

## How to cite this paper:

Bulai, A. (2023). Knowledge, Science, Intellectuals and Crises. *Perspective Politice*. Special Issue. 47-58[05].

<https://doi.org/10.25019/perspol/23.16.0.5>

Received: April 2023

Accepted: May 2023

Published: June 2023

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## Article

# Knowledge, Science, Intellectuals and Crises

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**Abstract:** *Whether we surf the internet, watch the news on television, or listen to more or less academic lectures, we are familiar with a phrase that has become a public label associated with the Romanian society and, at least in recent years, equally to the international one. The world is in crisis and so is Romania. At least we are better from this perspective, as many of those who talk about Romania consider it to be in a deeper crisis, facing more problems and having fewer solutions. Overlooking the trivial remark according to which it is questionable whether a crisis constantly characterizing a society is a crisis indeed, in this article I propose an epistemological perspective on the problem of the crisis and an X-ray of the mechanisms of knowledge that regulate and manage it. This article deals with four main themes. Firstly, I will depict a typology of knowledge, distinguishing between three types: common knowledge, public knowledge, and scientific knowledge. I will detail the concept of public knowledge and show the special role played by public intellectuals and public communicators in this type of knowledge. The former are specialists who choose to transmit information from their specialty fields to the public space, while the latter are public experts who have notoriety without being specialists in the fields in which they communicate. They propose a knowledge to say “superficial”, but extremely important on a social level. I will insist on the role of this type of culture of superficiality, a major role in the functioning of societies. Also, in this part I will describe the ideological mechanism behind all these types of knowledge whose management is provided by the structures of power. The second theme is the role of knowledge communities and intellectuals as members*

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*of these communities in supporting and disseminating labels applicable to social change. Moreover, I will show that in the field of sociology there is even a clearly defined professional dimension in the area of social activism, that is, public sociology. In fact, any intellectual in the public space is a propagandist of some values, sometimes we are talking about the values generally accepted in society, but not always. The third theme is the role of the paradigm of negative labelling of change, a paradigm that underlies many knowledge communities in today's world, a paradigm according to which social reality is evaluated and interpreted as a continuous suite of social problems. In other words, the world is represented as a universe of problems to be solved. This paradigm is based on the modern cultural model of the necessary positive evolution of history, according to which any stagnation or negative evolution is interpreted as a social problem. The fourth part of the article deals with crises and the mechanism by which they are generated by knowl-*

edge communities, as well as their main characteristics. Finally, I am trying to answer the question of why crises cannot be solved.

**Keywords:** crisis; elites; intellectuals; knowledge communities; labelling; paradigm; public knowledge; public sociology

## 1. Introduction

There's nothing more enjoyable today than talking about crises. That's for two reasons. First of all, it is fashionable and it is natural to talk about crises and the problems generated by them at any time. Secondly, everyone expresses opinions about them, so anyone can be a specialist in one crisis or another. I propose in this article an atypical analysis of the crisis, somewhat unconventional.

We start from the trivial remark that if a crisis constantly characterizes a society, then, according to its very definition, it is questionable whether it is a crisis indeed. We may then wonder how we can highlight a crisis beyond the usual public discourse, sometimes even claimed as being scientific. For this reason, in this article I propose an epistemological perspective on the problem of the crisis and an X-ray of the mechanisms of knowledge that rule and manage it.

## 2. Three Types of Knowledge

Traditionally, the distinction is made in science between two major types of knowledge, the scientific and the common knowledge. Of course, if we define knowledge as the relation of man to Reality (Bulai, 2017) we should speak of many types of knowledge that are related to the various activities in which the human being is involved. Beyond common knowledge and scientific knowledge there are forms of knowledge specific to magical, religious practices, as well as all forms of speculative knowledge. However, we focus on science because, as a rule, crisis legitimacy is done in the name of science and therefore I will accept the two forms, scientific and common, as defining. Alongside these two forms, I distinguish a third one, which is not identified with common knowledge, but does not have all the characteristics of scientific knowledge: it is not necessarily objective, systematic, puts values in brackets only partially, is oriented according to certain interests, etc. This is what I call public knowledge. I take as a starting point the concept of an audience monetized in sociology by the stream of public sociology launched by Michael Burawoy in 2004 (Burawoy, 2005) and which had multiple reactions in sociology, such as those of Orlando Patterson (2007), Alain Touraine (2007), Immanuel Wallerstein (2007), Andrew Abbot (2007) and many others. Before this, however, Ben Agger had launched the idea of public sociology in a book entitled Public sociology (Agger, 2000) in which he was concerned with the strictly academic world.

Burawoy believes that sociology must have an emancipatory central function, which is actually the historical purpose of sociology. It must reach out to diverse audiences, starting from those of one's own community and reaching out to one's own students or to the wider communities that are the subject of social research. This active civic function of sociology has been present from the beginning within what Burawoy calls traditional public sociology and is and should be essential for sociologists in today's world as well. Burawoy believes that the ideal tool to do this is *communicative action*. The concept is taken from Habermas (1984). I do not propose here an analysis of this approach, about which I wrote earlier (Bulai, 2018). I propose,

therefore, not an analysis of the means by which public communication is done, but a complex analysis of public communication as a whole, which does not concern in the least only sociologists, but much broader categories of actors who speak in public space. They are the promoters of a special kind of knowledge, the public one.

Public knowledge is knowledge disseminated in the public space with the role of transmitting knowledge to various audiences, categories usually different from those of knowledge communities that study publicly launched issues. Actors who communicate to different audiences are usually classified into two categories: Public Communicators and Public Intellectuals. Public communicators are those who expose various ideas, concepts, theoretical models, data and any other types of information in the public space using both traditional and new online media channels (Georgiev, 2022). From journalists to various online communicators, whether institutional or not, we are talking about people who address broad categories of individuals and who have a significant audience among them. However, it must be said that among them there are also legitimate specialists in certain fields, but who communicate in a much wider sphere than that in which they have a specific real certification. Alongside communicators, there are also public intellectuals, that is, academically certified intellectuals who speak to non-specialist audiences, but in their field of expertise. What they transmit to audiences outside their knowledge communities is always a simplified content of the theories, concepts, ideas or scientific data they present. In other words, public communication, regardless of who produces it, is always a simplifying and selective knowledge. It is often built on metaphors, it is illustrative, narrative, and it relies on suggestive comparisons instead of complex analyses, data, or demonstrations.

So, we can ask ourselves a legitimate question. Why do these categories of actors in the public space choose to use this kind of knowledge? There are several types of causes. On the one hand, all communities of knowledge must produce knowledge in order to exist, that is to say, knowledge products which are intended for other communities of knowledge, as well as for the public in general. Neither a community of knowledge nor scientific communities as types of knowledge communities can produce knowledge for themselves alone. Moreover, any knowledge community tries to offer its knowledge products on a broad knowledge market in a competitive regime and therefore at least some members of the knowledge communities choose to provide information about their knowledge products to external audiences. When we talk about knowledge communities, we refer generically to any kind of community, including religious, artistic, technical, etc. Another observation I have to make is that any community operates on the basis of a mechanism by which new members are permanently brought into that community. They obviously come from outside these communities, an important role being played by education systems, formal or informal, but also by the different institutional practices, sometimes formalized. Therefore, this is another reason that makes communication with external audiences mandatory for any knowledge community.

There is, however, another motivation for choosing to speak in the public space for all those who do so. It is due to the assumption of roles that have an ideological constitutive value content. In other words, a large part of the public communicators, as well as of the public intellectuals, assumes a propagandistic role. It is about the fact that the elites generally consider themselves entitled, in any modern democratic society, to formulate opinions, analyses, criticisms or positions in relation to the government or the political system, but also to launch principles, themes and objectives related to the way societies as a whole function. Ultimately, in the con-

temporary world, intellectuals are often called upon in the public sphere to make analyses, propose solutions, or at least to propose perspectives on general phenomena or processes or which are only part of the public agenda. At the same time, however, power, regardless of its composition, is interested in supporting the elite in expressing themselves in the public space, precisely because it can be a tool to legitimize their own policies (or criticism of opponents), but also the existence of a crisis as such (Țăranu, 2016). I am talking about the elites in a very broad sense, considering as defining a simple characteristic of them, that they have an important degree of notoriety and credibility in relation to at least one specific audience. So they do not provide a certain qualitative dimension. Moreover, we know that the capacity of public communications influence in society mainly depends on the size of the receiving audience and the way in which the communicator is appreciated. So we do not in any way link the category of elites to a certain quality of the content of their communication. Finally, when I spoke of power, I did not refer only to political power. Any form of power is interested in what is communicated in the public space, so also the power manifested in the area of economic institutions, in religious organizations, in the sphere of civil society, etc.

It should be noted, however, that power, regardless of its type, through various types of governmental and non-governmental or private mechanisms finances both directly and indirectly the overall process of public communication. Hence a certain theme, a certain orientation of the content of communication in this space. There is nothing abnormal though. Democracy by definition accepts such a form of public communication that can be beneficial to citizens as well as to social development in general (Pirvulescu, 2016), as long as there are a multitude of positions, even opposing ones, that are supported independently. It is never a question of power influencing public communication, for it is ultimately the definition of its existence. Problems arise when pluralism is not ensured and the monopolistic tendency of a single source of power is not limited.

Finally, we must not believe that this support of power is a non-transparent one, located in a semi-legal or even illegal area. It is often part of some institutional mechanisms as legal as possible. Let's think for example only about the fact that in today's world all governmental, non-governmental, national or international funded projects assume as mandatory the dissemination of information, usually to various audiences, most of them not being specialists. However, it must be said that any power structure that finances or supports communicators or public intellectuals imposes a certain value register. There is nothing to blame in this situation either. Simply put, contemporary societies function in this way, democracy being ensured, as I said before, through a certain balance in society of various power structures.

Power influences public communication both through the fact that it can support it directly through financial and non-financial resources, and through the fact that access to the classical means of communication or those of the online environment is possible mainly on the basis of resources that public communicators or intellectuals usually do not have. We have generically called all those who speak in the public space and are actors who support public communication propagandists (or intellectual propagandists) without considering anything pejorative in this attribute. I simply refer to the fact that within what they communicate they always implicitly convey a value fund, certain types of appreciations, principles, paradigms to interpret the world that have an ideological dimension. This happens whenever their comments concern the functioning of social institutions, public or non-public organizations, when they concern the administrative or political sphere, but also any other field affected by political positions:

ecology, climate change, protection of flora or fauna, etc. It should be noted that a very large part of them do so on the basis of their own convictions, but it is not mandatory.

We are now moving from public communicators to public knowledge. Firstly, we have to address its defining characteristics. The first and most important is *superficiality*. Public knowledge is always superficial in the sense that it always schematizes, simplifies and minimizes any deductive or demonstrative approach. It is always affirmative, non-arguing and non-reflective. Moreover, it proposes an intangible body of knowledge that is transmitted and must function at the public level as a belief system, even when it comes to science. The truth of information is established as a belief system, beyond the real possibility of scientifically analysing data, theories or various types of information. In fact, most often members of these audiences do not even have the minimal skills to critically analyse the information received. The public, of course, may not believe certain information, but most often not on the basis of a critical, methodologically correct analysis, but simply because for various reasons that information is not accepted as beliefs.

However, public knowledge also has other characteristics. I will present them synthetically:

1. It is always value-oriented. It filters data, information, interpretations based on value benchmarks. For this reason, it is always centred on the social significance of data, not on its correctness or scientific importance. This mechanism is largely influenced by the press, which is a major dissemination tool that, by definition, is only interested in information that can impact the public. In other words, a scientific discovery reaches the public sphere, promoted by the media, only if the influence it can have in people's lives is provable.
2. It is highly responsive. Public knowledge is supported by intellectuals and public communicators who are more efficient when they know how to filter and adjust information for a wide audience of non-specialists. Moreover, through their own intellectual capacity they easily manage to suggest argumentative constructions, including sophistic philosophy-based ones, for any kind of theses. On the other hand, social memory does not perform very well, which makes it possible at even short intervals for the same communicators to express radically different positions with equally persuasive messages. This responsive capacity of public communication is related to another aspect, namely that this type of communication is highly dependent on various types of power, but equally on the public agenda.
3. It is centred on social action. Compared to common knowledge, which is centred on the action needs of individuals related to the current problems they face and scientific knowledge centred on objectives and methodologies enshrined in a scientific community, public knowledge is fundamentally centred on capitalizing themes, ideas, scientific data, but also unscientific at the level of social action. That is, it is always intended to influence the public to have consonant reactions with political rather than scientific objectives.
4. It is much more effective than scientific knowledge. Public knowledge has an incomparably greater social impact than scientific knowledge. This is primarily because it appeals to extremely broad audiences for whom it is incomparably easier to validate. In general, public communicators have public communication capabilities incomparably better than the members of the scientific communities, except public intellectuals, that is, the genuine, let's say, specialists who have assumed the role of public intellectuals. Therefore, social action, more generally the functioning of social institutions, including administrative or political ones, is largely conditioned by public communication, by the way in which the pu-

- blic is convinced of certain types of realities, by certain types of data, by certain theses that may have absolutely nothing to do with scientific results.
5. Scientific knowledge cannot exist without public knowledge. All scientific communities operate only on the basis that they can reproduce. This is possible due to the fact that in modern societies there is an educational system as well as a wider one of cultural transmission that promotes scientific communities. Educational systems are also systems of public communication because they obviously present information about various fields in the same simplifying manner. We differentiate between pre-university and university education systems, but even within the university system we can speak of real scientific research only at the highest levels of this system. As I said, recruiting new members in the scientific communities requires a certain degree of knowledge of the general public related to their activity.
  6. Public knowledge is validated circularly. In other words, it does not need scientific tools and methodology. Most often the validation is offered by the public communicator itself suggesting only a scientific basis for a particular thesis. As a rule, it is sufficient to invoke sources with symbolic prestige that have a high degree of knowledge such as: “American researchers”, “Oxford specialists” or “Harvard studies”, etc. Public knowledge often resorts in this regard to sophistic philosophy-based concepts, to arguments related to authority, prestige, personal experiences, etc.
  7. It has a constitutive ideological dimension. Sometimes explicitly, other times only tacitly, having a direct relationship with different power structures, public knowledge imposes not only a general value filter, but also one that has an ideological dimension that concerns the positioning towards social problems (even their construction), but also the definition of social good and evil, as well as the support of a certain ideal model of organization and management of society.
  8. Public knowledge belongs to the elites. The elites, in the sense defined above, are the ones who provide most of the public communication, a part of these elites being found in the scientific communities. This makes the boundary between scientific knowledge and public knowledge not very clear at the public level, or even in scientific communities. At the level of public communication, however, equally important are public communicators who do not belong to scientific communities. Their influence actually depends on their ability to communicate publicly and not on scientific competence.

### **3. Crisis as a label for social change**

The term crisis was originally used in medicine, and about three centuries ago it was taken up in the scientific discourse referring to social life. Originally, the term referred to a critical situation in which a person’s state of health reaches a level so deteriorated that immediate intervention with radical means and in radical ways is required. Precisely this intervention being able to determine the body to have a beneficial evolution or on the contrary, to succumb. By analogy, the term was taken to denote situations in society where the degree of deterioration of social-economic life reaches the critical level that requires major interventions. We notice that originally the term was related to a certain key moment that determined the intervention or change of the paradigm of intervention in the system. In other words, the crisis involves that critical level that makes it necessary to change the recovery solutions, that is, an intervention in the system based on a new paradigm or by major changes to the usual one. At the same time,

the concept of crisis suggests that it is no longer possible to expect the system to recover on its own, based on the usual balancing mechanisms. Finally, the term suggests the need for immediate intervention, which may allow the system to be saved. From another point of view, we can also think of the crisis as the worst moment of a system, from which developments would naturally be expected to be positive.

At a first observation we distinguish relatively easily the fact that today we use the term crisis in a very wide way, in fact we call almost any type of situation that we consider negative as being generated by a crisis, more we use the term as a label for almost any kind of situation evaluated negatively. As mentioned, the term crisis has become a characteristic in itself of contemporary society that is frequently labelled with this attribute. We could say that social change, whenever it is negatively evaluated, has a chance to receive the label of crisis. Of course, this does not mean that this maximal use of the term excludes the existence of genuine crises. The problem is that in the public space the term is used with an incredibly high frequency both for large social structures or sectors of activity, as well as for institutions or private organizations. We can find, for example, the crisis label even to characterize a particular situation that is relatively common in organizations. We give some examples: “crisis at TAROM”, which refers to the trivial situations in which a director resigned or that someone took bribes and was arrested, or the phrase “medicine crisis”, which refers to the fact that a certain medicine is harder to find for various reasons. However, the term crisis is still used at strictly individual level, as we use it in phrases such as: the crisis of the elderly, adolescent crises or in the medical field related to patients’ crises. This huge polysemy indicates that the term crisis is actually a simple label that we apply to extremely diverse situations trying to suggest a trivial thing, namely a high degree of severity of a situation.

However, I am not interested in a certain clarification of the definition of the crisis, in finding some landmarks that could eventually make us filter the world in a correct way from the point of view of the presence or not of a crisis. I am actually interested in the label idea itself. Labelling is part of a social construction process in which we have deliberately chosen to apply labels that have a certain semantic content, but also value and ideological. These labels are applicable to a particular situation, state or sphere of social reality. The crisis is a social construct, a label that we apply stereotypically to define certain changes, undoubtedly evaluated negatively, and media is the ideal tool for this (Gamson et al., 1992).

To speak of a crisis, in the sense of the applicability of this label, at least three things are needed: first, there should be a perceptible change at the level of a system, it should be evaluated negatively, and third, there should be legitimate expectations of a certain course of action. In other words, negative evaluation can be done both in relation to the past, in the sense that a certain situation has worsened, and in relation to the expected future course of social action when we have positive expectations and they do not occur.

#### **4. Power, intellectuals, and crises as instruments of social control**

The concept of crisis is present at the level of all types of knowledge, but it has a special role at the level of public knowledge. This is because at its level, the use is much simpler, without semantic exigency requirements, without the need for validation and with a major acceptance of ideological contents. Therefore, at the level of public knowledge, the crisis label is extreme-

ly attractive, it can be used totally unrestricted, the crisis becoming an interpretative paradigm of social realities in public knowledge management. If we do an academic Google search for the word crisis (in Romanian) we will have 37,400 articles. For the English version of the term we have 5,600,000 articles. However, if we look up for the term crisis (in Romanian) at the level of Google search engine, we can find, cumulated for both grammatical forms, about eight million eight hundred thousand entries. If we use the English term we have a billion and five hundred million mentions. These data are only illustrative in order to have a more accurate picture of the use of the term. It is interesting, however, that on this search engine there are huge differences in the use of the term depending on the level of development of the relevant societies (It is the term crisis translated into each language and used only by sources in the country for which the analysis is made). Usually there are uses more than ten times larger for countries such as France, Germany or Japan that usually have over one hundred million mentions related to the crisis compared to Romania, Bulgaria have Hungary that have less than ten million uses.

But what is the meaning of the term crisis if it is used at the level of public knowledge in such a totally unrestricted manner? First of all, it must be said that its use is given most of the time not by individual choices, but by the fact that at the level of public knowledge we have a paradigm of its organization and functioning that imposes a certain way of seeing and interpreting reality. I must mention that I use the term paradigm precisely in the sense given by Thomas Kuhn (2008). The paradigm, as a way of understanding the functioning of societies, is based on a strictly ideological corpus of values that acts by filtering and interpreting social reality, operating independently of the real state of the systems to which it applies. By its very content, the crisis paradigm addresses three essential aspects: The first refers to the existence of an unprecedented severity of a system. The second concerns the need for immediate intervention, which can no longer be postponed. The third aspect is the need to take major risks. That is, the need for immediate intervention in a form other than that up to that moment. It is actually a mandatory risk-taking. This, however, implicitly means legitimizing interventions that can be evil for the system. The paradigm therefore presupposes immediate action beyond the usual way of solving a problem, and this is the essential aspect. The concept of crisis therefore presupposes that any solution that has been considered by the past as optimal is no longer valid. Tacitus admits that no matter how much confidence we have in past cultural models, no matter how much confidence we have in the self-regulatory mechanisms of systems, the crisis legitimizes the need to intervene without taking into account the historical circumstances of the functioning of a system. In fact, the crisis paradigm is a tool to nullify trust in traditional systems that previously regulated a system. From a sociological point of view, it is a tool for constructing an anomalous regime capable of allowing social change. Weakening trust in the rules is the prerequisite for imposing new ones (Bulai, 2010).

Based on an ideological dimension, the crisis paradigm at the level of public knowledge has a direct relationship with the system of power. I am referring to both political and economic power, where capital has had an interest in promoting rapid non-rational and non-analysable changes in the social system. Modernity has always been under the sign of permanent changes, and the crisis paradigm has been a tool in this regard. For these reasons, the crisis paradigm is supported at the level of public communication by almost all types of power. By its characteristics, public knowledge is the ideal framework for the functioning of the paradigm. First of all, it is that this knowledge is not critical or reflective, it is superficial enough to have huge audiences, it also has, through the intellectuals who propagate it, legitimacy, often even scientific.

This last aspect calls for the presence of intellectuals as propagandists of the crisis. Public communicators, as well as public intellectuals, through the notoriety or legitimacy of positions in various knowledge communities, ensure the legitimacy of the paradigm, as well as the credibility of the messages transmitted in the public space. It is obvious that at the level of public communication there is a diversity of information, so also communicators who can have completely opposite positions to those of various types of power. Those individuals with positions opposing those assumed by power are usually incomparably fewer, it is true that many belong to the sphere of public intellectuals rather than public communicators. Moreover, the cognitive tools to which public intellectuals turn in the construction of their speeches have a relatively small scope of impact, precisely because they resort more than necessary to critical, reflective analyses, to methods of analysis of the validity of knowledge. Finally, let us not forget that power, independent of public communicators or intellectuals, also legitimizes the paradigm of crisis. After all, governments propose crisis cells, programs and anti-crisis strategies, they maintain the image of the crisis through official data. Moreover, any kind of power, political or economic, in the name of the crisis can take measures that directly and concretely affect citizens. A private company can make staff redundant claiming the crisis or the high prices of products, just as governments can obviously do almost anything in the name of the crisis, from raising taxes and fees to limiting freedoms. Therefore, the crisis paradigm is supported primarily by various types of power and it must be said that power, whether political, economic or of any kind, has an incomparably greater capacity to influence the public than intellectuals.

Intellectuals and public communicators are actually useful, not so much as a major factor of influence, as of legitimacy. Both categories being apparently independent of the sources of power and the agents of change, as well as the potential beneficiaries of these changes, they have high credibility. But there is also a slight difference between communicators and public intellectuals. Public communicators are primarily tools for multiplying messages from the public and secondary space of legitimation. This latter role is central to public intellectuals certifying information conveyed through their own CV or membership of academic institutions, research, or simply prestigious organizations such as international organizations.

Finally, one last point. Why is the crisis paradigm useful for power systems? Apparently, at least the political power struggles with crises, it often publicly assumes the objective of overcoming, exiting the crisis, reaching normality. That's where the answer is. Getting over the crisis has two major characteristics. The first is very simple. The crisis presupposes a contextualization and a negative definition of the social and economic system. The paradigm, however, is too general to be linked to particular political actors. It always involves a depersonalization of the political space. It is difficult to find private political actors who are guilty of a crisis. They can be found punctually, for particular problems, but not for crises as a whole. They have collective authors. Moreover, some crises can be generated externally and then they have no authors at all, or their authors are not those of the power with which you are politically or electorally related as a citizen. Who was to blame for the 2008 crisis? What about the Covid crisis? Or the current economic crisis? It is obvious that we can symbolically blame the Chinese, Putin or the Americans, or whoever we want, but we can hardly focus on the actors who hold power in our political area. They may be held accountable for poor crisis management, but they do not bear any responsibility for triggering crises in the general public. The second characteristic is that the paradigm legitimizes rapid political and administrative action, without analysis, public debate, with low control of civil society, a civil society partly respon-

sible for supporting the paradigm by the fact that public intellectuals as well as communicators are part of it. In fact, the crisis paradigm has been invested in the contemporary world, especially in recent decades as a tool to circumvent democracy. The crisis justifies social actions outside the democratic rules of a government. For this reason, it is beneficial to the governed and in general to all those who hold significant power in society. The paradigm of the crisis, by allowing the democratic control of civil society to be reduced, implicitly becomes a system of social control.

## **5. Conclusion. How can we manage crises?**

Finally, we must make some further clarification. First of all, there are certainly real crises, that is, critical situations that can lead to major social or economic problems. However, they never function independently of the paradigm, being also amplified by it at the level of public knowledge, so in their case there will also be a distortion and maximization of severity. It is relatively difficult to calculate how much a real crisis in public knowledge is amplified. It is certain that the demographic collapse in a country, or the exponential growth of the planet's population, creates the premises for huge problems. Likewise, super-digitalization, the collapse in some societies of the quality of education, and we can continue with such examples. We cannot and do not want to say that there are no serious problems in society. But many other situations are also suggested to us at the level of public space as being particularly serious, even at the critical level: We find that species of animals or plants are disappearing, that others are only in danger, we are always told that the climate on the planet is changing, that resources are being depleted, that pollution is wreaking havoc. Beyond the natural world, in the social space almost everyone is convinced that corruption has reached unimaginable levels, that delinquency is present at every turn, that tax evasion has astronomical quotas, that the political class is incapable and immoral. Most of these themes are easily launched because at the level of public knowledge there are no critical or reflective skills, nor even elementary formulas for validating information. Most audiences have no idea how big the planet is, no information, and no understanding of the workings of natural or social systems. All species of plants and animals have disappeared permanently, after all, all hominins have disappeared, except for *Homo Sapiens*, the climate has permanently changed and will continue to change, there have always been disasters, etc. Moreover, in the social space, the labels placed on some realities are even more ephemeral and easier to put or change. Corruption in Romanian society is actually an extremely old historical cultural model (Bucur, 2020) and it is hard for anyone to say that this phenomenon has diminished or increased. It must also be said that there is no society without deviance, and its severity has always been the subject of arbitrary choices of particular societies in history. Moreover, deviance has its functional aspects in any society.

With all this in mind, one last question arises. How can we get rid of crises, or at least make them less present in today's life? The question as well as the answer I offer is very simple, but it is only an intellectual challenge and nothing else: Let's remove the paradigm of the crisis from the level of public knowledge! In other words, the presence of this paradigm should be diminished in public communication. If we choose to stop using the paradigm, then we may be able to reduce our problems by perhaps 90%. This includes the disappearance of the huge number of political and governmental actions taken on the basis of crises. But is this possible when so many would lose? Who has to lose? Political class anywhere, capital, marketing and

communication specialists, intellectuals and public communicators. We stop here because the list is already too long. We have also included in the list the marketing specialists because they are important actors who have as major objective the construction of problems. Selling anything is actually a solution to problems that you wouldn't usually have if there wasn't a product to sell that solves your problem. The marketing of social life is consonant with the crisis paradigm because marketing before selling must suggest the existence of a problem that you can solve by purchasing something that sells somewhere, and the crisis is by definition a space of problems. We are not just talking about products, but about values, principles, symbols. Marketing today sells cars, houses, art, war, but also morality or immortality. Therefore, marketing is also directly interested in the crisis paradigm.

Finally, a simple observation. We have proposed a model for crisis analysis, which ironically, even thematically, contributes to debates on crises in the public space. We thus have yet another legitimisation for the crisis, even though I have called it into question. Finally, this article is rather a product intended to be used at the level of public knowledge. This is a deliberate gesture to try to undermine a paradigm at least through the accessibility of information. Obviously, anyone who wants to start from the theoretical model I have proposed can look for statistical data, can make various complex analyses, but, after all, he may as well not believe in this attempt to dismantle the crisis paradigm.

## Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflict of interest.

## About the author

Alfred Bulai was born in 1962 in Bucharest, graduated from the Faculty of History – Philosophy, Philosophy Department, has been teaching sociology at the University of Bucharest and SNSPA for the last thirty years, has been a PhD coordinator in sociology, has approached the concept of electoral sociology, public sociology, government sociology, methodology of sociological research, visual sociology. He has been doing political and electoral consultancy for over 25 years, he is constantly present in the public space, in the written and online media, he is author of documentary films, he received in 2019 the Mircea Florian Award of the Romanian Academy for the work *The social foundations of knowledge*. He is the author of two novels and one short stories book.

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