



# Creativity in Shaping a Country Image and Identity. The Romanian Protests in 2017 – Citizen Diplomacy?

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**Context:** In February 2017, massive anti-corruption protests took place daily across Romania, making headlines across the globe

**Main RQ:** Can protests be a form of citizen diplomacy, generating alternative discourses about the country image and identity?

**Methodology:** Historical reconstitution & chronology of events; Exploratory corpus of data for January 18 - February 28, 2017 in the Facebook community "Coruptia ucide" (posts and events)

**Findings:** Protests became a form of citizen diplomacy, **indirectly**, through a gradual process of social construction (stages **intersect & influence** each other)



Stage 1. **Protesters** incorporated various MarCom practices to **mobilize** citizens and **gain visibility** for their anticorruption objective

- Laser projections
- Facebook live streaming – record viewers
- "protests of kids"
- Collective national anthem singing
- #hashtags

Stage 2. **International media** and press agencies symbolically construct **protesters as a resource of positive visibility for Romania**

- Romanians - **an example in Europe** for how citizens stand up for democratic values, fight corruption and mobilize

Stage 3. **Romanian media** gradually reproduce the **discourse of international media**

Stage 4. **Protesters** internalize & appropriate media discourse-> **strategically communicate to international audiences**



- protests are a form of democratization of society
- "the revolution of light"
- grant visibility to positive tone and evaluation of international media



**Conclusion:** Protests gain international relevance due to **appeal to universal democratic values**. Protesters become aware of their **symbolic soft power**. and **strategically instrumentalize** creativity and humour to gain international benevolence. They **generate alternative discourses** about Romania - *creative country, the hope from East Europe.*