

Symbolic Conflict in Post-Socialist Intellectual Fields: Testing and Extending Harrison's Typology through Evaluative Network Analysis

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Abstract. Simon Harrison's (1995) typology of symbolic conflict – distinguishing innovative, valuation, proprietary, and expansionary competition – was developed to analyse conflict over collective symbolic resources in tribal and national settings. This article argues that the typology requires systematic modification when applied to *intellectual fields*: fields of restricted cultural production in which individual prestige, rather than collective symbolic heritage, is the primary stake of competition, and in which the dynamics of public evaluative exchange produce outcomes that Harrison's model does not predict. Drawing on a corpus of 4,483 explicit evaluative verdicts in the Romanian intellectual field (2000-2005), we test Harrison's four predictions against empirical evidence and find that all four require qualification in the intellectual field context. Innovative competition fails to produce capital for the innovator without community validation, which is a condition absent from Harrison's model. Valuation competition produces a *prestige amplification paradox* whereby attacking a high-prestige actor augments rather than diminishes their symbolic standing, inverting the zero-sum logic Harrison assumes. Proprietary competition over intellectual heritage produces *replication without depletion*, contradicting Harrison's assumption that symbolic expropriation diminishes the original owner's resources. And expansionary competition – symbolic execution through moral disqualification – produces *parallel stigma trajectories* rather than annihilation of the target's capital, a structural outcome that Harrison's framework cannot accommodate. We propose a modified typology that preserves Harrison's analytical categories while specifying the structural conditions under which intellectual fields transform their predictions. The modification is grounded in Bourdieu's field theory and operationalized through a cumulative-recursive Bonacich index that captures the temporal dynamics of prestige accumulation.

Keywords: symbolic conflict, intellectual fields, Harrison, Bourdieu, field theory, evaluative networks, post-socialist, prestige, symbolic capital

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Introduction

Simon Harrison's 1995 article "Four Types of Symbolic Conflict" in the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* proposed one of the few systematic typologies of symbolic conflict available in the social science literature. Building on Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital, Harrison argued that all cultural processes involving competition over symbolic resources can be analysed as combinations of four modes of action – innovative competition, valuation competition, proprietary competition, and expansionary competition –, each corresponding to a distinct way of augmenting or diminishing the symbolic capital of groups and persons. The typology has been applied primarily in the contexts for which it was developed: conflicts between tribal groups (Harrison's own fieldwork in Melanesia), conflicts between national communities over flags, place names, and ethnic identities (Kaufman, 2006; Auchter, 2014), and conflicts in digital spaces where symbolic resources are collectively produced and contested (Milner, 2016). Its application to intellectual fields has been limited, and no systematic test of Harrison's predictions against quantitative evidence has, to our knowledge, been attempted.

This article undertakes such a test. The empirical anchor is the Romanian Intellectuals' Quarrel (*Cearta intelectualilor*) of 2000-2005 – a sustained public controversy in Romanian cultural press that engaged virtually all major voices of the post-communist intellectual field in a polemic about cultural values, moral legitimacy, anticommunist credentials, and symbolic hegemony. The "Quarrel" is not chosen for its national or cultural significance – though it has both –, but for its structural properties as a revelatory case for the general theory. The Romanian intellectual field of 2000-2005 provides an unusually rich empirical case for this purpose: a corpus of 1,001 articles containing 4,483 explicit evaluative verdicts among 172 active competitors, organized around five major polemic controversies that engage all four of Harrison's conflict types simultaneously. The corpus has been analysed in companion studies (Lazăr, 2025a; 2025b) using a cumulative-recursive Bonacich index (CRB) that captures the temporal dynamics of prestige accumulation – an instrument that makes Harrison's predictions empirically testable in ways that his original analysis, conducted without quantitative data on symbolic capital dynamics, could not achieve.

The argument proceeds in three steps. First, we reconstruct Harrison's typology and identify the five structural assumptions that underline his predictions about the outcomes of each conflict type. Second, we test these predictions against the empirical evidence from the Romanian corpus, showing that all four conflict types produce outcomes that deviate from Harrison's predictions in systematic and theoretically explicable ways. Third, we propose a modified typology that preserves Harrison's analytical categories while specifying the structural conditions under which intellectual fields transform their dynamics – conditions related to the individual rather than collective character of intellectual prestige, the recursive structure of peer-based evaluation, the community validation requirement for capital conversion, and the temporal compounding of prestige accumulation.

The contribution is comparative in a specific sense: not comparative across national cases (though the Romanian case is discussed in relation to Sapiro's 1999 and 2003 analyses of French intellectual fields), but comparative across *field types* – between the tribal and national fields for which Harrison developed his typology and the intellectual fields to which we apply and modify it. This form of comparison has methodological implications for field theory as a whole: it suggests that the structural properties of fields – their degree of autonomy, the individual versus collective character of their stakes, the recursive structure of their prestige

economies – systematically transform the predictions of general models of symbolic conflict in ways that are theoretically recoverable rather than merely empirically contingent.

Harrison's Typology: Assumptions and Predictions

The Conceptual Foundation: Political Symbols and Symbolic Capital

Harrison's starting point is a definition of the "political symbol" as "anything used to represent symbolic capital, making it a politically or strategically significant asset" (1995, p. 257). Drawing directly on Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital as the form taken by economic, cultural, or social capital "when perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception permitting them to recognize and acknowledge it" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 47), Harrison proposes that political symbols function as *vehicles* for symbolic capital – they attach value to a group's or person's political identity and can be accumulated, distributed, or destroyed through strategic action.

Four properties of political symbols ground Harrison's typology. They are *property* – objects of appropriation, expropriation, and monopolization; *status markers* – assigned values associated with sacredness or prestige; *sources of entitlement* – legitimating claims to rights, prerogatives, or positions; and *foci of emotional attachment* – central to individual and collective identity construction. "These four characteristics represent four ways in which it is possible to manipulate such symbols so as to appropriate symbolic capital". (1995, p. 258) From these four properties, Harrison derives four modes of symbolic conflict, each corresponding to a different operation on symbolic capital.

The Four Types and Their Structural Assumptions

Innovative competition involves the creation of new symbolic resources that expand a group's symbolic capital into previously unoccupied territory. Harrison treats this as the response to a *deficit* of symbolic capital: groups that lack established symbolic resources produce new ones to assert presence in the competitive space. The structural assumption underlying Harrison's prediction is that *innovation produces capital for the innovator*: the act of creating a new symbol generates symbolic value that flows to the creating group.

Valuation competition involves contests over the *value* assigned to existing symbols: attempts to increase or decrease the quantity of symbolic capital that symbols signify. Harrison identifies three forms: parades (displays of one's own value without direct competitive engagement), exchanges of arguments and insults (derogatory discourse toward others combined with self-praise), and ritual tournaments (organized symbolic combat). The structural assumption is that valuation competition is *relatively zero-sum*: devaluing the adversary's symbols and valorizing one's own are complementary moves in a contest where one group's gain corresponds to another's loss.

Proprietary competition involves battles over the monopolization, appropriation, or expropriation of symbolic resources. Harrison notes that unlike economic resources, symbolic capital "can be distributed without being divided" – a symbol can be copied without diminishing the original. But what copying does diminish is the *distinctiveness* value of symbols that depend on the exclusivity for their social force. The structural assumption is that *proprietary competition is a competition over exclusivity*: groups fight over the right to claim symbolic resources as distinctively their own, and expropriation threatens the claiming group's distinctiveness even when it does not diminish the total quantity of the resource.

Expansionary competition involves the destruction or annihilation of the adversary’s symbolic capital and its replacement by one’s own. Harrison’s examples – the replacement of conquered peoples’ flags, place names, and family names – suggest that the structural assumption is *capital destruction through symbolic substitution*: the dominant group’s symbols replace the dominated group’s symbols, extinguishing the latter’s symbolic presence in the contested space.

Table 1. *Harrison’s four conflict types: structural assumptions and predictions*

Conflict type	Primary operation	Structural assumption	Predicted outcome
Innovative	Create new symbols	Innovation generates capital for innovator	New capital flows to the group which creates
Valuation	Contest symbol value	Relatively zero-sum tournament	Winner gains symbolic value, loser loses
Proprietary	Monopolize/expropriate symbols	Exclusivity is the contested resource	Expropriation threatens owner’s distinctiveness
Expansionary	Destroy adversary’s capital	Annihilation through substitution	Dominant group’s symbols replace the dominated group’s

The Romanian Intellectual Field: Data and Operationalization

The empirical basis of the analysis is a corpus of 1,001 articles published in Romanian cultural press between 2000 and 2005, containing 4,483 explicit evaluative verdicts among 172 active competitors (Lazăr, 2025a). The corpus covers five major polemic themes: the *Cearta intelectualilor* [Intellectuals’ Quarrel] (230 articles, 2004-2005), miscellaneous debates (390 articles), debates on interwar intellectual legacies and antisemitism (116 articles), the reception of Patapievic’s *Omul recent* (98 articles), and debates on the Păltiniș School (99 articles). Each verdict is coded for valence (positive, negative, neutral), emitter and recipient identity, and temporal period (T1-T6, annually 2000-2005).

The Romanian Intellectual Field: Historical Configuration and the Logic of the Quarrel

The empirical case deployed here – the Romanian intellectual field of 2000-2005 – is not a generic instance of cultural polemic, but a structurally specific arena whose properties make it an unusually revelatory test for general theories of symbolic conflict. Understanding these properties requires a brief account of the field’s post-socialist configuration.

After 1989, the Romanian intellectual field underwent a rapid restructuring organized around a central axis of opposition: alignment with or rejection of the political arrangements associated with Ion Iliescu and the successive formations of the National Salvation Front (in Romanian: FSN). This first decade produced a relatively unified “opposition intellectual” front, internally differentiated by position in the cultural field, but externally cohesive in its anti-Iliescian stance. The dominant pole of this front – what the network analysis identifies as community C1 – was organized around figures of the *Păltiniș School*: Gabriel Liiceanu, Andrei Pleșu, and Horia Roman Patapievic, whose institutional anchors (the Humanitas publishing house, the New Europe College, the *Cultural Observer* magazine) gave them unmatched capacity for the production and circulation of symbolic capital (Lazăr, 2019). Their position in the

field combined high cultural autonomy with significant symbolic power – a configuration that Sapiro (2009) identifies as characteristic of “critical intellectuals” occupying the dominant space of autonomous cultural production.

The fragmentation of this solidarity front, and with it the conditions for genuine symbolic conflict, emerged at the turn of the millennium. Two catalytic events restructured the field’s competitive space. The first was the contested reception of Patapievici’s *Omul recent* [The Recent Man] (2001), whose anti-modernist argument provoked a series of critical positionings from intellectuals who had until then been notional allies. The second, more structurally decisive event was the *Cearta intelectualilor* [Intellectuals’ Quarrel] of 2004–2005 – a sustained polemic, concentrated in the cultural press (*Observator cultural*, *Dilema veche*, *România literară*, *Cotidianul*), triggered by Sorin Adam Matei’s *Boierii minții* [Boyers of the Mind] (2004), which introduced into public discourse the charge that Liiceanu, Pleșu, and Patapievici constituted an aristocratic-condescending elite monopolizing the field’s legitimate symbolic space.

The Quarrel crystallized pre-existing tensions along two axes that would define the field’s topology for the remainder of the decade: a *conservative-elitist* pole (C1: Liiceanu, Pleșu, Patapievici and their network) and an *anti-conservative/pluralist* counter-pole (C2), itself heterogeneous in its political orientations, but unified in challenging C1’s symbolic hegemony. These poles are not pre-given sociological categories, but emergent structures produced by – and detectable through – the pattern of evaluative exchanges between actors, as the Louvain community detection confirms (Lazăr, 2025a). What the Quarrel reveals, in structural terms, is the mechanism by which the accumulation of symbolic capital in intellectual fields generates adversarial configurations: the very dominance of C1 – constructed through decades of institutional investment, publication, and peer recognition – produced the competitive pressure that organized C2 as a counter-pole.

The corpus analyzed here thus captures a field in a moment of active structural conflict: not a settled hierarchy being reproduced, but a contested one being renegotiated through intense public evaluative exchange. This property – structural conflict under conditions of field-internal autonomy and without recourse to external institutional power – is precisely what makes the Romanian case of 2000–2005 a theoretically productive test of Harrison’s typology, and a productive point of comparison with Sapiro’s analysis of the French literary field under the Occupation, where external (state) power intervened directly in field dynamics.

Operationalizing Harrison’s Four Conflict Types

We operationalize Harrison’s four conflict types in the corpus as follows. *Innovative competition* is identified through the introduction of new evaluative frames that force the field to engage with a novel symbolic schema – most clearly Sorin Adam Matei’s *Boierii minții* (2004), which introduced the “boyars of the mind” frame into the field’s competitive discourse. *Valuation competition* is the dominant mode, comprising the full corpus of positive and negative evaluative verdicts between competitors: 1,596 verdicts in total (750 positive, 425 negative, 421 neutral at the competitor-to-competitor level). *Proprietary competition* is identified with the 724 verdicts on the topic “Interbelici, antisemitism” – a sustained contest over who legitimately inherits and can claim the authority of the interwar intellectual tradition. *Expansionary competition* is identified with concentrated campaigns of negative verdicts aimed at moral disqualification rather than evaluative reranking – most clearly the Liiceanu-Patapievici-Pleșu campaign against Marino in T5, which generated 18 of the 27 total negative verdicts received by Marino during his peak period.

The primary measurement instrument is the cumulative-recursive Bonacich index (CRB) developed in Lazăr (2025a), which models prestige as a temporally accumulating property: each period's evaluative matrix is weighted by the cumulative prestige scores of emitters from all preceding periods, capturing the compounding logic of peer-based prestige accumulation. CRB scores are calculated separately for positive and negative evaluations, producing prestige and stigma trajectories for each actor across the six periods.

Testing Harrison's Predictions: Four Systematic Deviations

Innovative Competition: The Community Validation Gap

Harrison's prediction for innovative competition is that the creation of new symbolic resources generates capital for the innovating group. The Romanian corpus provides a clear test case: Sorin Adam Matei's *Boierii minții* (2004), which introduced a new symbolic frame – the characterization of Liiceanu, Pleșu, and Patapievici as “boyars of the mind”, an aristocratic-condescending elite monopolizing the market of ideas – into the field's competitive discourse. By Harrison's prediction, this symbolic innovation should have generated capital for Matei and his implicit allies in the pluralist camp.

The CRB data contradict this prediction sharply. Matei's CRB positive at T6 is 354, with a CRB negative of 366, producing a net CRB of approximately zero. He receives 26 evaluative verdicts from competitors (11 positive, 11 negative, 4 neutral), concentrated in T5 and T6. The new symbolic frame he introduces does *generate field activity* – it forces engagement –, but it does not generate capital for its author. The reason is structural: Matei lacks the ingroup community validation that converts a symbolic innovation into accumulated prestige. His C5 community provides minimal positive feedback (8 positive verdicts from community members); without this endorsement, the CRB mechanism cannot convert the field's evaluative attention into prestige accumulation. Harrison's prediction assumed that innovation is the act of a *coherent group* that collectively benefits from the innovation; in the intellectual field, the individual character of prestige accumulation means that group innovation benefits accrue to the community, not necessarily to the individual innovator.

This deviation from Harrison's prediction points to a structural condition absent from his model: what we call the *community validation requirement*. In tribal and national symbolic conflicts, the innovating group's collective identity is pre-given – the group that creates a new flag or adopts a new name is constituted prior to and independently of the innovation. In intellectual fields, communities are themselves partially constituted through evaluative exchange (as the Louvain community detection demonstrates: communities are detected from the pattern of positive evaluations, not from pre-given group identities). An innovation that fails to elicit ingroup validation not only fails to produce capital; it may actually weaken the innovator's position by consuming evaluative attention without generating return.

Valuation Competition: The Prestige Amplification Paradox

Harrison's prediction for valuation competition is that it follows a relatively zero-sum tournament logic: groups fight to increase the value attributed to their symbols and decrease the value attributed to their adversaries', with gains for one side corresponding to losses for the other. The Romanian corpus's dominant mode of conflict – evaluative verdicts between competitors – constitutes valuation competition in Harrison's terms, and the CRB data provide a rigorous test of the zero-sum prediction.

The data reveal a systematic inversion of Harrison's prediction that we call the *prestige amplification paradox*. When C2 (anti-conservative/pluralist group) directed its highest volume of negative verdicts toward C1 (conservative-elitist group) actors – 23 negative verdicts in T5, compared to 1 in T4 – the CRB positive scores of C1's three leading actors increased by factors of 5.3 (Liiceanu: 266→1,417), 5.1 (Patapievi: 313→1,580), and 8.6 (Pleșu: 274→2,355). Far from diminishing in value through being attacked, the C1 actors' symbolic capital grew most rapidly precisely during the period of maximum attack. The correlation between an actor's offensiveness and their net CRB at T6 is $r = +0.052$ – indistinguishable from zero.

The mechanism producing this inversion is threefold. First, *notoriety amplification*: negative verdicts increase the targeted actor's presence in the field's evaluative discourse, which through the CRB mechanism translates into increased source-weighting for the target's future positive evaluations. Second, *defensive solidarity consolidation*: external attack triggers ingroup positive evaluation surges (C1's intra-community positive verdicts jumped from 10 in T2 to 43 in T3, the first period of systematic external challenge), and the CRB converts these solidarity surges into compounded prestige accumulation. Third, the *social epistemology of prestige*: in a field organized by peer evaluation, being attacked by significant opponents functions as implicit recognition – an actor is worth attacking in proportion to their perceived significance, making adversarial attention a form of prestige in itself.

Harrison's zero-sum assumption holds for collective symbolic resources (flags, place names, territories) because these are *rivalrous* goods – their possession by one group precludes possession by another. Individual prestige in intellectual fields is a *non-rivalrous* relational property: it is not diminished by being recognized, even adversarially. Indeed, the recursive structure of peer-based prestige evaluation transforms adversarial recognition into a form of contribution to the recognized actor's status, inverting the zero-sum logic that Harrison's tribal and national conflict examples instantiate.

Proprietary Competition: Replication without Depletion

Harrison's prediction for proprietary competition acknowledges that symbolic capital can be "distributed without being divided" – copied without diminishing the original quantity –, but predicts that expropriation threatens the claiming group's *distinctiveness*, eroding the exclusivity value of their symbolic heritage. Applied to the Romanian debate over the interwar intellectual tradition, this would predict that Alexandra Laignel-Lavastine's attempt to delegitimize the conservative-elitist group's claim to the Eliade-Cioran-Noica heritage should have diminished that group's symbolic distinctiveness, even if the total quantity of the inherited intellectual capital remained unchanged.

The CRB data tell a more complex story. The C6 (Laignel-Lavastine debate community), which concentrated its 263 relevant verdicts in T3 (2002), has the lowest mean CRB in the corpus (101 at T6). The conservative-elitist group's CRB trajectory is entirely unaffected by the proprietary challenge: Liiceanu's CRB grows from 87 in T3 to 5,253 in T6; Pleșu's from 46 to 4,147. The attempted expropriation of symbolic heritage not only fails to diminish the conservative group's prestige; it produces near-zero capital for the challengers.

The deviation from Harrison's prediction results from a structural asymmetry that his model does not accommodate: in intellectual fields, symbolic heritage is not a fixed quantity but a *producible* resource. Humanitas, as a publishing house, can republish Cioran and Eliade indefinitely, continuously producing new instances of the heritage claim. NEC can train new cohorts of scholars in the Noica philosophical tradition. The conservative-elitist group's claim

to the interwar heritage is not a flag that can be taken or a name that can be changed – it is a *practice of cultural production* that generates new symbolic resources continuously. Laignel-Lavastine's challenge contests the legitimacy of this practice, but it cannot stop it. The “fracturing resemblances” that Harrison describes (2006) – the process by which proprietary competition forces actors to insist on differences where similarities exist – occurs (the debate forces a distinction between Noica's philosophical legacy and his political biography), but this fracturing does not diminish the dominant group's capacity to continue producing symbolic capital from the heritage.

We call this structural condition *replication without depletion*: in intellectual fields organized around the continuous production of cultural goods, proprietary competition over heritage claims cannot achieve the depletion of the challenger's distinctiveness that Harrison predicts, because the resource being claimed is not finite and rivalrous, but continuously reproducible. The condition under which Harrison's prediction *would* hold – if the symbolic resource were fixed in quantity, as a specific sacred object or territorial name – is not met in fields of intellectual production.

Expansionary Competition: Parallel Stigma Rather than Annihilation

Harrison's prediction for expansionary competition is that it produces *annihilation* of the adversary's symbolic capital through substitution: the dominant group's symbols replace the dominated group's, extinguishing the latter's symbolic presence. Applied to the Romanian case, this predicts that the conservative-elitist group's campaign of moral disqualification against Marino in T5 – culminating in Liiceanu's revelation of Marino's compromising dedication to Dumitru Popescu – should have annihilated Marino's symbolic capital and effectively removed him from the field's legitimate competitive space.

The CRB data reveal a strikingly different outcome. Marino's CRB positive at T6 is 4,456 – the third highest in the entire field, surpassed only by Liiceanu (5,253) and Patapievici (5,012). His CRB negative is 1,152 – the highest stigma score among active actors. Far from being annihilated, Marino's prestige trajectory continues upward even as his stigma trajectory surges in T5. He remains the field's most structurally significant broker (betweenness centrality 0.145, the highest in the network) and one of its most recognized actors, while simultaneously becoming its most stigmatized. The expansionary attack produces what we call a *parallel stigma trajectory*: a simultaneous accumulation of prestige and stigma that coexist without cancelling each other.

This outcome has no precedent in Harrison's framework because it reflects a structural property of intellectual fields that has no analogue in his examples. When a flag is destroyed or a place name is replaced, the destruction is *material* and *complete*: the symbol no longer exists in the competitive space. When a cultural actor is morally disqualified, the disqualification is *discursive* and *contestable*: the actor's intellectual production continues to exist and to be evaluated, and those who evaluated it positively before the disqualification may continue to do so. The “annihilation” that Harrison describes is not available as a strategy in intellectual fields because the target of expansionary competition – an actor's intellectual authority – cannot be physically destroyed, only contested.

The structural consequence is that expansionary competition in intellectual fields produces a *bifurcation* of the target's symbolic standing rather than its elimination: the actor acquires a positive dimension (prestige accumulated through prior peer recognition) and a negative dimension (stigma accumulated through the moral disqualification campaign) that coexist permanently. This bifurcation is not a transitional state on the way to annihilation; it is a

stable structural outcome that constrains the actor's subsequent participation in the field without removing them from it.

Toward a Modified Typology for Intellectual Fields

The Five Structural Conditions that Transform Harrison's Predictions

The four systematic deviations from Harrison's predictions are not independent empirical anomalies; they derive from a small set of structural conditions that distinguish intellectual fields from the tribal and national settings for which Harrison developed his typology. Identifying these conditions produces a principled basis for modifying the typology rather than merely listing exceptions.

Condition 1: Individual rather than collective stakes. Harrison's typology assumes that the primary actors in symbolic conflict are *groups* – tribes, nations, ethnic communities – whose collective identity is the stake of competition. In intellectual fields, the primary stake is *individual prestige* within a community of peers. This means that symbolic innovations, heritage claims, and competitive attacks must benefit specific actors, not just communities, for their effects to register in the field's prestige economy. The community validation requirement – the condition that innovative and valuation actions must be endorsed by one's own community to produce individual capital – has no equivalent in Harrison's framework because the distinction between individual and collective capital is not operative in his field-type.

Condition 2: Recursive peer evaluation as the prestige mechanism. In Harrison's settings, symbolic capital is conferred by social position, institutional authority, or collective consensus. In intellectual fields, it is conferred by peer evaluation that is itself weighted by the evaluators' accumulated prestige – the recursive Bonacich mechanism. This recursion produces the prestige amplification paradox: because being evaluated, even negatively, by prestigious peers is itself a form of recognition, adversarial attention generates rather than diminishes symbolic capital for high-prestige targets. Harrison's zero-sum assumption cannot hold in a field where the evaluation mechanism is intrinsically non-zero-sum.

Condition 3: Continuous production as the heritage mechanism. In Harrison's settings, symbolic heritage is a finite resource – there is one Szekler flag, one name for the city, one set of claimed ancestors. In intellectual fields organized around cultural production, heritage is continuously renewed through the production of new cultural goods that invoke the heritage tradition. This makes proprietary competition over intellectual heritage a contest over *productive practices* rather than over fixed objects, and expropriation of the heritage claim cannot achieve the depletion that Harrison's model predicts.

Condition 4: Discursive rather than material targets. Harrison's expansionary competition destroys material symbolic objects – flags are replaced, names are changed, identities are coercively renamed. In intellectual fields, the targets of expansionary attacks are discursive constructions – reputations, intellectual positions, moral biographies – that cannot be materially destroyed, but only discursively contested. This produces the parallel stigma trajectory rather than annihilation: the target's prior discursive existence remains accessible and continues to generate peer recognition.

Condition 5: Community boundaries as emergent rather than given. Harrison's typology assumes that the groups engaged in symbolic conflict are constituted prior to the conflict. In intellectual fields, community boundaries are themselves partially produced by the pattern of evaluative exchanges – as the Louvain community detection demonstrates, communities are

identified from the structure of evaluative ties, not from prior group membership. This means that the ingroup/outgroup distinction that Harrison treats as fixed is itself a stake of symbolic competition in intellectual fields.

The Modified Typology

These conditions produce systematic modifications of Harrison's predictions for each conflict type. Table 2 presents the modified typology, specifying how each of Harrison's conflict types operates in intellectual fields and under what conditions the original prediction holds versus requires modification.

Table 2. *Modified typology for intellectual fields*

Type	Harrison's prediction	Modification for intellectual fields	Condition for original prediction to hold
Innovative	Capital flows to innovating group	Capital flows to community IF ingroup validation occurs; individual innovator gains only if community endorses	Innovation by a pre-constituted group with strong ingroup solidarity
Valuation	Relatively zero-sum tournament	Prestige amplification paradox: attacking high-prestige actors amplifies their standing through notoriety + defensive solidarity	Field where evaluation is NOT recursive by source prestige (e.g., voting systems)
Proprietary	Expropriation threatens owner's distinctiveness	Replication without depletion: heritage is continuously producible; challenge contests legitimacy, but cannot stop production	Heritage is a fixed, rivalrous resource (e.g. sacred objects, territorial names)
Expansionary	Annihilation of adversary's symbolic capital	Parallel stigma trajectory: target accumulates stigma AND prestige simultaneously; bifurcation rather than annihilation	Target's symbolic capital is material and can be physically destroyed or institutionally revoked

The modified typology is not a rejection of Harrison's framework, but a *specification of its scope conditions*. Harrison's original predictions hold in fields where (a) groups rather than individuals are the primary actors, (b) evaluation is not recursively weighted by evaluator prestige, (c) symbolic heritage is a fixed rivalrous resource, (d) symbolic objects are material and destructible, and (e) community boundaries are pre-given. Intellectual fields systematically violate all five conditions, producing the modifications specified in Table 2.

Theoretical Implications for Field Theory and the Comparative Study of Symbolic Conflict

The comparison between Harrison's original typology and its modified version for intellectual fields generates several theoretical implications that extend beyond the immediate empirical case.

First, the comparison reveals that *field type is a systematic moderator of symbolic conflict dynamics*. The four modifications to Harrison's typology are not random empirical discrepancies, but structured consequences of identifiable field properties. This suggests that a general theory of symbolic conflict should specify field-type parameters – individual versus collective stakes, recursive versus non-recursive evaluation, reproducible versus fixed resources,

discursive versus material targets, emergent versus given boundaries – and derive predictions for each parameter configuration rather than treating “symbolic conflict” as a uniform category.

Second, the prestige amplification paradox – the most counter-intuitive of the four modifications – reveals a property of recursive evaluation systems that has implications beyond cultural sociology. Wherever prestige is produced through peer evaluation that is itself weighted by the evaluators’ accumulated prestige, adversarial attention from high-prestige sources is structurally transformed into a form of recognition. This property is not unique to intellectual fields: academic citation networks (where negative citations still contribute to an author’s citation count), political fields (where being attacked by a powerful opponent signals significance), and social media environments with influence-weighted visibility algorithms (where controversial content generates “engagement” that algorithms amplify) all share this structural feature. Harrison’s zero-sum assumption is a special case that holds only when the prestige mechanism is not recursive by source quality.

Third, the Romanian case invites comparison with the French intellectual field analysed by Sapiro (1999, 2003). Sapiro’s study of the French literary field under the German Occupation identified the structural principle that political positions are determined by positions in the literary field rather than by individual ideological convictions – a principle that our analysis confirms and extends through the network evidence. But Sapiro’s case exhibits a form of *expansionary competition* that is materially more extreme than the Romanian case: collaborationist writers faced not discursive stigma, but legal prosecution, imprisonment, and execution. This material dimension of expansionary competition produces genuine annihilation in Harrison’s sense – the physical removal of actors from the field –, a condition not available in the Romanian post-socialist context, where the most severe form of expansionary competition remains discursive. The comparison suggests that the “parallel stigma” outcome we identify is specifically the outcome of expansionary competition *within* a field, while Harrison’s annihilation outcome requires external institutional power (state, legal system) to materialize.

Conclusions

This article has tested Harrison’s (1995) typology of symbolic conflict against empirical evidence from the Romanian intellectual field of 2000–2005 and found that all four of Harrison’s predictions require systematic modification when applied to intellectual fields. The modifications are not arbitrary empirical corrections, but structured consequences of five identifiable field-type conditions: the individual rather than collective character of intellectual prestige, the recursive structure of peer-based evaluation, the continuous producibility of intellectual heritage, the discursive rather than material character of symbolic targets, and the emergent rather than given nature of community boundaries.

The most theoretically significant modification is the prestige amplification paradox: the finding that valuation competition in intellectual fields produces non-zero-sum dynamics in which attacking a high-prestige actor amplifies rather than diminishes their symbolic standing. This paradox is not a quirk of the Romanian case, but a structural consequence of recursive evaluation systems, and it has implications for understanding symbolic conflict wherever prestige is produced through peer evaluation weighted by evaluator standing.

Two directions for future comparative research follow directly from the modified typology. First, systematic comparison across field types would allow identification of the specific

parameter thresholds at which Harrison's original predictions give way to the intellectual field modifications. How much recursivity in the evaluation mechanism is required for the prestige amplification paradox to emerge? At what degree of resource reproducibility does proprietary competition shift from threatening distinctiveness to producing parallel heritage claims? These are empirical questions that the modified typology allows to be asked precisely.

Second, the comparison with Sapiro's analysis of the French intellectual field under the Occupation suggests that the *institutional embedding* of fields in broader political structures is a crucial moderating variable that neither Harrison's original typology nor our modification adequately theorize. When expansionary competition in intellectual fields connects to state institutional power – as in the purge of collaborationist writers after the Liberation, or in the Soviet dismantling of the pre-revolutionary intelligentsia –, the material destruction of symbolic capital that Harrison predicts becomes available. Specifying the conditions under which field-internal symbolic conflict connects to field-external institutional power would constitute a significant extension of both Harrison's typology and the present modification.

Harrison (1995, p. 255) opened his article with the observation that “social life is permeated by conflicts over symbols and their meanings”. Thirty years later, the tools available to analyse these conflicts have multiplied substantially – network analysis, community detection algorithms, temporal prestige models –, but Harrison's typological framework remains one of the few systematic attempts to classify the *types* of such conflicts and specify their structural logic. This article has attempted both to test that framework rigorously and to extend it beyond the collective, material, and nationally-bounded contexts for which it was originally designed, toward the individual, discursive, and field-organized contexts of intellectual production. The result is not a refutation of Harrison, but a specification of his scope conditions – a clarification of what his framework does and does not predict, and an invitation to further comparative work that takes field-type seriously as a moderator of symbolic conflict dynamics.

Rezumat. Tipologia conflictului simbolic – care distinge între competiția inovatoare, de evaluare, de proprietate și de expansiune – a fost concepută de Simon Harrison (1995) pentru a analiza conflictele legate de resursele simbolice colective în contexte tribale și naționale. Acest articol susține că tipologia necesită modificări sistematice atunci când este aplicată *domeniilor intelectuale*: domeniile de producție culturală restrânsă în care prestigiul individual, mai degrabă decât patrimoniul simbolic colectiv, este miza principală a competiției și în care dinamica schimbului evaluativ public produce rezultate pe care modelul lui Harrison nu le prevede. Bazându-ne pe un corpus de 4.483 de verdicte evaluative explicate din domeniul intelectual românesc (2000-2005), testăm cele patru predicții ale lui Harrison în raport cu dovezile empirice și constatăm că toate patru necesită nuanțare în contextul domeniului intelectual. Concurența inovatoare nu reușește să producă capital pentru inovator fără validarea comunității, o condiție absentă din modelul lui Harrison. Concurența de evaluare produce un *paradox al amplificării prestigiului* prin care atacarea unui actor cu prestigiu ridicat îi sporește, mai degrabă decât îi diminuează, statutul simbolic, inversând logica de sumă zero pe care o presupune Harrison. Competiția pentru proprietatea asupra patrimoniului intelectual produce *replicare fără epuizare*, contrazicând ipoteza lui Harrison că exproprierea simbolică diminuează resursele proprietarului inițial. Iar competiția expansionistă – execuția simbolică prin descalificare morală – produce *traectorii paralele de stigmatizare*, mai degrabă decât anihilarea capitalului țintei, un rezultat structural pe care cadrul lui Harrison nu îl poate acomoda. Propunem o tipologie modificată care păstrează categoriile analitice ale lui Harrison, specificând în același timp condițiile structurale în care câmpurile intelectuale își transformă predicțiile. Modificarea se bazează pe teoria câmpului lui Bourdieu și este operaționalizată printr-un indice Bonacich cumulativ-recursiv care surprinde dinamica temporală a acumulării de prestigiu.

Cuvinte-cheie: conflict simbolic, câmpuri intelectuale, Harrison, Bourdieu, teoria câmpului, rețele evaluative, post-socialist, prestigiu, capital simbolic

Résumé. La typologie des conflits symboliques de Simon Harrison (1995) – qui distingue la concurrence innovante, la concurrence de valorisation, la concurrence de propriété et la concurrence expansionniste – a été élaborée pour analyser les conflits autour des ressources symboliques collectives dans des contextes tribaux et nationaux. Cet article soutient que cette typologie nécessite une modification systématique lorsqu'elle est appliquée aux *domaines intellectuels*: des domaines de production culturelle restreints dans lesquels le prestige individuel, plutôt que le patrimoine symbolique collectif, est l'enjeu principal de la concurrence, et dans lesquels la dynamique des échanges évaluatifs publics produit des résultats que le modèle de Harrison ne prévoit pas. En nous appuyant sur un corpus de 4.483 jugements évaluatifs explicites issus du domaine intellectuel roumain (2000-2005), nous testons les quatre prédictions de Harrison à la lumière de données empiriques et constatons que toutes les quatre nécessitent des nuances dans le contexte du domaine intellectuel. La concurrence innovante ne parvient pas à générer de capital pour l'innovateur sans la validation de la communauté, condition qui fait défaut dans le modèle de Harrison. La concurrence en matière de valorisation produit un *paradoxe d'amplification du prestige* selon lequel attaquer un acteur jouissant d'un grand prestige renforce plutôt que diminue son statut symbolique, inversant ainsi la logique de somme nulle supposée par Harrison. La concurrence de propriété sur le patrimoine intellectuel produit une *réplication sans épuisement*, contredisant l'hypothèse de Harrison selon laquelle l'expropriation symbolique diminue les ressources du propriétaire d'origine. Et la concurrence expansionniste – l'exécution symbolique par la disqualification morale – produit des *trajectoires parallèles de stigmatisation* plutôt que l'annihilation du capital de la cible, un résultat structurel que le cadre de Harrison ne peut intégrer. Nous proposons une typologie modifiée qui préserve les catégories analytiques de Harrison tout en précisant les conditions structurelles dans lesquelles les champs intellectuels transforment leurs prédictions. Cette modification s'appuie sur la théorie des champs de Bourdieu et est opérationnalisée par un indice de Bonacich cumulatif-récursif qui rend compte de la dynamique temporelle de l'accumulation de prestige.

Mots-clés: conflit symbolique, champs intellectuels, Harrison, Bourdieu, théorie des champs, réseaux d'évaluation, post-socialiste, prestige, capital symbolique

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