

# Bureaucratic Spleen: Europeanization and Resistance to Change in Romanian Public Administration

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**Abstract:** *In this paper, we analyse the way in which positive communication of European knowledge produces a series of perverse effects at the level of Romanian public administration, effects that take the form of an avoidance strategy. In other words, confronted with certain change requirements, Romanian public institutions react by decoupling the structural aspects from their specific activities. This form of resistance is unconscious, passive and continuously interiorized through the relationship and interaction with the elements of change. Instead of dislocating an inertial state of mind which is specific to the 'iron cage' of bureaucracy, the positive communication regarding europeanization and the formal embracement of all its components and regulations, does nothing else but consolidate and even resuscitate this state of sufficiency and passive compliance. In order to better understand the Romanian public administration's reaction to change, we introduce the concept of bureaucratic spleen. This oxymoronic concept points out the apparent paradox of simultaneous acceptance and rejection, change and resistance to change, and that of a cognitive tacit state of mind that is antagonistic to its own explicit dimension, all of these manifested along an emotional background of melancholy and assumed sufficiency, in the context of a major change process, the Europeanization of Romanian public administration.*

**Keywords:** organizational communication; public administration; perverse effects; Europeanization; knowledge management; resistance to change.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** comunicare organizațională; administrație publică; efecte perverse; europenizare; management al cunoașterii; rezistență la schimbare.

During a conference held at The London School of Economics and Political Sciences, Thomas Luckmann (2005) pointed out that scientific activity is always historically and culturally situated, and what differentiates social sciences from other ways of doing science, is the fact that they represent an integrated part of their own object of study. In this respect,

Luckmann uses a very suggestive metaphor: hard sciences look *from inside at what it is outside*, whereas social sciences look *from inside towards outside, at what it is inside*. Hence, these disciplines are reflexive in a sense in which hard sciences are not. This article is intended to be such a reflexive endeavour, its main object of study being the investigation of the way in

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which the communication of European knowledge is produced from the inside, by a series of unintentional effects, these effects simultaneously generating a series of perverse effects at the level of organizational communication in the Romanian public administration exposed to Europeanization.

In recent European studies and social research dedicated to the subject of Europeanization, the European integration of Romania is treated almost exclusively in terms of accession to the European community, and never debated from the perspective of shared and communicated European knowledge, emerging throughout the Romanian public organizations. The Romanian integration process is considered to be a subject of scientific interest just as far as it concerns the problems faced in achieving the European standards and implementing the specific EU regulations and legislation at a national or local level. The approach is almost always a comparative one, focusing on trends and distances between the changing socio-political and economic environment in Romania on one hand, and the European Commission's expected *reality*, on the other hand.

Taking into account these theoretical and practical realities regarding the European integration phenomenon, we focus our research on two major objectives: (i) to investigate the way in which the communication of change is produced at the level of Romanian public administration system and (ii) to identify and analyse the effects generated by the communication of European knowledge at public organization level.

Starting from these two major research objectives, we configured our research in accordance to the critical and postmodern theories of organizational communication and knowledge management. Particular attention was given to those theoretical guidelines that emphasize the added value of this research paper, and to the way in

which this study addresses the most recent findings in the field of organizational communication, as well as to the sociological understanding of the phenomenon of communicating change, in public organizations. Thus, we start this paper by outlining the theoretical framework of our approach, and by defining the hypotheses and methodology that apply to our specific research context, namely, the dynamics of Romanian public administration during the Europeanization process. Furthermore, we present a series of relevant quantitative evidence from two national surveys that indicate how European knowledge is perceived, communicated and reacted to in Romanian public organizations. The next section of the paper describes and analyses the key concepts and perspectives that support our conclusions. We separately examine two perverse effects generated by the positive communication of European knowledge at the level of Romanian public system, i.e., resistance through distance and bureaucratic spleen. We conclude by noting the limitations of this study, especially due to the challenges related to introducing a new interdisciplinary concept (*bureaucratic spleen*) in the field of organizational communication, and suggesting directions for further research.

## Theoretical orientation

This paper adopts an organizational communication approach to public administration, focusing mainly on post-modern organizational communication theories addressing knowledge management and resistance to change in complex organizational environments.

We focused mainly on applying Nonaka and Takeuchi's "knowledge spiral" (Nonaka & Takeuchi, 1995), which explains how knowledge is transferred from explicit to tacit and the vice-versa, to

a specific organizational context, in our case, the Romanian public administration. Ikujiro Nonaka and Hirotaka Takeuchi are two of the most significant representatives of postmodern organizational and knowledge management theories, particularly the Japanese model of KM from the '95's. Nonaka and Takeuchi's model is based on the assertion that, combining the four potential knowledge communication processes: (1) *from tacit to tacit*; (2) *from tacit to explicit*; (3) *from explicit to explicit* and (4) *from explicit to tacit*, it can be explained the way in which individual knowledge is transformed into organizational knowledge. The process is described as a four-step sequence, starting with *socialization* (from tacit to tacit), *externalization* (from tacit to explicit), *combination* (from explicit to explicit) and finally, *internalization* (from explicit to tacit). This is a dynamics that Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) consider to be the main object of knowledge management. A successful organization is the organization that allows the creation and manifestation of such a knowledge spiral. This particular theoretical distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge, and the potentiality of their transformation, stands at the very basis of our hypotheses, together with Raymond Boudon's (1998) interpretation of what is well known in the sociological literature as *perverse effect*.

As for the concept of Europeanization, we acknowledge the fact that it has numerous definitions, from approaches that identify an explicit difference between Europeanization and European integration for example, to those that eventually perceive very little difference between the concepts (Howell, 2004). In this paper we put little emphasis on differences between the two concepts, Europeanization of the Romanian public administration being exclusively treated and interpreted as a process of major organizational change. Therefore, by Europeanization we will

understand "the change within a member state whose motivating logic is tied to an EU policy or decision-making process. The prime concern of any Europeanization research agenda is therefore establishing the causal link, thereby validating the impact of the EU on domestic change", as suggested by Ladrech (2010). Furthermore, our primary concern with respect to Europeanization of public organizations in Romania is related to being able to assess and evaluate the risk of having a bureaucratic modernity which is inadequate in facing the challenges derived from the evolution of the Romanian society in the new context of European integration. Confronted with a major change, such as the Europeanization process, the Romanian society in general tends to be a "tendentious modernity society, where modernity is a trend, which coexists with obsolete institutional forms" (Schifirneț, 2007c, apud Schifirneț, 2009).

We also suggested a new concept that captures a particular communicational perverse effect, the bureaucratic spleen. *Spleen* is a term that belongs to French literature and the symbolist trend in European poetry. In French, *spleen* refers to a state of thinking sadness or melancholy, the term being derived from the well-known poems of Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867), though it had been used before by other artists of the 18<sup>th</sup> century romantic trend. This "illness of the century" was conceptualized poetically and psychologically, as some critics claim, by the master of the French symbolist poetry, Charles Baudelaire, at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Alongside with the French painter Delacroix, Charles Baudelaire considered that pain (*douleur*), together with melancholy (*mélancolie*), is part of the human condition, and cannot be overcome or eluded (King, 1996).

## Hypotheses

Taking into account these premises and the conceptual benchmarks that circumscribe our analysis, we considered adequate to launch the following hypotheses regarding the aspects under discussion:

1. The positive communication of the European knowledge produces a series of perverse effects at the level of knowledge management and practice in the Romanian public administration.
2. The perverse effects generated by organizational communication take the form of mechanisms specific to an avoidance strategy. In other words, confronted with certain change requirements, the public administration institutions and its members react by decoupling the structural dimensions from the specific activities.

## Method

In an article entitled "The Efficiency of Public Service Provision", Rune J. Sorensen (1993) wonders if the public sector is not inherently susceptible of inefficiency. Indeed, the common perception is that the absence of a self-adjusting mechanism, similar to the one existing in the private market system, produces, almost without exception, an ineffective public system. On the other hand, there are a lot of people who assert that all these accusations are unfounded. Public organizations aim at a set of social objectives, more complex and less tangible than those followed by private companies, for example. The efficiency indicators and criteria are different from those used in private organizations.

The reality is, probably, somewhere in between. Though, what seems to be a certainty is the need to understand and empha-

size the institutional factors which represent causes of the inefficiency and which can be transformed into generators of significant growth, in terms of organizational efficiency. Despite this need, the number of representative sociological studies dedicated to the analysis and assessment of the Romanian public sector, in the context of European integration as a change factor, are relatively scarce. This scarcity of studies is explicable, at a certain degree, by the methodological difficulties related to sampling the population of public servants, as well as related to actually conducting the field research, aspects that produce a certain reticence in initiating such scientific endeavours.

In our attempt to overcome some of these methodological challenges and still to be able to test our hypotheses stated in the above chapter, we use the method of secondary data analysis and worked with the data available from two sociological surveys with national representativeness at the level of Romanian public servants population. These two studies were contracted by The Governmental Strategies Agency, a Romanian governmental agency activating under the direct coordination of the Romanian Prime Minister's Office. The two surveys were conducted in October, 2005, by Gallup Organization Romania (Governmental Strategies Agency [GSA], 2005), before Romania's accession to European Union, and the other one, in May, 2007, by Metro Media Transilvania (GSA, 2007), after the accession in January that year. The surveys were based on probabilistic, stratified, multi-stadial samples, and validated based on the official data received from the National Agency of Civil Servants and National Institute of Statistics. The samples are representative for the national population of public servants with a sampling error of +/-3.0%.

With regard to comparing data, it appeared to be possible only for a few of the studied dimensions, because of a limi-

ted set of variables common to both studies. Out of this set, we identified five dimensions relevant to our research: the degree at which public servants perceive the influence of the Europeanization of public administration in their daily work, perceptions with regard to the process of alignment to European standards in their work, the perceived level of information about European Union and European integration of public administration, participation to professional development courses, and the perceived importance and frequency of European integration issues approached in these courses. Each of the five variables is conceptually identical in the case of these two surveys, with very similar wording of questions and position in the questionnaire, as well as identical response scale. In addition, we focused our analysis on the results from 2007 and the in-depth interpretation of interrelations between variables that measure public servant's perceptions and attitudes towards change (i.e., *Europeanization*) and organizational satisfaction.

## Results

When comparing the data obtained from these two available national surveys, we observed a relatively constant situation before and after the accession, with regard to perceptions of European knowledge and the perceived level of information. Hence, about two thirds of the public servants declared that they benefited from professional development courses both in 2005 and 2007, with a significant increase, of about 40%, of the courses dedicated to European related topics in 2007, compared to 2005. This indicates that, after the accession to European Union, there was a growing need of absorbing European knowledge and expertise at the level of local and national public administration in Romania. Despite this expressed interest in European related trainings and professional development courses, the perceived level of information among public servants indicates a moderate increase, from an average of 5.6 in 2005 to an average of 6.3 in 2007, on a scale from 1 to 10. The table below is comprehensive in this respect:

**Table 1:** *Comparative data from Romanian Public Administration and European Integration: National Survey (2005) and The Bureaucratic Phenomenon: National Survey (2007)*

<i>Nr. crt.</i>	<i>Item</i>	<i>Result 2005</i>	<i>Result 2007</i>
1	Europeanization of public administration affected his/her activity	Yes: 48% No: 48%	Yes: 26% No: 67%
2	To what extent is Romanian public administration aligned with European standards?	Not at all or to a small extent: 56% To a large extent or completely: 37%	Not at all or to a small extent: 68% To a large extent or completely: 29%
3	Perceived level of information	Average: 5.6	Average: 6.3
4	Benefited from professional development courses	Yes: 67% No: 32%	Yes: 68% No: 31%
5	European integration issues were approached during these courses	Yes: 20% No: 47%	Yes: 60% No: 38%

What was extremely interesting to observe when analysing the data from these two national surveys on public servants, is that, after almost a year since the accession to European Union, 68% of public servants believed that Romanian public administration met European standards only in a small or very small degree, or not at all. 61% of the public employees believed that professional background and qualification of Romanian public servants did not reach the level of European requirements. At the same time, 69% of the same employees considered themselves to be at least at the same level of professional expertise as the majority of public servants from other European countries (GSA, 2007).

At the same time, we observed a very high degree of organizational satisfaction among public employees, over 70% of the respondents declaring that they were satisfied or rather satisfied with their working relationships, in 2005 (GSA, 2005), and over 80% expressed their satisfaction regarding the relationships with colleagues and supervisors in 2007 (GSA, 2007). However, the data from 2007 (GSA, 2007) showed us that more than half of the public servants who expressed their satisfaction regarding their professional relationships perceived other public servants and supervisors as having low professional expertise, being rather inefficient in their activity, and rather poor communicators (Table 2).

**Table 2:** *Organizational satisfaction among public servants (The Bureaucratic Phenomenon: National Survey, 2007)*

	Low professional expertise	Rather inefficient	Rather poor communicators
Satisfied with the relationship with supervisors	53.2%	58.9%	59.9%
Satisfied with the relationship with colleagues	55.3%	57.6%	62.5%

Moreover, the majority of Romanian public servants were, on one hand, aware of the fact that public administration in Romania was not situated at the level of European standards (63%), but on the other

hand, their opinion was that the Romanian public administration functions well (68%). A simple cross tabulation of these data indicates a cleavage in their perceptions (Table 3).

**Table 3:** *Perceived alignment of public administration to European standards (The Bureaucratic Phenomenon: National Survey, 2007)*

	Public administration meets European standards to a small extent or not at all		Public administration meets European standards to a large extent or completely	
	Count	Row %	Count	Row %
Public administration works badly or very badly	265	87.7%	37	12.3%
Public administration works well or very well	454	62.4%	274	37.6%
Total	719	69.8%	311	30.2%

Hence, it can be observed that in May, 2007 (GSA, 2007), around 62.4% of those public employees who believed that the public system was working well, considered, at the same time, that Romanian public administration had not reached the level of European standards. The same study indicates that this apparent inconsistency in opinions is manifested in the context of very high levels of trust and appreciation among the public administration employees, with regard to the European integration process and its beneficial effects.

Consequently, a data analysis based on these three variables (the perceived quality

of Romanian public administration functioning, the perception regarding the alignment of public administration to European standards and the attitude toward the change of public administration due to European integration) allowed us to observe that 64.2% of Romanian public servants declared that, in their opinion: (1) public administration worked well, despite the fact that they perceived the public administration system as (2) not being aligned to European standards, and that (3) Romania's accession to European Union would improve the situation of public administration.

**Table 4:** *Perceived organizational satisfaction and European integration trends in public organizations (The Bureaucratic Phenomenon: National Survey, 2007)*

			Starting with January, 2007, Romania is an EU member. Do you think that Romania's accession to EU will change the situation of public administration?			Total
			It will change for the better	It will remain as it is	It will change for the worst	
Works well or very well	Meets EU standards	Count	194	63	6	263
		% Row	35.8%	50.4%	42.9%	38.6%
	Does not meet EU standards	Count	348	62	8	418
		% Row	<b>64.2%</b>	49.6%	57.1%	61.4%
Works badly or very badly	Meets EU standards	Count	28	5	0	33
		% Row	14.1%	7.0%	0.0%	11.8%
	Does not meet EU standards	Count	170	66	10	246
		% Row	85.9%	93.0%	100.0%	88.2%

We are dealing here with an apparent logical contradiction: the efficiency of public administration in Romania is associated with the idea of reform, Euro-

peanization, or, generically, with the idea of change. Therefore, change would bring efficiency, in the opinion of public servants. The actual state of the administrative

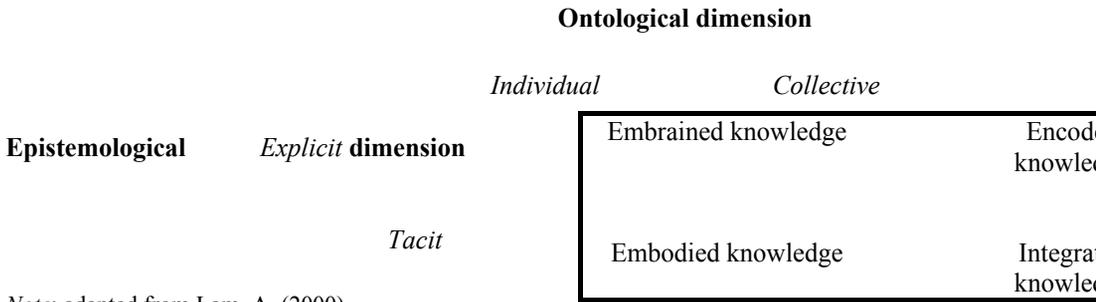
system is not situated at the level of European standards; thus, as a logical consequence, we could make the deduction that public administration is not totally changed. Moreover, not being changed enough, in conformity with the first assertion, it is not efficient. Or, at this point, a paradox appears: the same public servants who declare that change was beneficial, but the Romanian public administration has not reach yet the degree of needed restructuring and reform, claim that public administration is functioning well. Hence, Romanian public administration seems to be simultaneously efficient and inefficient, reformed and unchanged. This seemingly logical inconsistency can be explained to a great extent, as we will try to further demonstrate, by the manner in which change is perceived, as well as by the way in which the public servant position himself/herself on the two cognitive dimensions: tacit and explicit.

### **Bureaucratic spleen and resistance through distance**

As a mechanism, the attitude towards change identified in the case of public servants in Romania, seems to be similar to organizational sabotage, but the content is significantly different. It cannot be defined as pure cynicism of the public servants, as this segment of public employees expresses a clear optimism and confidence in the beneficial effects of Europeanization, 71% considering that European integration will improve the situation of Romanian public administration (GSA, 2007), in perfect concordance with the general desirability at the level of Romanian public opinion. Therefore, cynicism does not represent, for the Romanian public servant, a viable option in his/her attempt to preserve a state of facts. A frequently used metaphor explaining organizational cynicism is that of distan-

cing. Some researchers suggest that cynicism allows employees to distance the internal experiences of the self from the external cultural control. This interior – exterior space image can be found even in Erving Goffman's (1990) writings about a self that is conceptualized in dramaturgical terms. According to him, individuals cognitively alternate between *sharing the role* and *distancing from the role*, cynicism being specific for the second of the above categories. The distancing metaphor presupposes more movement than defence. Instead of imagining a barricaded self, one has to imagine a sort of tactical detachment, diffidence and normative isolation. This *resistance through distance*, as it was called by Collinson (1994, as cited in Fleming, 2005), can circumscribe a normative space of a relative autonomy. This game of simultaneous distancing and sharing of a professional role, the antagonism between the tacit and explicit dimension of the attitude toward change, constitutes, practically, the effect of a form of *resistance through distance*.

This form of resistance through distance is also visible in the specific manner in which knowledge is managed in the institutions of Romanian public administration. In order to understand this mechanism of resistance through distance, one has to start from the assumption that, in an organization, knowledge can be analysed along two major dimensions: the epistemological one and the ontological one. The first one refers to the forms of expressing knowledge or, more concretely, what Michael Polanyi (1962) called, the distinction between tacit and explicit knowledge (as cited in Lam, 2000). The second one, the ontological dimension, is oriented toward locating the knowledge, the knowledge being situated at individual or collective level. The two dimensions generate four different forms of organizational knowledge: embrained, embodied, encoded and integrated, as shown in figure below:



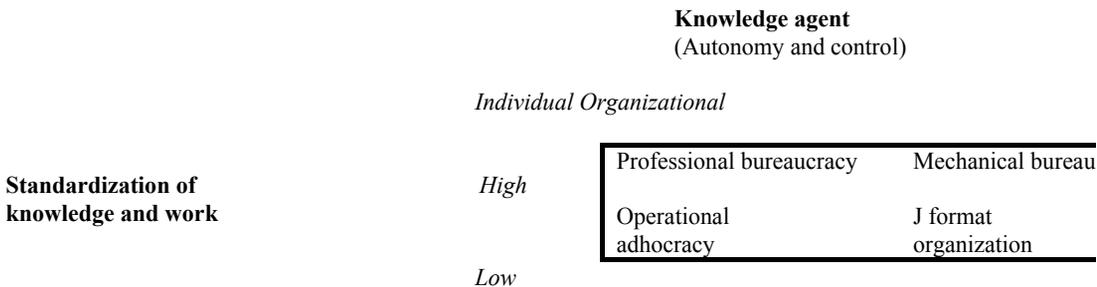
Note: adapted from Lam, A. (2000)

**Figure 1:** *Forms of organizational knowledge*

These four categories of knowledge are conceptual distinctions, suggested for the first time by H. R. Collins (1993), in order to explain the psychological and behavioural aspects of knowledge (Lam, 2000). Frank Blacker (1995) used them in order to describe different “images” of knowledge in organizations (Lam, 2000). This typology practically integrates the cognitive and organizational dimension. The embrained knowledge (explicit – individual) is dependent on conceptual attitudes and cognitive abilities of the individual. It is a formal, abstract and theoretical knowledge. Scientific knowledge, which is focused on rational “understanding” and “knowing” of the universal principals and nature’s laws, belongs to this category.

Every organization contains, as a potentiality, a mixture of these types of knowledge. What is different from one organization to another is their relative importance. Organizations can be domi-

nated by a certain type of knowledge and their capacity to cultivate tacit knowledge can vary very much. Starting from the classical typology of organizational forms proposed by Henry Mintzberg (1979) and by the studies of Aoki (1988) and Nonaka and Takeuchi (1995) about the Japanese model of organizations, Alice Lam (2000) distinguishes between four ideal types of organizational forms, presented below. Lam (2000) asserts that each organizational form is associated with a certain dominant type of knowledge, generating four contrasting configurations: *professional bureaucracy* and the embrained knowledge; *mechanical bureaucracy* and the encoded knowledge; *operational adhocrcy* and the embodied knowledge; *J format organization* and the integrated knowledge (see figure below). These four configurations differ in respect of their ability to mobilize tacit knowledge and their capacities of learning and innovation:



Note: adapted from Lam, A. (2000)

**Figure 2:** *Types of organizations*

An organization that derives from its knowledge capacities that are integrated in its routine operations, in the relations between teams and shared culture, can be described as J format organization. The “J format” concept is used because the characteristics of this organizational form can be best illustrated by the Japanese model of organization, the organizations that were called by Nonaka and Takeuchi “knowledge creating companies” (1995) and that Aoki (1986, apud Lam, 2000) defined as *J-firm*. J-type organizations combine stability and bureaucratic efficiency with the flexibility and dynamic of an adhocracy. It allows the functioning of organic, non-hierarchical operating structures, as well as hierarchical and formal managerial structures. These two structural levels are bound together by a strong corporate culture, which constitutes, practically, a third organizational level: the knowledge basis of the organization. Coordination is obtained through a horizontal coordination and mutual adjustments. At the same time, it is strengthened through shared values and integrated in the organizational culture.

The Romanian public organization takes the atypical form of a reversed J, i. e., an organization creating resistance to knowledge and within which the tacit dimension, that is profoundly unspecific to a bureaucracy, is exactly the one that potentiates the strong mechanic and inertial character of this bureaucratic organization. As we previously observed, at the explicit level, change is desirable, and Romanian public servants are aware of the fact that the level of knowledge in this respect is precarious, and that the public system is not prepared for the desired transformation (see Table 3). Both at individual and collective levels, on the explicit dimension, public servants feel a lack of knowledge, otherwise necessary for the Europeanization of the public system (as shown in Tables 1

and 3). Nevertheless, at the tacit level, the current organization state and settings is perceived as desirable, which makes public servants declare that public administration functions well, and relationships between colleagues and supervisors are very good, offering them a high level of work satisfaction. There is no anxiety or fear regarding the implementation of change, public servants being convinced that these changes will not modify at all the existing relational structures and the informal organization, which seems to fully satisfy them. Thus, on a tacit level, there is a very high degree of satisfaction with regard to the functioning of the organization (see Table 3 and 4).

It is extremely interesting how Romanian public employees are aware of their colleagues’ and superiors’ organizational inefficiency, their resistance to change, as well as their lack of adequate knowledge in order to efficiently implement this change. But, at the same time, the same public servants consider that the public administration works very well, the organizational climate is satisfactory, as well as the professional relations, both horizontal and vertical (see Table 3 and 4). All these indicate the prevalence of the tacit level in these public organizations, an organizational level which does not work, as expected, in the direction of adopting change, but on the contrary, in that of conserving a *status quo* that allows public employees to decouple their activities in the organization, from the change factors and change agents that act upon this public organization. The cognitive dissonance at individual level is solved by adopting a state of apathy with regard to everything that presupposes organizational knowledge and a state of compliance to an inertial state, one of *taedium vitae* and assumed sufficiency that we can call ‘bureaucratic spleen’ (see Table 4).

Therefore, the communication of European knowledge is, in the case of

Romanian pre- and post-accession, the one that generates its own counterpoint, both at individual and collective levels. If at the collective level this is manifested as *resistance through distance*, as decoupling of specific organizational activities from everything that presupposes the European reform of public administration, at individual level, the atypical situation of the public servant can be defined as an ongoing expression of a *bureaucratic spleen*, with a significant cognitive and emotional value for the public professional position.

Bureaucratic spleen is a particular manifestation of resistance to change that does not exist *per se*; it only arises as an unintentional consequence of a change process, a perverse effect of the Europeanization tentative of the Romanian public administration. Bureaucratic spleen is a continuously constructed state, cognitive and emotional, a non-intentional state from the perspective of the actor that is the object of change, and unrecognized as resistance to change by the targets and observers of the phenomenon.

Starting from Baudelaire's poems in "Flowers of Evil" with their *architecture secrète* (secret architecture) to its poems in prose from "Le spleen de Paris", it can be said that the obsessive binary representations of the world in literature and language were veritable organizational strategies. Applying such a generous concept to an organizational communication approach, we were able to identify a similar "secret architecture" at the level of binary representation (cognitive and emotional), in the case of the subjective identity of Romanian public servants. The *bureaucratic spleen* expressed by Romanian public servants exposed to an ongoing Europeanization process, captures a reaction to a major change of a familiar *Weltanschauung*, a reaction in which, as expected, the aesthetic dimension and poetic exaltation are atrophied to disappearance.

The bureaucratic spleen, in the way we understood to conceptualize and configure it in this article, finds its specificity in the fact that it delineates itself as a perverse effect of a change initiative. The Europeanization process forced Romanian public organizations to manage and communicate a desirable but unfamiliar organizational knowledge. In this context, the public servants reacted by non-reaction. At the same time, they expressed an emotional state that was voided of emotion, of substance, but a state which neither depress them, nor frightens them. On the contrary, this state comforts them and solves every cognitive dissonance related to this change. Thus, the change proposed by the European Union is accepted and avoided with the same intensity. Positive communication of a major organizational change, like the European integration, is closely related to this *bureaucratic spleen*, the relationship not being one of causality, but rather one of mutual enhancement.

Even if in modern organizations we cannot talk about Max Weber's *iron cage*, but rather about a *glass cage* (Yiannis, 2008), employees still succeed in creating a series of niches, which are neither managed nor manageable. In these slots, the Romanian public servants succeed in creating identities and representations that do not match the organizational conformism, or the revolt, but which are more complex and richer than those that derive from common organizational practices (Gabriel, 2008).

There is a significant disequilibrium in favour of the tacit level, in the case of these two representational cores (explicit and tacit) that structure one another. This imbalance determines the communication of European knowledge in the Romanian public system to generate not just attitudinal distancing, but also a state of melancholia and nostalgic view on an organizational configuration and role, about which there is an awareness of its irrevocable and unre-

peatable character. Otherwise, this melancholia is satisfied, painless and voided of the pathos specific to nihilism or decadent symbolism, as observed by Jean Baudrillard (1994). Hence, this is the state that accompanies the explicit openness of the Romanian public administration toward the European integration process. The horizontal and vertical relational structure is one that indicates a high degree of satisfaction among the public servants in Romania, a relational satisfaction which is “decoupled” however from the potential effect of change. As shown in Table 4, in 2007, 64.2% of the public servants were, at the same time, satisfied with how the public organizations work, aware of the fact that these organizations do not meet European standards and perceiving this change to have a positive impact on their work environment.

The bureaucratic spleen should be understood, in this context, as a particular reaction generated by the permanent intersection between the affective level of the public servant’s attitude toward change, and the cognitive level of the same attitude, a level that has two subdimensions: tacit and explicit. The state of spleen is precisely this antagonistic relationship that the affective level has with the other two cognitive subdimensions. While the tacit cognitive level is directly proportional and coherent with regard to the affective level of the attitude toward change, the explicit cognitive level is inversely proportional in relation with the affective dimension. The communication of European knowledge is oriented almost exclusively in the direction of the cognitive dimension of the attitude towards change, and its purely discursive nature makes it penetrating only on the explicit level of this cognitive echelon.

We can conclude, based on the analysed data, that the bureaucratic spleen is permanently generated as an effect of the positive communication of European knowledge, a knowledge that is positively received at

explicit level, but which simultaneously feeds, in the opposite direction, the tacit subdimension of the cognitive level, in the context of an affective perseverance, negatively oriented towards change.

## Discussion

As Max Weber asserted, any act of knowledge in the sphere of social sciences is “knowledge in terms of specifically particular point of views” (apud Lahire, 2000). Following his perspective, and based on the data analysis operated on the available pre- and post-accession public opinion barometers that are relevant for our general theme and core objectives, we were able to conclude that our hypotheses are confirmed. In the case of Romanian public system, communication of European knowledge is the one that generates its own counterpoint, both at the individual and collective level. While at the collective level, this is manifested as resistance through distance, as decoupling the specific activities of the organization from everything related to European reform, at individual level, this atypical situation of the public servant can be defined as a continuous expression of bureaucratic spleen, with emotional and cognitive significance related to public workplace and its Europeanization.

The *bureaucratic spleen* is, without doubt, an oxymoron. Bureaucracy does not have emotions, feelings or states of mind; on the contrary, it is deeply impersonal and depersonalized. The spleen on the other hand, is clearly a state of mind and spirit, deeply personalized, in spite of its passive, melancholic and fatalist character. We consider this oxymoron to be perfectly adequate for this level of interpretation and understanding of the Romanian public administration dynamics, in the context of major Europeanization pressures. This

oxymoronic concept points out perfectly the apparent paradox of simultaneous acceptance and rejection, change and resistance to change, and that of a cognitive tacit state of mind that is antagonistic to its own explicit dimension, all of these manifested along an emotional background of melancholy and assumed sufficiency.

As a reaction to Europeanization pressures, the Romanian public administration reveals a chronic *bureaucratic spleen*, which constitutes a particular perverse effect of the positive organizational communication regarding Europeanization, and expresses itself as a special type of resistance to change. As a result of in-depth analyses elaborated in our research, the bureaucratic spleen configured itself in terms of a particular attitudinal response, generated by the permanent intersection between the affective level of the public servant's attitude towards change and the cognitive level of the same attitude, a cognitive level that is further divided into two different sublevels that coexist: the tacit sublevel and the explicit one. The state of spleen is given precisely by the antagonistic relationship between the affective level of this attitude towards change and the two cognitive sub dimensions. While the tacit cognitive sublevel is directly proportional and coherent with the affective level of the attitude towards change, the explicit cognitive sublevel is inversely proportional with this affective dimension.

The communication of European knowledge is directed almost exclusively towards the cognitive dimension of the change attitude and its pure discursive nature makes it penetrating or persuasive only at the explicit level of this cognitive dimension, a fact that explains the apparent paradox of the simultaneous acceptance and rejection of change, or the presumed attitudinal and cognitive dissonances revealed by the descriptive data obtained from the opinion polls and barometers dedicated to this matter.

The use of a multidimensional perspective in the analysis of attitudes towards change proved itself to be a key benefit for our research, the separate conceptualization of each attitudinal dimension giving us the possibility to understand various reactions along these distinct continuums. It is true that, in some cases, this only means that opinions towards change are much more positive than the emotional responses towards the same change. Such a multidimensional approach helps when trying to understand situations in which one faces profound ambivalences, as those in which the cognitive response towards change is in conflict with the response expressed at an emotional level. More than that, we observed that there are cases when this ambivalence can be found even at the level of the same dimension, in which case, the affectivity expressed towards change "can be negative and positive at the same time" (Piderit, 2000).

Trying to understand the insights of change communication, we suggested the concept of *bureaucratic spleen* as an expression of a perverse effect generated by the organizational communication of change and the innovative knowledge attached to that change, a perverse effect that does not exist in isolation. On the contrary, it is permanently built and reconfigured according to the intensity and shape of this change pressure.

Of course, this interest for knowledge should not be limited to the findings and conclusions presented here. The results of this study should be considered just a first milestone for future subjects of debate and investigation, in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the actions and cognitive mechanisms generated by the organizational dynamics specific to communicating change and to knowledge communication in a change context, even if this change is expressed as Europeanization, modernization or institutional reform. A qualitative study focusing on *bureaucratic spleen* and

on its different forms of manifestation at the level of communicating change, as well as in-depth testing of the communicational satisfaction of public servants would be useful for future research efforts. We can also think of a potential social cognitive neuroscience perspective that could rigorously operationalize and explain such an organizational communication phenomenon.

At the same time, it would be interesting and useful to investigate if resistance through distance and the bureaucratic spleen as perverse effect of organizational communication about and in favour of a change initiative, represents a cognitive configuration specific only to Romanian public organizations and its members, or we are dealing with a regional pattern (Central and Eastern Europe, in the context of European integration). Another interesting future approach would be a comparative study between different systems of

public administration that went through a similar change process, systems that are not necessarily European, such as the Chinese or Japanese system, or the public administration specific to other emergent democracies, such as Serbia, Montenegro or even Kosovo.

Despite of the potential future research approaches and the multitude of opportunities in using and developing the concept, we think that *bureaucratic spleen* is a colourless but strongly invasive *ingredient* of organizational communication of change in Romanian public administration and it should be interpreted and understood taking into account its current limitations, as a suggested concept meant to better depict and capture an unintentional effect that radically influences the organizational communication, the quality of knowledge management, and, at the same time, the functionality of the Romanian public administration reform in a European context.

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