

Titu Maiorescu and the Paradoxes of European Projects

Prof PhD. CorneliuValentin Pau

Associate Prof PhD. Argentina Gramada

Abstract.

The first part refers to the paradoxical situation in which Romania finds itself.

And if a project can be defined, among other things, as a temporary organization, the article refers to the contradictions within the process of absorption of European funds as well as to their impact on Romanian universities and society. The new challenge consists in translating ideas into values by walking the path from data and information to knowledge through creating and carrying out projects.¹

Key words: paradox, European project, project-oriented organization, project-oriented society.

Titu Maiorescu used to believe that culture is not only elevation of the spirit, but also a task that ceaselessly calls for and consumes the vital strength of a nation.² Titu Maiorescu was an authentic project writer; he admitted that in fact 'our whole life is nothing but the extensive combination of some **major projects**, which have been into existence for a long time...'³. **The Dictionary of the Romanian Language** defines the word *paradox*, *paradoxes*, as a contradictory statement, which is demonstrable at the same time; (absurd) opinion, contradicting the unanimously recognized truth; weirdness; enormity; absurdness.⁴

Any analysis of contemporary Romania shows us that it is paradoxical in many ways. That is why it is difficult to systematize it, that it is why it is difficult to govern it. We succeed in doing things that normally do not go well together. For example, as Titu Maiorescu had already found out, we manage to 'produce forms without substance. Not everyone is able to do this'.⁵ And what is really amazing is the fact that, in spite of this, our country seems to be functioning, as paradoxical, as improbable as it may be **!Let us give some examples:**

One of our unusual achievements is that we have a huge pollution coefficient (in the water, in the air and in the soil), without having a big industry. 'Our industry is sublime', but hardly perceptible otherwise than through the quantity of toxins it exudes.

Another paradoxical achievement: we have very good doctors and very poorly equipped hospitals. It is inexplicable how a country can have pre-eminent doctors when most of

¹ Pau Valentin Corneliu, Grămada Argentina Dragu-“ **Strategy in Project Management**“- Ed Univ Titu Maiorescu-2007-P67

² Titu Maiorescu –"The New Direction in Romanian Poetry and Prose", 1872)-
<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Junimea>

³ Maria Cornelia Barliba, « Titu Maiorescu, Argument for intelligence », Casa de Editura "EDIMPEX-SPERANTA", Bucuresti, 1992, pag. 144 (, Edimpex – Speranta Publishing House, Bucharest 1992, page 144)

⁴ <http://dexonline.ro/search.php?cuv=PARADÓX>

⁵ Andrei Plesu – "Romanian paradoxes" - www.adevarul.ro/articole/paradoxuri-romanesti.html

them lack the instruments they need to do their job. Nevertheless, they do their job. The doctor saves you, it is the 'system' that kills you.

Another miracle: we have a high concentration of touristic sights, but we do not have tourism; **a collateral paradox** would be that Romanian people are very hospitable but they have their foreign guests pay huge bills, as they believe that the latter should be ripped off.

Moreover: we pride ourselves on pre-eminent students, who win various international contests, but we all know that the Romanian education system goes through a big crisis.

We have incontestable agrarian traditions, fertile land, workforce, but we hardly have any agriculture at all: we eat Turkish bread, communitarian fruit and vegetable, we import meat and meat products from all over the world.

We are poor, but the streets of Bucharest are filled with flash cars; pubs are full, Romanian travelers cram in trans-European and transatlantic planes and carry with them huge luggage.

We are patriots, but we lack patriotism: we are not interested in cultivating the language of our ancestors, the immediate and concrete future of our country, its history, its monuments, its institutions. During public events, we sigh pathetically and hold national speeches, but our first impulse is to dilapidate our country. The fewer elites we have, the bigger the despise we show for them.

We are Christians, but whenever there is an Orthodox holiday or dedication day we jostle and shove, we curse and shout like an inglorious herd with no history and no faith.

The following can be concluded:

1. As they are keen on state protection and authoritarian paternalism, Romanians are in a fervent quest for their leader.⁶ Whoever appears in the role of a leader is contested. Whoever steps forward and asks for the political power, loses their popularity and credibility.⁷
2. Romanians do not trust institutions either. While institutions are despised, individual positions that make them up are appreciated. The degree to which a person is appreciated increases when s/he holds a public position.
3. Romanians wish for a change, for a radical one; which means they are utterly discontent with their life. Nevertheless, they are not able to say exactly in what way things should change. They know they want something, but they do not know what exactly.
4. Finally, Romanians are concerned with price increases, but they are relatively calm when it comes to unemployment increase. They are hardly aware of the connection between prices and work. The quality of life is benchmarked against the level of prices, there is no connection with the quality of work. That is probably why lack of job opportunities is of secondary concern and there is no sense of self-criticism. We are confronted with unemployment, but we work

⁶ Adrian Severin »Four paradoxes of Romanian thinking <-www.jurnalul.ro/stire-editorial/patru-paradoxuri-ale-gandirii-romanesti-139431.htm

⁷ The very definition of the leader is that of a corrupted, egocentric, greedy, lazy and dishonest person.

illicitly, we have no money, but we manage to get by. Payment rights have been the subject of regulation, but these attempts led to another paradox. In the words of a politician, 'the paradox of the unitary payment law consists in the fact that everybody's discontent shows it is a good law.'⁸ Given this collective attitude, we wonder why politicians spend so much money to get elected. Such a society cannot be governed!

How can we break the vicious circle created by the paradoxes above? It seems that Romanians want to experiment all wrong political solutions and to live with the consequences before regaining their trust in institutions and leaders, as well as the ability to promote the elites they need. Will time be patient enough to wait for them?

To put it briefly, we can say that we:

- **either have interminable evolutions, which do not result in any attained goal.**
- **or we have achievements that are not justified by any evolution.**

THE PARADOX OF PROJECTS

Until now, research on the maturity of project management has been carried out by big companies⁹, on an industrial sector (for example, the IT industry, the banking sector). As we have already shown, there were also global surveys involving groups of countries, whose objective was to evaluate the maturity of project management from two points of view: **the practice of project management and the specific services offered through universities, research institutes and professional associations.**¹⁰

The grade that the Romanian society got for the subject of 'project orientation', 'maturity of project management' is not satisfying.

Which shows that Romania lacks project orientation, a genuine culture of projects, which should pervade the Romanian society, from central or local public institutions, to the private environment, up to small communities. In our evaluation, the absence of this culture of projects, the lack of project orientation, the inability to make the connection between development and projects are all major drawbacks for the absorption of European funds of almost 30 billion Euros worth (for the period 2007-2013).

In order to improve the ability to absorb European funds-which has been a constant concern of all governments- we need to carry out reforms of public administration, of training for specialists, of implementation of extensive training programs for those who work or will work with European funds.

The efficient usage of European funds, the participation in the European development policy call for a much bigger and lasting change, a change that should envisage the **promotion of the profession of project manager and of project management** as a micro and macro economic approach, **the professionalization of project management,**

⁸ www.realitatea.net/boc--paradoxul-legii-salarizarii-unitare-consta-in-faptul-ca-nemultumirea-tutoror-arata-ca-este-o-lege-buna_610972.html

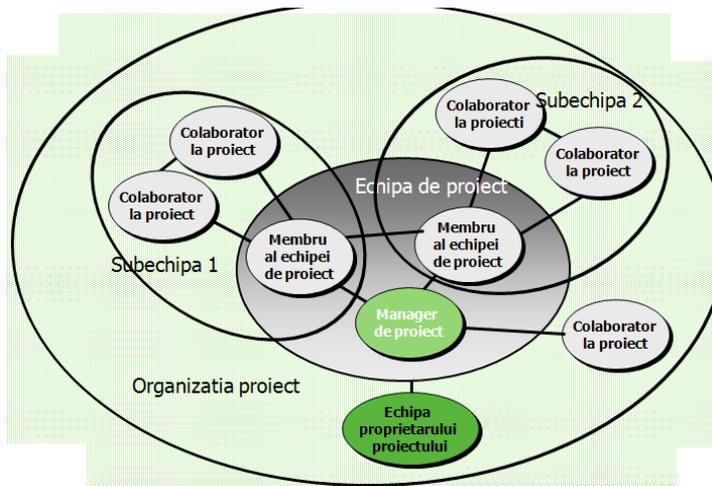
⁹ (global survey carried out by Pricewaterhouse Coopers, 2004, www.pwc.be)

¹⁰ One of the analyzed countries was Romania; the various phases of research show that our country holds either the last place in the top of project management maturity (Roland Gareis, 2001) or the place before the last, followed by Lithuania (Roland Gaeris Happy projects-2005, p.586).

the creation of a genuine project culture in universities, in central and local administration, in small enterprises or in big companies, the conception of the overall Romanian societal development in explicit terms of programs and projects, using specific methodologies of program management and project management.

To paraphrase the title of a cited work, the role of project management is to change Romania's status from a state member into a player in the European Union's development policy.

The project is a temporary organization which has a certain unique objective, at a certain cost, at a definite time¹¹.



Project team

Sub-team 1

Sub-team 2

Project collaborator

Project team member

Figure number 1 Project organization¹²

Projects get born, develop and last if there are creative ideas. As a result of several years of expertise in the creativity domain, Amabile Teresa is able to conclude the following¹³ :

- a. creative ideas come from creative people;
- b. money is a motivator of creativity;
- c. pressure of time develops creativity;
- d. concern breaks thinking patterns;

¹¹ Rao, R. (2006). White Paper The Role of Project Management in Transforming a Nation from Developing into Developed Status: The Case of India Vision 2020, în *PMI Global Congress 2006 – Asia-Pacific*, Bangkok

¹² www.rgc.com.ro/index.php?

¹³ Amabile, Teresa M., and Mukti Khaire. "Creativity and the Role of the Leader." *Harvard Business Review* 86, no. 10 (October 2008 Mit uri despre creativitate)

- e. competition overtakes collaboration;
- f. a restructured organization is a creative organization.

Lester Thurow stresses the idea that the new leaders of global economy will have to have project management abilities and knowledge.¹⁴ **Project-oriented society.** In this context, special attention is paid to the concept of ‘project-oriented society’, as ‘a society that frequently uses projects and programs to carry out processes which are relatively unique, of a medium or high complexity.’¹⁵

The ascension of this concept reflects the fact that project management methodologies go, as we have already shown, beyond the domain of an industry and are considered to be macro development strategies of a whole nation/society. In the dynamic level of maturity of a project-oriented society, apart from technical aspects (specific methodologies and processes, knowledge areas), social key aspects intervene, such as: the perceived importance of projects, the social relevance with which the profession of project manager is endowed, the overall structure of society, its history and its expectations concerning the future, the structure of its sub-systems; economy, science, education, politics, religion, law, art etc.¹⁶

Therefore, the activity of specialist training must be completed by the following:

- to increase the level of project management awareness among decision-makers (either the private environment or public administration), to increase the number of managers who are ‘project aware and project friendly’.
- to obtain the ‘cross-over’ effect with regard to project management from industry and private environment to small organizations, small communities, schools and even families¹⁷.
- To create organizational competences in project management, competences that should complete the individual ones.

1. Taking into account the fact that Romania pays its dues for communitarian funds allotted to research, what results from here is the paradox that our country finances research in the EU rich, developed countries; therefore, it is obvious the inability of researchers and institutes to legally spend the funds offered by European financing bodies. The red tape of laws, directives and ordinances always puts forth **barriers which researchers cannot cut through**, and the result is that there are always some funds that remain unspent. The inability of our country to absorb communitarian funds is notorious and, unfortunately, applies in this case as well.

¹⁴ www.pmi.org- Thurow - 2003, Fortune Favors the Bold: What We Must Do to Build a New and Lasting Prosperity.

¹⁵ Roland Gareis- Happy Project, Manz, Viena -2005, p. 579.

¹⁶ Gareis, 2001, p. 4.

¹⁷ Roland Gareis- Happy Project-Editura ASE- 2006, p.580;

2. Information on European funds is, most of the time, inexact, superficial, even wrong. Paradoxically, the importance of the domain as such is one of the causes of inexactitudes. Starting from the correct assumption that these funds represent key factors in the elimination of the development lag between Romania and other member states, the result is that funds have been overrated as the only chance Romania has to develop, as they are believed to have a miraculous impact on welfare. A closer look will reveal that the absorption of funds is meant to contribute to the modernization of our line of thinking and action.

What materials on POR addressed to universities and to certain institutions of local administration describe refer, in fact, to the priority axes of POR and major intervention domains which offer financial support in view of developing education, although certain intervention areas do not take into consideration universities' demands for financing, but only institutions of local administration.¹⁸

3. **Preparation of applicants for competition.** Integration in the EU means first of all that we should accept *competition*, with its inherent successes and failures. Allow me to point out that failures are sometimes even more important. When competition is the engine, a failed offer is the 'petrol' that keeps it working.

Our analysis starts from the assumption that there is a correlation between the degree of maturity of Romanian society with regard to project management and the results obtained in the management of European funds. In order to increase the ability of absorption, the training of specialists who work or will work with European funds is insufficient.

The stress must be equally on **creating organizational competences** which should stimulate adoption of project management as a way of envisaging development. Despite the fact that worldwide economy has been stagnating or declining, which led to a decrease of expenses in various economic sectors, **project managers' wages have been going up quite rapidly.**

For the subject of European project management within the University we created a site which should improve the degree of information for the formation of entrepreneurial¹⁹ and digital²⁰ competences, I published a book on practical application for projects²¹, a style of online work with students for professional announcements and communication of results, next to participation to specialized session and symposiums.

¹⁸ Alina Bargaoanu « European funds + strategies for promotion and utilization » ed Tritonic 2009 -p 232 (, Tritonic Publishing House 2009, page 232)

¹⁹ www.proiecteu.ro

²⁰ www.sitebirotica.go.ro

²¹ Argentina Gramada-« Office applications for the management of European projects «-2008- Ed Renaissance-Bucuresti , Renaissance Publishing Houe, 2008, Bucharest)



Figure no.2 The site for the subject of European Project Management within Titu Maiorescu University for the Faculties of Computer Science and Economic Sciences.

Five paradoxical situations accompanied Eminescu on his poetic path.²² The first paradoxical situation is that Eminescu is the Romanian writer with the shortest literary activity: only thirteen genuine years. To these we can add the first four years, from 1866, the years of his literary debut in the magazine 'Familia' to 1870, the year of his debut in 'Convorbiri literare'. These were years of searching, reading great books, the establishment of the themes and the revelation of the specific style.

In spite of all appearances, although his body of work seems to be massive and monumental, Eminescu published very little: only 73 poems and some prose. This could be the second paradox. The third paradoxical situation: Eminescu is the only Romanian poet who did not publish a volume of poems as he would have wished.²³ The fourth paradox: Eminescu left unpublished the vastest literary body of work ever written by a Romanian. The famous 'Notebooks'-15.000 pages-contain ten times more poems than the poet accepted to publish. Eminescu made projects rather than finished work. He was a hurried poet. He wanted to express himself under the terrible pressure of the topics that called for being written. He might have succeeded in doing so, had he had the biological

²² Viorel Mortu – The Eminescu Paradox, Objective: the voice of Braila, June 15th, 2009
-www.obiectivbr.ro/cultura/30327-paradoxul-eminescu.html

²³ The volume 'Poesii', with a short foreword by T. Maiorescu, dated December 1883, was published at the beginning of 1884. Eminescu was 34 years old. It was not only a late debut, similar to that of Arghezi or Bacovia, it was also his final work. The initiative of publishing the volume, the contents, the correction, with small interventions in the text, with the scholarly rhetoric of commas belonged to Maiorescu. In the foreword, the great critic mentions that 'the volume is being published in the absence of the poet who is abroad'. Maiorescu recognized that under the spell of Eminescu's poetry, 'the Romanian language seems to receive a new life'. The 61 poems were not published in chronological order, as they are found today in any editions that follow the model of the edition Perpessicius; their order is different, and **this order was well considered by Maiorescu**. From 'Solitude', the first poem of the volume, published in 1878 to 'To my critics', the past poem, found by Maiorescu in the salvaged manuscripts, there is a vision on Eminescu's work, an indirect comment, from the voluptuous, melancholic monologue of the first poem to the slightly pamphlet-like tone of the last poem.

peace Goethe had enjoyed and had lived for eighty years. He chose to live intensely, he burned rather than lived. On the verge of disaster he had the revelation of a frightening truth: 'It seemed to me I have lived for eighty years.' The fifth paradox of Eminescu's work is linked to the reception of his work. It is a unique case in our country and a very rare one in the universal literature. For a century the poems discovered after his death have increased the mystery of his creation and endowed his work with a dynamic feature. He is unequal -just like nature is- as well as matchless.

The project: 'The house in Varatec where Eminescu lived, mused and created' is also a justification for the memory of the mentor of Junimea, Titu Maiorescu who issued Eminescu's first volume, and for the University as well, as it has the opportunity to use the instruments of the age to restore the house where our great poet dreamed and created, not far from his 'silver forest'.



Figure no3 The house from the monastery of Varatec in which Eminescu lived

Conclusions

The absorption of European funds is meant to contribute to the modernization of our line of thinking and action. We are studying to prepare for the creation of professional projects which should be useful and long-lasting.

We are waiting for this country to become aware of the importance that project management study has in its development.

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