

Available online at www.postmodernopenings.com

e-ISSN: 2069-9387; ISSN-L: 2068-0236

Postmodern Openings

2015, Volume 6, Issue 2, December, pp. 59-77

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/po/2015.0602.05>

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How to cite: Sandu, A. (2015). Preliminaries to a Social-Semiotic Model of Communicative Action. *Postmodern Openings*, 6(2), 59-77. Doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.18662/po/2015.0602.05>

Preliminaries to a Social-Semiotic Model of Communicative Action

Antonio SANDU¹

Abstract

The purpose of this article is to bring contributions to the elaboration of a social-semiotic model of social constructionism, which will make a synthesis between the theory of communicative action and the theories of social-constructionist semiotic model, based on the postulation of a social universe in a network of communicative interdependencies developed on levels of reality. The interpretative model we propose comes to conceptualize the particularities of the sociological analysis of the transmodern society, seen as a knowledge-based society, placed at the interference with the postmodern society; that of generalized permissiveness.

The model proposed aims at a constructionist-fractal analysis (of deconstruction-reconstruction type) of the interpretative drift of social constructs, under the empire of different constructive instances.

Keywords: *social-constructionism, communicative action, deconstruction, deconstruction-reconstruction.*

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Introduction. Two Maps – Same Territory. Social Reality

This work started from the assumption formulated by Alfred Korzybski (apud. Bandler & Grinder, 2005) that the “*map is not the territory*”. In fact, we have two maps for the one and only territory, called the (*social reality*). The two maps that are placed at the threshold between the social sciences and social philosophy are represented by post-positivism and social constructionism.

In the post-positivist perspective, we talk about unique reality, which is objective and knowable, independent in its entirety from the context of the investigation. As opposed to post-positivism, we find another major direction in studying the social reality; social constructionism, according to which, reality is dependent from the observer and the context of the investigation. *Reality* is understood as being multiple, there being as many distinct social realities as interpretative contexts that contribute to the social construction of a social system – institution, social act, social action, etc. – being the result of negotiating the interpretations on the meaning of the object of knowledge and social action, at the level of the interpretative community. In our opinion, social reality is knowable, based on the levels of transparency to knowledge (Nicolescu, 2007) and is developed in the direction in which the interpretative community formulates the interrogation (Cooperrider & Srivatsva, 1987), being continuously altered by the observer.

This article’s objective is to bring a contribution to the elaboration of a social constructionism model that would make a synthesis between the theory of communicative action and the theories of social-constructionist semiotics, based on the postulation of a social universe in a network of communicative interdependencies, developed on levels of reality.

The Context of the Applicability of the Model

The interpretative model we propose comes to conceptualize a series of the specific transformations of the *transmodern society*, that we associate with the idea of a *knowledge-based society*. In our opinion, the knowledge-based society has a series of characteristics, among which the most important is the *change in the method of production*. This has developed from a model based on using machines, which resulted from the industrial revolution in order to gain goods and services destined for individual consumption, to one based on creating symbolic goods, in the framework of interactions that are based on the *virtualization of the social space* and the overcoming of the spatial limitations, specific to the human condition, through the transfer of social

interactions in the communicational environment. The transmodern communicative context (Ray, 2011; Sandu, 2011), which we consider tributary to a gnoseological constructionist paradigm, partly overlaps with the postmodern one, which is based on the idea of deconstruction of the communicative supra-structure. At the level of the society, the two models coexist and interact, which is why we developed an interpretative model which incorporates both the idea of deconstruction, of globalizing meta-stories, and the need for compatibility with the perspective of the communicative construction of the *contextual reality* (Frunza, 2011; Sandu, 2014). Coexistence at the level of the society, both of the postmodern and the transmodern model based on knowledge, brings the need for a new sociological, epistemological, pragmatic and ethical approach.

Post-Positivism and Social-Constructionism. Ontological and Gnoseological Perspectives in Originating the Model Proposed

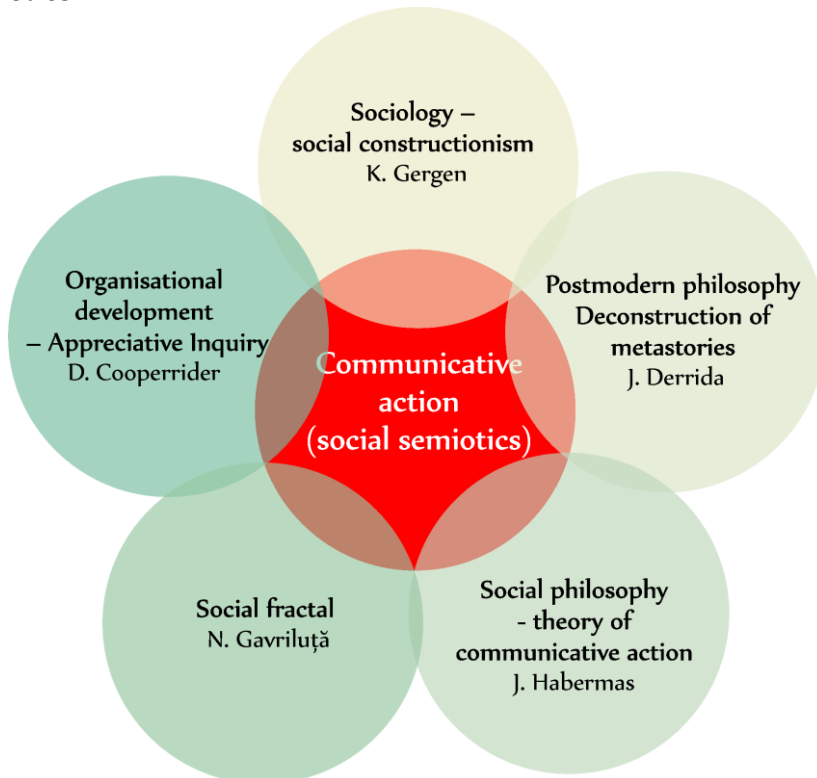
Social reality can be understood from at least two perspectives based on the ontological assumption referring to the dependence or independence on the epistemic subject. If we assume that social reality is unique, and independent from the epistemic subject, we can place ourselves in a post-positivist perspective of realist nature, which leads us to assertions regarding the independence of the social action from the communicational context, and not only from the epistemic subject, but its full cognoscibility and intrinsic objectivity of the social fact.

The social-constructionist perspective has, as an ontological assumption, the multiple natures of the social reality and, as an epistemological assumption, the dependence from the communicational context and the position of the epistemic subject in the very process of social construction of reality. Social reality is a product of the process of negotiating the statements that the communicative actors offer to the concepts that define the phenomena and social institutions that they are part of and that they constitute in consciousness (Sandu, 2012a). The process of negotiating the interpretations has a mostly social nature; therefore, the social community is seen as an interpretative community. One and the same concept, which defines, for example, a social phenomenon, a norm or social value, has multiple meanings, based on the interpretative community in which a process of negotiating meaning takes place. A subject, social actor or communicative agent can simultaneously participate in many processes of signifying the same epistemic object in different interpretative communities.

We consider that the social reality is constituted on different ontological, epistemic and axiological levels, based on their *transparency to knowledge*.

Postpositivism	Social constructionism
Reality (including the social one) is unique	Reality is multiple, having different levels of reality
Reality is independent from the context of its investigation	Reality is dependent from the context of its investigation – it develops in the direction of interrogation
Reality is independent from the observer	Reality is not continuously modified by the observer
Reality is objective	Reality is subjective – the result of the negotiation of interpretations
Reality is knowable in its entirety	Reality is knowable, based on the levels of transparency to knowledge (Nicolescu, 2006).

Why Social Construction of Reality? ...Towards Social Semiotics



The model which we propose is based on a process of theoretical breeding, starting from the Habermas Communicative Action Theory (1987) completed with a series of elements coming from the postmodern model of the deconstruction of meta-narratives (Derrida, 1967), the social constructionism (Gergen, 1978; 1985; 1990; 1999; 2005), the appreciative perspective (Cooperridder & Srivatsva, 1987; Cojocar, 2005; 2006; Cojocar, 2012; Sandu, 2012a; 2012b), in the context of interpreting the social (society?) as a fractal (Gavrilita, 2003) – as a reiteration of a constructive model in different contexts. The model of social semiotics, which we propose, aims at a new form of communicative action, as particular form of social action.

The Double Deconstruction Model

If the postmodern, post-industrial society, which is defined as a society of generalized permissiveness (Lipovetsky, 1996), integrates the perspective of deconstruction in its structure (Derrida, 1967), the transmodern society proposes the exit from post-history (Vattimo, 1991) by identifying certain models of reconstructing the social (society?). Today, we talk about a transmodern society, based on knowledge, which, for the first time in the history of humanity, transforms knowledge and its production into a fundamental means of production. Our opinion is that the two concepts – transmodern society and knowledge-based society – describe the same contemporary civilized paradigm in different terms. We support this idea, starting from Ray's opinion (2011), considering that the transmodern society is based on the unification of social reality into a network, as virtualized communicative interactions. Changing the already mentioned way of production entails a change in the area of social action, which is more and more mediated by the virtualizing instruments (Sandu, 2003). In order to resign social action and its particularities in the transmodern society, based on knowledge, we identified a correlation between the deconstructive and the reconstructive stage, seen as a unit of deconstruction – (re)construction.

For Derrida (1967), *metanarratives* represented great theoretical systems, whose role was to “give meaning to the world”. These great stories are about the existence of a superior being (God); the existence of the world order; a sense of time and the progress of humanity. Metanarratives allow both the individual and the community to reconstruct the world in consciousness and give meaning (rationality) to social action.

Starting from Derrida (1967; 1997), we show that modernity is based on a series of constitutive myths, or meta-narrations, among which we can

identify the myth of the never-ending progress (Apel, 1992; 1993; 1999), proceeding to the affirmation of the Hegelian perspective of developing the Absolute Idea as history (Hegel, 1995). The theorists of postmodernity identified a crisis of these meta-stories, not only at the level of the theoretical paradigm as Derrida did, but also at the level of public trust in the legitimate structures of modernity, founded on their constitutive myths, especially on that of the progress of the linearity of human development (Lipovetsky, 1996). The crises of transcendent, superior values, which institute the social order, represent the *deconstruction* in the act of the legitimate structures of the modern social order. This crisis is manifested, amongst others, by the secularization and adoption of alternative lifestyles, as opposed to the traditional ones.

The term *charity* is a definition of a set of social practices that comes from the Christian paradigm, where charity is a divine command. Charitable practices underlie certain mechanisms of reducing social inequality, often promoted by organisations, which are centred on faith (Sandu & Caras, 2013; Cojocaru, Cojocaru & Sandu, 2011). We see the phenomenon of secularization as a deconstruction of religion, as a legitimating instance of the care for others, and implicitly for a society whose moral foundation is based on respecting the divine commands. The phenomenon of secularization creates a deconstruction of metanarratives about charity, as a divine command, which loses its legitimate value. Social practices related to charity (redistribution of social welfare and normalization of social disparities) also suffer from a process of deconstruction and reconstruction, as it subsumes a new legitimate structure: professionalization of social work (Sandu & Caras, 2013). Turning Christian charity into social work, institutionalized under the influence of the process of secularization, represents such a model of interpretative drift of the concept of charity, of *deconstruction in the act* (Sandu & Caras, 2013; Cojocaru, Cojocaru & Sandu, 2011). As the religious legitimate structures have been replaced by the secular ones, social practice has been transformed under the impact of new ideologies, not having disappeared but having been *reinterpreted*. Therefore, it moves from a modern society, whose unit can be regained, amongst others, in ideas such *state of the nation*, faith, religious values, etc., to a society in the network of interpretative communities.

Waiving meta-stories is twofold once on the theoretical plan, through the de-ideology and empowerment of the social theory under the empire of great founding stories, and that of another deconstruction in act,

at the level of social practices, which transforms starting from new secular ideologies, which bring into discussion a pluricentric society, atomized, in the place of a universalizing and essential one. The deconstruction of the universalizing perspective on society can be placed under the sign of the failure of the two great totalitarian ideologies: Nazism and Communism (Caras & Frunză, 2014; Sandu, 2015a).

Starting from the ideas of Derrida (1967), we observed the existence in fact of a *double deconstructive process*:

- The first – at the level of metanarratives as legitimate structures of social reality;
- The second – at the level of social practice, accompanying social order instituted by metanarratives (Sandu & Caras, 2013).

The model of the double deconstruction can be understood as the existence of two parallel and simultaneous deconstructions, the first one occurring at epistemic level, as it was exposed by Derrida, and the second, at the level of the language conventions that accompany the interpretative drift of the different concepts, based on the interpretative context in which that concept is integrated.

Contributions to the Development of the Idea of “Deconstruction”

We consider deconstruction as a first step of a complex process of deconstruction-reconstruction, both in the plan of metanarratives and of social practices. In the field of metanarratives the ideas around which they are constructed, suffer an interpretative adrift. They do not entirely lose their legitimate value, but only suffer a contextualization at the specific level of the interpretative community. The globalizing meta-story suffers an interpretative adrift in the direction of gaining new meanings, as a result of the communicative action, which appears as a legitimate process at the level of the interpretative community. In the plan of social practices, the deconstructive process aims to permanently normalize the relationships of power. In fact, we consider that this process of deconstruction is one of erosion of the traditional power towards a communicative soft power (Nye, 1990; 2004; 2011), and a power, based on consensus gained through communicative action.

Communicative Action and Social Rationality

Habermas (1987) identified the following forms of social action: *strategic action* – oriented towards efficiency in the economic field, *instrumental*

action – oriented towards efficiency in the social field; *communicative action* (*strictly speaking*) – oriented towards gaining consensus, or, how we would say, of interpretative consensus.

Starting from the mentioned theory, we redefined the types of social action, differentiating:

- Strategic and instrumental action - as being forms of social action, which aim to institute a relationship of power. This relationship of power is constituted either in the economic space, or in that of social influence, in the sense of creating a power disparity and a discursive advantage. What Habermas (1987) called efficiency, we interpret in terms of instituting the relationship of power (Foucault, 2005), especially of influence – soft power (Nye, 2004; Goffman, 2004), as normalizing power and power specific to the knowledge-based society.
- Communicative action – which can be seen as a normalization of the relationships of power being, therefore, opposed and complementary to other types of action.

In this regard, we can, for example, refer to the relationship between the practice of social work and supervision, where *social work* fulfils the role of *social instrumental action* and the *supervision in social work* – as *communicative action*, of normalizing the relationships of power from the area of social work. We can analyse the practices of renormalization of the relationship of power between a caregiver and a care receiver, in medicine or in social care, starting from empirical data in the constructive context.

Habermas (1987) instituted communicative action as a form of rationality of social action. Gaining consensus is the result of an intention of the social/communicative actor. In our opinion, *communicative action is implicit to social action, normalizing the reports of power, having both a rational and irrational nature*, being rather about a communicational relational experience, not necessarily acknowledged by the epistemic subject. This approach questions the post-positivist perspective, because in the absence of a series of *essences*, independent from the influence of the observer that would be conserved and measured in the process of social action, social research would be reduced to an analysis of the particular social event and the context of social action. The laws of social are questionable, since any knowledge, dependent from the observer and the observing context, is valid exclusively for that social-semiotic situation. In fact, knowing the social does not want to be a

knowledge of the particular, but a knowledge of the *general* of certain regularities existing behind the social particular, behind appearances. As Derrida showed (1997), if this *general knowledge* is nothing but a variation of the *particular*, it means that the laws that the social science presumes to be correlated with the existence of an essence of social values are being questioned. However, we find that these regularities, which define the sphere of social action, seem to exist and have been highlighted by sociologists, even if they have a statistical value, rather than a deterministic one at the individual level.

“Social Construct” and the Secret Included Third

In an attempt to render the constructionist perspective, particular and contextualized with the traditional sociological theories, positivist or post-positivist, on the social fact, we appealed to the idea of the *secret included third*, formulated by Lupascu (1960) and developed by Nicolescu (2006).

Nicolescu (2006) took the idea of the secretly included third from Lupascu (1960), according to which the opposition between contradictions is solved by the existence of an included secret third, which is situated in another plan of reality. Starting from this interpretation, we introduce an idea of social construct, which is divided on multiple levels of reality. The first such plan is that of *social action*, in which the individual acts affectively inside the social space where he/she moves and acts, based on certain ideas, beliefs, etc. In fact, he acts based on certain constructs that he has on reality, which take the shape of values and beliefs he has acquired during the socialization. A second plan is that of establishing constructs or negotiating interpretations on constructs, being the plan of *communicative action*.

The individual does not oscillate between the two plans of reality, but simultaneously lives in both of them, most of the time not even realizing that a constructive process happens while the individual performs a social action, that in the social action itself, a communicative action also takes place. That is why we consider that social action cannot be categorically separated by communicative action. For the individual, the two plans overlap, but from the perspective of understanding the possibility of capturing certain elements of rationality and of regularities of the social evolution, we must admit that the two plans are different, at least from the perspective of social ontology. The fact that the individual acts in both plans simultaneously does not make the plans be any less separate.

This separation between the two plans is not total; they interfere and are subject to different degrees of transparency to knowledge. The

traditional sociological perspective is oriented towards understanding and signifying the social interactions, but less on the ways in which these actions are generated in the individual's consciousness. The constructionist perspective concerns the way in which constructs are generated in consciousness, at the level of the social interactions. The model we have outlined aims to unify the two perspectives, precisely by showing the existence of two different plans: one of communicative interaction and establishing constructs and the second one of social action.

Not all social phenomena can be investigated with the same degree of precision, as they are about the different degrees of transparency of social knowledge (Nicolescu, 2007). We understand social interactions, but very little the way in which these interactions are generated in the individual's consciousness. From the perspective of constructionist sociology, social knowledge is oriented towards the instances of social construction of a phenomenon and not on the social phenomenon that is not accepted as existing in itself, independent from the context of its social construction. The (post)-positivist perspective emphasizes the need and *possibility* of investigating social facts, although in practice, the respondents' opinion on facts has been investigated (Miftode, 2011). Including the observation and its derivatives that involve participatory inquiry, which offers the opinion on social reality as data, interpreted from the ontological and epistemological perspective of the investigator. Derrida (1967) showed that there is a moment between the perception of the present and the description of the present act, which makes any knowledge on social space, be a subjective knowledge on reality. The social-space researcher thus imprints social reality. This is the assumption underlying constructionist epistemology in social research (Sandu, 2012a), as we actually present in the constructionist model.

In our opinion, the constructionist model can be better understood if we take into consideration the existence of many levels of reality. The same construct can be seen as *appearance*, as a derived from the semiotic pact, which results from the negotiation of its meanings, in particular, interpretative contexts and, as *essence*, as fundamental of social action.

Starting from the unifying claim of trans-disciplinarity, we noticed the incompleteness of the deconstruction of dialectic, between essence and appearance, where a medium term may occur, situated in a different term of reality. From the perspective of analysing the social, the medium term we have identified is the idea of the *social construct*. This works as essence, once it is instituted through the process of social negotiation of reality. For the

subjects of social action, it has a constrictive nature, identical to the one of metanarratives, which legitimates social reality.

Trust, for example, is established as valuable in a process of negotiating the interpretations on the idea of a relationship of power. Once the *construct* is established and accepted by the interpretative community, it becomes the starting point for social. The two levels of social reality are *the level of interpretative construction* and *the level of social action*. At the *level of interpretative construction*, communicative action dominates and at the level of social action, the instrumental and strategic one does. Therefore, the process of renormalization of power through communicative action is done at a different level from that of social reality, rather than the institution of the relationship of power itself. The dynamical instrumental action, communicative action, generates *interpretative adrift*.

We consider that a construct acts as essence when it generates and legitimates social action. A construct can be seen as *appearance* on the level of reality in which the negotiation of interpretations on the meaning, with which the construct is invested, is produced. Construct (trust) is built in a plan in which communicative actors are negotiating the given meanings. This negotiation of interpretations takes the form of communicative action, which aims at gaining consensus. This is, however, an unstable equilibrium, as once intervened, the consensus will not be a permanent one; the idea of trust will not always have the same operational definition, not even at the level of the same interpretative community, such as the one of doctors or social workers, etc. We will receive different operational definitions referring to the meaning of the concept of trust depending on various factors, such as the person we are asking, the person doing the asking, and the moment and the way in which the question is addressed. Since the same construct has different meanings in different interpretative contexts, can we legitimately ask whether the construct still operationalize the same social phenomenon? In order to answer this question, we must identify a conservation of a meaning of the phenomenon that should be preserved in different interpretative contexts, in the very process of semantic drift of that construct. The analysis of the interpretative drift of a concept in different constructive contexts in which that concept undergoes a process of deconstruction-reconstruction, we called constructionist-fractal analysis (Sandu, 2011).

Starting from social constructionism, we proposed a mechanism of “deconstruction-reconstruction” with which we can understand the

interpretative cleavage that the different social constructs suffer in the continuous process of resignification.

If Gergen (2005) was interested in the context in which a clipping from reality (eg., an institution) is built, we are more interested in the process of permanent reconstruction of the social meaning of an institution, in different interpretative contexts.

Fractal Constructionism – Methodology in Social Semiotics

At the methodological level, we proposed a semiotic strategy called fractal constructionism, which aims at analysing the interpretative adrift of certain key concepts that have, in fact, value of social constructs. The analysis mentioned starts from the fractal model, which Gavriluță (2003) applied to the dimensions of the social construction of reality. The method involves the analysis of a construct and highlighting the transformations they are experiencing in different interpretative contexts and the way in which each acception generates “social reality”.

Starting from the theory of the social fractal (Gavriluță, 2003), we proposed a model of analysis of the process of deconstruction-reconstruction, which a of concept/social institution faces in the interpretative drift, connected to multiple social contexts in which that reality is constructed.

Examples of analysis of interpretative drift: *social construction of identity*, which we can follow in the context of cultural and multicultural identity (the Italian ethnic from Romania), *the social construction of professional identity* (of the social worker, the doctor, etc.), *the social construction of identity of the patient*, etc. (Sandu, 2015b).

In the interpretative analysis of a construct, we followed the conservation of the built essence (quasi-transcendental) in multiple constructive instances and the law of transformation, which governs the passage of the construct through different constructive instances. Consensus is an unstable equilibrium, interfered in the interpretative adrift of concepts with legitimate value. When this equilibrium occurs, the concept takes the form of a construct and acts in the further plans of constructing reality as a quasi-transcendental. We call quasi-transcendental a concept, which emerged as a result of a semiotic pact (negotiation of interpretations) in a level of reality, that acts as an *exterior and constructive given*, in a further plan of social reality.

Social Constructionism

Gergen (2005) gave a new interpretation of the idea of “social construction of reality”, taken from Berger and Luckman (2008). The process of acquisition of constructs, in Gergen’s (2005) vision, is one of *social mediated mediation?*. The entire human intelligibility (rationality of social action), is generated in the framework of social relationships, those being the contexts in which the individual deduces what is rational, good, real, etc. From a constructionist perspective, we no longer talk about *truth*, but about *adequacy*.

Starting from Gergen (2005), we consider that social-constructionism is preoccupied with *explaining the processes through which the individuals describe and take action in the world in which they live and are part of*.

Constructionism, as well as constructivism, are paradigms referring to the way in which the individual operates with constructs; operational definitions on reality itself.

While *constructivism* places the formation of constructs at the level of the individual, *constructionism* places them at the level of the interaction from the social environment, the individual assuming and re-projecting them towards the environment (Sandu, 2015b; 2015c).

We propose a particular version of constructionism, which takes into account Habermas’ (1987) theory regarding communicative action.

From Appreciative Inquiry to Social Semiotics

Using the constructionist perspective, Cooperrider and Srivatsva (1987) introduced a paradigm of organisational development, based on the notification of what gives meaning to social reality. As long as reality (organisation) is a subjective construction, it requires the practitioners of the organizational development to choose to focus on problem, or to focus on what has already worked. Cooperrider’s postulate was that a human organization is developed in the direction in which the questions are being formulated. Social construction of reality cannot be axiologically neutral, any social reality being infused by values from the very moment of its social construction. We have taken affirmative centering from the appreciative inquiry proposed by Cooperrider, focussing on “what works, what has results and is valued”. We have decontextualized this method, subjecting it to the mentioned interpretative adrift and building with it an appreciative social semiotics as an interpretative grid of analysis of the constitutive speech for the social space.

Starting from the ideas of Cooperrider, we proposed a socio-semiotic perspective on the way in which values are implicated in the process of the social construction of reality.

Therefore we have identified two types of values specific to the two deconstructive/constructive moments previously identified: constitutive values and operational values (Sandu, Caras & Frunza, 2014a; 2014b; Sandu, 2015c).

The constitutive values are those values which make a system or social organization become necessary and emerge. These values are implicated in the social construction of the institution or organization. The constitutive values are the result of an interpretative agreement (of a communicative action) at the level of all social actors, which express the need for creating the institution.

The operational values guide the functioning of the institution or organization, as well as the way in which social action is developed (Caras & Frunza, 2014).

The two types of values can be understood in congruence with the two levels of reality discussed previously. The constitutive values show the way in which that social reality is built, which are the constructs that make social reality become necessary. In the case of the construct of *charity* (Sandu & Caras, 2013), *previously presented*, on the first constructive level of communicative action, it generated the need for social care. This need arises as a constructive instance in the area of the modern secular society, of liberal type.

Once social care is established as a social construct by itself, it acts in a social plan, for example, in that in which the semiotic pact is done at the level of the relationship between the social worker and the beneficiary. This relationship is based on communicative action, implementing constitutive values of social work, which are constructs instituted at a high level of social reality, and through another semiotic pact. This constructive context generates a constructive instance for another relationship, for example, that of supervision, which, therefore, appears from the perspective of the transparency to knowledge as situated on a different level of social reality.

The operational values from the previous level become constitutive for the further level of organisational reality. In the process of social care, there are other levels of reality connected to the relationship between the institution and the state, which are established between the representatives

of the institution and the beneficiary, and between the representatives and other different stakeholders.

In social practices, other constructs are generated; therefore, operational values of the social care practice may become constitutive values for other institutions that are derived from social care. For example, these values could be subsumed in the area of autonomy, especially relational and expressive autonomy of the responsibility for the human being's dignity and the respect for it and social justice. An important dimension of social semiotics is constituted by the appreciative pragmatics developed as methods of practice.

The practices, with role of counselling, have the characteristics of social action through a means of communicational strategies. The distinction between social action (social innovation) and communicative action (social inventiveness) can be made. *The innovation* allows the development of action in the framework of the very constructive paradigm and the very same semiotic pact belonging to the same level of reality. *Inventiveness* sets another semiotic pact. Instituting another semiotic pact is the engine that triggers the interpretative adrift of constructs in a manner similar to that proposed by Kuhn (1997) for the scientific paradigms. The semiotic pact ensures interpretative unity of the world through the means of social construction of reality.

Infusing the social constructs with ethical values may ask for the reconstruction of ethics as form of social normativity. Appreciative ethics (Sandu, 2012b) could derive form from the ethics of discourse (Habermas, 1987; Apel, 1992; 1993; 1999) and that allows us to rethink communicative action as ethical action. Appreciation is an ability to grasp the positive in people and organisations, as well as ways of amplifying it. Appreciative ethics proposes tracking the development of virtues derived from constitutive values in the place of an excessive normativity, derived from operational values and principles of the social system. Starting from the ethical values of communicative action and reinterpreting it from an appreciative perspective, we proposed elsewhere an appreciative ethics of communication with applications in the dimension of care, but also of social change (Sandu, 2012b). Appreciative ethics are, by excellence, ethics of communicative action, which aim at changing the referential of the semiotic universe.

Conclusions

The process of constructing reality takes the form of a communicative action of gaining interpretative consensus between the own rationality of the individual and the communicative-interpretative structures of the individual, projected by the environment.

Social construction of reality takes place even in, and also through, communicative action as a process of negotiation of interpretations. Once the interpretative strategies have been set, they become operational constructs and the action of the individual becomes social action. We brought into discussion both the postmodern communicational paradigm, as well as the transmodern one, as particular forms of reporting about the social reality. The unity of the world, deconstructed by postmodernism, is rebuilt as a communicative network. Unity is not managed by transcendent meta-narrations, but through semiotic pacts. The communicative actions construct new forms of narrations as epistemic landmarks available inside the interpretative universe. We analysed the social construction of reality, seeking to develop our own version of social constructionism at the intersection between the constructionist paradigm and the theory of communicative action. We approached this theory from ontological, epistemological, axiological and ethical perspectives.

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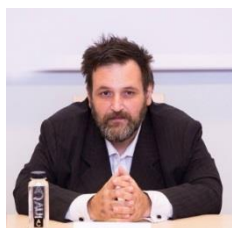
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