etc.).
- 3) Exemplars (real and hypothetical examples):
  - Real examples of the past or present focusing on the villagers' stories about the consequences that Chevron fracking may have on their lives and the protesters' stories about their experiences during this social movement.
  - Hypothetical examples: possible scenarios (statements relying on possible outcomes unless the hydraulic fracturing stops).

We included in the coding scheme for the visual framing devices the following categories:



- Logo of the online communities' and of other organizations' visual identification.
- Advertisements: images used to promote an online and offline event.
- Photographs: images depicting the participants (protesters, gendarmes, politicians etc.) during the protests.
- Caricatures.
- Charts.
- Maps showing geographical locations of protests, of the areas to be exploited by Chevron.
- Anthropomorphic images which become visual metaphors (objects performing human actions).
- Video files user-generated posted or shared by the community members.

## 2.2. Collective frames

The inductive method was used for an in-depth analysis of the verbal and visual framing devices in order to find the types of frame to which they were assigned by the two online communities. We identified five main frames: land struggle frame, conflict frame, solidarity frame, political opportunity frame and ecology frame. The land struggle frame refers to villagers' social welfare within the context of Chevron's hydraulic fracturing. It focuses on verbal and visual accounts of persons peacefully protesting in the Resistance Camp, of the disadvantages of shale gas exploration operations (destruction of local businesses, resettlements) and of the advantages of the anti-shale gas exploration operations (local traditions, daily life and social customs). The conflict frame includes verbal and visual accounts depicting either participants (protesters and gendarmes) engrossed in violent scenes (fighting, police repression), participants (protesters and opponents) engrossed in verbal attacks or accounts of TV stations' misinformation about the protesters. The solidarity frame includes verbal and visual accounts of protesters' supporters (common people, elites, TV presenters, present at the offline sites). The political opportunity frame refers to verbal and visual accounts of politicians who used this social movement to their political benefit. The ecology frame refers to accounts of environmental welfare, posts depicting local areas affected by exploration operations (destruction) versus intact local areas (preservation).

## 2.3. Research questions

Based on the literature regarding verbal and visual framing, offline and online social movements, the following research questions were developed:

RQ1: What is the salience of verbal and visual framing devices?

RQ2: What collective action frames do the anti-fracking online communities use in their Facebook posts?

RQ3: How do the online communities use the visual and verbal framing devices to represent the five frames?

## 3. Analysis and results

### 3.1. Frequency of verbal and visual framing devices

The number of framing devices used by the posts analyzed reveal a great discrepancy. The Pungești-Resistance used 1121 framing devices in 294 posts, whereas the Pungești-TV only used 361 framing devices in 115 posts. As shown in table 1, both online communities understood the importance of visual framing devices in the online representation of protesters' anti-fracking actions and more than half of the devices focused on a visual depiction.



The first research question sought to determine the salience of the two types of framing devices. Table 1 shows a dominance of photos in both online communities' posts, followed by general descriptions, videos, catchphrases and real examples. Although these five devices were the most commonly used in both online communities, a difference in their overall distribution may be noticed.

**Table 1. Types of verbal and visual framing devices – Romanian Facebook communities against Chevron**

Framing devices		Pungești-Resistance		Pungești-TV	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Verbal framing devices	Catchphrases	37	3	36	10
	General descriptions	201	18	87	24
	Statistics	0	0	0	0
	Testimonies	10	1	1	0.23
	Real examples	26	2	16	4
	Hypothetical examples	2	0.30	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>39</b>
Visual framing devices	Logo	12	1	2	0.54
	Advertisements	5	0.55	13	3
	Photos	725	65	157	44
	Caricatures	2	0.30	0	0
	Maps	5	0.55	1	0.23
	Charts	0	0	0	0
	Video files	94	8	48	14
	Anthropomorphic images	2	0.30	0	0
	<b>Total</b>	<b>845</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,121</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>100%</b>	

In the Pungești-TV community, fewer than half of devices (44%) were photos, whereas in the Pungești-Resistance community photos were more than half (65%). General descriptions were the second mostly frequent used device. Though less than one-quarter (18%; The Pungești-Resistance and 22%; The Pungești-TV) of the devices provided descriptions about the reasons of the anti-fracking social movement and the protests' development, the frequency (n=201 and n=87) is important highlighting the online community members' desire to explain their demands and to properly organize their protests. Videos constitute a significant visual element and they are the third framing device most commonly used by both online communities. Catchphrases are the fourth most frequently used device and they mainly focused on slogans to mobilize new protesters. Although real examples were not very commonly used, both online communities provided stories of the protesters who were abused by the police or of the villagers who had to suffer after Chevron's hydraulic fracturing activities.

### 3.2. Frequency of collective action frames

The second research question focused on the types of collective action frames used by the two online communities during the anti-fracking protests.

**Table 2. Collective action frames - Romanian Facebook communities against Chevron**

Collective action frames	Pungești-Resistance		Pungești-TV	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Land struggle	719	64	173	48
Conflict	188	16	106	29



Solidarity	168	15	76	21
Political opportunity	7	1	3	1
Ecology	39	4	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,121</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>100%</b>

As observed in table 2, both communities used land struggle, conflict and solidarity as the first three most salient collective action frames. The high frequency of the «land struggle» frame is hardly surprising given that the protests were started by the villagers of Pungești as a way of protecting their land from the Chevron's invasion. «Conflict» as the second mostly dominant frame may be explained through the offline violent confrontations between the protesters and the gendarmes. Although both online communities provide a similar framing of the anti-fracking protests, two differences may be noticed:

- 1) More than half of the devices used by the Pungești-Resistance community members frame the villagers' land struggle whereas only less than half of the devices used by the second community members frame this collective action.
- 2) Whereas the Pungești-TV community provided the same frequency for the «political opportunity» and «ecology» frames, the Pungești-Resistance community members used the «ecology» frame more than the «political opportunity» frame.

### 3.3. The verbal and visual accounts of the collective action frames

The third research question focused on the discrepancies in framing device use for the five collective action frames. To better understand the verbal and visual framing devices by collective action frames, mean values were calculated to determine how often they were used by the two Facebook communities.

Framing devices		Land struggle		Conflict		Solidarity		Political opportunity		Ecology	
		A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Verbal framing devices	Catchphrases	1.07	.85	.64	.92	.92	.71	.00	.07	.00	.00
	General descriptions	4.71	1.78	3.92	2.78	3.78	1.42	.21	.07	1.71	0.21
	Statistics	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Testimonies	.14	.00	.28	.00	.28	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Real examples	.49	.21	.92	.64	.42	.28	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Hypothetical examples	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.14
Visual framing devices	Logo	.14	.07	.00	.00	.71	.07	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Ads	.21	.00	.64	.64	.14	.28	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Photos	41.56	7.92	5.78	1.42	3.85	1.85	.07	.00	.49	.00
	Caricatures	.00	.00	.07	.00	.00	.00	.07	.00	.00	.00
	Maps	.14	.07	.07	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.14	.00
	Charts	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00
	Video files	2.78	1.42	1.49	1.14	1.85	.78	.14	.07	.28	.00
	Anthropomorphic images	.07	.00	.07	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00	.00

**A = Pungești-Resistance, B = Pungești-TV.**

As table 3 shows, photos, general descriptions and video files were the three most commonly used devices in three frames related to the anti-fracking protests in Romania, namely land struggle, conflict and solidarity. To frame «land struggle», both communities provided the same hierarchy in the





framing device use: photos, general descriptions, and video files. As observed, photos outscored all other devices used to frame to the «land struggle» frame for both online communities. To frame «conflict», the Pungești-Resistance used photos ( $m=5.78$ ) more than general descriptions ( $m=3.92$ ), whereas the Pungești-TV provided more verbal descriptions of the conflicts with the gendarmes ( $m=2.78$ ) than visual accounts of these confrontations ( $m=1.42$ ). The devices used to frame «solidarity» by the two online communities were nearly the same: photos of the crowds depicting protesters supporting the villagers and general descriptions of the protest organization and development. The Pungești-Resistance community outscored the Pungești-TV community in the usage of devices to frame «political opportunity», the main focus being on verbal descriptions of politicians supporting the protesters ( $m=0.21$ ). A discrepancy in the device use is at the level of the «ecology» frame. Whereas the Pungești-TV community members provided only general descriptions of the disadvantages of hydraulic fracturing ( $m=0.21$ ), the Pungești-Resistance members used five framing devices. General descriptions ( $m=1.71$ ), photos ( $m=0.49$ ) and video files ( $m=0.28$ ) had the highest level of revealing the dangers that fracking may cause unless it is stopped.

#### 4. Discussion and conclusion

By analyzing the content of two Romanian anti-fracking online communities during a four-month online protest, this study found that the online communities preferred to use more visual framing devices (more than 60%) than verbal framing devices and that they mainly represented their actions as collective action frames of land struggle, conflict and solidarity. The extensive use of visual accounts (photos and video files), typical of Facebook, is consistent with Corrigan-Brown and Wilkes's findings which highlight the importance assigned to this framing device by conveying a greater emotional response than textual accounts of the social movement. Beyond this emotional impact, images of protests serve as motivational and evidence tools. The photos and video files depicting villagers, protesters and challengers (gendarmes, local authorities and Chevron representatives) provide visual accounts of two important steps in organizing an activism campaign on Facebook, as Schultz (2008) mentions in his study: the existence of an external site and the beginning of real-world actions. The visual depictions of villagers and protesters at the two external sites (the resistance camp in Pungești and the University Square in Bucharest) constitute significant evidence that the two online communities were used to enhance the offline anti-fracking activism in Romania. Besides the evidence function that Facebook visual depictions have, they reveal, as Sádaba (2012) mentions, a more insightful account into the local collective action. The visual depictions of the protesters' fighting for their land provide a clear representation of the villagers' power to mobilize themselves against a foreign enemy (Chevron).

During social movements the visual and verbal legitimacy of a group is important because it shows cohesion among protesters. But at the same time, legitimacy bestowed on individuals also plays a significant role because the dramatic displays of individuals' stories may trigger a higher mobilization of new protesters. Real examples and testimonies are two verbal framing devices used to associate a face with a name. Although these two devices did not have the highest frequency, they were used by the two online communities. The Pungești-Resistance and the Pungești-TV communities provided 26 and 16 real examples of villagers, of hunger strikers, or of individuals who suffered from police's violent action. As Dan Schultz (2008) pointed out, the generation of media support is important in online activism campaigns. This media support was represented through the verbal framing device of testimonies. Unlike the Pungești-TV community, the Pungești-Resistance community offered more testimonies of supporters (TV producers, national and international journalists or Romanian elites) who joined the protests or who tried to provide an objective media account of the social movement.

Catchphrases constitute another significant verbal framing device during online activism campaigns. Unlike the Pungești-TV group, the Pungești-Resistance community provided catchphrases



to create two online events. Both online communities used the greatest number of catchphrases for photo albums or video files («Pungești is all over Romania! An example for the whole planet!» or «We shall not be intoxicated! No to shale gas!»).

The constant postings of the anti-fracking offline and online protests allowed us to observe the evolution of the collective action frames used by the two online communities throughout a four-month interval (October 2013 - February 2014). Initially depicted by both communities as a peaceful struggle about Pungești peasants' right to land, the anti-fracking social movement in Romania evolved into an overt double conflict. Both community members provided, on the one hand, vivid descriptions of the physical conflict between the villagers and gendarmes, and on the other hand, a conflict between protesters and the local, governmental and parliamentary representatives responsible for Chevron's fracking and hydraulic fracturing in Romania. Whereas the Pungești-TV community members provide a constant framing of conflict, the Pungești-Resistance community members put an emphasis on the violent confrontations between the protesters and the gendarmes at the beginning of December when the police arrested villagers, destroyed their private properties and closed down all access roads. Although Chevron resumed its search for shale gas after these violent conflicts, the two online communities continued to provide information about the protests. In January and February the Pungești-TV community members used conflict as the most dominant collective action frame, whereas the Pungești-Resistance community members focused on supporters' solidarity with villagers and through the ecology frame they provided experts' opinions about the potential health and environmental risks of fracking in the region. The «political opportunity» frame was scarcely used by the community members because the majority of Romanian politicians were represented as corrupted social actors who simply obey the Prime Minister's orders. Two Romanian politicians and the eleven Green members of the European Parliament from five countries who sent an open letter to Martin Schultz about the abusive actions of the Romanian government and Chevron were framed as allies for the villagers' struggle.

Although the two communities did not decentralize the online control of posts and shares, their visual and verbal accounts of the anti-fracking protests in Romania had the force to mobilize citizens from all over Romania. Both communities used collective action frames which had the three qualities mentioned by Benford & Snow (2000) and Noakes & Johnston (2005): cultural compatibility, consistency and relevance. The successful online mobilization of the protesters was due to an appropriate choice of collective action frames relevant to the villagers (land struggle and conflict) and to other Romanian citizens (solidarity and conflict). The dominance of «land struggle» as a frame is consistent with the daily lived experiences of the peasants from the village of Pungești, ready to defend their land against the «enemy» (Chevron). The Romanian peasants were framed as social movement entrepreneurs since they were able to construct a representation of a social movement from the inside (group-level experience as villagers of Pungești) out by embedding symbols borrowed from the Romanian common cultural kit. The verbal and visual accounts of the frames used by both online communities were culturally compatible with Romanian symbols and narratives (e.g. logo as a bull with horns, see 1.2.; or mobilizing catchphrases which depict the local development of the protest. «To the Senate. Against the shale gas fracking»).

Though this study showed the efficiency of visual and verbal online devices in depicting the collective action frames of land struggle, conflict, and solidarity during the anti-fracking protests in Romania, it should be noted that only two online communities were examined during a four-month protest without taking into account the interaction between the Facebook community administrators and its members. These limitations do not undermine the importance of this research, but they give ideas for future research. Case studies should be conducted to help offer insights into various aspects: the interactive nature of the online community by analyzing the members' comments, a comparative analysis between Romanian and foreign anti-fracking Facebook communities, or a visual framing analysis of how the visual legitimacy of different individuals and groups of actors is rendered in images of anti-fracking collective action.



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