Central European
Labour Studies
Institute

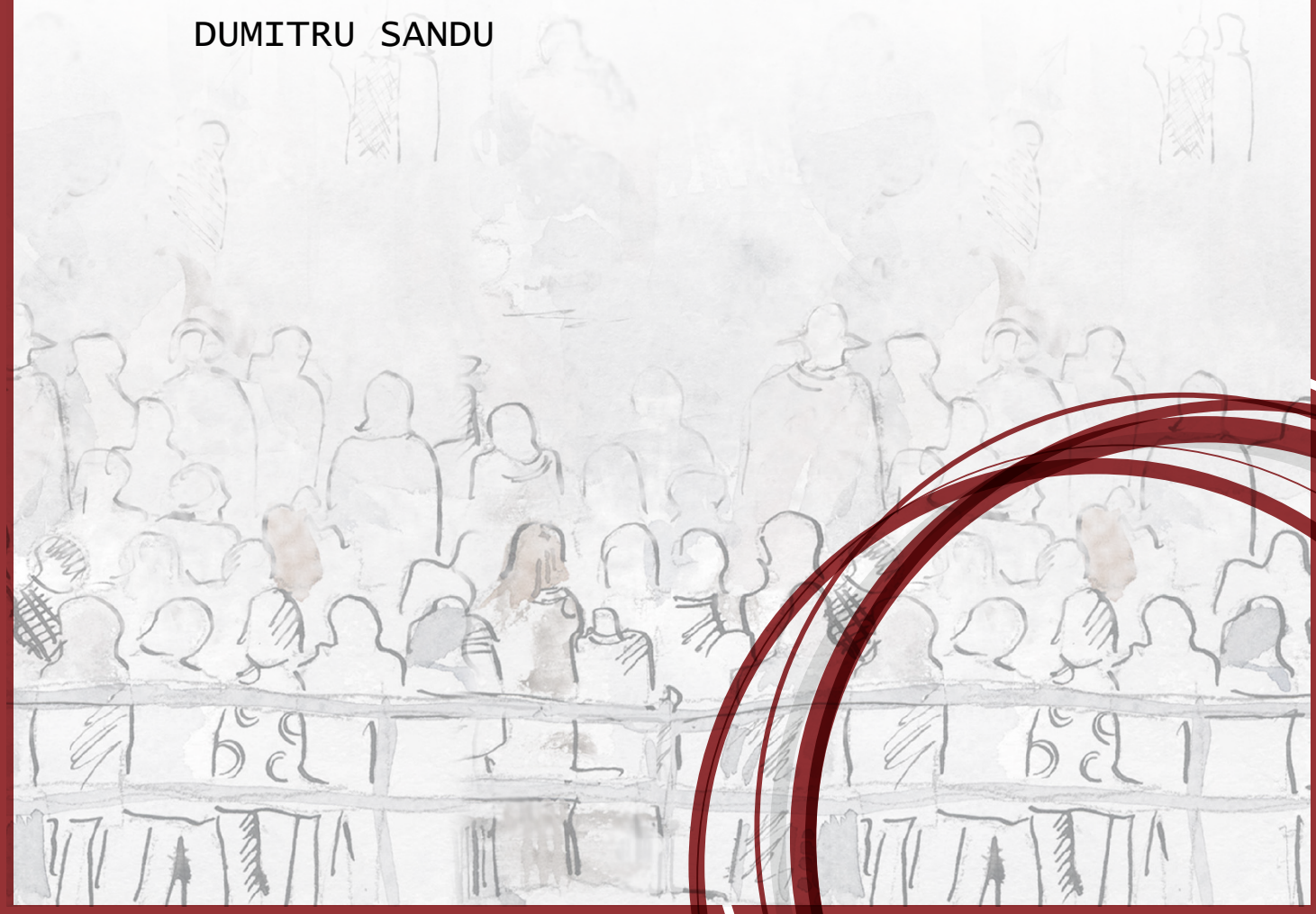
www.celsi.sk

CELSI Discussion Paper No. 10

MAPPING OUT SOCIAL WORLDS BY STATES OF MIND IN EUROPE

June 2013

DUMITRU SANDU



Mapping out social worlds by states of mind in Europe

CELSI Discussion Paper No. 10
June 2013

Dumitru Sandu
University of Bucharest

Central European Labour Studies Institute (CELSI)

Zvolenská 29
821 09 Bratislava
Slovak Republic

Tel/Fax: +421-2-207 357 67
E-mail: info@celsi.sk
Web: www.celsi.sk

CELSI Discussion Paper No. 10
June 2013

ABSTRACT

Mapping out social worlds by states of mind in Europe

The study explores the social diversity of Europe from the perspective of life-spaces with high profile configurations of states of mind. "Social worlds" as groups with standardised modes of acting, thinking and evaluation are identified beyond formal borders. This study tested the hypothesis of the existence of similarities in states of mind (measured in terms of satisfaction with life, optimism, perception of labour market in the country and institutional trust) as a function of age category (young adult, middle-aged adult and aged), residential environment (rural, urban) and the sociocultural macroregion. The testing of research hypotheses is performed by means of a multilevel analysis of the Eurobarometer 70 data collected at an EU level in the autumn of 2008. The approach is in line with quantitative grounded theory (Glaser 2008).

Keywords: social worlds, states of mind, European regions

JEL Classification: A13, J28, Z13

Corresponding Author:
Dumitru Sandu
Faculty of Sociology and Social Work, University of Bucharest
Str. Schitu, Magureanu 9, Sect.5, Bucharest
E-mail: dumitru.sandu@gmail.com

---

* The first draft of the paper was published in Romanian under the title "Lumi sociale de varsta si rezidenta in Uniunea Europeana" (Age and Place Social Worlds in the European Union), in Sociologie Romaneasca, 2/2009, pp.3-26. The main changes in the present version relate to the theoretical frame of reference, better specification of multivariate models, construction of an index of state of mind and the interpretation of the data. The author is indebted to Martin Kahanec for a suggestion to explore the role of labour markets perceptions on states of mind.

Questions and structure

Do different age groups, found in specific residential environments and specific regions, constitute "social worlds" (SW)? Does the way people from different social categories - defined in terms of age category, residential environment and macroregion - act, think and evaluate demonstrate a high level of institutionalisation, such that it leads to specific expressions of identity? Does being a young person in a village, for example, reflect a social situation with its own specific experiences, discourses, emotions and feelings of identity, which are different from those of other age and residential categories? In a globalised world, does the administrative or social definition of the place where you live or the difference between, say, being in the 18-29 age group or the next group up, that of 30-54, really still matter?

These are the starting questions of this study. The main concept used in doing so is that of the social world, while the analytic framework applied is that of the European Union. With these specifications, the central question of this study thus becomes exploratory in nature: do age, residential environment and sociocultural region SWs exist at a European Union level?

The first part of the study describes the theoretical and methodological premises of the analysis. The second part identifies the sociocultural profiles of the five socio-cultural regions of the EU understood as macroregional matrices that determine age and place social worlds (starting with cultural and economic demographic indicators). The third part mainly develops descriptive approaches, starting with the Eurobarometer 70 data for the autumn of 2008, which highlight differences in states of mind in age and place SWs and in the various sociocultural macroregions of the EU. In the fourth part is attempted an explanatory approach towards satisfaction with life and an index of state of mind as a proxy variables for SWs in order to test the hypothesis formulated in the first section. This is a way to trace the specific role of the age and place matrices for subjective states. This part of the study is of a confirmatory nature.

The frame of reference for social worlds

There are two main interpretations of the concept of social worlds in the social sciences today. These differ in terms of their level of structuring. This is at a minimum when reference, explicit or implicit, is made to the socio-human sphere, as opposed to the natural, or to the social sphere, as opposed to the political, economic and legal, etc. The maximum level of structuring – that taken into account in this study – stems from the line of symbolic interactionism of the Chicago school and, from the 1960s onwards, is associated with grounded theory. In the summary provided by Adele Clarke, and validated by Anselm Strauss (1993:212), social worlds are described as "groups with shared commitments to certain activities, sharing resources of many kinds to achieve their goals, and building shared ideologies about how to go about their business" (Clarke, 1991: 131). The commitment referred to here is, in essence, action orientation and identity construction (Becker, 1960, Clarke and Star, 2008). The result is that social worlds are groups with a specific profile in terms action orientation, ideologies of action and identity.

The social worlds described by Strauss are the mostly highly structured, featuring dominant primary activity, specific places where activities occur and institutionalised modes of action: "In each social world, at least one primary *activity* (along with related clusters of activity) is strikingly evident; such as climbing mountains, researching, collecting. There are *sites* where activities occur: hence space and a shaped landscape are relevant. *Technology* (inherited or innovative modes of carrying out the social world's activities) is always involved." (Strauss, 1993: 212). The "social worlds" approach emphasises the dynamic perspectives of group life, with its lines of conflict that determine the content of social arenas and processes of segmentation, intersection and legitimisation (Strauss, 1993: 215-219).

Social world type groups are characterised, in the tradition well represented by Tamotsu Shibutani, who was a forerunner to Strauss, by specific means of communication associated with patterns of action, thought and discourse: "Each social world is a scheme of life – a way of acting, talking, and thinking. It is an arena within which special meanings are shared, where one who is a part of it feels *at home*." (Shibutani 1961: 134).

In summary, one could say that social worlds are life-spaces in which specific modes of acting, thinking and evaluation confer a high level of identity to group actors. More simply, SWs are life-spaces with a high level of institutionalisation and identity construction. Standardised modes (formal and informal) of acting, thinking and evaluating provide the content of institutionalisation.

The borders of socials worlds are drawn precisely by the specific institutionalisations of the modes of acting, thinking and evaluation (Table 1)

Table 1. Key concepts in social world analysis

Families of categories	Categories	Subcategories
Inputs	Conditional matrices	Social situations, causal paths
Constitutive patterns of…	thinking	Dogmatic, relativistic, creative, dialectical, experimental thinking etc.
	evaluating	Values, definition of the situation, state of mind
	acting	behaviours, discourse, primary activity
Outcomes	Identity construction	Reference groups, "we-ness" vs. "other-ness", community, social cohesion

The members of an SW, owing to their action, value or mode of thinking orientations view their own living environment or own group as being familiar (Shibutani, 1961: 274), as "home", "we-ness" versus otherness, as a "social whole" (Clarke, Star 2008: 115), etc. Markers of these worlds can be of the kind: action/occupation (e.g. the medical world, that of football, of artists, etc.), spatial (the world of the village, "street corner society", Whyte...), temporal-historical (the world of the Old Testament), etc.

Focusing on personal, group aggregated states of mind is one particular way of understanding social worlds from the perspective of values. States of mind, in general, can be understood as dominant orientations in the contextual evaluation of sequences from one's own life. Similarities in terms of satisfaction, optimism and trust are examples of the markers of social worlds.

Methodology and data

This study depicts variations in states of mind in the European Union as a function of three categories of conditioning factor (the "conditional matrix" in the language of the theory based on data, "grounded

theory" – Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Glaser 2008; Clarke, 2008): these are place/age, sociocultural macroregion and place/age by macroregion. Both place/age social worlds and the sociocultural macroregions represent relatively new frames of reference. This makes the descriptive and exploratory parts of the study obligatory. The regression analysis in final section of the study represents the explanatory component of the approach.

The analysis is focused only on age groups in terms of the adult population, differentiating between young adults, middle-aged adults and the aged. Conditioning factors of place will be defined bidimensionally through reference to the local space, urban or rural, and the macroregional space, as a function of the sociocultural areas of the European Union. The respective areas are constructed by indentifying countries with similar profiles in respect of economic development, demographic behaviour with cultural (fertility) or sociocultural (suicide, immigration) significance as well as their involvement in global communication networks (internet access).

The measurements for states of mind are used to define the dependent variables used in the analysis. One could consider as belonging to the same SW people who, living in similar social situations – in terms of community, region or age – and sharing common values, exhibit similar states of mind. These states of mind are described in terms of satisfaction with life, optimism, perception of labour market in the country and institutional trust. For these people there is a high probability of belonging to the same SW according to all four basic dimensions of the concept generated by value, action and mode of thinking orientations. The variables for states of mind have the status of proxy variables in the assessment of SW phenomena: similar evaluations of one's own life and of relationships towards market and non-market institutions are significant not only for similar conditioning factors of social life, but also for similar value orientations that result in specific levels of aspiration.

For the nominal measurement of state of mind, by using the intersection between a satisfaction and optimism variable, there have being distinguished five social types:

- Continuity satisfaction – "The present is good and it will be the same in the future"
- Continuity optimism – "The present is good and it will be even better in the future"

- Continuity Pessimism – “The present is bad and will the same or get worse in the future”
- Dynamic optimism – “The present is bad but things will get better”
- Recent pessimism – “The present is good but things will be become bad”

An index of state of mind is constructed as a factor score of general life satisfaction (0.74), personal optimism, positive or negative perception of employment situation in the country and trust in regional or local public administration.

A first hypothesis claims that age/urban-rural spaces function as matrices that generate meanings, experiences and specific feelings. In other words, these spaces tend to function as SWs. The idea is used here as to be able to draw a comparison between different European societies. The falsification of such a hypothesis in fact involves the identification of an interaction effect between age and residential environment on value orientations and the behaviours which derive from them. This effect is expected to act independently of the specific effect of age or residential environment.

A second hypothesis proposes that states of mind – such as satisfaction with life, optimism, trust and perception of labour market– vary on a continental level, within the EU, not only by place/age SW, but also by sociocultural macroregion as opposed to the geographic macroregions used currently to analyse data for the European space. The methodological premise starts from the idea that the currently important sociocultural macroregions within the EU can essentially be identified by using cultural demographic indicators (Sandu, 1992), access to modern forms of communication (in particular the internet) and the level of economic development.

The third hypothesis claims the social world effects associated with place and age vary depending on the sociocultural macroregion. Is the social world effect – for example, that related to place and age – more powerful in the richer societies of the north or the poorer societies of the south and east? The partial data available suggest there is a higher chance of this effect being stronger in the relatively poorer areas of the east and south.

In conclusion, the hypotheses in this study claim to show that age/place groups as community conditional matrices, in interaction with the macroregions, generate social worlds as universes of experience and expression.

The data used to determine states of mind for different SWs are from the Eurobarometer data (wave 70, from the autumn of 2008, European Commission, 2008). These data were mainly collected during October 2008, using a sample size of 30 thousand people.

The sociocultural macroregions of the European Union

In order to identify the optimum grouping of the 27 EU countries by sociocultural macroregion, country profiles are based on four indicators: total fertility rate in 2006, life expectancy at birth for men in 2006, the proportion of people with access to the internet at the start of 2008, and gross domestic product per capita as a percentage of the 2006 EU average. All these data originate from the EUROSTAT records published on the internet. The first two indicators – total fertility rate and life expectancy at birth – are of a demographic nature, albeit they also have a strong cultural relevance, as reflected in the academic literature, in particular the theories relating to demographic transition (Freedmann, 1979). Access to the internet is a basic indicator of human capital, as well as the development of this new form of digital sociability. GDP, while an economic indicator, can, however, approximate to many of the economic determinants of cultural phenomena.

For the clustering there have been used the “furthest neighbour” method, squared Euclid distances and standardised values of the variables with Z-scores. Malta, Cyprus and Luxemburg are not included in the calculation, since the sample sizes for these countries were only 500 people, leading to average values with large error margins.

The resulting similarity groups (Figure 1, dendrograme of similarity not shown due to space limitations) largely support the idea of classifying the countries of the EU into the following five macroregions: eastern (the Baltic states, Romania and Bulgaria), central-eastern (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Hungary, Slovenia), southern (Greece, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Cyprus, Malta), western

(France, Austria, Belgium, Holland, Germany, Luxemburg) and northern (Finland, Sweden, Denmark, Great Britain, Ireland).

The analysis highlights the fact that the five groups have well-defined sociocultural and economic profiles:

- The northern countries of the EU are the most developed economically and socially, with maximum values for GDP and digital culture, as reflected by access to the internet;
- Within the EU15 countries, the southern countries are the least developed economically and socially;
- The eastern countries have a minimum level of development within the EU, both economically and socially. The gap between them and the central-eastern countries is clear.
- The rate of suicide was not made one of the classification criteria. Its extreme variation between groups created using other indicators constitutes a supplementary validation criterion. Suicides are a type of total social phenomenon, containing information about culture, social life and the economy. In this context, is relevant to note the low level of suicides in southern countries, which is mainly the result of the predominant Latin-Mediterranean model for this phenomenon (Chesnais, 1981).

		% satisfied with life, EB70	state of mind index, EB70	GDP per capita as % of EU average, 2006
Eastern EU	Bulgaria	38	-61	37
	Romania	47	-47	39
	Latvia	62	-30	54
	Lithuania	58	-39	56
	Estonia	74	7	69
Central-Eastern EU	Poland	76	5	52
	Slovakia	71	-5	64
	Hungary	46	-84	65
	Czech Rep.	83	13	79
	Slovenia	84	10	88
South EU	Portugal	46	-78	75
	Greece	53	-63	98
	Italy	63	-49	103
	Spain	83	-13	105
Western EU	France	80	-2	111
	Germany	85	26	114
	Belgium	87	30	120
	Austria	79	43	128
	Netherlands	98	104	131
Northern EU	Finland	95	82	117
	UK	86	16	118
	Sweden	97	78	125
	Denmark	96	132	126
	Ireland	88	-7	146
EU27		77	0	100

Figure 1. The five sociocultural macroregions of the EU reflecting the main differences in state of mind and economic situation (Figures for Malta, Cyprus and Luxembourg are not included due to the small subsamples for these countries and relative instability of the figures). Source of GDP data: Eurostat News Release 176/2008, 11th December 2008

Each of the five groups of countries features an exceptional, borderline case. Estonia, Slovenia and Holland are more developed than the countries from the group to which they belong both geographically and historically. As a consequence, they present levels of satisfaction with life that deviate consistently from the group. In the southern part of the EU, Portugal represents the exception, with a level of development far lower than the other countries in the group. Correspondingly, the level of satisfaction with life is also low.

Table 2. Defining indicators for the sociocultural profiles of EU macroregions

	Sociocultural macroregions of the EU					
Profile indicator	EAST	CENTRAL-EAST	SOUTH	WEST	NORTH	Total
GDP per capita, % of EU average, 2006	42.2	60.3	100.8	115.9	120.6	100.1
Life expectancy at birth for men, 2006	68.5	71.0	77.6	77.2	77.2	75.8
Total fertility rate 2006	1.33	1.29	1.35	1.60	1.84	1.52
Suicide rates per 100,000 inhabitants, 2004	15.97	16.37	6.34	12.73	8.31	11.06
Foreign residents per 1000 inhabitants, 2006	21.62	18.05	62.76	73.77	54.19	56.36
% of people of 15 years of age and over with internet access at home, 2006	33	49	45	70	73	59

Data source: EUROSTAT. Figures indicate country averages within macroregions, weighted by country population

Age-place SWs by macroregion

Life satisfaction. The maximum variation in level of satisfaction by age/place group (computed data, not shown in the table due to space limitations) is found for countries from the macroregions East and Central-Eastern. The minimum difference is found in the northern and western regions of the EU. And the age/place groups within the South region of the EU display an intermediary heterogeneity for life satisfaction, lying between those from the East and Central-East, on the one hand, and those of the West and North, on the other. This finding supports the idea formulated in the first part of this work and thus indicates a greater significance of the concept of the age/place social world for countries with low levels of economic and social development in the European context.

Differences by age/place SWs are very important for the eastern and central-eastern regions, which represent a fifth of the EU's population. To these one can add the countries from the South region, which account for a quarter of the EU population, where these worlds are of great relevance. In other words, for nearly half the population of the EU, the structural differences according to age and residential environment are highly likely to have a powerful impact on life experiences and states of mind.

At first sight, one might say "it's only normal" – you earn better in the city, you have running water and better healthcare – for the process of ageing, wherever you live, is associated with declining health. However, if one looks at the data in the table above, one can see that things are not the same all over the EU:

- In the north and west of the EU, differences in satisfaction with life are extremely low between the six age/residential environment categories, at a maximum six or eight percent. On the other hand, in the entire east of the EU, these differences are of 25-28 percent. Here residential environment in combination with age really does matter to the subjective quality of life.
- In the south of the EU, the difference between states of satisfaction is 15 percent. This is clearly a region with a profile that falls between the rich north-west of the EU and the relatively poor east.

We can interpret the disparity between satisfaction indicators for SWs as a measure of the relevance of these worlds to the reference country or macroregion. The greater the disparity, the more likely that in a given area the difference between age/place categories really matter for experience of life. On these grounds one can formulate the interpretative hypothesis that age/place social worlds are of maximum relevance in the east of the EU and minimum relevance in the north.

Social typologies of satisfaction/optimism. Experiences and, implicitly, the discourse of daily life are frequently determined, not in terms of satisfaction/dissatisfaction, but rather by a combination of evaluations relating to the present and the future, in other words: satisfaction and optimism.

The dominant model from this perspective at an EU level is that given by people who are satisfied with life and think it will continue to be good for them. This might be called a "continuity satisfaction" of the kind "the present is good, the future will remain the same". This segment of the

population represented approximately 40% of the EU population over 14 years of age as of the autumn of 2008. A second important segment is formed by the optimistic satisfied, those who believe life is good and will get better. Over the entire EU, this segment accounts for approximately 20%. Together these two segments dominate the state of mind profile of the EU's northern and western areas.

The opposite situation is found for the populations of the EU's eastern countries. Here, there is a strong presence of the social typology of the dissatisfied: people who believe things will be just as bad or worse in the future in respect of their own lives. Romania (44%), Bulgaria (56%) and Lithuania (36%) are typical cases for this state of mind. However, this typology is not limited only to the eastern region. It is also well represented in the central-eastern region through Hungary (50%) and the southern region (Portugal, 50%, and Greece, 39%).

Over the entire EU, the main change in state of mind determined by the relationship between satisfaction and optimism is given by a reduction in continuity optimism ("the present is good and will get better"). This falls from 28% in the spring of 2008 to 21% in the autumn of the same year. The decline, from this point of view, is seen for all macroregions, with the exception of the south.

In this context, one could mention the case of Romania, which recorded a very strong growth in the share of people with continuity pessimism ("The present is bad and will stay the same or get worse"). Simultaneously, there also occurs a boost in the percentage of people with continuity satisfaction (Computed data, not shown in the text). Changes of this nature play an important role in accentuating feelings of social inequality in the respective country: the prevalence of groups dissatisfied with life and/or pessimistic receive a massive boost, the percentage of those with average level satisfaction drops, while there is slight increase in the number of those with a maximum level of satisfaction.

These macroregions are only aggregations of countries. It is possible for certain relationships to have seemed insignificant during the regression analysis (see appendix) and that the used regionalisations were not best suited to identifying groups of maximum homogeneity in respect of the conditioning factors for satisfaction with life. In order to test this hypothesis, there have been created a profile based on the

shares of those satisfied with life for each of the six worlds. A value to represent the total share of those satisfied with life in the respective country was added to the country profile.

Countries with the most similar satisfaction profiles were then grouped by a cluster analysis (that is not included in the text) based on furthest neighbour method, working with standardised variables and Euclidean distances. The way the countries are grouped together, however, according to the distribution of satisfaction capital according to age/place group, does not correspond perfectly with their classification as sociocultural macroregions. This is likely to be due to the combined effects of level of economic development and localisation within macroregions. In the new group, Romania, viewed from the perspective of the structure and level of satisfaction with life, appears closer to Bulgaria, Hungary, Greece and Portugal, countries with relatively low levels of GDP and situated either in the immediate vicinity or in the EU's southern region.

The cluster analysis by satisfaction profile shows how the structure of satisfaction with life in Italy, Portugal and Greece, all countries belonging to the southern group, tends to resemble that of Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary plus two of the Baltic States (with low levels of GDP).

Institutional Trust. The five macroregions diverge strongly, not only in terms of their socio-demographic, economic or satisfaction/optimism profile, but also in terms of institutional trust. The perspective of trust also falls under states of mind. It forms part of the family of optimism, of experiences associated with a certain level of expectation. Trust is a state of mind belonging to the family of optimism. For both phenomena, the essential term is expectation. In the case of optimism, expectation is related to what will become of the person in question or, more precisely, the relationship between what he/she desires/plans and will, probably, obtain. Generically speaking "I am optimistic if I expect my plan to build a home to have high chances of success". Trust is also a rationale defined in terms of odds. In this case, however, reference is mainly made to the other, to the person with whom one expects to interact or on whom one may depend, directly or indirectly.

There are three main models of institutional trust in the EU: the eastern and central-eastern, the north-western, and the southern models. In the north and west, trust in national institutions tends to be

stronger than in those of the EU. In the East and CENTRAL-EASTERN regions, this relationship is reversed, with people placing far more trust in the EU than the institutions of their own countries. The southern model lies somewhere in the middle, with a similar level trust shown towards both national and foreign institutions.

A second parameter which differentiates the three models of institutional trust is trust in the justice system. This is at a maximum in the NORTH and WEST, a minimum in the EAST and CENTRAL-EAST, and an average level in the SOUTH.

The third parameter that determines regional models is trust in local administration. In the EAST and SOUTH this far below the EU average, while in the NORTH and WEST it is above the EU average (data not presented in the text). How people relate to the justice system has consequences for their state of mind. In the Old European Union of the 15 countries as well as in the New Member States, trust in the national justice system contributes to a high level of satisfaction with life (see appendix).

By looking only at the variation in trust in the justice system for the different age/place categories (table not included in the text) and macroregions, one gets one of the clearest images of the influence yielded by the respective conditioning factors over expectations vis-a-vis the justice system.

Trust in the justice system grows systematically: at a regional level: from a minimum in the East, via the mid-level Central-East, South and West, to a maximum level in the North; from a minimum level for the aged in urban areas, to a maximum for rural youth.

State of mind index. A more synthetic image on the variation of states of minds by regions and age-residence categories is provided in table 3. The mean value of the index of the state of mind is maximum for rural and urban youth in North region, contrasting with the minimum for the rural and urban aged persons from East region. The population in the South region is closer to population in Easter parts of EU by its high negative state of mind.

Table 3.Mean values of the index for state of mind by macroregions and age-residence segments

	Macroregion of European Union					
	East	South	Central-East	West	North	Total
aged old persons, urban	*-74*	*-52*	*-33*	*13*	*23*	*-14*
aged old persons, rural	*-73*	*-60*	*-37*	*10*	*36*	*-14*
35-54 old persons , urban	*-50*	*-40*	*-16*	*18*	*20*	*-7*
35-54 old persons , rural	*-45*	*-45*	*-26*	*24*	*36*	*-2*
youth 15-34 old age , rural	*-25*	*-20*	*20*	*44*	*55*	*21*
youth 15-34 old age , urban	*-21*	*-17*	*24*	*51*	*52*	*22*
Total	*-47*	*-38*	*-8*	*25*	*34*	*0*

Data source; Eurobarometer 70. The index is a factor score (multiplied by 100) of life satisfaction, personal optimism, trust in public administration and positive vs. negative perception of labour market in the country. KMO= 0.631 . Loadings of the four component indicators have specific hierarchies by regions:

	East	South	Central-East	West	North	Total
Life satisfaction	***.762***	***.724***	***.733***	***.754***	***.631***	0.737
Perception of national labour market	***.596***	***.621***	***.718***	***.704***	***.691***	0.694
Trust in public administration	***.434***	***.571***	***.315***	***.537***	***.617***	0.568
Optimism	***.687***	***.611***	***.724***	***.390***	***.521***	0.510

The table above indicates also the fact that it is not only the level of positive/negative state of mind that varies by regions. It is also its structure that differs: East population is the only one having a second rank relevance for optimism that is minimum for West and North populations; it is only the North region population that records a very high relevance for the perception of labour markets.

Do age/place social worlds really exist?

The regression analysis in tables A1 the appendix goes a long way towards answering this question. There, in a series of predictors for satisfaction with life are considered an entire range of characteristics of status (gender, education, internet access, satisfaction with income, etc.), including age and residential

environment. In addition, there have also been considered the four of the six categories of age/place used to define social worlds – rural youth, urban youth, urban aged, and rural aged. These represents a kind of interaction effect between age and place, one which is constructed, however, qualitatively, not quantitatively. One could say that the hypothesis of age/place social worlds is confirmed, if at least some of the aforementioned categories prove to be significant predictors of satisfaction with life.

Before looking more closely at the age/place effect, it is useful to list the main findings of a regression analysis (not included in the text) conducted in terms of predicting satisfaction with life for the whole of the EU . Satisfaction with life tends to be higher for: people satisfied with the level and development of their own financial situations; those satisfied with their place of work and the area where they live; those with a positive view of the justice system, of the way inequality and poverty are dealt with in their own country and of the way public administration works; youths (and, albeit with a higher probability of error in the calculation, also women) with access to the internet at home; people living in countries with a high level of economic development, particularly in a rural environment, in areas whose quality they are satisfied with.

For the time being, the analysis will not dwell on the role of interaction variables relating to the main theme of this study – that of specific combinations between place of residence and age category. The focus will be to highlight the differences observed between macroregions (Table A1).

The only situations in which women are not more satisfied with their lives than men, according to the regression analysis in the appendix, are those in the macroregions EAST, SOUTH and WEST. In these cases, gender does not appear to be a significant predictor of satisfaction. Why only in the North and Central-East are women more satisfied with life than men? This can be clarified only after looking more closely at the situation in the entire EU. At this level, the percentage of men satisfied with life (78%) is significantly greater than the corresponding percentage for women (75%). In the regression analysis, however, this relationship appears to have a different meaning. When one controls for different variables of status (education, age, material situation, etc.), the state of satisfaction tends to be higher for women than men. Why does the bivariate analysis say one thing and the multivariate another? After eliminating,

through detailed verification (Lazarsfeld method/elaboration model, Babbie, 1989: 416-434) the possibility of technical errors, one could say that what is at play are the effects of a social composition that differs between the two gender categories. For the entire EU, one can say that if men and women had the same resources of status and lived in similar environments, then the feeling of satisfaction would be greater for women than for men. This finding is similar to that of other academic literature on satisfaction with life (for the case of Ireland, Brereton, 2008:221). The absence of a significant relationship between gender and satisfaction with life in certain regions of the EU (East, South and West) suggests that, in the given context, the resources of status not included in the set of predictors in the regression models are, probably, lower for women than for men. For three of the EU macroregions (Centre-East, West and North), the high level of education contributes to a reduction in satisfaction with life. The explanation for this lies in the fact that, for relatively similar levels of resources, people with a high level of education have a higher level of expectation and, correspondingly, a greater chance of dissatisfaction with life. In the macroregions East and South, this relationship is insignificant. Satisfaction with the way of dealing with inequalities and poverty in society has a positive impact on satisfaction with life in only two regions: the eastern and southern regions. It should be noted in this light that the similarity of causal pattern between the East and South macroregions appears in many instances. This is also observed in relation to the role of education in determining satisfaction with life.

Having described the general picture of conditioning factors for satisfaction with life, one can begin detailing the role of place/age.

For the entire EU area, only two of the four age/place categories used in the regression models act as significant predictors of satisfaction with life: all other conditions being the same, urban youths and the urban aged tend to be more satisfied with their own lives. Of course, it was to be expected that urban youths would be more satisfied with life. But why also the urban aged? Why not also rural youth?

The formulated hypothesis maintains that the urban aged, the majority of which are pensioners with relatively high incomes in many EU countries, enjoy a lifestyle with much higher levels of freedom and, implicitly, more sources of satisfaction, despite the problems associated with age. Clearly, the

positive correlation between satisfaction with life and the fact of being aged in an urban environment cannot have the same explanation in relatively poor countries as in rich countries. For the latter, the above hypothesis merits consideration. A second hypothesis, which might shed significant light on the positive correlation mentioned in the case of these countries, is that of the partial occupation or multiple occupations of people of 54 years of age. For the whole of the EU, 42% of people of 55-64 years of age living in an urban environment are still occupied; they still work.

This finding, which shows a high level of satisfaction with life among youth and aged from urban environments for the whole of the EU, is consistent with the results of previous research in this field. Orsolya Lelkes (2008), using data from 21 European countries (European Social Survey, 2002/2003), found that middle-aged people tend to be less satisfied with life or unhappier compared with youths and the aged. In other words, there exists a U-type relationship between age and satisfaction with life. The Eurobarometer data fully support this same idea of a non-linear relationship of maximum satisfaction with life among youths and the aged, provided control for variables relating to resources of status. This view occurs mainly in economic and sociological literature on happiness. Some of the psychological approaches (Lelkes, 2008:1) indicate a relationship of a different nature, of the inversed U variety, between satisfaction and age. It is probable that the different control variables used in different regression models cause this kind of discrepancy.

The analysis from the perspective of social worlds provides supplementary information and shows that the U-type relationship between age and satisfaction is valid only for urban, and not rural environments, at the level of EU countries.

The conditioning factor of age vis-a-vis satisfaction with life is not, however, the same for all five macroregions of the EU. The social world effect defined by place/age differs strongly between macroregions. It appears as such, in the aforementioned form, only for the EU as a whole and the Centre-East region. In the remaining EU regions, one finds a high level of satisfaction with life among the aged, but not youths, from an urban environment. It is hard to say why a causal model is visible only on a

continental level and for a single macroregion. This finding, therefore, if it is to be understood, calls for additional analysis using data different from those of the Eurobarometer.

For the whole of the EU, differentiation by age in the rural environment does not result in significantly different levels of satisfaction. Things are different, however, at the level of macroregions: urban youths in the West macroregion tend to be happy, with those from the North region tending to be unhappy. For the other regions, the relationship is not statistically significant; the aged in rural environments tend to be satisfied with life in the North and Central-East regions, and unsatisfied in the West.

All these findings indicate a strong variability in the influence of age/space spaces on satisfaction with life from one macroregion to the other. Regional contexts clearly induce a different dynamic in the relationships between age/place and satisfaction with life.

Conclusions

Analytical premises .The study started from the assumption that states of mind - in particular those related to satisfaction with life, short-term optimism, trust in public administration and perception of national labour market - can be used as indirect measures (proxy variables) for the identification of social worlds at a continental level and, in particular, at the level of the European Union. These worlds are nothing other than living spaces with high levels of institutionalisation in terms of modes of acting, thinking and evaluation.

The analysis focussed on the existence and profile of age/place social worlds. States of mind measured ordinally as well as nominally (through typologies of states of satisfaction/optimism) are related to two conditional matrices, one pertaining to the regional level, the other the level of community and status. These matrices acts as a kind of “hard” conditioning factors whose effects continues to be felt even after the introduction to the analysis of a range of control variables. Community and status type conditioning factors are really of matrix-like nature in the sense that they contains categories determined by the intersection of residential environment categories (rural or urban) with the main age categories

(youth, middle-aged, the aged). This intersection resulted in six categories of age/place. These are given below with the values they hold for the entire EU (Eurobarometer data does not reflect the official, administrative residential status, but rather self-perceived status): rural youth (9%), urban youth (22%), middle-aged people from rural environment (12%), middle-aged people from urban environment (23%), the aged from rural environment (12%), and the aged from an urban environment (22%).

The relevance of age/place worlds. Although the category of people who perceive themselves as rural in the EU is limited in size, accounting for only one third of the population over 14 years of age in the European Union, states of mind conditioned by the age/place matrix are very different both for the whole of the EU and at the level of the sociocultural macroregions used in the analysis.

Even when controlling for variables related to resources of status (education, material situation), socio-demographic status (age and gender), institutional environment, community environment (urban/rural), national development (GDP) and macroregional environment (EAST, CENTRE-EAST, SOUTH, WEST, NORTH), membership of the different age/place categories continues to have a significant impact on states of satisfaction-optimism.

The fact of being satisfied with your own life, for example, is strongly associated with being young in an urban environment or old in an urban environment. The remaining age/place categories are not strongly associated with satisfaction with life, if one controls for the variables essential in defining a life situation. This finding is wholly consistent with previous studies in the field (Lelkes, 2008), which indicate a non-linear, U-shaped relationship between age and satisfaction with life. Additionally, it also permits a specification of limitation of the existence of the given relationship, especially at the urban environment level within the EU.

The state of “continuity dissatisfied” (those who say “the present is bad and it will the same or worse in the future”), for example, is, at first sight, specific to the EAST macroregion to which Romania belongs, together with Bulgaria and the Baltic states. A little under half of the citizens of this macroregion (45%), and a fifth of all EU citizens, belong to this category of state of mind. Continuity dissatisfaction, at an EU level, is associated (according to a multinomial regression analysis that is not included in the text)

in particular with urban living among the poor countries of the EU, with those people who have a poor material situation, a low level of internet access and are dissatisfied with the way institutions in their own country work. Beyond all these conditioning factors, the general type of dissatisfaction is also found to be specific to middle-aged people from an urban environment.

The relevance of sociocultural macroregions. The picture of sociocultural macroregions is given not only by economic, social and cultural-demographic differences, but also by states of mind and the configuration of the causal relationships which structure states of mind. It is of great relevance to the social significance of the EU's sociocultural macroregions the variation within each of these in the level of satisfaction with life according to age/place categories. The social worlds, as they are defined in this study, show their maximum variations in the EAST and CENTRE-EAST regions, and minimum variations in the WEST and NORTH. In other words, the categories of living place differ depending on the level of satisfaction with life, especially in the macroregions of EAST and CENTRE-EAST and, at a minimum level, in the WEST and NORTH. In the first two regions, where you live and how old you are matter far more than in the latter two. Life in terms of experiences and a universe of discourse is far less conditioned in the space-time of the NORTH and WEST compared with that of the EAST and CENTRE-EAST. The southern countries of the EU show an intermediary profile for states of mind, lying between the two groups mentioned above.

The northern group of the EU – made up of Sweden, Denmark, Finland, Great Britain and Ireland – is a very well defined formation. Here one records the maximum level of satisfaction and optimism in the EU, the maximum level of trust in the justice system and a low level of concern vis-a-vis future employment.

For its part, the southern group – made up of Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal – is in principal one which, under some indicators, lies closer to the eastern and central-eastern macroregions than those of the west and north. Concern for employment, for example, is extremely high (40%) and comparable with that of the central-eastern macroregion, while being a long way from the results for the west and north of the EU.

The macroregions used in this analysis exhibit strong differences not only in terms of satisfaction/optimism, but also institutional trust. The analysis revealed the existence of three large models of institutional trust in the EU – the eastern and central-eastern, northern and western, and southern models. The parameters which distinguish these models are trust in national institutions vs. international institutions, trust in the justice system, and trust in local administration. The eastern and central-eastern model is characterised by higher levels of trust in the EU than in national institutions. This relationship is inversed for the North and West, with higher trust in national institutions than the EU. Trust in the justice system is at a minimum in the EAST and CENTRE-EAST and at a maximum in the NORTH and WEST. The southern model lies between the two described above. In terms of trust in local administration, the SOUTH is closer to the EAST than to the NORTH and WEST.

Similarly, the second and third hypotheses are supported (not refuted) by the data. Trust in the justice system, as with satisfaction with life, shows strong variations according to the cumulative conditioning factors of age/residential environment/macroregion .

Conditional Matrices. This study in fact analysed variations in states of mind (satisfaction, optimism, trust) and of types of discourse (such as political discussions) in relation to the categories of age/place for sociocultural macroregions at an EU level. Age, residential environment and macroregion are conditioning factors of universes of experience and discourse. All of these are “hard” conditioning factors which continue to feature in the analysis, even where a wide range of other conditioning factors are controlled for (Tables A1 in appendix). The initial idea of representing regional conditioning factors as being of maximum generality and including those for age and residential environment is fully confirmed by the data in the analysis.

A better understanding of the strong linkages among state of mind indicators and place-age conditional matrix results from multiple regression analysis controlling for status variables (age, education, gender) some subjective variables (satisfaction with the financial situation of the household and trust in government) and country GDP (table A2). Even if one controls for all these variables, state of mind reveals to be highly positive in the North and and Central-East

partes of EU and highly negative in the South; Eastern population is not specifically of a negative state of mind as suggested by data in table 3; function of age-residence, the best state of mind is for urban youth and the worst for the aged from rural areas.

Appendices

TABLE A1. Predictors for satisfaction with life by EU macroregion

	EAST		CENT.-EAST		SOUTH		WEST		NORTH	
Predictors	coef.	p>z	coef.	p>z	coef.	p>z	coef.	p>z	coef.	p>z
Concerned about purchasing power of (hhd)	-0.69	0.00	-0.53	0.00	-0.38	0.00	-0.39	0.00	-0.29	0.00
Has difficulty paying monthly bills	-0.42	0.00	-0.42	0.00	-0.18	0.24	-0.49	0.00	-0.36	0.00
Has a good job*	0.65	0.00	0.55	0.00	1.08	0.00	0.55	0.00	0.23	0.02
Satisfied with the financial situation of the hhd*	1.50	0.00	1.34	0.00	0.75	0.00	1.28	0.00	1.53	0.00
Trusts Justice system*	0.22	0.00	0.29	0.01	0.11	0.34	0.30	0.00	0.14	0.00
Positive evaluation of her/his residential area	0.39	0.00	0.34	0.03	0.57	0.00	0.69	0.00	0.42	0.00
Believes social inequality in the country is well dealt with	0.20	0.02	0.22	0.21	0.54	0.00	0.19	0.07	0.00	0.99
Positive opinion of public administration in the country	0.20	0.00	0.05	0.43	0.21	0.00	0.15	0.02	0.28	0.00
age	-0.01	0.05	-0.01	0.00	-0.03	0.00	0.00	0.84	-0.02	0.00
Man *	-0.01	0.91	-0.16	0.00	0.04	0.70	-0.11	0.09	-0.26	0.00
Higher education*	-0.02	0.55	-0.24	0.00	0.08	0.67	-0.22	0.00	-0.20	0.02
Internet access at home*	0.28	0.00	0.34	0.06	0.27	0.00	0.49	0.00	0.29	0.00
Owner of a private car*	0.21	0.00	0.32	0.03	0.07	0.19	0.31	0.00	0.30	0.00
Urban resident*	-0.39	0.00	-0.19	0.00	-0.29	0.40	-0.31	0.00	-0.24	0.00
Country GDP as compared with EU average, 2006	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.35	0.03	0.05	0.02	0.36	0.01	0.37
Young adult from rural area*	0.02	0.91	0.28	0.08	-0.16	0.44	0.35	0.00	-0.27	0.00
Young adult from urban area*	0.23	0.30	0.33	0.00	-0.05	0.73	0.37	0.06	0.17	0.00

Predictors	EAST		CENT.-EAST		SOUTH		WEST		NORTH	
	coef.	p>z	coef.	p>z	coef.	p>z	coef.	p>z	coef.	p>z
Aged in rural area*	-0.04	0.41	0.14	0.01	0.64	0.09	-0.14	0.00	0.64	0.00
Aged in urban area*	0.30	0.03	0.68	0.00	0.61	0.00	0.23	0.00	0.79	0.00
R^2	0.18		0.17		0.18		0.15		0.09	
N	5070		5025		5052		6094		5394	

This table presents five models of ordered logistic regression. It does not include the threshold values for the dependent variable.* Dummy variables are coded as 0 and 1. The data are weighted using a variable constructed by TNS Opinion&Social for EU27. The highlighted coefficients are significant for p=0.05. The model was run in STATA , using the cluster option to correct for country bias. Data source: Eurobarometer 70, 2008 N=26635

TABLE A2. Predictors for state of mind index and its components

	Dependent variable									
	state of mind index		life satisfaction		personal optimism		satisf.labour.market		trust in public administr.	
	Coef.	P>t	Coef.	P>t	Coef.	P>t	Coef.	P>t	Coef.	P>t
Has difficulty paying monthly bills	-12.471	0.000	-0.377	0.000	-0.127	0.000	-0.214	0.000	-0.041	0.124
Satisfied with the financial situation of the hhd*	67.349	0.000	1.656	0.000	0.634	0.000	0.989	0.000	0.294	0.000
Age	-0.388	0.000	-0.002	0.207	-0.020	0.000	-0.003	0.115	0.004	0.052
Man*	0.960	0.547	-0.093	0.026	-0.009	0.827	0.196	0.000	-0.078	0.081
Medium level education*	2.301	0.320	0.027	0.644	0.026	0.649	0.007	0.900	0.012	0.850
Higher education*	12.478	0.000	0.204	0.003	0.209	0.001	0.227	0.000	0.049	0.491
Internet access at home*	9.971	0.000	0.385	0.000	-0.134	0.008	0.244	0.000	0.043	0.407
Urban resident*	-7.017	0.001	-0.315	0.000	-0.039	0.447	0.109	0.042	-0.248	0.000
Young adult from rural area*	4.960	0.221	0.137	0.196	0.307	0.006	-0.158	0.117	0.097	0.384
Young adult from urban area*	15.612	0.000	0.203	0.010	0.610	0.000	0.059	0.434	0.139	0.099
Aged in rural area*	-8.571	0.016	-0.212	0.018	-0.183	0.019	-0.031	0.740	-0.150	0.156
Aged in urban area*	-2.989	0.287	0.150	0.051	-0.063	0.332	-0.127	0.081	-0.026	0.746
Trust in government*	32.230	0.000	0.251	0.000	0.201	0.000	0.470	0.000	0.975	0.000
Country GDP as compared with EU average, 2006	0.488	0.000	0.018	0.000	-0.001	0.608	0.018	0.000	-0.010	0.000
Eastern region of EU*	4.702	0.345	0.262	0.051	0.256	0.041	1.233	0.000	-1.510	0.000
Central_Eastern region of EU*	19.471	0.000	0.632	0.000	-0.065	0.493	1.271	0.000	-1.094	0.000
Sourh region of EU*	-24.965	0.000	-0.006	0.936	0.336	0.000	-0.725	0.000	-1.161	0.000
North region of EU*	8.769	0.000	0.667	0.000	0.257	0.000	0.074	0.245	-0.432	0.000
_cons	-41.96	0.00								
R2	0.42		0.17		0.060		0.120		0.141	
N	22699		23493		234593		22629		23493	

This table presents one OLS regression model for the index of state of mind and four ordered logistic regression for the index components. It does not include the threshold values for the ordinal dependent variable.* Dummy variables are coded as 0 and 1. The data are weighted using a variable constructed by TNS Opinion&Social for EU27. The highlighted coefficients are significant for p=0.05. The model was run in STATA , using the cluster option to correct for country bias. Data source: Eurobarometer 70, 2008.

References

Babbie, E. (1989). *The Practice of Social Research*. Fifth edition, Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Becker, H. (1960). Notes on the concept of commitment. *American Journal of Sociology*, 66, July, 32-40. DOI: 10.1086/222820.

Brereton, F., Clinch, j. P., Ferreira, S. (2008). Employment and Life-Satisfaction: Insights from Ireland. *The Economic and Social Review*. Vol. 39, No. 3, Winter, 2008: 207–234.

Chesnais, Jean-Claude. (1981). *Histoire de la Violence en Occident de 1800 à nos jours*. Paris: Éditions Robert Laffont.

Clarke, A. (1991). Social Worlds/Arenas Theory as Organizational Theory. In *Social Organization and Social Process: Essays in Honor of Anselm Strauss.* Edited by D. Maines. Hawthorne, NY: Aldine de Gruyter: 119-158 .

Clarke, A. (2008). Sex/gender and race/ethnicity in the legacy of Anselm Strauss. Dezin, N. (editor) . *Studies in Symbolic Interaction* (pp. 161-178). Volume 32 JAI Press.

Clarke, A., and Star, S. L. (2008). The Social World Framework: A Theory/Methods Package. In Hackett, E., Amsterdamska, O., Lynch, M. and Wajcman, J (eds.), *The Handbook of Science and Technology Studies* (pp.113-138). Third edition, Cambridge: MIT Press.

European Comission. (2008). *Eurobarometer 70, Public opinion in European Union. First Results*. http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/eb/eb70/eb70_first_en.pdf.(Consulted Sept. 16th , 2010).

Freedman, R. (1979). Theories of Fertility Decline: A Reapprisal. *Social Forces*, 58,1,1-17.

Glaser, B.G., and Strauss , A.L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory. Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Glaser, B. (2008). *Doing Quantitative Grounded Theory.* Sociology Press.

Lelkes, O. (2008). Happiness across Life-Cycle: Exploring Age Specific Preferences . *Policy Brief* . March, 2, European Centre, 1-15. http://www.euro.centre.org/data/1207216181_14636.pdf (consulted Sept. 16th, 2010).

Sandu, Dumitru. (1992): Elements de demographie culturelle de la Roumanie rurale, in: *Population*, 3

Strauss, A. (1991). A Personal History of the Development of Grounded Theory. *Qualitative Family Research. A Newsletter of the Qualitative Family Research Network* , Volume 5., no 2: 1-2.

Strauss, A. and Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research : Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory*. Thousand Oaks, CA : Sage.

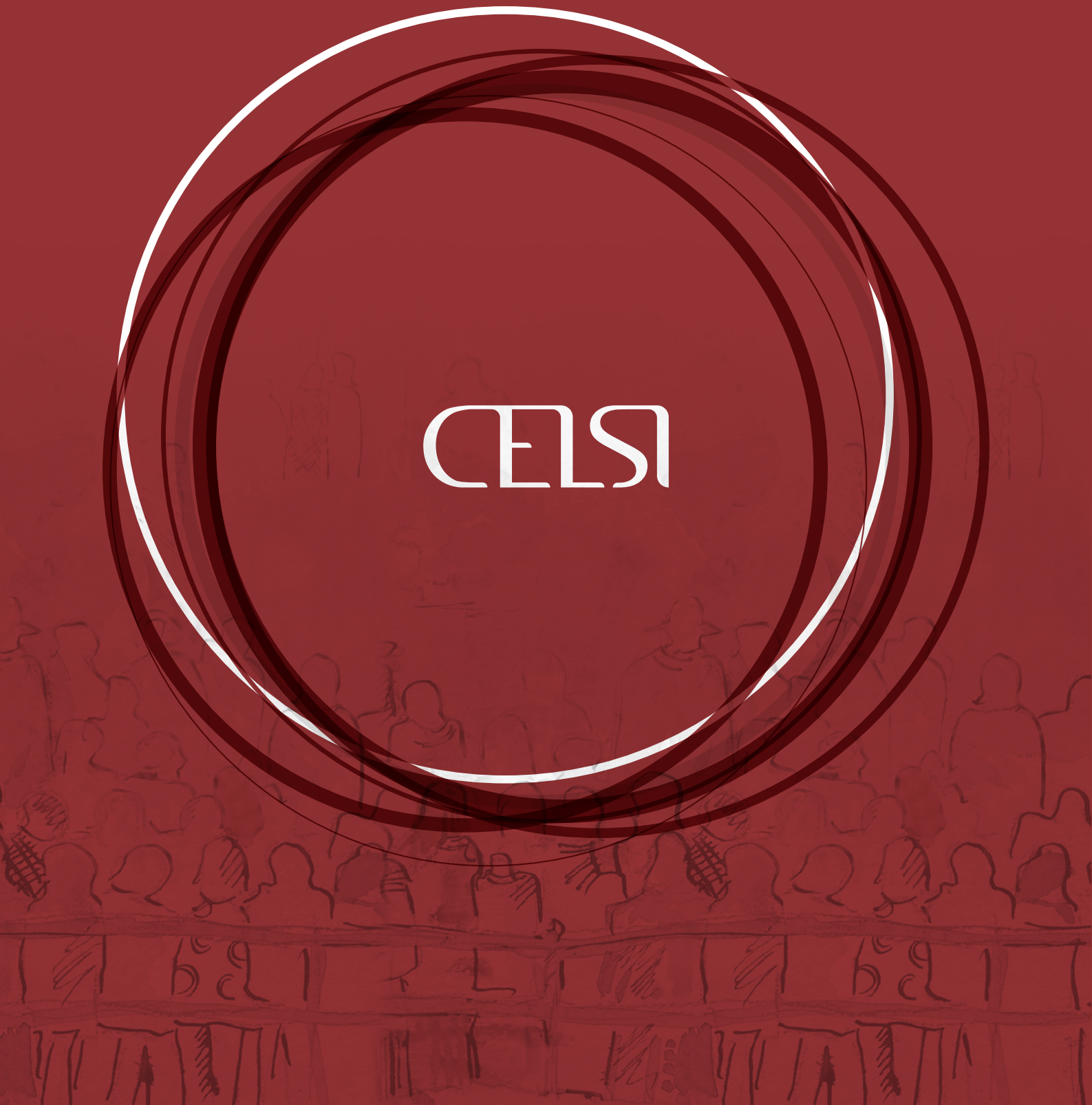
Strauss, A. (1993). *Continual permutations of Action*. New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Schutz, A. [1970] (1975). *On Phenomenology and Social Relations*. Editated and with an Introduction by Helmut R. Wagner, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Shibutani, T. (1961). *Society and Personality: An Interactionist Approach to Social Psychology*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Vasconcelos, A. C. (2007). The Use of Grounded Theory and of Arenas/Social Worlds Theory in Discourse Studies: A Case Study of Discursive Adaptation of Information Systems . *The Electronic Journal of Business Research Methods*. Volume 5, Issue 2: 125-136, available online at www.ejbrm.com [Consulted May 20th , 2010].

Unruh David. (1983). *Invisible Lives: Social Worlds of the Aged*.CA: Sage.


CELSI