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
- Collective national anthem singing
- Facebook live streaming – record viewers
- “protests of kids”
- #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
- protests are a form of democratization of society
- “the revolution of light”
- grant visibility to positive tone and evaluation of international media

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

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.