



# Journal of Intercultural Management and Ethics

## JIME

ISSN 2601 - 5749, ISSN-L 2601 - 5749

published by

Center for Socio-Economic Studies and Multiculturalism  
Iasi, Romania  
[www.csesm.warter.ro](http://www.csesm.warter.ro)

**TABLE OF CONTENT**

Editorial .....	3
Julian Warter	
Culture Differences and Trust .....	5
Paulo Finuras	
The Pre-M&A Stage: Understanding the Phases and Success Factors .....	13
Rachel Calipha, David Brock	
Life's a Box of... Conversations: The Company as a Language Network .....	35
Thomas D. Zweifel	
How Could We Turn a Good Idea Into an Effective Action? From Human Security to Interpersonal Securitization .....	43
Anton Carpinski	
Laughing Matters: When Humor is Meaningful .....	55
Hershey H. Friedman, Linda Weiser Friedman	
Inequities in the Romanian Society of Today .....	73
Melentina Toma	
Dental Healthcare Accessibility in Underprivileged Populations.....	81
Oana Isailă, Hostiuc Sorin	
Book Review .....	87
George Simons	
Book Review .....	89
George Simons	

# INEQUITIES IN THE ROMANIAN SOCIETY OF TODAY

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## Abstract

The study encompasses a brief analysis of the main types of social inequalities manifested during the transition period of the Romanian society towards democracy and a competitive economy, the causes of these social differences and the possible remedies.

We consider social inequalities the differences of coexistence, between individuals, both objective and subjective, which have their roots, mainly, in the presence or absence of state intervention on the side of the common good, in correlation with the individual one. Even if these differences are manifested on an economic level, or a cognitive, legal, educational, axiological or social-human one, these are all essentially *social inequalities*, because they represent differences in the coexistence of man as a *social being*, in a regulated collectivity.

The differences in social coexistence thus reflect the deficiencies of institutional regulation, at a macro-social level, deficiencies of political management at national level, doubled by deficiencies in the continuity of moral regulations, the absence of ethics. To these are added deficiencies in individual behaviors, generated by their attitudes, beliefs, worldviews, types of actions. The causes of all social dysfunctions have their source in the *quality of education* of said society. A society based on ethics and the protection of the human being and life is inconceivable outside a thorough education.

**Keywords:** social inequalities, transition, education, ethics.

## Introduction.

Ștefan Lupașcu describes three types of *matter-energy* that function on the basis of a *dynamic equilibrium*, applicable also to social systems, between *homogeneity and heterogeneity*: in favor of homogeneity, in the macro-physical world; in favor of heterogeneity, in the living world, in favor of the equality of the two tendencies, homogeneous-heterogeneous, in the neuro-psyche and quantic world (Lupașcu, 1960). The dynamics of social systems indicate that, for communism, defining was the homogeneous-heterogeneous dynamic balance in favor of homogeneity. The capitalist system on the other hand is characterized by a balance in favor of heterogeneity. Any system disappears when it is engulfed solely by one of the two sides. Communism collapsed when homogeneity also gained the ground of heterogeneity, removing the contradictory dynamic balance. As the capitalist system today gives serious signs of crisis, by installing social heterogeneity and eliminating homogeneity, thus abolishing again the contradiction.

The transition from one political system to another is, naturally, possible only through economic, institutional and political changes that modify the comfort of human habits on all levels. In Romania, the transition period also coincides with the effort of integration into the European community. Considering the gap between our country and the western-European countries, but also the difficulty of reorganizing the state, internally, in this transitional stage for the Romanian society, there are dysfunctions on multiple levels, some with their roots in the past regime, others generated by the new context. Everyday life, through the reorganization of the social and political-administrative system during the transition to democracy and a competitive economy, becomes the favorable ground for economic, social,

cultural inequalities, etc., inequalities of opportunity, on the scale of individual and collective human evolution.

In the rush to wash away the traumas of the past and to fill the gap in relation with the other more economically developed democratic states, in the management of the Romanian transition *the middle way*, as indicated by Aristotle as an *ethical virtue*, expressing the middle of two opposite extremes, based on excess, and an insufficiency of alternatives, respectively, was not a visible option (Aristotle, 1988, p.135), *deliberate choice* indicating the principle of moral action, although the psychology of the Romanian people does not harmonize well with this preference for extreme situations, but, rather, with *being in line with the rest of the world*.

The *T state* „characterizes us as human beings” (Lupaşcu, 2000, p.84), in the hierarchy of values being the *supreme Good*. In the three-dimensional structure of the human being, the moral life, through *the T state*, specific to the *psychic* world, entails a median between extremes, given by the *physical* and *biological* world. The complex structure of the human being demands unique adaptation mechanisms and behaviors, materialized in *three ethics*, with specific registers of *Good* and *Evil*. (Lupaşcu, 1999, p.24): an *ethics* of a *homogenizing* energy; an *ethics* of a *heterogenizing* energy, in each case normality being given by the specific dissymmetric balance, the Good, and the deviations belonging to the pathological, the Evil; in the *ethics of the T state*, normality is given by contradiction, the maximum tension, based on the *homogeneous-heterogeneous* equality, illustrating the Supreme Good.

With a complex structure and a personal philosophy, during the transition to another regime, the Romanian citizen is strained to capitalize on the adaptation mechanisms, both for opportunities and for disasters, fractures and discontinuities, *education* making the difference between the options: „the individual, taken in itself, would be a meaningless being, if it wouldn't have been given to him in his social life to associate and contribute to the existence of spiritual goods, to the culture of the people of which he is a part of” (Rădulescu-Motru, 1998, p.73).

### **Embodiments of inequity during the transition period towards a democratic regime.**

In a democratic world in which it is aspired to eliminate the injustices propagated by the former communist regime, justified by the doctrine of egalitarianism and homogenization, the managers of the nation, represented by the legislative, executive and judicial powers, are caught up in a veritable challenge of our times. The tone is given by the social essence: *inequality before the law*, with multiple manifestations and with the multiplication of inequality on other levels: economic, social, axiological, cultural etc. The lack of firmness in the application of the law, its relativization depending on the perpetrator, creates the first great source of social disorder and mistrust in the authority of the state.

The immunity of national managers (parliamentarians, governors, etc.), which should only concern political statements, exempts the elected members of the nation from being in line with the world: they cannot even be investigated, in the event there is any suspicion of them breaking the law. With this protection, some do not even withdraw from their privileged status even if convicted. After 20-30 years, it no longer serves anyone to clarify the guilt/innocence of anyone, neither to the individual nor to the society. During this time, however, the authority of the state has been undermined, the contempt for the law was publicly exercised, another way of being in the community has been practiced, a certain type of behavior was suggested, democracy has been erroneously defined, lastly, the young generation was brought up on certain types of attitudes, messages and behaviors, as benchmarks of social learning. All these negative acquisitions, after 20 years in exercise, not only that these cannot be taken back, but have already been amplified through their effects, in a geometric progression.

Inequality before the law is also perceived as having sources in the *social status of the offender*, in general. The attitude regarding the control of the observance of the law and the regulations, but also the attitude towards the one who violates them, sometimes differs, depending on the person concerned. There have been some cases, made public by the press, in which people with important functions were exempted from routine police checks, or, if they were controlled, the misdeed was not counted, as, the same was proven indirectly, by the attitude of a chauffeur to a parliamentarian, who was revolted by the fact that he was stopped in traffic, surprised that his special status was not recognized by the police officer, to be above the law.

Inequality before the law can also have an *objective source*, disregarding the time and place it took place, in the actual paradox of the functioning of the defense: the one who has more money has access to the best lawyer, whether he is the defendant or the injured person.

In other words, the best minds in the field of law, can be put in the service of the worst perpetrators, in the case that the latter have enough financial resources. In this case, the paradox is given by the fact that the eminent lawyer, a professional, does not have the satisfaction to have been contributed to the establishment of justice and social order, his professional success materializing in his participation in the reduction of his client's guilt, the reduction of his sanction and even the acquittal of the guilty!

In the case that some individuals involved in the process of dispensing justice have problems of professional ethics themselves, or have poor training, and have been many examples of this in the Romanian transition, the inequalities before the law also have *subjective sources*. Judicial errors have aroused much controversy in the Romanian society and solutions are being sought to improve the activity of justice, but also to hold magistrates accountable.

Inequality before the law also has its source in the *different demands* regarding the state, respectively, the citizen, the double measure, in terms of respecting the laws, the rules on social life, as well as the unwritten laws. There are enough situations in which, if the citizen delays with his payments to the state, he receives penalties, while, if the reverse happens, the state is not sanctioned, unless the citizen has power, from all points of view, to go to court against the state. Moreover, there are situations in which the adoption of a law targets, through its promptitude and obligativity, in some articles, only the citizen, the state being omitted.

*Law no. 1 concerning national education*, adopted on January 5, 2011, in the middle of the academic year, comes with at least two discriminations: in no field of activity was it ever allowed to change the rules during the game, and the lawyers know this well, taking care not to let something like this happens to them; but in education it happened; with the entry into force of the respective law, the payment per hour was reduced, to that of a supplementary norm, although the teachers already started their academic year with other regulations regarding this type of activity. At the same time, art. 8, regarding the obligation of the state to finance the education with 6% of its gross domestic product, not only was it not honored *immediately*, in the second semester, but it was never honored at all, and in the meantime 9 years of activity have passed!

What can be said about the other provisions of the law, regarding the qualification of education as a „national priority” (art. 222, 3a.), the organization of the national higher education system on the „principle of equity” and „the principle of managerial, and financial, efficiency”? (art. 118, 1). Acts of pure philosophy. Where would the managerial efficiency of the resort ministry be located, according to the demands of this law? Where would the responsibility of the state be in observing the law, but in the sanctioning, in the obvious case, of non-compliance? The questions come to emphasize the unilateral character of the law enforcement claims, the state being favored, like the master that gives no account to anyone.

During the period of the Romanian transition, inequality before the law takes the form of *many other* harmful aspects for the individual and for society. Debt recovery by the state is another, unnatural, discrimination opportunity between debtors. Petty debtors are forced to be disciplined, while greater debtors go unnoticed, sometimes accumulating debts of hundreds of millions of euros. During this time, the institution consistently pays one or more managers, for the inefficiency of their activity, probably. Although this squandering is easily detectable, the state is not disturbed. Moreover, it prepares a great gift: „it generously passes it over to the public debt, or it infinitely resales the debts of the societies where the fictional work has exceeded, in volume, the real work” (Lisievič, 2000, p.20). Thus „everyone wins from this business, except the state”.

According to the frequency with which this scheme of action has been used, like the failed privatization schemes, it is no longer possible to speak of pure chance, of ignorance, etc., but of *the absence of ethics in action*. The numerous evidences of corruption illustrate not only the wrong directions of action, in the various fields, bad will, bad intention, personal interests, but also the absence of effective management, at a national level, in the management of resources for the benefit of the community. The absence generated by the state's withdrawal as the responsible owner of the national wealth, before creating structures to replace it.

By evoking other registers of inequity, we can continue the inventory of the types of inequalities generated by the relationship to the law. *The hierarchy of economic and social activities* is another source of inequity, the legal one! Salarization, and correlatively retirement plans, based on an assessment of the social activity of the individual, using criteria, themselves subjective human choices, naturally produce hierarchies that exclude equality. However, it is a natural the concern to reduce inequalities for the same level of payment, for the same field, to use essential criteria in professional differentiation, to find common rules for achieving the unity of the assessment and material attribution.

The hierarchy behind this salarization betrays the system of social values, the philosophy regarding the social importance of each type of work, a kind of a fashion of our time relating to the social categories. At the same time, the implementation of the law on salarization and retirement constitutes a series of tools for education, for exercising the attitude towards social classes and categories. Well-paid categories enjoy not only prestige and respect, but also great competition in the selection of the personnel for the respective field, thus achieving the increase of the human quality in the field and, correlatively, the increase of the quality of the activities and services.

On this *feed-back*, we could periodically build policies to rejuvenate the declining domains. At the moment, during the transition period, as well as in general, in Romanian society, *education* is needed, as the vital element of any socio-human existence. However, the education reform, after 30 years, is moving in circles, to the chagrin of the students and the other educational factors. The last years, marked by the controversies on the topic of justice, have wasted, selfishly, the time of the other fields, including education, without even gaining anything, especially for justice. It grinded empty, the elected of the people mimicking public activity.

The Romanian transition is in full swing in the hierarchy of professions. From the communist philosophy that placed at the top of the wage pyramid the worker/miner and the production, the intellectuals being economically insignificant, generating inequities difficult to tolerate, there have been, at present, numerous disputes over the hierarchies, in the hope of correcting the imbalances. After a single attempt, publicly announced, to elevate education in this hierarchy, which appeared only for a few days in the project, then the field went into the shadows and no further attempts at a populist declaration even appeared afterwards.

In reality, we are witnessing a veritable war of interests: the financially well rated categories do not want to give up their reserved place, as such, the others have no way of ascending the hierarchy. Naturally it would be to reduce the gaps by reducing the privileges, exaggerated for the economic stage in which Romania is. Inequities are generated by these privileges and their justification. It is not necessarily about the fact that some categories are rated too well, in other circumstances maybe this would be natural, the problem is that other categories are financially wrecked. As the economic situation of Romania does not allow the classification of the latter as the first categories, the solution can be given by the approximation of the two extremes to the middle line: the first must give up some advantages, going down one or two steps in favor of the latter, which will go up one or two steps.

How ethical is it to justify the salaries of magistrates through *prevention*? It goes on with the sophism: if they are exceptionally paid, they are correct, if they are not very well paid, they will be tempted to be corrupt. Wouldn't it be easier, as in any other social category, that the one to make mistakes to have to pay for them, and not have to have the magistrate be paid extra in order not to make mistakes? Other sophistries are also used to support the magistrates' privileges. The argument of the type „youas well”, used in various other cases, invoking the fact that there is the same practice in Europe.

In Romania, the problem is not that the magistrates are well paid, but that other social categories, also important for society, are very poorly paid, the differences indicating an unjustified inequity. If a 1st grade teacher, with 40 years of work experience, in compliance with the law on salarization, earns a pension of 1400 lei, and a magistrate obtains a five figures pension, how could any sophism save the contempt of the *specialists trainers*, the teachers? Therefore the recourse to the situation in Europe is an *ignoratio elenchi* that serves no use, from a logical point of view, as neither can the slogan, *an earned right cannot be lost*, which contradicts the possibility of progress, including at the level of justice.

Sophistics has a place of honor also in other types of justifications for the advantages that make certain social categories *veritable castes*: it is said that those in the fiscal field must be well paid, because they bring the money, if we do not pay them, we have no money. Why should they not be sanctioned, if they do not honor their job, as any other employee who does not do his job? Is a teacher that is not going to school paid? On the other hand, if the *preventive payment* is also practiced in the fiscal field, how dowe explain the paradox that, annually, the government reports a low percentage of tax collection to the state budget, below the European level, not to mention the situation of the big debtors, not observed at the right time, who were sent in insolvency.

Relating to the two laws leads to other types of inequalities, having the source in privileges, generated by the *diversity of criteria*. If we compare, for example, two people who begin their activity at 25 and end their life at 75, the most obvious inequity could be given by the fact that one of them, the teacher, works 40 years and he enjoys a pension for 10 years, for which *he has contributed*; the other one works for only 20 years and enjoys his pension, for another 20 years, a pension for which *he has not contributed*, even without arguing that the latter's pension is several times higher.

The reform, together with the loss of some advantages generates a resistance in any society, as proofare the protests in France, aimed at reforming the heterogeneous pension system. This is also the reason why the representatives of the power in Romania during the transition did not rush to reduce the inequities resulting from the *Law on Salarization*, respectively the *Law on Retirement*, through losses, and when they did so they were electorally sanctioned. Rather, there is the populist temptation to increase the material advantages of the disadvantaged categories, regardless of the economic risk involved.

Considering the fact that the elections were separated in three different intervals, one can understand the difficulty of some radical, but useful measures, in the healing of various

fields and in restoring respect for the individual and for each of the professional categories, the difficulty in restoring social equity, central and local managers being in a permanent election campaign. Most often the only act of courage in this reformation is the concern of leaving an inheritance to the political opponent, the hot potato, the changing of the shift, according to the principle, *after us, the flood*.

The economic inequalities between individuals, between professional categories, between Romania and other states in the community space have different sources, objective and subjective, individual or social, in the past, but also in the current context. At the macro-economic level, community policies of cohesion and convergence do not necessarily solve the situation, since the reduction of the disparities between countries in some respects, in the short term, is achieved at the same time as the deepening of other disparities, in the long term, the cohesion representing, the general result of the process of convergence“(Leonardi, 2005, p.9).At least in the context of the transition, excluding the faulty management of the situations, the main source of economic inequity is the inequality before of the law and the rules: equal opportunities through laws and community rules is not accompanied by an equal power of action, which makes the strong one strengthen even more, and the weak one to lose ground. Equal opportunities are thus accompanied by increasing gaps, due to economic, educational, contextual differences, etc. of the community participants.

The free movement of goods, persons, services and capital, as specific freedoms of the community space (Turşie, 2013), although they ensure the conditions of a gradual homogenization, the effects are diverse. For Romania, these represent conditions for increasing the economic gap, due to the *unilateral participation* in these freedoms: for a very large part of the transition period, the free movement of goods was made only towards Romania, and today, even if exports are made, imports heavily dominate the trade balance. The Romanian producer was not ready to go out into the world with its products and neither the situation could be easily resolved. The effects? Bankruptcy of the internal domestic autochthonous production, through the invasion of cheaper products from the outside. The same thing happened with the unilateral invasion of foreign capital, which produced only positive effects for the mother country, where the profit was returned. Few are the cases in which part of the profit was invested in the host country.

Unilateral participation is also in the case of accessing European funds. They existed as a possibility, but they were not in reality accessible, lacking the necessary education and structures. Only after a good couple of years were policies launched in this area and literacy began. With small exceptions, the results indicate totally inefficient funds absorption, wasted money, corruption, all the big projects remaining at this stage and outside the European funding. We return to education, with Rădulescu-Motru from another time that seems unchanged: if we want to adopt the European institutional model, we must „apply their political and economic principles”, renouncing „all the bad habits that distance us“ (Rădulescu-Motru, 1999, p.32).

Only the free movement of persons brought some immediate economic benefits, to Romanian, but to the host countries as well! In the long term, however, this advantage produces negative effects: the reduction of the active population, the decrease of the birthrate, the decrease of the number of specialists in various fields, family break-up, school drop-out, accidents involving unattended minors, etc., an opportunity that Romania used, but with sacrifices.

During the period of the Romanian transition, the internal *political management*, as well as the relationship with the European Union, were deeply inadequate, unprofessional. The causes are multiple. Until other concretizations, the universal cause is unique: the lack of education in all its registers. It is not only about the absence of knowledge and experience in

the field (there were enough specialists in the country), but also of an attitude, responsibility, character, will, affectivity, motivations, etc. and other sides of the complex human structure.

In their absence, the industrial tradition in certain sectors for which Romania was internationally renowned was hastily destroyed, lands were sold for nothing, even if they could have been listed as strategic resources. The Dutch, who are reclaiming the land from under the sea, understood this and became strategic owners. In the absence of education there is no concern for the protection of the natural environment, land, air, water, forests, for the increase of birthrates, for the future of the pupil and of the student, for their professional perspective, etc., the list is endless. In the absence of education, public institutions and services can be hijacked from being „means for achieving the public good”, to „means for achieving personal interests” (Rădulescu-Motru, 1998, p.65). Given the lack of education, in the 30 years of transition, Romania has been an easy prey for those interested. The result is obvious to the eye.

### Conclusions.

In the Romanian society, the transition to a democratic regime and a market economy, as a gradual process of institutional, economic, social reform, etc., is accompanied by dysfunctions, materialised, in many cases, in inequities on the level of social existence.

The sources of inequity are multiple, with manifestations on various levels, the most obvious source being the discrimination of some social categories in relation to the law, by its *content* (the Law on Salarization, the Law on Retirement), or by its *application*, relative to the target (Law on Education and many others).

At a decisional level, flawed management on the political, economical, social, educational, cultural levels, etc., both strategically and in terms of implementation, lack of ethics in action, indicates that, ultimately, the main source of inequities in the period of Romanian transition is *the quality of the human resource*, provided through education. Therefore, the ultimate cause of social dysfunctions is the lack of adequate education. The intention of reform in this field had not overcome this vicious circle.

Through the absence of education, we can explain, together with Hayek, *why the worst come to the fore*: not because „they have a choice between disregarding the current morality and failure” (Hayek, 1993, p.155), but because, having no education, they do not have a choice (!) and the elections illustrate the audacity of the ignorant. The complete answer: the worst come to power, because we allow them.

Through education and culture these social dysfunctions can be overcome, in favor of the human being: „in culture the finality of the social consciousness is mirrored; through it, deeds acquire a higher meaning, they become historical” (Rădulescu-Motru, 1998, p.77). The attainment of the *T state*, of the *consciousness of conscience*, invoked by Lupașcu, is possible only through education.

The division of Romania into *castes*, according to the different facets concerning the individuals` relationship to the law, and to all the inequities described above, is adequately illustrated by the institutional symbolism: the national management centers, manifestos in legislative, executive and judicial actions, materialized in the Cotroceni Palace, the Palace of the Parliament and the Palace of Justice, on the one hand, and the prospect of the Salvation of the People, materialized in the small room of the peasant from Bucovina, Apuseni, Bărăgan or the Delta, on the other. The contrast is given by the parallelism of the two worlds, one material, the other spiritual.

The discrepancy between the national centers of management and the managed reality would not necessarily betray an element of separation, if a difference of essence would not occur: thinking is done differently in a hut than in a palace.

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