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Improving communication among stakeholders through ex-post transactional analysis — case study on Romanian forestry

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ABSTRACT

One of the most visible components of the Forestry Development Project, carried out between 2003 and 2009 by the World Bank and Romanian Government was "PR support, Awareness Campaign and Development of PR products", meant to improve the communication between all stakeholders involved in sustainable forest management. The awareness campaign mainly consisted of nine meetings with the forest owners and nine workshops with all stakeholders, i.e. representatives of the forest inspectorates, county headquarters of the national forest administration, mass media, forest landowners, forest managers, logging companies and local authorities, including police and gendarmerie. The discussions, facilitated in each meeting by the three authors, were recorded and the minutes produced there have been further used for diagnosing the main interaction bottlenecks occurred between stakeholders. These discussions have been examined through the transactional analysis method in order to find out the main communication problems needed to addresses at national, regional and local level by the representatives of the public authorities in charge with implementing and supervising the forest policy. The main results of this analysis consist of a list of problems supposed to generate conflicts of various kinds (legal, technical, managerial and communicational) in Romanian forestry. The study has also revealed some important and frequent pitfalls that jeopardize the communication between prevailing stakeholders. Explaining them and their root causes could be a very useful input for further PR training programs and for the academic curricula.

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1. Introduction

In general, the process of implementing environmental policies relies to a large extent on the stakeholders' awareness (Myers, 1996; Withrow-Robinson et al., 2002; Pinto-Correia et al., 2006; Fernandez-Gimenez et al., 2008); in particular, a successful forest policy depends not only on how responsible people are but also on how the stakeholders effectively communicate. A successful communication also depends on the extent to which different people figure out the risk of undertaking or not a certain course of actions, and these different perceptions are brought by different degrees of knowledge.

More recently it has been admitted that the communication between the European forest sector and other stakeholders is still difficult and a clear path towards a better inter-sectoral communication is still lacking (Hogl, 2007; Janse, 2007). These difficulties are brought about by the fact that any decision referring to forests and forestry encompasses large areas, long time horizon and multiple stakeholders (Kangas and Kangas, 2004), and implies also a great deal of knowledge and information from different sources (Kennedy et al., 2003). Integrating these pieces of knowledge into the traditional forest management is an imperative (Krumland and Krott, 2004; Oesten and von Detten, 2008) as the forest management plan is still the main tool of communication (Otsyina, 2002; Larsen and Nielsen, 2007). However, formal participation in outlining the management plan does not guarantee a real influence upon the quality of communication but the competence and attitude of key actors may be of great importance. The quality of communication is also highly influenced by the distribution of power and conflicts of interests (Aasetre, 2006) or the systems of landscape classification, all these factors embedding locally specific values (Pinto-Correia et al., 2006).

Both issues, the distribution of power and conflicts of interests are interconnected with the concept of discourse, meant by sociologists as "a coherent set of more or less coherent understandings that shape the boundaries of thought, and thus of action" (Foucault, 2002). Discourse can also be seen as a particular way of using language and other symbolic forms able to shape relations (Leskinen, 2004). Usually the stakeholders who are responsible with keeping people better informed are leaned to emphasize some aspects and overlook other issues just for being in line with the common opinion, which is shaped to a great extent by indirect perception of most different communication channels

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(Scholz and Suda, 1998). However, the role of face-to-face or peer-to-peer communication cannot be neglected, as long as communication barriers still exist due to distrust or limited comprehension (Hujala and Tikkanen, 2008; Janse, 2007).

The Romanian forests and foresters were analyzed in some sociological studies focused on the local conflicts brought about by the forest restitution process (Dorondel, 2009; Sikor et al., 2009), on the social dimension of forestry and forest-related business in rural areas (Vasile, 2007), the peculiarities of traditional community forests in Romania, (Mantescu and Vasile, 2009), the relationship between local identity and forest ownership (Mantescu, 2009) or the systems of values altered or strengthened by the restitution process (Lawrence and Szabo, 2005; Nichiforel and Schanz, 2009; Sandulescu et al., 2007.

Between the methods meant to improve communication could be the transactional analysis (TA), although only a few studies actually aimed such a goal. The method was used in tourism in order to get a better interaction between employees and clients (Wachtel, 1980), in improving the relationships occurred in supply chain networks (Dani et al., 2004), in analyzing the discourse of workers facing organizational changes (deZanet et al., 2004) or in improving the communication skills of people employed in pharmaceutical activities (Lawrence, 2007). A pure theoretical perspective on the interaction between biological behavioral systems and their environment was also based on TA (Germana, 1996).

This paper aims at identifying through TA the main causes why the communication in Romanian forestry is either difficult or inefficient. The study the article is based on also has provided some clues about the linkages between the communication bottlenecks and five types of important problems to be solved. Some key stakeholders of Romanian forestry are also presented, along with some relevant structures and the threats these structures have to cope with. Since this is practically the first application of TA in exploring the communication problems occurred in forestry, a short presentation of the core theory of TA is embedded into the methodology section; the forth section presents the results, the fifth one some discussions while some conclusions are drown in the last section.

2. A snapshot on Romanian forestry and potential sources for communication pitfalls

The only significant change brought out in Romanian forestry in the last two decades is the ownership pattern (Fig. 1). After the collapse of the communist regime the forests have been restituted to the families and communities who had owned them before 1948, the year when all forests were nationalized by the communist regime. The restitution process took a very long time due to the three successive and complementary laws of ownership restoration; the first one was issued in 1991 and the last one in 2005 (Strimbu et al., 2005); the restoration process itself is still ongoing, as suggested in Fig. 1. The stakeholders involved into the restitution process are the forestland owners and often their associations (or nowadays legal successors), forest administrator at the date (National Forest Administration — NFA), forest authority (Ministry of Agriculture represented by the regional offices, the Territorial Inspectorates for Forest Regime and Hunting (ITRSV[1]), local and county public administration representatives.

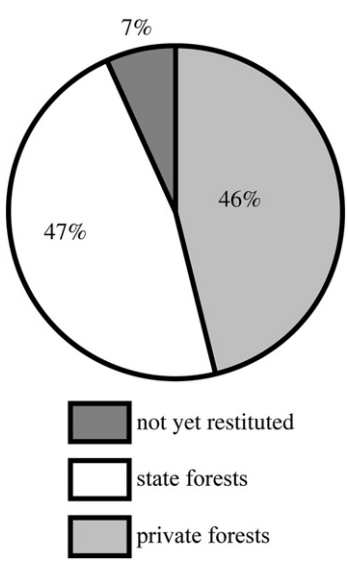

Fig. 1. The ownership structure of Romanian forests (by December, 2009, National Forest Administration annual report).

There are about 1 million individual owning patches of forest from 0.01 ha and tens of hectares, the state being the largest forest owner. These individual forest owners are facing an over-prescriptive legislation and they also lack the basic knowledge about forest management and forestry.

NFA is the largest forest administrator in Romania (about 50% of the forest land in Romania, see Fig. 1), and manages not only the state forest but also some private forestland; it is organized as a national company and nowadays is facing severe financial difficulties since the managed forest area has been reduced more than the total number of employees.

The ITRSV network (Fig. 2) was created in 2005 to support the public authority for law enforcement, monitoring and extension services for the whole forestry sector.

The private forest administrators are also important stakeholders. They manage forests owned by individuals, municipalities and associations, and their structures (Private Forest Districts, further referred as PFD) have kept up with the restitution process in order to get a better control on the overheads.[2] The whole restitution process, which effectively lasted more than 15 years, has been deterred in various ways, even stopped for some years, for different reasons, such as the fear of having the forests destroyed by the new private owners, the inability of local authorities to deal with the whole process of ownership restoration, lack of appropriate papers to document the ownership before the forest nationalization. Another important aspect worth being highlighted in this context is the political interference: none of the political parties empowered after the five democratic elections was seriously interested in reorganizing the NFA[3] or simplifying the legislation referring to forests and forest management. Therefore the whole system is not been able to pursue any forest policy the public authority would have conceived.

3. Research method

3.1. Basic concepts of transaction analysis

Transactional analysis (TA) is both an instrument for social psychology and a method to improve communication; it allows to analyze how we have developed and treated ourselves, how we relate and communicate with others. Eric Berne coined it by the end of '50s and transformed it into a new philosophy of social and business networking (Berne, 1961, 1966). Conceptually the TA relies on the three states in which the 'ego' interacts with the rest of the world; these states are responsible for the ways one thinks, feels and behaves and they are called Child, Adult, and Parent.

The *Parent* state (further referred as P) is defined by set of feelings, ideas and beliefs the child has copied from her/his predecessors or caretakers; it operates with rules, concepts, prejudgments, norms and

[1] ITRSV is the Romanian abbreviation for "Inspectorate Teritoriale de Regim Silvic si Vanatoare".

[2] Wherever it is possible, the forest owners prefer to make their own forest district, which seems to be the cost-effective solution in many cases. The alternative option is to make an administration contract with the local NFA forest district.

[3] Before 2005 the NFA managed about 70% of the Romanian forests and each ruling party extensively used its network for campaigning in parliamentary elections.

Fig. 2. Jurisdictions of the nine Territorial Inspectorates of Forest Regime and Hunting.

authoritative patterns (Pitman, 1984). Whenever one tries to control something, the Parent state is being activated. There are two types of Parents: the Nurturing Parent, whose only priority is caretaking, and the Controlling (or Critical) Parent, who makes s/his best to transfer values and beliefs to the successor (i.e. Child) at any cost.

The *Adult* state (A) features the ability to process various data and information; whenever decisions shall be made the Adult state is getting involved. An Adult is emotionally mature, autonomous and concerned, more or less, with social issues. Elisabeth Pitman (Pitman, 1984) considered that Adult state is not an autonomous state but only a middleman between Parent and Child, activated whenever is necessary to reconcile the internal conflicts occurred between them. An adult talks reasonably and does not try to control other people.

The *Child* state (C) is associated with emotional and affective responses to whatever situations occurred. Usually this state is associated with doubts, fears and uncertainty, and statements like "I don't know how to go for…"I don't know how I'd manage this situation" or "I don't know what to do" are typical for the ones who are in this ego state. Corresponding to the two types of Parent, the Child performs like a Rebel or a Natural Child.

All these ego states are activated and interact whenever two or more subjects/parties approach a certain subject and any exchange of ideas amongst them is considered a 'transaction', meant as "an explicit bilateral commitment to a well-defined course of action (Berne, 1966, 1972) or "the basic unit of study and a social intercourse which occurs when one person encounters another and says or does something to acknowledge the other person" (Wachtel, 1980). According to Berne (1961) there are two major types of transactions: *complementary transactions*, occurred only at social (verbal) level, and *duplex transactions*, occurred both at social (verbal) and psychological (non-verbal) levels.

Simple transactions can be *complementary*, *angular*, and *crossed*. *Complementary* (reciprocal) *transactions* (Fig. 3) occur when both partners are addressing the state other is already in; for instance, PC–CP, or AA-AA transactions are complementary. Whenever such a transaction occurs the communication is not jeopardized and the two parties keep on exchanging ideas. The *angular transaction* occurs whenever a stimulus is meant to trigger another state of the ego, meaning that the psychological message does not overlap the verbal stimulus (Fig. 4). *Crossed transactions* when the ego state addressed is not the one that responds (Fig. 5) and this type of transaction turns into communication failures.

Duplex transactions occur when the verbal message is not congruent with the non-verbal message. These transactions involve three or four ego states; they can be *blocking* or *tangential*, and they are also referred to as *redefining transactions*, meaning that the party who responds shifts the ground of what is being discussed, usually without any awareness (Stewart, 1996). In a tangential transaction the respondent changes the perspective of the discussed issue, while a blocking transaction occurs when the respondent tries to redefine the issue. Having defined these basic concepts, the following three rules apply for the communication process (Berne, 1972): i) as long as transactions are complementary people keep on communicating to each other; ii) whenever a crossed transaction occurs the communication stops and one of the two partners should change shies or his ego state in order to resume the dialogue; and iii) the outcome of a duplex transaction depends on the psychological level, not on the social one.

3.2. Reasons for using TA in the analysis

Historically, public awareness and communication campaigns were conceived as rather proactive than reactive means to induce some positive changes in people behavior and perception (Paisley, 1981). Unfortunately, the campaign carried out in Romania for 2 years was a reactive one aimed at improving the public image of forestry, foresters, and forest owners, having a 'check list' of critical issues, one of them being the poor communication skills proved by foresters day by day. Considering that "communication is interaction through messages" (Gerbner, 1985), two issues are to be analyzed: the messages and the ways in which people are interacting through messages. The main reasons for choosing TA to analyze communication between

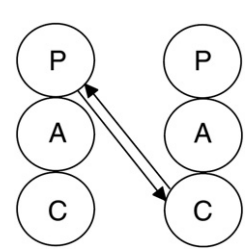

Fig. 3. Complementary transactions.

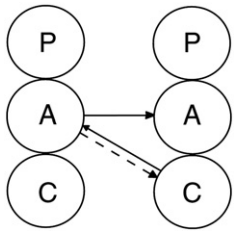

Fig. 4. Angular transactions.

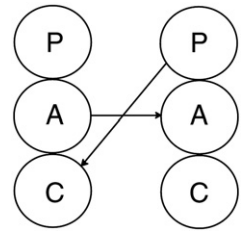

Fig. 5. Crossed transactions AA-PC.

stakeholders in a given context shall be sought into its stylishness and simplicity in explaining people behavior and reactions, through a simple set of coherent assumptions and rules. According to many authors (Stewart, 2007; Pitman, 1984; Hargaden and Sills, 2002; Steiner, 1999) this method has long been used for brief therapy allowing an effective use of any time-limited framework both he therapist and client shall confine, and this quality makes it a promising tool in analyzing and bettering dialogues or discourses.

3.3. Methodology of assessing the communication patterns in Romanian forestry (case study)

Within the Forestry Development Project implemented by the Romanian Government and supported by the World Bank, nine regional workshops were organized between January and September 2007 in order to improve the communication of the stakeholders involved in forestry, forest management and nature conservation. On average, each event gathered about 40 participants standing for all relevant stakeholders: forest owners, forest inspectors, forest managers, forest planners, public authorities, and environment protection agencies (EPA). All meetings had a 3-day common agenda. During the first day the forest inspectors (ITRSV representatives) got a short and practical training on internal and external communication (including interviews given to a 'virtual' very aggressive journalist). According to TA philosophy, this short training program aimed at improving the capacity of ITRSV inspectors to shift quickly from one ego state to another one in order to avoid crossed transaction with journalists. The second day was devoted to chaired discussions amongst the professionals (foresters, authorities, private and state forest administrations) on three pre-defined subjects: forest management planning, day-to-day forest management and sound use of wood. During the third day all local and regional relevant stakeholders came together for an open discussion about sheer communication with local administrations, Police, Gendarmerie, environmental protection agencies, civil society and so forth.

The input data for the TA application has consisted of various records[4] taken during the nine workshops. Stakeholders' profiles were defined while analyzing their interventions and dialogues and the prevailing ego states were kept for further interpretation. These records were later analyzed according to the TA principles but only the transactions associated to prevailing subjects (i.e. *transaction fields*) have been further analyzed, keeping in mind the final goal of the study, which is to highlight how the communication bottleneck can be avoided or, if not possible, to pinpoint the main causes of having a poor communication between stakeholders.

The default ego state initially assumed for any stakeholder was Adult, providing that no other stimulus would have changed this state. During a discussion, in punctual aspects, the ego state of any stakeholder could pass from the default state (A) to another state, according to the peculiar dynamics of debated topic.

The key problems were identified in each workshop and, while a moderator was trying to clarify the discussion, the other two assessors (i.e. authors) were trying to find the appropriate category for each bundle of problems: technical, legal, managerial or communicational. All these problems were ranked accordingly (very important, quite important and important), by all participants, at the end of each workshop; this relative importance was recorded for further analyses and reported in the workshop memos, being handed over to the public authority. The transaction type was diagnosed afterwards considering the additional questions or comments raised by moderators.

3.4. Method issues

Despite the fact that TA straightway reflects the relation *within* the key parties involved in the forestry sector, it does not properly capture the effects related to *outside* parties (e.g. social, legal, economic factors, civil society). One should not forget that TA came from a quite narrow area of scientific investigation, which is *psychotherapy*; so, it cannot solve all kinds of problems, yet it can improve the way in which people interact in real life, avoiding, first of all, crossed transactions. Communication problems raised at institutional level cannot be approached through this method since these stakeholders always behave like Adults and AA–AA transactions are not a real issue; the institutional dialogue can eventually retrograde to bureaucracy, which in beyond the scope of this analysis.

4. Results

Having the debates kicked off, most of stakeholders changed their initial ego state (default state), assumed to be the Adult. Thus the Parent state was mainly associated to those who are standing for whatever authority: professional authority, lawful authority or even the authority given by the statute of owning a piece of land. Considering that attitudes are rather expressed by raised questions than answered given, *the prevailing ego states*[5] were identified using the correspondences summarized in Table 1, on the following rationales. Facing the different challenges they had to deal with during the three days workshops, or difficulties in giving the right answers to the question raised by other speakers, the stakeholders were swapping from the initial Adult state to Parent or Child, and these swaps were triggered by the transactions summarized in Table 2.

The *Child* state has been associated with ignorance and lack of any substantial support from elsewhere. Forest owners fall into this category, as they usually lack the basic information needed for a minimal understanding of the reasons behind different concepts and norms they have to obey. They were always complaining about different issues; the law is against them or it is enforced in a wrong manner, nobody is supporting them, they have to obey certain rules broken instead by rangers employed by the state forest district and so forth. They fill these gaps with different assumptions concerning the

[4] Two of the three authors of this article were writing memos or recording the dialogues during the nine workshops, keeping the name of the intervening person and s/his affiliation, in order to document the outcome of the workshops to the client, who was, at that time, the Romanian Ministry of Agriculture.

[5] The standard tool used by physiotherapists during a TA experiment or therapeutic session is the egogram, which is actually a three-bar chart, each bar being associated to a specific ego state. The egogram says how much time a person has reacted like a Parent, an Adult or a Child during a (group) therapy session or in a TA experiment.

Table 1
Attitudes and questions typical for the three states of ego (Parent, Adult and Child) shown by stakeholders.

Ego state	Dominant attitudes and regular approaches	Typical questions that render the dominant attitudes
Parent (P)	Passivity, propensity to invoke the law. Prefers to formulate the impersonal questions. Does not criticize the legal system, which is taken for granted	As a rule, s/he does not address other question excepting for "Why don't you/they obey/apply the law?"
Adult (A)	A sound sense of reality, tendency to grasp the reality as it is. Technical-oriented mind, s/he invokes the technical standards only when any disobedience from these standards would harm her/himself.	"How can we manage to…?" and usually a very well defined issue follows. S/he addresses only feasible questions dealt with in a constructive way.
Child (C)	S/he's always complaining about something and cannot follow the orders; cannot apply the law or the law works against her/him. S/he's always helpless or even in desperate situations.	"When and how are you going to follow the rule/law?" S/he addresses questions in a vague way, waiting for somebody else to come up with clarifications and support.

roles played by the professional foresters they have to interact with: rangers, inspectors, managers and planners.

During the nine sessions most of the time the ITRSV inspectors behaved like *Parents* since they have been standing for the state authority, being empowered to check both private and state forest districts. Even though they were coping with controversial legal issues, they were reacting like the ones who are always right, since the rule of law supports most of their actions.

The NFA forest engineers are the most experienced in managing the forests due to a very sophisticated information system wherein all technical details shall be reported in due time. Their prevailing state was *Adult* since most of the time they had to explain the rationale behind any activity they were doing in the forests or in the local commissions for land restitution, either to the NFA staff or to the private forest owners.

Table 3 presents the main conflicting problems identified during the nine workshops. The transaction fields causing communication blockages are also briefly commented in the next section. The table also shows the importance of the conflicting issues as appraised and agreed on the spot by the stakeholders who attended the meetings.

Table 2
Main reasons for swapping from Adult state to another ego state.

Stakeholders who are most likely to swap from Adult state to Parent or Child state	The transaction field and the state towards the ego state swaps
Forest inspector	Complaints about the institutional weakness and legislative gaps (Child)
Professional foresters employed by forest districts and forest planners	Technical discussions and debates about the timber valuation and sustained-yield managerial planning or whatever technical issue related on sustainable forest management (Parent)
Forest owners	Land tenure (Parent); lack of support or motives for joining into associations; inconsistent legal framework (Child)
Harvesting company representatives	Inappropriate templates for the official forms needed for timber transportation (Parent)
Environmental Protection Agency representatives	Gaps in the legal framework on the sustainable management in protected areas (Parent)
Other officials who shall prevent illegal cuttings	Weak cooperation with county attorneys; inappropriate legal forms, corruption, not enough personnel and inspectors (Child)

5. Discussions

It is obvious that any TA assignment can be affected by a certain degree of subjectivity in stating the default ego state. For this study the validity of the results was a real concern for the authors but in the end, the volume of the information processed (materials from the nine meetings with a lot of active participants) and the fact that the fields that triggered non-complementary transactions have been repeated many times have provide the necessary confidence over the validity of the results.

A key issue related to the Romanian forestry is the debate on the real meaning of *forest regime*. According to new Forest Act ([Anon], 2008) the forest regime is defined not only as *a set of norms and standards* aiming at sustainable forest management but it implies the quite vague concept of "*forest services*" that shall be provided by professional forestry structures only. To some extent the concept of forest regime bridges the three continuously evolving terms of forest, forestry and forester, which are fundamentally linked (Helms, 2002).

As most of the ITRSV forest inspectors are either lacking professional experience or they came from the re-organized NFA structures, they are either inexperienced in dealing with wood smugglers and illegal logging or, on the contrary, they are well experienced in this field, being very efficient in preventing or tracking down illegal cutting [6]([Anon], 2005). The poor communication between the ITRSV inspectors and the NFA foresters is caused by many situations when their duties overlap as well as by the reciprocal lack of confidence. Quite often the ITRSV inspectors have some kind of nostalgia of being former NFA employees, but on the other hand they fully enjoy their institutional authority over the NFA. Forest inspectors always doubt the good will and honesty of NFA staff, which in return, are complaining about the weak professional experience proved by the forest inspectors.

Additional communication problems exist within the NFA structure, which fell behind other Romanian institutional networks[7] since the NFA staff was has been changed quite often in order to accommodate the political clientele. The 'Adult style' approach of NFA employees relies to a great extent on the internal information system, which is very consistent when it comes to juridical issues related to land use, land use change, timber cruising and pricing, preventing timber thefts and budgeting the forest-related activities, but it is out of date and rather inadequate in some other respects like adaptive management planning, timber tracking, and outsourcing due to a very centralized decision making system.

The NFA decision-making system is obsolete and top–down oriented, while, in parallel, NFA staff has to report the same information on slightly changed templates to the newly created institutions legitimized by the legal framework (including ITRSV, Environmental Police or EPA). The bureaucratic process of bottom–up data reporting over the whole NFA hierarchy, on the one hand, and the ITRSV claims, on the other hand, causes many communication bottlenecks between the two institutions, not only between their representatives. Assuming the NFA forest districts had to report only to ITRSV, 'ignoring' the intermediate structures of NFA,[8] a great deal of effort would have been saved and most of the crossed transactions would not have occurred. Actually these

[6] The Human Resource Development Project produced by FIATEST for the Ministry of Agriculture within the Forestry Development Project was grounded on an extensive survey carried out through the personnel of the nine forest inspectorates and five open interviews with some key stuff of the forest inspectorates and forestry department.

[7] Excepting some organizational changes imposed by the European Union legal framework on competitiveness, some new tasks related to protected areas and forest road network, nothing really changed in NFA structure and vision in the last two decades.

[8] The intermediate structure referred here is the NFA county subsidiary, whose main task is to supervise some activities like timber cruising and budgeting, pest control and forest regeneration.

Table 3
Key issued generating crossed or duplex transactions.

Stakeholders involved	Transaction field	Transaction type	Conflict potential problems (as resulted from TA)/their importance	
Forest owners and forest administrators	Management contracts	Simple cross CP–AA	Improper information sharing	Very important
Forest planners and forest landowners	Simplified managerial plans for small ownerships	Duplex transaction PC–CP (AA-AA)	Legal gaps	Very important
			Lack of information sharing	Quite important
			Technical inconsistencies	Quite important
Forest owners and environmental protection agency representatives	Compensation for landowners who are not allowed to cut trees because a protected area was created on the land they own collectively	AA–PC (typical counter-transfer reaction)	Legal gaps	Very important
			Lack of information sharing	Very important
Forest inspectors and forest engineers employed by state forest districts	Too many controls and inspections carried out by forest inspectorates	PC–CP (typical cross-transaction "who's the best")	Lack of information sharing	Very important
			Management planning issues	Very important
Loggers and policemen	Checkups on timber and lumber transport carried out by police and gendarmerie	Angular transaction AA (AC)-CP	Technical gaps	Very important
			Management planning issue	Important
			Legal gaps	Quite important
Forest inspectors and private forest owners	Better use of timber, motives for making forest owners associations	AA-AA (PC-AC) Duplex transaction	Lack of information sharing	Very important
Forest inspectors and NFA forest professionals	The same information reported in different ways to NFA county office and forest inspectorates	PC–CP (typical cross-transaction "who's the best")	Lack of information sharing	Very important
			Technical gaps	Quite important
Forest inspectors and forest owners	Opportunity to produce management plans for very small forest ownerships	AA–PC	Lack of information sharing and	Very important
			Legal gaps	Very important
Forest engineers employed by NFA and those employed by private forest districts	Different approaches between state and private forests on technical issues, sales and timber cruise	AA–PC	Critical lack of information sharing	Very important

intermediate structures of NFA, i.e. the county branches, are functionally and institutionally useless as long as their role confines to simple middlemen between the forest districts and the NFA headquarters.

Although the NFA was represented only by engineers and technicians at the nine workshops, the individual forest owners discussed a lot about their conflicts with forest rangers that always behave like Parents and took over a lot of duties related to timber cruising and harvesting on forestlands under restitution; not surprisingly, the NFA rangers were accused for being involved in illegal logging on forestlands under restitution. As stated before, during the restitution process little has been done in order to adjust the NFA personnel structure to the ever-changing ownership pattern; actually, all the time the NFA personnel considered themselves as the only professionals able to manage the woods in a sustainable way and they pay little attention to the social issues (Lawrence and Szabo, 2005; Mantescu and Vasile, 2009). Hence the NFA foresters are always astound by different changes they have not been prepared for, swapping quite often from Parent to Child.

The whole picture of the potential conflicts between NFA and ITRSV would be incomplete without pinpointing the difference in wages: NFA personnel negotiate the salary with a state company, which is financially autonomous while the forest inspectors are regular governmental employees. Sooner or later, the best graduates are employed by NFA, while the ITRSV would employ what has been left on the labor market, even though the former structure is supposed to be dismantled while the latter is an emerging one. This situation causes a lot of frustration on both sides, which explains the permanent hidden conflict between the two prevailing professional stakeholders. A common characteristic of all foresters, both inspectors and NFA officers, is too much personal involvement in working relations; their job descriptions overlap in some areas, while other areas are not covered at all, leaving enough room for egocentric personalities to dominate both structures.

Depending on the complexity of each individual case and the political context the restitution process has often lasted one or more years. During this period the forestlands were still owned by the state and the NFA has been legally entitled to harvest the trees according to the provisions of Forest Management Plans (FMP) in force (Sandulescu et al., 2007). This situation has brought about, on the one hand, a lot of frustration for the would-be forest owners, on the other hand, has made room for a series of abuses of the NFA representatives, extensively reported by the media.

As shown in Table 3, several stimulus-response sequences were identified as relevant for communication between stakeholders; for the forest owners, the most likely transactions fields are the following ones:

- Landowners complained about the *institutional weakness, legislative gaps, and lack of information sharing*. They triggered inappropriate reaction of the authorities representatives, who have the tendency to defend their institutions and legal framework and not being enough open at suggestions — Critical parent status;
- Landowners underlined the *legal gaps in managing the protected areas in a sustainable way* (inappropriate delineation, lack of financial support) — the same reaction was triggered in the representatives of the protection Agencies officials, who turned into critical Parents;
- Landowners were asking for *a more flexible FMP* in order to be able to cut more — this made all forest administrators and some forest planners to react as Critical Parents; instead of sharing the relevant information about the sustainability issue they preferred to close any discussion, invoking the rule of law.

The crossed transactions occurred either for explicit conflicting issues (see Table 3) or for not having adequate communication skills. The latter cause could be excluded if the authoritarian stakeholders (ITRSV inspectors, NFA and EPA officers) would have a better understanding of the inner causes of these communication pitfalls. The records the study relies on have proved that after a crossed transaction the dialogue can be saved and have positive results if the interlocutors can adapt to each other in order to avoid further blockages.

The forth transaction field was the forest management planning system. The AA–PC crossed transaction occurred between forest owners and foresters (i.e. ITRSV and NFA officers) on the matter of small-scale FMP[9] because the two stakeholders have different perceptions about the outcome of having or not having a management

[9] A small-scale forest management plan is a compromise between regular sustained-yield management and the need of owners to harvest now and then, keeping an eye on the basal area of the forest, which shall not be reduced too much.

plan. On the one hand, the foresters associate the FMP with the very existence of the forest[10] while the forest owners understand the FMP as a pre-condition of having the right to cut *some* trees whenever they needs. Apparently the forest owners are not at all concerned about the sustainability issue; they considered the management plan just an additional cost that shall be paid for having the right to use the forest as a production mean. They behaved like Adults and asked the other Adults about what they have to do, while the reply came from a Parent to a Child. The Child is always considered less responsible and this reaction is a typical counter-transfer transaction (Berne, 1966).

The same issue of FMP brought out a duplex transaction between forest planners and the forest owners. As suggested before, the small-scale FMP is perceived like a trade-off between enforcing and not enforcing the forest regime, since the sustain-yield principle is just mimicked; such a plan is only a counterfeit solution, since no technical argument can support the allowable cut any FMP shall produce; the only positive side-effect of such a plan is an updated cadastral situation. The duplex transaction PC-CP (AA–AA) occurred between the forest owners and planners was not a crossed one, because in both registers, social and psychological, the two transactions were complementary: both sides are interested in keeping the small-scale FMP legally justified, as long as both sides have some net benefits.

The fifth transaction field concerns forest economics. A duplex transaction AA-AA (PC-AC) was revealed by one chief inspector who had advised the steering committee of a forest owners association to exchange on the timber market the valuable logs they were harvesting for fuel-wood with firewood. The forest inspector came up with a simple barter proposition: to change the very worthy ash-wood, just perfect for veneer, for a much larger amount of firewood, any logging company being interested in such a barter scheme. The forest inspectorate role would have confined to advertising this proposition among logging companies. The communication into the social register was Adult to Adult — both sides approached the subject in a responsible manner — but in the psychological register a crossed transaction occurred once a landowner *inquired the forest inspector: "Well, you have a peculiar interest in this business, don't you?"* Afterwards all members of the steering committee became suspicious and reluctant in going for that business proposal. They finally refused the idea, confirming a Rebel Child state of the collective ego of that association.

The lack of confidence in professional foresters, shown off in many circumstances, is very dangerous because it undermines any effort directed to forest extension services. While people still need firewood for household consumption (heating, cooking), inevitably they have to interrelate with the foresters' professional body, but the only persons they are effectively interfacing with are the forest rangers, who are the least interested persons in changing the status quo. Eventually the information they get from this channel is meant to distort the whole communication chain and this is one of the reasons why so many crossed transactions occurred, according to forest owners' statements.

One of the nine workshops revealed a conflict between forest owners and EPA on the compensation system for environmental services, which does not apply for the forest owners' associations; according to the existing legal framework, only the individual forest owners were compensated for the opportunity cost of the having banned any harvesting operations in protected areas. The regional EPA has overlooked the real needs of the local people[11] whose welfare completely depends on timber harvesting, which is one of the few economic activities people can afford in that geographical area. Talking with authorities responsible for nature protection the forest owners usually behave like Adults ("this land is our property") and they try to trigger the same state to their interlocutors, although their psychological inner state is Child. The EPA representative behaved in both registers, social and psychological, likes a Controlling Parent and crossed transactions were inevitable.

A final transaction field, listed in Table 3 as very important, but solved meanwhile, was the inappropriate size of the transportation documents that certify the legal origin of the timber. It was a simple issue, and the template of documents needed to endorse the timber transportation has been altered in accordance with the situations reported by the representatives of gendarmerie.[12]

6. Conclusions

The study revealed a network of individual and institutional interactions between forest inspectors, professional foresters, and the forest owners. Generally, the institutional frame of Romanian forestry has similar features with other forest sectors in many European (and not only) countries; the same problems are informally reported, more or less. Romanian particularities (regarding the immaturity of the regulatory framework and the relative instability of the forest policy) certainly localized the results of the study, but make them interesting for any ex-communist country. Beyond this, in countries with similar institutional systems, the method or some results produced by this study can be easily adopted to improve the small-scale awareness campaign carried out at different regional levels.

In most situations the forest owners complained about the too complex role they have to play, being completely unaware of the responsibility they had undertaken; these people are not confident in foresters because they do not understand the basic rules of cutting the trees, rules that are too thorny for them and nobody taught them. Therefore they often react as rebel children and the only explanation for this behavior is the lack of confidence in foresters and forestry structures. The only way to overcome this situation is to train in forestry some landowners in order to create communication bridges between professional foresters and forest owners; a 'training for trainers' scheme fits perfectly these needs.

The NFA has been very reluctant to any change in its immediate environment, with the whole staff nucleated around the claimed principle of sustainable forestry, which is narrowly focused on sustained yield only, without any social and ecological concern. This could be one of the main communication bottlenecks between the state forest sector and the whole society. As for the private forestry, the bottom line is its weak capacity building, which actually has a negative effect on the manner the forest owners mingle and react to the stimuli sent by institutional stakeholders.

Most of the matters that generated crossed transactions where technical and managerial, meaning that Romanian forest policy has not yet been adapted to the new ownership structure; technically speaking, Romanian forestry is too complicated for small-scale forestry and some differentiations shall urgently be made in this respect. The only reasonable solutions shall be sought in encouraging people to openly discuss their problems and not confining the whole debate to a list of do's and don'ts.

Forest authority shall also take into account the opportunities the forest owners have in managing their forests in a sustainable way or, if not possible, to prioritize more the forest regeneration process instead of controlling the harvesting operations; such a policy would make people more responsible for the regenerating the forest, providing a liability insurance until the new forest is being established.[13]

[10] 'Traditional' foresters simply consider that un-managed forests cannot exists, it is just a matter of time until all trees will be cut down.

[11] A community forest is entirely included in the protected area of the Putna Natural Park.

[12] The sheet of paper where all logs shall be recorded separately was simply too small for the many pieces of firewood or thin logs transported by trucks in numerous situations.

[13] According to the existing Forest Act, the forest administrator shall deposit between 15% and 25% of the main yield value. Having created this deposit doesn't guarantee a proper regeneration of the forest. Before the Word War II, the Romanian Forest Act stated that the landowner's house could be used as liability insurance till the end of the regeneration process, carried out through afforestation or natural regeneration.

Nevertheless, the benefits of this study are about to come providing that forest inspectors will get appropriate training in transactional analysis, which has been just glimpsed in this study. As for the academic curricula, the two Romanian faculties of forestry (Brasov and Suceava) have introduced new subjects on applied sociology like "PR and communication" and "Management of environmentally-related conflicts". By the end of the Forestry Development Project, between 2008 and 2009, more than 300 employees of NFA and ITRSV were trained in two follow-up special programs on "PR and communication" held by the Faculty of Forestry and Forest Engineering of Brasov.

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