

A Great Career, a Great Man, Professor Dumitru Patriche. A Testimony coming from the last former PhD Student trying to look beyond the Electronic Commerce topic that they focused on

Abstract: *E-commerce and e-business are considered by some as a whole new dimension in terms of economics, while at the same time many professionals see it as a natural evolution of the same raw, basic, traditional economic principles. Although this was the main concept, together with its applicability and manifestation in Romanian's environment, of a PhD thesis, the purpose of this article is to capture and highlight some of the most memorable moments and facts that happened during this complex process, a process that was supervised, carefully monitored, guided by one of Romania's well-known personalities in the economic field, Professor Dumitru Patriche.*

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The meaning of electronic commerce for a PhD Student

What is electronic commerce? From one perspective, that of the aspirant to one of the highest titles in the academic world, is a very large topic, an extremely complex and modern one. A subject which is difficult if not impossible to master due to a dynamic and an advancement speed rarely seen in human history, at least one known by most people. A very attractive and interesting theme, just because of these reasons, mentioned above. It is a theme that combines classical economic approach with state-of-the-art technology, with inventions and innovations that can be found everywhere, and participants of the most unusual: from the children that are just entering through the school gates, to elder people who, even without knowing it, receive their pension faster and easier, thanks to electronic communication systems and protocols, which enters the sphere of electronic commerce. Electronic commerce can be seen as bringing with it a whole new world, which includes more often the housewife who buys a dress through Internet infrastructure from a U.S. website on a weekend. Here also we find the small entrepreneur who recently opened a business based on products imported from Italy for gifts, which has the possibility of electronic communication with suppliers, electronic tracking of deliveries, and electronic sell through his own online store.

Where is Romania, in what stage, a Romania of individuals, of private companies and public bodies, when it comes to Internet and electronic commerce? What stage is Romania in, compared to the global development, but especially to the European's, considering the open borders and the development of freedoms of all kinds, which have affected every layer of modern Romanian society? This was the question or questions to which an answer was

searched, questions that governed the beginning of a large research that culminated in the realization of the doctoral thesis entitled "Development of electronic commerce in the context of globalization and globalization Romanian", whose author is the same author of this article.

What urges one to embark on the journey when choosing to do a PhD? There are multiple motivations, but far more interesting is to analyze the factors and forces that help maintain on a line as close as possible to an "optimum" the individual who involves in such a difficult, complex, but very interesting through the contribution in an absolutely striking way in that individual's personal development.

The up's and down's of a PhD preparation process

The first report of the doctoral project represented also the first area of impact with the academic reality: the general considerations concerning the content were positive, there was sufficient advice in this regard, but, most significantly, the style adopted and lack of bibliographical consistency was criticized. Prof. Dumitru Patriche, the thesis coordinator, warned on these issues, and made a whole series of recommendations, but the PhD aspirant, the freshman PhD aspirant, strongly defended his style, considering it part of the work's personality. Patriche the professor would probably have insisted on these recommendations to be implemented, but Patriche the man, which had experienced so many doctoral students and disciples, and most likely evaluating the situation and considering it appropriate, left things running. Thus, the PhD student has experienced the hard way the first direct contact with the academic world, with its rigors, much different from the multitude of approaches and messages more or less commercial that flood the information and communication flows in normal environments. So, the respect towards the professor from doctoral student has increased.

Professor Patriche is a celebrity in the Romanian economy sector, both through teaching and research career, and through the numerous articles and books written as sole author, co-author or coordinator. Being a PhD student of the professor Patriche was a great advantage as well as responsibility. But things have acquired an entirely new perspective when I, doctoral student, found that I am professor's Patriche last doctoral student, and, today, doctor. But at that time, the pressure and responsibility have reached a maximum, because I realized that I carried the completion's burden of a high caliber professional's career, career that cannot end but in one way - impressive. The responsibility became enormous, because one, by the very essence of the PhD concept, not only had to produce results with novelty and value that contribute to the development of that field, suddenly it had to rise up to a different bar, to a whole new level of standard. Of course, the end of his career is nonsense for Professor Patriche, who was tirelessly involved in bolder and bolder projects over the years, and who certainly still has a lot to say. He is still constantly invited by colleagues, former colleagues, to write articles for a lot of events, without any obligation to Professor Patriche, but out of respect for Patriche the professional, in appreciation of his style, work power, wisdom, and rich stock of knowledge that few can praise on, as he could, although it does not, Patriche the professional.

It is evaluation day, the assessment of the work that tends to become a doctoral thesis. In choosing the title Professor Patriche had a decisive contribution, as in fact had the same contribution also in determining the work's structure. And all this given that it was a theme particularly present, new, technological. I assumed that, even with great experience in all that is commercial, marketing and economic research in general, the professor could not keep in touch with what e-commerce means, with the electronic-economic relations of business-to-business and business-to-consumer, with networking through technologies like enterprise resource planning, customer relationship management or supply chain management, with the use computer, the Internet and a multitude of devices such as smart phones. These are very new and dynamic concepts, and only a very active person and a very interested in the field one could be in touch with all of them. The surprise was that, in spite of all these considerations, Professor Patriche evaluated, analyzed, structured, proposed modifications and improvements of form as well as of essence. Sure, interventions in strictly technical issues related to new technologies were proposed less often, but in all what is trading mechanism and movement of elements in the economy, the influence was significant. It was a revelation that in fact the essence of economic and transactional concepts remains valid even if the tools, procedures, techniques change, evolve in one form or another. This was in fact one of the basic research directions in this thesis, namely, arguing that no matter how new and dynamic e-commerce is, it is subject essentially to traditional commerce's and management's rules and principles.

Professor Patriche workroom is not a spectacular one, if you get to know him well enough. It is full of books on the desk, near the desk, in the library, on the library, on the bed, all around the seat of the desk. It is a telling mirror of the kind of life that professor Patriche lived, surrounded by books, taking advantage of every "free" moment to start a new project in a new book or a new article. Books old and new, books in Romanian but also books in different languages, all show the active and constant concerns, even today, at over 70 years, of professor Patriche. The mere fact that he accepted me as his PhD student demonstrates a work power that not many can boast. And not any kind of work, but one that requires an outstanding level of skill and knowledge.

In that workroom he told me how the AES (Academy of Economic Studies) exam sessions proceeded, in times long past, when the Romanians were led by communists. He told me about the stress and pressure level at the time, given that it was not allowed to make a mistake, or to be late, considering that all the work was carried through by people, without the help of computers or automation. He told me about how people helped each other and had fun, even in those days, about end-of-year parties that were organized in the AES, about festivals and events organized or attended by the AES. He told me just about that time when a colleague, then a student, had the opportunity and permission to organize a wedding in one of ESA's halls. About how one studies at the time, when the internet was unthinkable, immersed in reading in libraries by the days, and what it means to give up a good position and fulfilling life to come to Bucharest and follow your dream of becoming a famous and respected teacher and researcher at the same time. He told me about difficulties faced under a harsh and unjust regime, but also about the recent "forced leave" from the university medium. He told me what it means to be simply removed from the learning system through a law that has little to do with the realities of academia. Another paradox for Romania, another puzzle, another contradiction, one of the many existing, one

that reflects how the Romanians exile their values, values that are not so many. And that's not what professor Patriche said, it is a reality lived by that all those who know, or have known people like professor Patriche.

Again in the workroom, professor Patriche is vigorously criticizing me. He criticizes me because lately I tended to reduce the engines, because it's been months since I paid serious attention to doctoral work. It was already late, it got dark for some time when I left, somewhat angry, from professor Patriche's house, unhappy because I was put on the wall, because I was rebuked. Slowly, slowly, I realized that the anger was directed towards me and only towards me, as the discontent too, was directed towards me, because I realized that once again professor Patriche was right, and I could, of course not without effort, make more progress. This was only the first episode of a series of moments that resembled in this regard as drops of water: I came, somewhat relaxed at the meeting, and left mad, but an anger that was rapidly converted into determination, in a push to focus on what was very important to me at that time, namely to go finish this doctorate at a high level in terms of quality. I still do not know what exactly the method was, but each time he managed, somehow, to give me that push that led me to get home and immediately begin working on the thesis, to embark on a new phase of personal development that culminated with the receiving the title of Ph.D. in Economics. In addition to specialized support, along with outstanding support in structuring and monitoring the work in development, these "sessions" of motivation had an extremely important role in this laborious project.

As a student I did not know professor Patriche, AES is a big institution so it is not unusual. But I knew him by his fame. During the doctoral internship, I knew the professor and the man Patriche through the eyes and experiences of others. His former students, former doctoral students - and I found out there were a lot of doctors who remained grateful to professor Patriche for the support and guidance, former colleagues. I found out that he worked and collaborated not only in Bucharest, not only in ESA, but also in a significant number of other prestigious educational and research institutions in the country. So, I met people who worked with professor Patriche, as saying, in different instances - student, master, doctoral student, colleague, subordinate. All these people appreciated him, and had in most cases at least one reason to thank him for. Whether he supported them, advised them, or effectively helped them to open a department at a university in the country, helped them raise funds, or develop an area of interest or another. And it is very interesting to note that one may find such people all over the country.

Again in professor's Patriche workroom, we debated over the communist period. I was too young then to assess rationally and objectively, in terms of own experiences, that period, but old enough to remember those times. I had a sufficient stock of information that allowed me, with today's wisdom, to evaluate and analyze a number of issues related to that period. He reminded me about the good things that have been made at that time, and that today, after 20 years of freedom, modernity and capitalism, are nothing but constantly patched. And he told me that in spite of the fact that professor Patriche was one of those who suffered from the communist regime. However, without minimizing the negative effects, he highlighted the achievements of the era, and some economical mechanisms and principles of the era, which were even more healthy and more sustainable than the way

economic principles are now applied. He saying that every step in the evolution of a nation and of humanity as a whole, has good and bad sides, but something remains every time - the good must be preserved and developed, the evil must be used to learn from it, how to be eliminated, removed, or at least reduced in its negative effects. We talked about the current crisis, its adverse consequences, about the causes deeply rooted in the mechanics of today's macro-economy, and the danger of perpetuating these disorders of modern society. We talked about greed and about the particularly large differences between individuals, countries and regions of the globe - also one of the themes explored in depth in the thesis. We talked about the benefits of globalization, but also about its threats. All these discussion sessions somewhat open were framed automatically in the category of moments when one is glad he chose to do a PhD, you are glad that you chose to read, inform yourself, to grow more, to detach from the ordinary and tend towards something else.

I consider myself a responsible, demanding person. But Professor Patriche is an example of rigor and attention. He checked in great detail all the documents and works that I created in this complex process. Spelling, punctuation, sentence construction, paragraph and page layout, graphics and visuals construction, everything passes through a careful and scrupulous filter. Initially, I was outraged. Later, I was grateful. In fact, all this effort was directed to achieve if not perfection, at least a form of expression very neat and valuable in terms of form and content. And then I realized that I was not an exception, it was a not a whim of the moment: all professor's Patriche doctoral students went through these trials of fire, and all, finally, thanked him for it. And I learned these things directly from them, portrayed with careful chosen words and leaving that feeling of gratitude that I spoke about earlier.

On the day when I had the presentation of the thesis in the AES commercial department, the most difficult trial until then, I was, of course, nervous. With surprise I found out, right from professor Patriche, that he was nervous too. How? A great teacher, with many years of experience, with a background of dozens of presentations, with participation in dozens or maybe hundreds of committees, can be nervous? My state hasn't changed, but I sensed a new push, a new encouragement, seeing that the great professor Patriche is above all a man, and that these feelings are, how else, if not human.

An obvious conclusion

How many are those who can count by the dozens the written books? Or the hundreds of articles published in prestigious journals inside and outside the country? Who can be the proud coordinator of 30 doctoral students and PhD's? How many are those who are among the most important personalities of the 21st century? How many Romanians can boast with books indexed in the US Congress Library? How many are those who have had the opportunity to advise ministers and to participate actively in shaping today's Romania? Which are those who can boast the title of professor emeritus? Obviously, Professor Patriche is characterized by all these great achievements which have marked his long and restless career. But they do not represent Patriche Dumitru in full. By his side we will find all those people whom he influenced in one way or another over the years, those

like me, who have learned something from Patriche the Man and the Professor, and who are grateful for that. There are those who will use what they learned from Dumitru Patriche in molding their own lives and careers, and will pass, perhaps, some of this knowledge on.

Professor Patriche which, although he said he will not take on more doctoral students, is probably preparing for the next project, from which we will all benefit, all of us who truly appreciate him, and for which we will be grateful if he will invite us to participate in.

Sincerely and thankfully to the Professor Dumitru Patriche,

Alexandru Băjenaru, PhD