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## **Moral Panic, Risk or Hazard Society—the Relevance of a Theoretical Model and Framings of *Maidan* Dogs in Chişinău and Bucharest**

„And dogs. A bunch of mutts were sluggishly jogging on the concrete. Everything here was ownerless” (Stasiuk 2009).

*Abstract:* The study analyses the dynamics of public debate surrounding the issue of *maidan* [stray] dog population control strategies in Moldavia and Romania. The comparison takes as its point of reference two episodes of moral panic and discusses the applicability of the theoretical models of moral panic, risk and hazard society. Following the work of Bruno Latour, Mary Douglas, Phil Macnaghten and John Urry, the study distinguishes between the conceptualization of strays dogs (as hybrids) in terms of nature, and their conceptualization in terms of culture. It argues that the stabilization in terms of nature is more suitable to be addressed by the theoretical models of risk and hazard society, whilst the stabilization in terms of culture pertains to the theoretical model of moral panic instead.

*Keywords:* dog population management; moral panic; risk society; hazard society; Bucharest; Chişinău.

From the theoretical point, the challenge in the analyses of the implications of the presence of a large number of free-ranging dogs on the streets of the Romanian and Moldavian capitals is to decide whether the would-be sociology of dog population management (as applied to these particular cases) is to be circumscribed to the broader field of moral panics, to that of risk society, or perhaps to hazard society. Crossing the borders of these two countries, we learn that the matter of choosing one of the three theoretical models is further relevant when considering Russia, Bulgaria and Serbia for example. Whilst, as far as parts of India and China are concerned, the study would more easily decide either for risk society or for hazard society (thus leaving the model of moral panic aside). This hypothesis is based on a fundamental difference between Bucharest and Chişinău on the one hand, and parts of China and India on the other. This is the fact that, as the latter regions are concerned, the phenomenon of dog population management is connected—even subordinated—to that of rabies control.

The dog control strategies are concerned with three problems: dog population control, dog bites/attacks and rabies prevention. Proposed methods of dealing with one matter do not necessarily lead to a solution for others. Furthermore, it is rare for a consensus to be reached regarding the policy for any of the three sets of problems. The Romanian and Moldavian dog population management deals with the number

and aggressiveness of the total dog population and particularly with the number and aggressiveness of stray dogs whereas, Indian and Chinese dog control also targets rabies prevention. Thus, the employment of dog-beating teams in dog culls—such as in Beijing in 2006 and in Shaanxi province in 2009—and the imposition of a one dog policy—such as in Guangzhou in 2009 and in Beijing in 2006—are part of Chinese efforts to fight the spread of rabies and the abandonment of pets. Controlling the population of stray dogs as a strategy in the fight against rabies is also documented for Western Europe. John K. Walton's article, *Mad Dogs and Englishmen: The Conflict over Rabies in Late Victorian England* (1979), analyses how the decline in rabies in urban England was achieved by the rounding-up of stray and wandering dogs and by the issuing of a muzzling order. In the context of the fight against rabies, dog population control resembles pest control—during the plagues in Bombay, for example, the systematic dissection and counting of rats (in order to count and examine flies) took place (Burt 2006: 119–129).

The present study analyses the dynamics of public debate surrounding the issue of ownerless dog population control strategies in Romania and Moldova. The comparison takes as its point of reference two episodes of moral panic. The first one erupted in Bucharest in 2006 after Hajime Hori—a 68-year-old Japanese business man—died after being attacked by a dog only few steps from the government building in Bucharest. The second one was witnessed in Chişinău, in 2009, after the death of Victor Cotug—a 57-year-old municipal employee—attacked by a pack of dogs in early June. Both events were given intense media coverage. The authorities' response was to outline supplementary dog catching measures. The occurrences triggered responses from already established institutional actors in the field—while also occasioning the appearance and establishment of new ones. The subsequent impact on the field of urban dog population management is especially visible in the Moldavian case, where the municipal council of Chişinău advanced a project creating a dog catching institution that would supplement the activity of the Municipal Enterprise "Administration of Auto Sanitation."

The reconstruction of the dynamics of ownerless dog population management in Moldova and Romania is based on the content analysis of press releases (2005–early 2010 for Romania, and 2008–early 2010 for Moldova), legislative proposals, laws and the activity balances of the city hall of Chişinău for 2008 and 2009.

### Theoretical Guidelines

In the next section, I will present the following three theoretical models: moral panic, risk society and hazard society, and I will discuss their relevance with respect to the dynamics of dog population management in Chişinău and in Bucharest. As the applicability of the models is to be established according to the conceptualization of the stray dogs as social actors, I will begin with an introduction to the theoretical perspectives that operate with the notions of *transgressive animals* and *hybrids* (between nature and culture). This part will be followed by more or less general considerations

on moral panic, risk and hazard society, and eventually by an applied theoretical analysis of the two case studies.

**New Geographies of Human-‘Transgressive Animal’ Relations as Geographies  
of Human-Hybrid Relations**

This approach might be termed as a subfield of new animal geography that documents and analyses the inclusion and exclusion of animals termed as *transgressive* from particular types of places. Pest control targeting rats and cockroaches, and regulations that forbid the feeding of specific birds (pigeons for example) in the city are all strategies of limiting this transgressiveness. Following Philo and Wilbert (2000: 21), feral cats and dogs are “curiously transgressive beings,” which find accommodation in built-up areas and marginal spaces. *Feral* denotes animals occupying an intermediary location, being somewhere between wild and domesticated. Hence, it superposes with the term stray. Regarding the broader field of new animal geography, this was mainly advanced by Anglo-American geographers in the 1990s. Yet, the stimulus for focusing on human/animal relations with space, and on human influence on animal life was already given in the 1950s and 1960s (Philo and Wilbert 2000: 4). Primarily, new animal geography is an attempt to combine a monograph of human-animal relations with an analytical/theoretical work that relies on Edward Said’s concept of “imaginative geograph.” Said’s term indicates conceptual and hierarchical framings of spatial fauna and flora distribution. Following this approach, it is revealed that the term ‘transgressive’ indicates the crossing of boundaries between nature and culture—that is, of boundaries which are defined as such by humans. The social construction of these is contextually and culturally sensitive, and sometimes the (peaceful or conflicting) coexistence of distinct imaginative geographies might be located even within the limits of one’s city or neighbourhood.

An interesting study in this respect is Huw Griffiths, Ingrid Poulter and David Sibley’s project on, “Feral Cats in the City” (of Hull, Great Britain). The authors discuss perceived levels of ‘transgressiveness’ in cats—pets, feral and wild—in connection to the concept of pollution. As stated, transgression constitutes the breaking of the boundary between nature and culture. In the case of pet cats, the transgression is revealed when, as a result of the animals breaking their confinement, pollution of the domestic space is effected. This can be seen, for example, when they bring mice or birds into the home (Griffiths *et al.* 2000: 58). The levels of transgressiveness in feral/stray cats are certainly higher. Yet the perception of these is dependent on whether the feral felines are perceived as being closer to pet cats, or closer to wild ones. In addition, the potential of high mobility between these two poles should be also taken into account. The issue of the perception of stray cats as pets or wild animals is essential. And this is for the reason that the former representation might allow for the assimilation of stray colonies in the urban context, leading to them being considered as ‘belonging’. Meanwhile, the latter might lead to some groups contesting their presence on the grounds that urban ordered spaces incorporate animals solely as pets (Griffiths *et al.*, 2000: 58–59).

This approach resonates to a great extent to that presented in the foregoing. The employment of the term *hybrid* instead of *transgressive animal* is meant to drive us closer to Bruno Latour (1993) and Mary Douglas' (1995) work on the concepts of hybrids, pollution and taboo. As the work of Bruno Latour has been thoroughly analyzed and interpreted by Krzysztof Abriszewski (2008), I will also make reference to this author in order to validate some of my assumptions regarding the applicability of Latour's theory to the Moldavian and Romanian case-studies.

The application of the term *hybrid* also makes conspicuous the fact that by threatening the defining lines between nature and culture, the transgressive animal also mingles these two spheres—or at least it does so in our representation. According to Latour, the “modern constitution” is built on rejecting juxtapositions of spheres which are classified as being distinct. “The modern partition” is the divide between nature and culture, nature and society. This fact, in turn, contributes to the “proliferation of hybrids.” Following Douglas (1995), such a critical reaction might be viewed in terms of “pollution behaviour”—where pollution effected by transgressions is a mechanism of transmitting danger by contact. “Hybrids and other confusions” constitute an “anomaly” that diffuses ambiguity and might raise feelings of anxiety when encountered by people. They are labelled as dangerous and attempts are made to subject them to physical control (Douglas 1995: 39–40, 53). With regard to animals as hybrids, Douglas' discursive analysis of the dietary rules of Leviticus (the third book of the Christian Old Testament and the third of the five books of the Jewish Torah) is particularly relevant. She establishes the criteria of attributing cleanness to animals. Accordingly, these are mainly based on establishing to what extent an animal belongs to a definite class and to this specific class solely (Douglas 1995: 55).

An important outcome of Douglas' analysis is that it shows that the rejection of hybrids is not an invention of modern times. Following the work of the two authors, we learn that the main distinction between modern and pre-modern attitudes toward hybrids consists in the fact that pre-modern groups recognize them and consequently try to limit their existence, whilst modern populations ignore them, which as a result, leads to their proliferation (i.e. this is achieved by “the work of purification and mediation”) (Latour 1993: 41).

If the “pre-modern [peoples] are all monists in the constitution of their cultures,” then modern groups are all dualists. According to Abriszewski (2008: 208), “the ‘dualizing’ way of speaking” is related to the polarity of “nature-culture;” and questioning it would imply questioning this *polarity*, which would mean that “hybrids constitute for us hybrids as such, and not mixtures of two substances.” Replacing the dual social and natural order (meaning that only these two poles are embedded with agency) with monism would render that any hybrids placed on the continuum will be embedded with agency and thus would “assume responsibility for [their] activity” (Abriszewski 2008: 208). In conclusion, the dualism should also be viewed as an organized system of allocating responsibility. Furthermore, this is also a system of “locating each actor on the nature-culture axis,” where every social actor is “purified” either as nature or as culture.

The conceptualization in these terms of relation between hybrids and humans, and more specifically of the relations between hybrids and humans in modern society,

allows for the opening of new paths of analysis. One such inquiry, for example, would focus on the place of stray dogs as hybrids in Romanian society. Their status as hybrids should be understood in correlation with several distinctions: culture vs. nature, and pets vs. wildlife. The different modalities for referring to strays—*câini maidanezi* / *maidanezii* [waste ground dogs, *maidan* dogs], *câini comunitari* [community dogs], *câini vagabonzi* [vagabond/wandering/stray dogs], or *câinii străzii* [street dogs]—reveal their status as “ex-pets.” To further employ the terminology used by Huw Griffiths, Ingrid Poulter and David Sibley (2000: 58) in their study of stray cats in Hull: these dogs are “all potential pets.”

### The Three Theoretical Models

The moral panic perspective seems appropriate in those cases when a consensus of defining *transgressive animals* as *problem animals* emerges. It also points to research in human-transgressive animal conflicts that should be viewed as a sub-field in the prolongation of the studies in human-wildlife conflicts. Colin Jerolmack’s (2008) article: “How Pigeons Became Rats: The Cultural-Spatial Logic of Problem Animals,” amply documents this evolution from *transgressive* to *problem animal*. His underlying argument is that the issue of animals as social problems is socially constructed, and it derives from the cultural framing of culture-nature relations. Notably, moral panic theory also pertains to cases of overlapping imaginative geographies which dispute the place of transgressive animals in the urban context. For example, the response of animal welfare associations and supporters of stray dogs to their mistreatment and killings could be understood in these terms. The study of Roger Yates, Chris Powell and Piers Beirne (2001) concerning the societal reaction to sequences of horse maiming in rural Hampshire in the 1990s is illustrative for this type of research inquiry.

Briefly stated, moral panic is an organized societal reaction to certain crimes or to distinguishable *social types*. In this case the transgression of the social norm is viewed as a recurrent transgression of certain groups or social types. The phenomenon has been usually analyzed in relation to youth, class, gender, ethnicity, race, generation etc. According to Iwona Zielińska’s (2004: 170) literature review of relevant studies in the field, the fundamental difference between the phenomenon of moral panic and that of social problem is the element of morality. Consequently, occurrences such as pandemic influenza or the problematic consumption of beef—though they might be termed social problems—do not constitute instances of moral panic. Moral sensibility is connected to two other factors of distinction between the two phenomena: folk devils—“visible reminders of what we should not be” (Cohen 1993: 9–10)—and the fluctuation in the level of social anxiety in the case of moral panic.

Thus, moral panic seeks to subject to social control groups or social categories which are defined as deviant. Paraphrasing this postulate in terms that are rather familiar to the theoretical frameworks presented above, “I would argue that moral panic is concerned with culture, and that risk society is about nature.” This (obvious) hypothesis seems to be validated by further passages of Zielińska’s (2004: 172–173) synthesis. Thus, when discussing moral panic in connection with risk society, the

author follows the work of Sheldon Ungar who operates with the same distinction between moral deviation on the one hand and chemical and medical threats on the other.

Returning to the issue of moral panic, the question arises regarding the specific context (or posture) when it would be possible to talk about the partaking of animals in occurrences of moral panic. Following Bruno Latour, the immediate reaction would be: in any situation (as long as the animal is imbedded with social agency). Next, a more elaborate answer would point to the animal as hybrid between nature and culture, and would probably argue that moral panic phenomena appear when the animal (the hybrid defined in terms of culture) becomes transgressive (i.e. exhibits features of nature). Such a feature of nature (in the context of the case studies discussed within the limits of this paper) is the aggressiveness of the stray dogs. Furthermore, the whole list of their possible denominations (wandering dogs, *maidan* dogs, community dogs, ownerless dogs) certifies *their deviance from the status of pure pet*, and—in spite of this—their *further belonging to the category of domestic dogs*. In this case, the dog as hybrid is not yet clearly constructed as *nature*. A clear purification in terms of nature would indicate the model of risk society, and not that of moral panic.

Aside from the above possibility of integrating animals as social actors in the analysis (as folk devils), there is a second option where the animals are either the victims of humans, or their deviant agency is viewed as an outcome of human behaviour. In both these cases, the human conduct is that which is deviant in the first place.

Roger Yates, Chris Powell and Piers Beirne's cited article—"Horse Maiming in the English Countryside: Moral Panic, Human Deviance, and the Social Construction of Victimhood" (2001)—is illustrative for instances of moral panic when animals are listed as victims. An example for the would-be cases in which the agency of the animal is perceived as less autonomous, or as traceable to human deviance is that of Romania. Here, the responsibility for the aggressiveness and agglomeration of stray dogs on the streets of Bucharest is disputed among several actors. We witness accusations, shifts of responsibility and exculpations that eventually delay the promulgation of a national plan of dog population management. More explicitly, the phenomenon of stray dogs is perceived to instigate the prolongation of three other phenomena:

- the 'repatriation of stray dogs'—the case of 'immigrant'/'smuggled' stray dogs
  - Practices of 'deportation' of stray dogs from one city to another, or from one city to limitroph towns and villages is perceived to be carried out (usually) by municipal workers, though cases where private persons were involved have also been reported
  - the 'fake' adoption of stray dogs
  - Practices of the adoption of stray dogs in order to release them back on the streets.
  - the support of the population
- This refers to practices of feeding the stray dogs and protecting them from dog catchers.

The following typology of occurrences of moral panic with instances of animal agency (i.e. animals as social actors) can be constructed:

- moral panic about transgressive animals (not yet problem animals);
- moral panic about human deviance in which animals occupy the place of victim;

— moral panic about human deviance leading to transgressive animals.

The anthropology and sociology of risk made their debut in the social sciences at the end of the 1960s. Within the field of anthropology the paradigm of *cultural theory of risk* was introduced in 1982 with Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky's book, *Risk and Culture: an Essay on the Selection of Technical and Environmental Dangers*. In the field of sociology, the term *risk society* made its breakthrough in 1986 when Ulrich Beck's, *Risk Society*, was published. In *Risk and Blame*, Douglas' (1996) 'archaeology' of the meanings attributed to risk in the social discourse reveals the shift from an understanding in terms of "risk taking" to that of "risk-as danger." The author also indicates the potential of the new meaning in metamorphosing the word 'risk' into an instrument of social criticism directed towards the abuse of power and trust (Douglas 1996: 24–25). Returning to Ulrich Beck's *Risk Society*, the concept pertains to technologically induced dangers (chemical pollution, atomic radiation and genetically modified organisms). Their next common denominator is that they are inaccessible to the senses, with the implication that it is hard to make a case about their existence until their actual emergence (Adam and van Loon 2000: 3). Beck has also pointed to the effectiveness of discursive strategies for changing the political agenda of modern industrial society (a process referred to as 'sub-politicization') (Adam and van Loon 2000: 4). Hence, the field of risk-definition and the contestation and imposition of knowledge is influenced by the dynamics of contemporary political rivalries.

In the foregoing section on moral panic, I advanced the hypothesis that this phenomenon is concerned with culture, and that risk society is concerned with nature. Recalling the typology of episodes of moral panic with instances of animal agency (i.e. animals as social actors), I would claim that risk society is an advanced form of *moral panic about transgressive animals* which are constructed as *problem animals*. The model of risk society implies a clear stabilization of the hybrid in terms of nature.

Following the previous line of inquiry, I will generally define hazard society as a risk society where ecological, nuclear, medical etc. risks (dangers) are of a cultural provenience—i.e. there is a social discourse distributing responsibility to concrete social actors (humans). For the purposes of our paper, the difference between *moral panic about human deviance leading to transgressive animals* and *hazard society*—except for the dualism of nature–culture—is that in the latter case the blame for the risks encountered is to be put on the powers-that-be including scientists, concrete institutions, corporations etc. Whereas, in the case of moral panic, the responsibility is distributed to social groups which are presented in a stereotypical manner. The model of moral panic pertains to welfare organizations which adopt stray dogs and put them on the streets, as well as to zone protectors [*protectori de zonă*] which feed and protect the dogs and to people who abandon puppies on the streets. The model of risk society pertains to the activity of the mayor, to the city council, to the government and to all the local and national institutions which have resources to influence the legislative framework of the dynamics of dog population management. Probably, the actor which could successfully claim membership to both models is the animal welfare organizations.

The principle laying at the foundation of the theoretical model of hazard society is that, namely, if it were not for the ignorance or misinformation of the powers-that-be or of the scientists, the dangers that put the society at risk might have been avoided. In other words, if the element defining risk society is unpredictability; the behaviour defining hazard society would be taking risks at somebody else's expense.

The theoretical model indicates an element of distinction between the layers of the society, in the sense that the powers-that-be or the scientists enjoy the privilege of taking risks, meanwhile other strata (with no power of decision in the matter) are further subjected to the dangers resulting from the initial risk taking—in other words, they are exposed to hazards. In the former case, we deal with risk as risk taking, whilst in the latter we deal with risk/hazards as dangers. Phil Macnaghten and John Urry (2005: 328–364) made reference to the theoretical model of hazard society when discussing the implications of mad cow disease for English society in the 1980s and in the 1990s. The epidemics showed the extent to which industrial practices penetrate the most private aspects of everyday life (like for example: eating). Accordingly, the outbreak of the disease and the inconsistent declarations of the government effected low levels of trust in political authorities and in scientific expertise (Macnaghten and Urry 2005: 349). Following Barbara Adam, the authors employ the term hazard in the sense that hazard does not involve risk taking, and that people are rather victims of hazard—meaning that they are facing the risk already taken (by others) and not taking it themselves. In this understanding of the term, hazard comes from outside our spheres of action and it is unpredictable.

While all the above pertains, the term hazard society employed here refers to a culturally identifiable (and blameable) source of risk—as danger—as nature. Notably, in this case it is the political and/or scientific elites who are perceived as risk entrepreneurs.

### **Background of the Study**

According to press releases (an official census is still lacking), the estimated number of stray dogs in Bucharest—a city of nearly two million inhabitants—ranges between 30,000 and 100,000; whereas in Chişinău—with more than half a million inhabitants—it ranges between 6,000 and 40,000. Regarding the broader social problem of unwanted pets, in both Romania and Moldova these dogs evolved from the status of *abandoned/ownerless dogs* to that of *community/street/stray/ownerless/wandering pets*. They are also referred to as *câini maidanezi—maidanezii* [waste ground dogs]. The diversification of the modalities of designating them is itself indicative of the amplitude of the phenomenon in the two countries under analysis. The fact that the Romanian language is the official language of Moldova renders the task of the following content analysis easier. Besides this element, there is the obvious advantage that the usage of the same language in the official Romanian and Moldavian documents increases the chances of employing the correct units in the content analysis.



Romanian public discussion surfaced earlier than that which took place in Moldavia. Illustrative of this phase difference, is the fact that Bucharest witnessed episodes of moral panic over the aggression of stray dogs throughout the 2000s, whilst the Moldavian press releases indicate the occurrence of this phenomenon just in 2008–2009. Reportedly, the presence of the stray dogs in the Romanian urban fauna is a post-revolutionary phenomenon which finds its roots in Nicolae Ceaușescu's policy of large scale demolitions, whereas, the Moldavian social problem is regarded to have surfaced ten years ago.

The Romanian and Moldavian population of stray dogs became a matter of concern for similar organizations working for the protection of animal rights—The Brigitte Bardot Foundation and Vier Pfoten International being cases in point. One also witnesses the occurrence of a *déjà vu* phenomenon regarding episodes of their involvement. The most telling example is the activity of the Brigitte Bardot Foundation. In March 2001, the French actress signed a deal with Bucharest mayor, Traian Băsescu, which stipulated the launching of a mass sterilization campaign in Bucharest. The two year mass sterilization program was supposed to accomplish the sterilization of one third of the total stray dog population of the municipality (estimated to reach 300,000 at that point). Băsescu's part of the deal was to limit euthanasia only to dangerous, old and terminally ill dogs. When, a few weeks later, Băsescu decided to subject to euthanasia any wandering dog which was found ranging on the street, Brigitte Bardot sent an open letter to the mayor criticizing his policy. Returning to the Moldavian case study, a similar intervention on the part of the French actress was recently witnessed when, in February 2010, Brigitte Bardot sent a letter to the mayor of Chișinău protesting against the most recent decision of the municipal council: that stray dogs that are caught and are not claimed by anyone within ten days will be subjected to euthanasia.

### The Romanian Case

As far as early 2010 is concerned, the field of dog population management in Bucharest is legislated by a law issued in the field of animal welfare. *Law no. 9 of January 11<sup>th</sup> 2008* ruled out the measure of euthanasia. Furthermore, given that the 2009 projects of introducing mandatory registration and sterilization in the municipality have failed, the institutionalized measures of stray dog control include the voluntary sterilization of dogs which are pets and sterilization campaigns for the stray dogs. These latter attempts are carried out by the municipality (represented by the Administration for Stray Dog Control), by animal welfare organizations and by private veterinary doctors.

A concrete eruption of moral panic took place in 2006, when Hajime Hori—the former president of the Romanian-Japanese Association and former head of ball-bearing maker JTEKT Corp.'s local unit—died after being attacked by a dog only few steps from the government building in Bucharest. The event was followed by heated debates. The city authorities blamed the permissive legislation, the practice of the 'fake' adoption of stray dogs—by animal welfare organizations and *zone protectors* [protectori de zonă]—followed by the practice of returning the dogs to the

streets. They proposed the advancement of radical measures and the improvement of the conditions under which the institutions managing the stray dog population in Bucharest were operating. The debates also shed light on the contention between the Bucharest city hall and the six townships [*sectoare*] regarding the phenomenon, as several declarations given by the township mayors pointed to the city hall as being the one to blame for the failure of the mass sterilization campaign. In reply, the central Bucharest authorities criticised the townships for the poor execution of stray dog management in the period when the responsibility for dog population management was decentralised.

The municipality quickly started drafting a bill that would bring changes in dog population management. The mayor of Bucharest, Adrian Videanu, advanced a plan of an intensive mass sterilization campaign that would be carried out by 1,000 veterinary students from the European Union. He also intended to reduce the period for which the captured stray dogs were kept in the shelters of the Administration for Animal Control of the Mayor's Office from fourteen days to only three (afterwards they were to be euthanized). Furthermore, although the dog which committed the attack was not identified, stray dogs found in the area of the attack were gathered and shown on TV. In many respects the act brought to mind animal trials which took place in early medieval Europe (Beirne, 1994). The attitude of the animal welfare organizations was also peculiar. The „Cuțu-Cuțu” Foundation, for example, requested the adoption of the dog suspected to be the attacker. And it even obtained a court order which prohibited the Administration for Animal Control to kill the dog or to offer it for adoption after the investigations were over (Severin, 2006). The protection of the dog ‘under suspicion’ was thus envisaged.

In spite of short term mobilization and heated debates, the episode of moral panic did not lead to any of the envisaged changes in the legislation. From this point of view, the Moldavian consequences of the episode of moral panic are more solid. What is peculiar here is also the politicization of the debate on the basis of the conflict between the mayor of Chișinău (of liberal orientation) and the President of Moldova (of communist persuasion).

### **The Moldavian Case**

The present section presents the dynamics of the debates concerning the implementation of dog population management in Moldova in 2009 and 2010. The 2009 episode of moral panic should be also perceived in the context of the political rivalries between Vladimir Voronin (the communist President of Moldova—he resigned on September 11, 2009—First Secretary of the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova) and Dorin Chirtoacă (the mayor of Chișinău—assumed office on June 18, 2007—vice-president of the Liberal Party of Moldova). More explicitly, the amplification of the social problem of the wandering dogs on the streets of the Moldavian capital was presented in the media (by sources favorable to the liberal mayor) as a result of the governmental efforts to block the activity of the municipality (by initially diminishing and later blocking their funds) and, also, as subsequent to the poor

management of the previous communist mandate. This latter element points to the debts that have been left by communists to be paid by the liberals—money that, it is thought, would have otherwise been channeled to the waste management activity. On the other hand, the media sources supporting the communist president in the debate, suggest a link between the ideological/political orientation of the mayor and the failure of the municipality in the field of waste management (as will be shown, the presence and aggressiveness of wandering dogs was also converged with that of ineffective rodent control).

Regarding the institutional framework of dog control, there are three important moments. First, in 2001, a decision of the Ministry of Environment delegated this activity to the Municipal Enterprise “Administration of Auto Sanitation.” Then, in 2009, the city hall projected the building of a second shelter—animal asylum. This is a period when the mayor was declining the measure of euthanasia and was in favor of placing the stray dogs in shelters. In parallel, the municipal council of Chişinău (strongly contesting the strategies advanced by the city hall) advanced the idea—not yet materialized in early 2010—to found a dog-catching service. In February 2010, the mayor (now in line with the municipal council) has returned to measures of euthanasia—yet there is no input envisaging the creation of new institutions.

On June 4, 2009 Victor Cotug—an employee of the Municipal Enterprise “Association of Green Spaces Management”—died after being attacked by a pack of stray dogs. The episode triggered strong reaction and claim making. The discovery of a case of rabies in the *maidan* dogs in the central township further alerted the authorities. The mayor ordered the intensification of the activity of dog catchers, of the so-called ‘intervention groups’ [*grupele de intervenție*] of the Municipal Enterprise “Administration of Auto Sanitation.” He emphasised that the dogs will not be shot, but will be sterilized, taken to the *animal asylum* and put up for adoption. On June 11, the discontent with the results of stray dog and rodent control strategies led to a protest (of approximately twenty people) demanding the resignation of the mayor. The protesters argued that the mayor failed to address the problems the capital was facing. Shortly after the issuing of the news that Dorin Chirtoacă decided to run for parliamentary elections, President Vladimir Voronin declared that the careerist ambitions of political parties led to total disregard for the social problems that the Moldavian capital was facing. Hence, his party would fight the spread of corruption throughout the rest of the country, as to prevent the transformation of the “whole [of] Moldavia into a reservation of dogs and rats.”

I do worry for [Moldavia], for its people—for this thing not to happen: not to transform all [of] Moldavia into a reservation of dogs and rats. With this aim [in mind] our party will fight [...] (Voronin in Tănase 2009).

The President—referring to the problem of stray dogs and rats in Chişinău—stated that, “we would rather open the zipper of Chirtoacă and put these rats there” (Tănase, 2009). In reply, Chirtoacă added that: “the President of the country instead of thinking with what and how to get into my pants, should rather be wondering if it still has with what.” Furthermore “Voronin should rather be thinking about how it

got so far that people sell their children for 12 lei a piece. Sad but, unfortunately, this is the situation” (Tănase 2009).

In parallel with the unfolding of the argument between Chirtoacă and President Voronin, animal welfare associations put forward a project of sterilization and claim that the employees of the Municipal Enterprise “Administration of Auto Sanitation” continue to “exterminate” wandering dogs (Infotag 2009). In July, the problem of *maidan dogs* is discussed by the municipal council and the idea of creating a dog catching service is advanced.

During a press conference on February 19, 2010, Dorin Chirtoacă presented the position of the local authorities regarding measures to be taken to solve the problem of ownerless dogs and the relevant European norms in the field. Accordingly, the envisaged measures will conform to the stipulations of the European Convention for the Protection of Pet Animals (1987)—to which Moldova is a signatory nation (City Hall of Chişinău 2010). The press release available on the website of the city hall proceeds with a description of Article 11—Killing (Chapter II—Principles for the Keeping of Pet Animals) and Article 12—Reduction of numbers (Chapter III—Supplementary Measures for Stray Animals). The mayor also expresses his regrets regarding the conflict in the society on the issue of the appropriate measures of how to solve the problem of the ownerless dogs, and adds that the solutions are to be sought starting with the necessity of ensuring the safety of the citizens and especially of children who are at potential risk of becoming victims of the aggressiveness of dogs (City Hall of Chişinău 2010). Eventually, the press release gave a statistical estimation of the number of people who fell victim to dog bites in Chişinău. As compared to the previous year, in 2009, the number increased from 1388 to 1443 registered bites. Furthermore, in 2008, 305 children were bitten by dogs, whereas in 2009 the number reached 347 cases. The death of the employee of the Municipal Enterprise “Association of Green Spaces Management” is also mentioned (City Hall of Chişinău 2010).

### Discussion

To recapitulate, the three types of moral panic (where the agency of animals is involved) are:

- moral panic about transgressive animals (not yet problem animals);
- moral panic about human deviance in which animals occupy the place of victim;
- moral panic about human deviance leading to transgressive animals.

Regarding the Moldavian case, we notice that allegations of human deviance leading to transgressive animals are rarely noticed. Despite practices of the ‘repatriation of stray dogs’ and the case of ‘immigrant’/‘smuggled’ stray dogs having been publicly voiced, the Moldavian public opinion is much more concerned with the deviance of the city hall and local authorities in this matter, and public debate about other types of deviance is rather mute. As far as Chişinău is concerned, it is more appropriate to talk about the occurrence of episodes of *moral panic about transgressive animals* (not

yet problem animals) coupled with discourses in terms of *risk* and *hazard society*, that would eventually (in 2010) prove stronger and take over.

The Romanian public debate about dog population management evolved towards the model of moral panic about human deviance leading to transgressive animals with elements of risk and hazard society that are more moderate than in the Moldavian case. Elements of risk and hazard society were strong during Traian Bănescu's first term as general mayor (2000–2004). He initiated a very controversial campaign reducing the number of stray dogs in Bucharest by employing large-scale euthanasia. Besides his open conflict with animal welfare associations, he also fought a parallel battle in the political field. Afterwards, for several reasons, discourses of risk society (as coming from the field of local powers-that-be) lost the battle, and though they appear from time to time, they do not manage to remain on the surface of the public debate and to implement changes. On the other hand, the model of *moral panic about human deviance leading to transgressive animals* is still rather discursive and also fails to materialize—as it was proved in 2009 when the municipal council of Bucharest did not eventually implement the envisaged project of the mandatory sterilization and 'microchipping' of the total dog population of the Romanian capital.

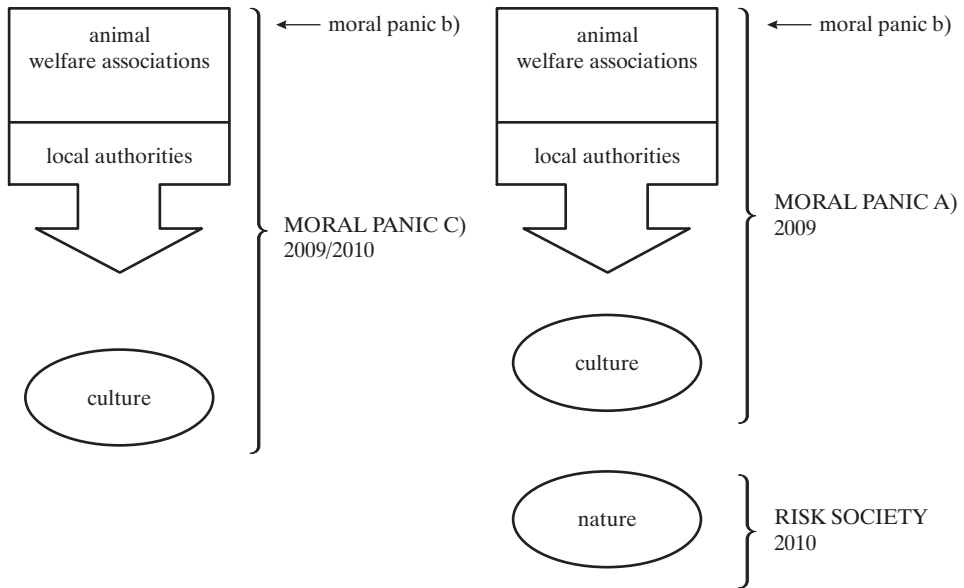
In both of these cases, the model of activity in dog control of the local authorities witnesses a strong competitor: the moral panic about human deviance in which animals occupy the place of victim. This model describes the attitude of animal welfare associations and the population supporting, feeding and protecting the *maidan* dogs. In light of the early 2010 events, it could be stated that, as matters currently stand, this model is stronger in Romania than in Moldova—in the sense that the latter country decided to neutralize it. The Moldavian model, in 2010, evolves in the direction of risk society.

There is one more element indicating that the debate concerning dog population management in Moldova has incorporated elements of risk theory. This element is the presence of rats. In the politicization of the debate about the stray dogs—between the liberal mayor and the communist President—reference has also been made to the problem of rodent control the city is facing.

Following Mary Douglas' work in *Purity and Danger* (1995), we could argue that the rats strengthen the perception of stray dogs as an anomaly—an anomaly which translates as danger. The rat symbolizes dirt. According to Douglas (1995: 36), "[w]here there is dirt there is system." What renders the stray dogs an anomaly is their attribute as strays, namely their invasion of the public space. Colin Jerolmack (2008) has already pointed to the strength of the rat as a metaphor in suggesting the potential of the pigeon—"the rat with wings"—as a polluter of spaces designed for human habitation. Jonathan Burt (2006: 48–89) revealed the ambiguous symbolism and the elements causing anxiety in connection to rats—the disappearance of the rodents can be as unpredictable as their appearance; the connection between these animals and plague; rats as one of the consequences of war; their fertility etc.

The discourse analyses of the 2009 press releases criticizing the activity of the mayor reveal the framing of the problem of *maidan* dogs according to the hazard society model. The *blame giving* targets the activity of the mayor of Chişinău solely.

Dynamics of Dog Population Management—Local Authorities: Chişinău and Bucharest



MORAL PANIC A): moral panic about transgressive animals (not yet problem animals)

MORAL PANIC B): moral panic about human deviance in which animals occupy the place of victim

MORAL PANIC C): moral panic about human deviance leading to transgressive animals

This discourse was drafted in the context of the politicization of the debate between Chirtoacă and President Voronin. The press releases reflect the position of the President and of voices in the municipal council which are discontent with the mayor's activity and (probably) also with his ideological orientation.

The dynamics of dog population management is eloquently summarized by the two *activity balances* of the city hall of Chişinău for 2008 and 2009. In both speeches, the control of the phenomenon is listed as a priority for 2008/2009 and for 2009/2010 respectively. Still, a change occurs in the manner of framing the social problem of stray dogs and of its envisaged solutions. The shift is from the “control of vagrancy and solving the problem of *maidan* dogs by humane methods” to “solving the problem of community dogs by their sterilization and placing them in an asylum.” The new element—the “animal asylum”—is a measure of physical control of wandering. Both reports mark concrete steps in the direction of a clear construction of the *maidan* dog as culture (Activity Balance after the First Term Year of the General Mayor of Chişinău Municipality, Dorin Chirtoacă), (Activity Balance after the First Term Year of the General Mayor of Chişinău Municipality, Dorin Chirtoacă).

When comparing the February 2010 position of the city hall with the one proliferated the foregoing year, two elements stand out. First is the usage of the denomination of ownerless dogs instead of the hitherto customary formula of wandering dogs. Second is the overall employment of a discourse in terms of risk and the advancement

of the measure of euthanasia. Consequently, in 2010, we are dealing with a definite profile of the model of risk society.

This metamorphosis might be interpreted in terms of a shift in the direction of stabilization of hybrid as nature (i.e. no longer as culture). Notably, this move drives the city hall closer to the position displayed by President Voronin and several municipal councils in June 2009. While all this pertains, there is still the difference that the 2009 model for these is that of hazard society.

### Conclusions

The analysis of the dog population management in Chişinău and Bucharest combined their monograph with a discussion of the applicability of the theoretical models of moral panic, risk society and hazard society. Following the work of Bruno Latour, Mary Douglas, Phil Macnaghten and John Urry, Iwona Zielińska and Krzysztof Abriszewski, it distinguished between the conceptualization of strays dogs (as hybrids) in terms of nature, and their conceptualization in terms of culture. The study argues that the stabilization in terms of nature is more suitably addressed by the theoretical model of risk society, whilst the stabilization in terms of culture pertains to the theoretical model of moral panic instead. It could be inferred that the measure of euthanasia seems more acceptable when clear constructions of nature take place, whilst that of sterilization is generally lobbied for in cases of conceptualizations of culture. This hypothesis is further supported by the early 2010 developments in the field of Moldavian dog population management. As shown, in February, the city hall of Chişinău returned to a representation of the stray dogs in terms of nature (in the context of framing the social problem in terms of risk). The politicization of the Moldavian debate also shows how the model of hazard society might find its applicability inside the political field, and indicates that the three theoretical models have long crossed the limits of solely scientific framing or inquiry.

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