EXPLORING MANAGEMENT THROUGH QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

Edited by

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Editorial Paper: Exploring Management Through Qualitative Research – Introductory Remarks

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INTRODUCTION

Our intention with this special issue is to continue a rich, scholarly dialogue on producing insightful qualitative research in the management field. Being engaged in fieldwork through varied research endeavors, we have experienced challenges and uncertainties when doing qualitative research (e.g., Najda-Janoszka, 2016a, 2016b; Daba-Buzoianu, Bira, Tudorie & Duduciuc, 2017; Daba-Buzoianu & Bira, 2017). Despite a growing number of studies pertaining to the interpretative approach, there are no universal standards for conducting qualitative inquiry (Bluhm, Harman, Lee, & Mitchell, 2010; Cassell & Symon, 2015). Moreover, advocates of qualitative research have been arguing against development of such standards (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012; Pratt, 2009), because it could put at risk the fluid and emergent nature of qualitative research (Cassell & Symon, 2015). Hence, the enduring dilemma relates to the balance between the creative, inherent messiness of qualitative research and methodological rigor (Cyfert, 2014; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). We agree with the standpoint of Symon,- Cassell and Johnson (2016) that evaluation criteria should not marginalize alternative perspectives nor impose unified normative practices. Representing different research backgrounds (strategic management, communication) as well as perspectives (organizational, individual) we have discussed promising opportunities for management studies stemming from confronting distinct research traditions within an

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interpretive approach. The biennial conference, Qualitative Research in Communication (QRC) in Bucharest, provided the perfect environment to enhance such a debate and resulted in a call for this special issue. Papers included in the issue do not contribute to the standardization trend but are expected to show the diversity of methods used and phenomena studied in the qualitative research in management.

Observed progress

There is no doubt that qualitative research is very much linked to the significant changes that dominated the 20th century and that emphasized the importance of exploring rather than inquiring (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011). Through qualitative research, individuals and processes are considered in their inner diversity as the researcher does not aim to find specific answers but instead looks for new questions and answers to understand the meanings that individuals give to their life (Paille, 2002; Daba-Buzoianu & Bira, 2017). Most important is the fact that the development of qualitative methodologies is linked to the supremacy of Western epistemologies and to the attempt to understand new contexts, phenomenon and behaviors that were impossible to study by quantitative means. Qualitative research has a comprehensive character and has been opposed to positivism and post-positivism, trying to depict the reality through a phenomenological approach (Guba & Lincoln, 2005; Willig, 2008; Lindlof & Taylor, 2011).

For many years, qualitative research has been referred to as opposed to the scientific and rigorous quantitative studies and has been considered subjective and a way of producing soft science (Lindlof & Taylor, 2011; Taylor & Lindlof, 2013). Although qualitative research tends to be the dominant methodology in some fields (e.g., communication, see Lindlof & Taylor, 2011), scholars still question qualitative studies and ask for more standardized research tools and techniques. Of all the critiques, generalizability is probably the most widespread issue that qualitative research has to deal with (Silverman, 2006). Although scholars consider that generalizability should not be considered a goal anymore, this dispute is still visible. This is why researchers try to turn the debate towards explanations of meanings, which can be regarded as transferable to another setting (Mason, 2017). Analyzing qualitative results in connection with quantitative surveys and using theoretical samplings (Paille, 2002) are some of the options available for researchers interested in doing qualitative research and aiming to reach validity.

The continuous growth of interest in qualitative research in management studies that has been observed over the past decades (Lee, Mitchell, &

Sablynski, 1999; Bluhm, Harman, Lee, & Mitchell, 2010) confirms the increased recognition of the strengths of qualitative inquiry with regard to issues of context and timing in organizational affairs (Langley, Smallman, Tsoukas, & Van de Ven, 2013). According to published literature reviews, qualitative research within the discipline of management has repositioned itself from a marginalized avant-garde into the mainstream (Bluhm et al., 2010; Symon, Cassell, & Johnson, 2016). A growing number of management scholars reach for qualitative methods, as they are better suited to enhancing the understanding of the meaning of actions in real-life contexts (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000) and the temporal flow of organizational life (Langley et al., 2013). Qualitative research tools are invaluable for opening the "black box" of abstractly defined contextual variables (e.g., power position) and addressing uncharted knowledge territories of the managerial landscape (Eisenhardt, 1989; Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Edmondson & McManus, 2007). It has been argued that qualitative research is particularly helpful in addressing grand challenges, i.e., "complex problems with significant implications, unknown solutions, and intertwined and evolving technical and social interactions" (Eisenhardt, Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016, p. 1115). Allowing for a deep dive into varied types of rich data (text, pictures, videos, social media posts) qualitative research facilitates novel insights and enables contextual understanding of abstract, hard-to-measure constructs, and unusual and emerging phenomena (Eisenhardt,Graebner, & Sonenshein, 2016). Not without reason, papers using inductive methods are among the most highly cited at the most prestigious management journals (e.g., AMJ, AM, SMJ), as well as having become recognized as the most interesting ones (Bartunek, Rynes, & Ireland, 2006; Eisenhardt et al., 2016).

As pointed out by Kociatkiewicz and Kostera (2014), the contribution of psychology and sociology has been present from the very emergence of management studies, thus reaching for methods used in those disciplines appears to be a natural and logical consequence when understanding management studies in terms of "an engagement undertaken with the aim of increasing the wellbeing of organizational participants" (p. 9). Hence, the extent management scholarship presents seminal examples of innovative approaches that broaden the exploratory scope, e.g. application of discourse analysis (Jørgensen, Jordan, & Mitterhofer, 2012), narrative approach (Vaara, Sonenshein, & Boje, 2016), visual methods (Davidson et al., 2012), ethnographic observation (Seidel & O'Mahoney, 2014). The potential for understanding the complexities of management expands with the strong wave of methodological innovation.

Challenges ahead

Nevertheless, despite the advances in qualitative research in management studies, there are still important challenges to overcome when it comes to conducting qualitative inquiry and publicizing the obtained results (see editorials for AMJ, SMJ; Pratt, 2009). The very nature of the qualitative research, which requires immersion in data and a multi-perspective reflection on gathered material, makes those tasks highly difficult. There are no algorithms for producing the fieldwork in qualitative research, as the research is often designed at the same time that it is being done (van Maanen, 1998) since "qualitative methods need to be elaborated or modified for each new application" (Gephart, 2004, p. 458). On the one hand, such a fluid nature enhances fresh and unexpected insights that contribute to, or even open, new research avenues. On the other hand, a non-linear research process involving various shifts during the study makes it harder for researchers to manage such "messiness," as well as to succinctly explain research evolvement within the limited space of an article. Scholars highlight the continuous need for works providing practices that contribute to the strengthening of the methodological fit of qualitative research in management and organization studies (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007; Corley & Gioia, 2011; Gioia, Corley, & Hamilton, 2013). There is a consensus that a good paper, regardless of the qualitative or quantitative design, should present a clear contribution to theory, be well written and use transparently articulate methods (Pratt, 2009). However, these are very general criteria, leaving considerable room for maneuver for authors and reviewers. According to some researchers, developing more detailed guidelines that ensure theoretical and methodological consistency is of particular importance in the face of a growing trend towards plurality in perspectives, multi-paradigm approaches and mixed methods usage observed in management studies (Molina-Azorin, 2011; Molina-Azorin & Cameron, 2015; Bazeley, 2010; Bluhm et al., 2010). It has been argued that the development of certain standards would help both reviewers in their evaluation and authors in improving the trustworthiness of the presented research. However, the observed tendency to enforce templates for qualitative research, and practices of mimicking the style of quantitative papers, has led many scholars to question such disciplinary, normative direction (Cassell, 2016; Symon et al., 2016; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). They suggest that such guidelines, instead of helping qualitative writers, raise the risk of compromising detailed, explanatory theorizing – the heart of qualitative research – for linear, cause-effect theorizing typical of a quantitative approach (Cassell, 2016; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Moreover, pressure towards standardized compartmentalization of

the content seems to ignore the fact that the balance between "showing and telling" (Pratt, 2009) is dynamic and is dependent on the topic studied, methods used, and richness of data gathered (Symon et al., 2016). Hence, scholars call for resistance to observed attempts to homogenize qualitative management research (Cassell, 2016). They emphasize that preserving the "messy," non-linear nature of the qualitative approach does not imply an "anything-goes stance" (Czakon, 2009; Gummesson, 2005; Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001). Although the qualitative research usually does not proceed unidirectionally through predefined stages, it is about performing research activities in a manner that ensures congruence between a chosen method, data analysis and a report of the findings (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007; Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012). Methodological rigor of the qualitative approach embraces reshaping the research during progress (Gummesson, 2005; Symon et al., 2016), yet requires transparency in reporting all turns and refinements (Eisenhardt & Graebner, 2007). Given the amount and diversity of gathered data, an appropriate systematization, documentation and visualization of the whole research process can be quite challenging. Hence, a growing number of researchers report usage of Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS). By enabling multimodal interaction with the data, CAQDAS can analyze large volumes of diverse data more manageable and transparent (Sinkovics & Alfoldi, 2012; Maher, Hadfield, Hutchings, & de Eyto, 2018). However, using software to analyze data raises certain concerns related to fragmentation and over-simplification of the analysis (Maher et al., 2018). The functionality of CAQDAS has proved to be invaluable when it comes to organizing gathered data and communicating the rigor of the research process (audit trail), yet it has been observed that digital tools unevenly support different types of cognition (Maher et al., 2018), which may affect further interpretation and reflection. Thus, caution with the application of software relates not so much to balancing as to a practical awareness that the analytical process remains the task of the researcher.

Contributions to the special issue

With growing recognition of its relevance, qualitative research has moved away from the periphery of the management field. However, heading towards the mainstream engenders concerns over the preservation of methodological openness and flexibility (e.g., Symon et al., 2016). The papers selected for this special issue address the problem by providing insights into the use of various qualitative methods across different contexts. By highlighting some current trends in the field and following a reflexive stance, the articles aim to

enrich and inspire new debates regarding the realization of the potential of qualitative research in management studies.

The first paper, authored by Marta Gancarczyk and Joanna Bohatkiewicz (2018), discusses the concept of upgrading within cluster dynamics research. Although the extant literature provides quite a rich content on the dynamics of industrial agglomerations, the problem of cluster upgrading, understood as the advancement of the relative competitive position of clusters' dominant industries in global value chains (GVCs), is considered a new phenomenon in the field. Prospective approach and structural change orientation make the concept highly relevant for the adaptive and proactive planning of regional development. With the intent to identify and systemize the research streams in regional cluster upgrading, by capturing a broad horizon of theoretical lenses, the authors conducted an extensive narrative literature review. The qualitative approach that is introduced facilitates a comprehensive critical analysis of the extant literature and, as a result, enables the development of a cohesive map of research streams and interrelations between them (GVC governance, the resource-based view, evolutionary and life cycle concepts, lead-firm strategies, policy interventions) and an integrative framework for studying the antecedents of cluster upgrading. The formulated proposition of an integrative approach may serve to engender new debates on positive and normative objectives in regional development.

The second article, by Carmen Novac and Raluca Ciochină (2018), shifts the scope toward changes in the managerial philosophy which have been induced by developments in information technology. The authors have focused on the agile project management framework and, accordingly, on Scrum methodology. Although the agile approach has been implemented on a growing scale, in particular in the software industry, the extant literature provides a rather fragmentary picture of the actual performance of teams that undergo reorientation towards agile principles. Hence, in addressing the gap, the article presents a case study of an in-progress implementation of Scrum methodology by software development teams situated in Bucharest and Brussels. Using participant observation as the primary tool for collecting data enabled a deep immersion in a setting, which in turn facilitated a thorough exploration of inter-group relations and disclosure of "backstage realities." The authors have evaluated observed agile and coordination practices according to three criteria referring to value, stability and speed. The results that are presented shed more light on the process of redefining responsibilities, and the way it engenders the transformative flow in the distributed context. The insights and reflections provided by the research contribute to the discussion on the implementation challenges of agile methodologies, in particular by

highlighting the contextual factors influencing the discrepancies that were observed between formal agile principles and actual practice.

Monica Bira's paper (2018) discusses management tools from a communication perspective, aiming to explore how museums can strengthen their relationship with key audiences. In doing so, Monica Bira puts under scrutiny online communication management in order to see possible usages in establishing stable relationship with stakeholders and in reinforcing a museum's mission and identity. The qualitative study of online communication management is done by considering content management and interaction management. As Bira's study reveals, by managing the content of communication and online interaction, museums find themselves in the situation of reassessing their identity. Moreover, the paper concludes that online communication management helps museums to act as a place of power, as they are pictured as a source of wisdom and knowledge.

Bianca-Florentina Cheregi (2018) proposes a multimodal analysis of the Republic of Moldova and Romania's tourism campaigns in the context of nation branding. The comparative semiotic analysis is a cross-cultural comparison of nation branding in the case of two countries sharing traditions and language. Cheregi looks at the logos, websites and videos from the two cases through a neoliberal perspective, paying attention to the marketization of public discourse. Nation branding can be seen as an instrument used in the construction of the *other.* The paper connects national branding to national identity discourses and sheds light on how semiotic analysis can be used in further explorations.

The last article, authored by Regina Lenart-Gansiniec (2018), reflects on the methodology of research on the relatively new concept of crowdsourcing. Considered as a promising concept, with a wide range of applications in the management of companies and organizations belonging to the public sector, crowdsourcing has been receiving growing scholarly attention in recent years. As an emerging field, it has been approached from various perspectives, hence the scholarship provides a manifold of its distinct conceptualizations. With the aim of mapping and assessing the evolving knowledge base, the author has undertaken a systematic literature review on the subject. A thorough, context-sensitive analysis has involved bibliometric techniques as well as a critical assessment of the theoretical and empirical content. The identified key, methodology-related challenges faced by scholars investigating crowdsourcing extend across a confused understanding of the nature of crowdsourcing, the multidimensionality and many-sidedness of the concept, the adopted epistemological stance and the methods used for measuring crowdsourcing. Interestingly, in order to provide a more fine-grained insight into the potential and limitations of quantitative and qualitative approaches,

the author has decided to present an in-depth analysis of two well-received studies on crowdsourcing representing opposite epistemological stances. The contribution of the study relates not only to the systematization of the relevant intellectual territory but more importantly to the indication of sensitive and contentious areas that could be addressed in order to develop the existing body of knowledge on crowdsourcing further.

The articles included in this special issue do not total a comprehensive picture of the current state of qualitative research in management. Instead, they provide insightful snapshots reflecting methodological diversity and pluralism observed in qualitative management research. These selected papers present valuable examples of practices of using qualitative methods, where reflections generate a rich understanding of managerial processes whilst appreciating their subtleties in different contexts. Moreover, although this special collection contributes to the promotion of method diversity, it emphasizes the fundamental issue of addressing the primary questions which underlie qualitative research choices. We hope the discussions presented in the articles will inspire and stimulate new developments in qualitative management research.

Acknowledgments

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Biographical notes

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Research Streams in Cluster Upgrading.
A Literature Review

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Abstract

This paper aims to identify and systemize the research streams in regional cluster upgrading. Cluster upgrading belongs to broader research in the dynamics of industrial agglomerations, currently, the major topic in studies on clusters. Within this literature, the upgrading concept differentiates by the focus on structural change in response to the insertion of regional clusters into global value chains (GVCs). Based on the narrative literature review, we identify and discuss two major research streams and classify them as the positive and the normative. Moreover, we elaborate a framework for studying the antecedents of cluster upgrading to conclude with research questions that may serve further systematic reviews and empirical investigations. This paper provides two contributions to the cluster dynamics literature with a focus on the upgrading of industrial agglomerations. First, it offers a comprehensive approach to the cluster upgrading theory by integrating the fragmented research in this area. Second, it proposes a theoretical framework to set up further research directions.
Keywords: cluster upgrading, global value chains, cluster evolution, cluster life cycles, capabilities, governance

INTRODUCTION

Cluster upgrading belongs to rapidly developing research in the dynamics of industrial agglomerations that represents a major issue both for academia and policy-makers. Its importance lies in the prospective approach, relevant for the adaptive and proactive planning of regional development, while the majority of extant research on clusters is focused on their on-going or past competitive advantage. Within the cluster dynamics research, the upgrading concept focuses on the improvement of regional clusters'

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positions in global value chains (GVCs), i.e., it acknowledges the insertion of regional agglomerations into global exchange (Humphrey & Schmitz, 2004a; Gereffi, Humphrey & Sturgeon 2005; Saxenian, 2007). This concept is also closely linked to the current interest in learning and knowledge transfer through international cooperation that prevents regional lock-in (Lam, 2007; Lorentzen, 2008; De Propris et al., 2008; Malecki, 2010; Wall & Van der Knaap, 2011; Gancarczyk, 2015a; Geodecki & Grodzicki, 2015).

The concept of upgrading is explored both at enterprise and industry levels to explain the advancement in relative competitive position due to cross-border contracts (Lager, 2000; Schmitz, 2006; Aspers, 2010; Ivarsson & Alvstam, 2011; Simms & Trott, 2014). This advancement of position reflects in higher value adding activities accomplished through capability development in the area of products, processes, functions, and new value chains (Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002; Gereffi et al., 2005; Kaplinsky & Morris, 2001; Aspers, 2010). Therefore, both research and practice focus on how to maintain and advance the positions of clusters in global value chains through developing higher value adding activities.

As with other development processes of an evolutionary and multi-dimensional nature, upgrading requires the investigation of complex and interrelated antecedents with regard to firm, industry, and institutional setup in the spatial context (Fornahl & Hassink, 2017; Trippl et al., 2015). The theoretical background and empirical studies are vitally developing in this area, with a call for knowledge accumulation and setting up a comprehensive conceptual framework to study the antecedents (factors, drivers, determinants) of cluster upgrading. Therefore, this paper aims to identify and systemize the research streams in cluster upgrading with the adoption of a narrative literature review as a research method.

In the following sections of the paper, we identify and discuss two major research streams proposed as the positive and the normative. The positive stream, including the GVC governance, capability and evolutionary approaches, aims to explain the antecedents of upgrading as objective and non-intentional antecedents of cluster dynamics. The normative stream proposes proactive, intentional behaviors of cluster lead firms and public policy interventions to stimulate upgrading processes. Moreover, we propose a framework for studying the antecedents of cluster upgrading stemming from these two perspectives. Finally, research questions have been formulated that may serve further systematic reviews and empirical studies. The concluding section synthesizes the results in relation to extant studies and sets directions for future research.

The paper provides two contributions to the cluster dynamics literature with a focus on the upgrading of industrial agglomerations. First, it provides

a comprehensive approach to cluster upgrading by integrating the fragmented research in this area. Second, it proposes a theoretical framework to set up new research directions.

RESEARCH METHOD

The major research method was a narrative literature review. A narrative review differentiates by qualitative, comprehensive and up-to-date approaches to a selected topic, based on the printed and electronic books and journal articles (Kirkevold, 1997; Collins & Fauser, 2005). It also features a subjective component when determining the studies for review and discussing results. However, the selection procedure and choices need to be explained (Green, Johnson, & Adams, 2006).

Nevertheless, narrative reviews are valuable for the synthesis of the development of a phenomenon under study, pointing to the most up-to-date achievements in the field, and often for critical lenses, attempting to set out new views on the topic (Jones, 2004; Green et al., 2006). This comprehensive, qualitative, and critical analysis of extant literature enables one to comprehend the diversities and pluralities of a given phenomenon (Jones, 2004). Such an approach is justified by the breadth and often initial development stages of the field under study. As an outcome, narrative reviews may be expected to identify specific research questions for further investigations in the form of empirical tests or systematic reviews.

In contrast, the systematic literature review starts with a specific research question(s). Moreover, it adopts relevant databases to identify the large stock of studies with the use of key words, and according to specific criteria of inclusion and exclusion (Thomas & Harden, 2008). By this rigorous attitude, systematic reviews can employ quantitative statistical methods to process the findings from empirical evidence (Collins & Fauser, 2005).

Since our research aims to identify and systemize a broad topic of research streams in cluster upgrading, a growing but still new phenomenon, the narrative review is an appropriate method. First systematic reviews in this area address one established theoretical approach of GVCs with the specific questions, such as learning channels that condition upgrading (c.f. De Marchi, Giuliani, & Rabellotti, 2017). Our paper intends to capture a wider horizon of theoretical lenses to end with research questions that may guide further systematic literature reviews and empirical investigations.

The foundations of our broad perspective was an interdisciplinary literature search that included research papers, monographs, and research reports in development and political economics, economic geography, as

well as entrepreneurship and regional development. We included not only the literature that adopts a predominant theoretical approach of the GVC governance, but also the studies in cluster dynamics with such theoretical lenses as capability approach, life cycles, and the evolution of industrial spatial forms. We reviewed both theoretical and empirical studies to describe the theories of upgrading, including their development phases. Following this, we have established the major research approaches, their propositions about upgrading drivers, and logical interdependencies among these approaches. In the next step, we have categorized the approaches as belonging to normative or positive research streams that study cluster dynamics. The research procedure concludes with a framework for studying the antecedents of cluster upgrading and questions for further investigations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The essence of cluster upgrading in the GVC literature

Clusters (industrial agglomerations, industrial districts, and industrial production systems) differentiate by spatial industrial concentration that implies regional specialization, and by network relationships conducive for knowledge and innovation development (Porter, 1990; 1998; Vanhaverbeke, 2001; European Commission, 2002; Brusco, 1982; Pyke, Sengenberger, 1992; Markusen, 1996; Saxenian, 2000; Asheim & Isaksen, 2003, pp. 36-40; Gancarczyk, 2015). The traditional view on industrial agglomerations presents them as self-sufficient production systems comprising the majority of functions in value chains of their dominant industries (Bellandi, 2001; Piore, Sabel, 1984; Krugman, 1991; Porter, 1998). However, globalization and spatial fragmentation of production and innovation turned clusters into chain links within cross-border value chains (Gereffi et al., 2005; McKinnon, 2012; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002; Sturgeon, 2003; Pietrobelli & Rabellotti, 2011; MacKinnon, 2012; Aslesen & Harirchi, 2015; Sturgeon, Van Biesenbroeck, & Gerefii, 2008). Clusters became more specialized through offshore outsourcing and relocation activities (Aslesen & Harirchi, 2015; Gancarczyk & Gancarczyk, 2018). One of the most critical issues in this specialization concerns either higher or lower value-adding functions in the global production chains, since this specialization translates into hierarchy and power relations among different regions and unequal division of economic returns. The major research and practical problem arise, how clusters can maintain and advance (upgrade) their positions in global value chains through developing higher value-adding activities.

Upgrading is understood as the advancement into higher value adding activities through the development of capabilities in the area of products, processes, functions and new value chains (Gereffi 1996; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2004a; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2004b). In relation to clusters, upgrading is the improvement of the relative competitive position of clusters' dominant industries in global value chains. The opposite process is downgrading, going down the value chain to lower value activities (Simms & Trott, 2014; Lager, 2000).

The phenomenon of upgrading is investigated in the global value chain (GVC) approach, focused on the positive explanation of how governance affects the roles, power relationships, and competitive positions of contracting partners (Gereffi, 1996; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2004a; Humphrey & Schmitz 2004b; Gereffi et al., 2005; Sturgeon et al., 2008). Governance means modes or structures of regulating economic activities that include the market, the firm (hierarchy), and hybrids integrating markets and hierarchies (Williamson, 1991). The nature of governance in the GVC concept is micro-economic since it seeks firm-level drivers of upgrading clusters and regions.

The GVC approach assumes that inter-firm governance affects not only the current competitive position but also the future one, in terms of upgrading in value chains (Kaplinsky & Morris 2001; Humphrey & Schmitz, 2002; Gereffi et al. 2005; Pietrobelli & Rabellotti, 2011). Five types of governance modes are considered, namely, markets, hierarchy (the firm), and three types of network structures. The market mode assumes spot and short-term transactions that do not engage any in-depth interaction, while the firm represents internal transaction where the external knowledge transfer is not considered. Therefore, upgrading can occur in network relationships, since they involve relatively firm, repetitive collaboration that implies a transfer of knowledge between partners. Nevertheless, each of the governances offers different prospects for supplier upgrading. Captive networks feature hierarchical and top-down relationships that provide limited opportunities for learning and development and may pose a threat of lock-in for suppliers (Gereffi et al., 2005). Suppliers predominantly focus on lower-value adding and standardized activities, following strict terms of quality and supplies (Rugraf, 2010; Pavlínek, 2012; Gancarczyk & Gancarczyk, 2013). In modular networks and relational networks, suppliers can benefit from upgrading, since the cooperation is less hierarchical and more balanced, thus encouraging more in-depth interaction (Humphrey & Schmitz, 2004b; Winter, 2010; Gereffi et al., 2005).

Governance modes are largely determined by the more powerful party in international exchange, predominantly, customers to suppliers from

less developed countries. However, they are not purely subjective and subordinated to the discretion of individual buyers, since they also stem from supplier capabilities and technology life cycle and advancement that either support outsourcing of standardized and lower value or more advanced and higher value activities (Gereffi et al., 2005; Sturgeon et al., 2008). Technology characteristics are reflected in the determinants of transaction complexity (the amount of information to be exchanged between partners) and transaction codification (the level of formalization). The supplier capability is not clearly defined in the GVC concept: however, considering the theoretical context, they represent a supplier's resources and competences to meet the customer's requirements (Gereffi et al., 2005; Sturgeon et al., 2008; Pietrobelli & Rabellotti, 2011).

Considering the above determinants, captive networks emerge in the case of high transaction complexity and codification and low supplier capabilities (Gereffi et al., 2005). Modular network governance applies when transaction complexity, technology codification, and supplier capabilities are high. Relational networks, in turn, are adopted in transactions with high complexity but low codification, and when subcontractor capabilities are high (Humphrey & Schmitz, 2004b; Winter, 2010; Gereffi et al., 2005).

The extant research points to the specialization and hierarchization of global relationships among clusters representing either higher value adding activities, such as research and development, engineering, design, marketing and value chain coordination, or lower value adding functions, such as manufacturing standardized products and assembling.

Therefore, how can cluster upgrading be accomplished according to the GVC views?

The GVC proposes that upgrading stems from the cluster firms' global collaborations. The governance mode set up by the large global customers impacts the development prospects of suppliers. However, the type of governance is not only dependent on the choices of powerful corporations from advanced economies. These choices are also dependent on the technology life cycle and advancement that turns into the level of transaction complexity and codification, as well as on supplier capabilities.

In the theoretical framework of the GVC, the issue of capabilities poses a threat of tautology, just as the entire capability or resource-based approach. Namely, the essence of upgrading is in the supplier's capability advancement and the latter one, as pointed out earlier, would also be dependent on supplier capabilities that affect the choice of governance. This tautology can be resolved, if we assume that capabilities are mediated by the life cycle of

specific cooperation. Namely, at the start of cooperation, we can consider the initial capabilities of a supplier that determine the governance mode beside transaction complexity and codification. The resulting governance directly impacts the prospects for supplier upgrading. However, another problem is determinism of a governance mode if a supplier starts with captive governance mode. Once established, the governance would eventually determine learning and development of a supplier as a trap or lock-in. Considering this, the GVC governance would not be able to explain the evolution from captive networks to relational or modular networks, which has been observed in reality. This would require introducing additional factors that enable modification of the established governance towards more advanced modes, during the course of cooperation (Kaplinsky & Morris, 2001; Tsang, 2000; Foss & Foss, 2005; Williamson, 1991, 1999).

The resource-based perspective on cluster upgrading

More recent views on cluster upgrading propose the role of supplier capabilities not only in the initial phase of cooperation, but also throughout its course (Kaplinsky & Morris, 2001; Gereffi et al., 2005). Namely, absorptive capacity and dynamic capabilities are emphasized as drivers of cluster upgrading (Samarra & Belussi, 2006; Cusmano et al., 2010; Pietrobelli & Rabellotti, 2011; Munari et al., 2012; Menghinello et al., 2010; Aslesen & Hirarchi, 2015; De Marchi et al., 2018). These developments signal refocusing from the GVC governance as a set of conditions external to clusters, towards cluster internal characteristics and dynamics. Alike the GVC governance, this view adopts a micro-perspective of firms forming industrial agglomerations. It is positive in nature since it points to the importance of resources and competences of firms forming clusters rather, than to specific decision types. As a result, the research focus changes from governance mode as a direct determinant of firm upgrading, towards the antecedents of the evolution of governance structures, and to factors that enable benefitting from governance solutions. This approach is in line with the resource-based view (the RBV) of the firm or the capability perspective as a broad approach that stresses the relevance of internal capabilities over environmental factors for the firm's competitive advantage (Penrose, 1959; Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Kogut & Zander, 1992; Peteraf, 1993; Barney, 1999; Teece, 2007).

The RBV originated as a theory of learning and growth (Penrose, 1959; Wernerfelt, 1984; Kogut & Zander, 1992; Barney, 1999), thus its recent focus on absorptive capacity and dynamic capabilities. Dynamic capabilities are considered as the ability to integrate, build and reconfigure internal and external competences in response to environmental changes (Teece,

2007; Helfat et al., 2007; Di Stefano, Peteraf, & Verona, 2010). They ensure new, more efficient solutions by adapting or replacing the existing routines and practices (Zahra, Sapienza, & Davidsson, 2006) and are conducive to knowledge exploration and radical innovative activity (Sirén, Kohtamäki, & Kuckertz, 2012). Absorptive capacity forms conditions for adopting new ways of functioning and it establishes a basis for dynamic capabilities to act (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Munari et al., 2012). Absorptive capacity represents the ability to absorb and internalize external knowledge (Cohen & Levinthal, 1990; Zahra & George, 2002; Ahlin, Drnovšek, & Hisrich, 2014). Both dynamic capabilities and absorptive capacity concepts are evolutionary and path-dependent: therefore their impact and outcomes need to be mediated by a time factor (Sirén et al., 2012).

In the literature on cluster dynamics, including the concepts of life cycle, evolution, and eventually, upgrading, it is posited that absorptive capacity and dynamic capabilities largely determine the growth and competitive advantage of industrial agglomerations (Pietrobelli & Rabellotti, 2011; Aslesen & Harirchi, 2015). They are critical for transferring technological and management knowledge between large customers from advanced economies and their suppliers and subsidiaries in clusters from less developed countries (Munari et al., 2012; Pietrobelli & Rabellotti, 2011; Hervas-Oliver et al., 2012). The research on clusters and foreign direct investment in emerging markets, such as Central East European countries, confirms the importance of these factors on upgrading regional economies (Gorynia, Nowak, & Wolniak, 2007; Pisoni, Fratocchi, & Onetti, 2013). Moreover, the link is emphasized between more balanced and reliability-based relationships and higher levels of transaction technology and supplier competence (Lungwitz & Campagna, 2006).

Consequently, *the RBV proposes that cluster upgrading depends on the level of absorptive capacity and dynamic capabilities demonstrated by cluster firms. Absorptive capacity and dynamic capabilities are conditions for learning processes and they enable progressive changes in the governance of customer-supplier relationships.*

Cluster life cycle and evolution and the prospects for upgrading

Alternatively to the micro- or firm-level perspective of GVCs and the RBV, the approaches of cluster life cycle and evolution offer an industry-level perspective on cluster progressive dynamics, including upgrading. These are positive approaches to the phenomenon of upgrading as they focus on investigating complex mechanisms and processes rather than on normative recommendations of specific decisions and choices leading to the improvement of cluster competitive position in international exchange. In its

traditional form, the evolutionary and life cycle views on cluster advancement predominantly focus on group processes linking actors, territories and networks (Fornahl, Hassink, & Mentzel, 2015). These complex systems are analyzed with the use of such concepts of evolutionary economics as myopia, path-dependence, and isomorphism, that channel group processes in clusters into some established pathways, conditioned by prior events (Martin & Sunley, 2006; Maskell & Malmberg, 2007; Mentzel & Fornahl, 2010; Ter Wal & Boschma, 2011). Firms predominantly are not considered as individual units but as groupings of interconnected entities that undergo joint development processes. According to evolutionary approaches, cluster upgrading prospects depend on the stage of this cluster's life cycle and evolution.

Theories of network and technology life cycles are a grounding for the cluster life cycle approach (Mentzel & Fornahl, 2010; Tushman & Rosenkopf, 1992). According to this approach, the level of technological heterogeneity of firms and the level of network openness and flexibility mark the emergence, growth, sustainment, decline or renewal of industrial agglomerations. The best prospects for upgrading are in the growth phase. In this phase the technological specialization of companies is moderate and networks are flexible and open to external knowledge through cross-border links (Ter Wal & Boschma, 2011). These characteristics are also typical of the start of new cycle (recovery) and further growth after periods of sustainment or decline (Hassink, 2005; Frenken, 2007; Neffke et al., 2011). In the decline stage, when firms' technological profiles become strongly homogenous, focused and bound by closed, rigid networks, the opportunities for upgrading are low. The phases of emergence (high technological heterogeneity but low networking interaction) and sustainment (low technological heterogeneity but networks open to external synergies) are featured by moderate possibilities of upgrading (Ter Val & Boschma, 2011).

The concept of cluster evolution puts emphasis on the role of firm capabilities and networks, which facilitate knowledge spill-overs inside the cluster and in its external, international environment (Ter Wal & Boschma, 2011). Alike the life cycle approach, the model of cluster evolution assumes development stages. However, it is less deterministic than the concept of life cycle and therefore more realistic. Moreover, this framework is more open to the role of external networks and relocation processes that result either in the dispersal of the activities formerly concentrated in clusters from developed economies, or in the emergence of new clusters in less developed economies (Hassink, 2005). The prospects for upgrading are high in the growth stage and renewal (new growth) stage that might take place after maturity and decline. Growth is accomplished due to the infusion of knowledge through networks centered on focal firms, provided that these networks are dense both inside

and outside the cluster. The prospects for upgrading are moderate in the introductory stage (flexible, social networks but weak business networks, variety of firm capabilities) and in the maturity stage (stable networks around focal firms but decreasing variety of firm capabilities due to shake-out). Decline offers low possibilities of upgrading due to technological rigidity (low variety of firm capabilities) and network rigidity.

Table 1. Cluster upgrading prospects according to the concepts of cluster life cycle and cluster evolution

Upgrading prospects	Cluster life cycle stages	Cluster evolution stages
Moderate	Emergence (technological heterogeneity of firms, low interaction)	Introductory stage (flexible, social networks but weak business networks, variety of firm capabilities)
High	Growth (focusing on technology of firms, open and flexible networks)	Growth stage (stabilizing core-periphery profile of networks, dense networks inside the cluster, possibility of stable and dense knowledge networks dispersed to other locations)
Moderate	Sustainment (focused technology, open networks benefiting from synergies and external knowledge)	Maturity stage (stable core-periphery profile of networks, decreasing variety of firm capabilities due to shake-out)
Low	Decline (strongly focused technology, closed networks impede cluster adaptability)	Industry decline (network rigidity, technological lock-in)
High	The start of a new cycle (new technological heterogeneity, strong networks sourcing external knowledge)	Renewal (the importance of dynamic capabilities in relocating to new regions or in changing position in the network)

To sum up, both life cycle and evolutionary approaches recommend a moderate level of technological variety in networks to accomplish cluster upgrading (Fornahl et al., 2016; Gancarczyk, 2015). Too low a variety would not ensure new products and industries to branch out. Too high a variety would prevent economies of scope and scale and exploiting an extant resource base. Regarding network characteristics, open and flexible networks with balanced and dispersed power support upgrading, while rigid and centralized governance

prevents cluster advancement towards new, higher value adding activities (Fornahl et al., 2015; Gancarczyk, 2015a, 2015b; Gancarczyk & Gancarczyk, 2018).

As earlier noted, the *evolutionary view proposes that cluster upgrading depends on the stage of cluster life cycle or evolution. However, this relationship is indirect and mediated by network structure as well as technological heterogeneity and variety of firms' capabilities. Namely, the type of network governance and capability of firms have direct effects on introducing new products, services, and functions, or sticking to the established paths and rigid exploitation of extant capabilities.* This view corresponds with the concept of cluster upgrading in the GVC and the RBV to be dependent on the network governance and capabilities, accordingly.

The impact of lead firms on cluster upgrading

The emphasis on network governance and capabilities was a natural background for a new focus in cluster upgrading that underlines the role of lead or focal firms (Frenken 2007; Mentzel & Fornahl, 2010, Ter Wal & Boschma, 2011). According to this view, individual firms with superior capabilities act as network leaders and their choices impact the development paths of networks and the entire industrial agglomerations. The lead firms, through expansion and spin-offs, drive the cluster specialization and build its internal strength (Best, 2000; Penrose, 1959). Their growth mechanism consists of matching capabilities with environmental opportunities (Penrose, 1959; Best, 2001; Gancarczyk & Gancarczyk, 2016). To better exploit the opportunities they form alliances with competitors and focus on core and higher value-adding activities, while outsourcing or spinning-off those lower value and standardized (Huggins & Johnston, 2010; Barney, 1999). As a result, the collaborative and competitive networks emerge around focal companies, ensuring knowledge exchange and creation (Maskell & Malmberg, 1999; Alegre, Sengupta & Lapiedra, 2013; Lisowska, 2015; Gancarczyk & Gancarczyk, 2016). Cluster networks are repositories of strategic resources, including knowledge conducive for innovation and further growth (Gulati, 2007; Huggins & Johnston, 2010; Hansen, 2002; Owen-Smith & Powell, 2004). This raises a mutual dependence between firms and their networks in clusters and focal companies plan growth and make strategic choices considering their own capabilities and complementary resources stored in their networks (Francioni, Musso & Vardiabasis, 2013). Following this, the research on the expansion and strategic decisions of cluster lead firms is a normative perspective that seeks recommendations as to firm-level choices that affect upgrading or downgrading of industrial agglomerations.

The major strategic choices in recent years were about internationalization of production function by cluster leaders (Li, Bathelt, & Wang, 2012; Biggiero, 2006; Alberti, 2006; Lorentzen, 2008; De Propris, Menghinello, & Sugden, 2008; Samarra & Belussi, 2006). On the one hand, this process was necessitated by the need to search for cost-effective inputs and sources of technology in the face of the increasing global competition. Dense internal networks are valuable as knowledge repositories. However, they might also suffer from rigidity and excessive specialization leading to regional lock-in and inability to diversify into higher value and more prospective industries (Grabher, 1993; Hsu & Lin, 2011). Focal firms took the roles of global pipelines to access new markets and technologies (Hassink, 2005; Aslesen & Harirchi, 2015; Alegre et al., 2013; Lisowska, 2015; Gancarczyk & Gancarczyk, 2016). On the other hand, the relocation, i.e., moving the elements of cluster value chains out of the source agglomeration, caused structural changes in the production systems and networks. Decomposing the local knowledge and production networks threatened the extant competitive advantage and often led to a decline in the cluster life cycle (Alberti, 2006; Samarra & Belussi, 2006). In order to combine the advantages of internationalization and extant cluster capabilities, selective relocation is recommended in the area of activities and functions that are non-core, while retaining the most advanced, knowledge-intensive manufacturing and services (Biggiero, 2006; Gancarczyk & Gancarczyk, 2018; De Propris et al., 2008). This kind of relocation strategy might be a good grounding for new growth or renewal in the cluster life cycle or evolution.

To sum up, *the research on the role of cluster lead firms proposes that the upgrading of industrial agglomerations depends on the internationalization strategies of these enterprises. The international strategies of focal firms affect cluster capabilities, governance, as well as life cycles and evolution. The focal firms should adopt the strategic objectives directed both at the avoidance of regional lock-in through external collaboration, and at the retention and development of the capabilities of the source cluster.*

Policy interventions approach to cluster upgrading

The successful transition from lower value-adding to higher value activities is often supported by public policies (Humphrey et al., 2018). As the advancement to higher value activities always involves innovations in the area of new products, processes and functions, the support for cluster upgrading belongs predominantly to innovation policies (Lema, Rabellotti, & Sampath, 2018). Particularly, regional innovation systems and smart specialization strategies are conducive to the accomplishment of upgrading (De Marchi et al., 2018; Pietrobelli & Rabellotti, 2011). The innovation systems policies were found to

be instrumental for the progressive shift from assembling and manufacturing of standardized components to advanced manufacturing, engineering and design in the Taiwanese computer industry, as well as from manufacturing to design, branding, and marketing in the Brazilian and Mexican shoe industries, among others (Pietrobelli & Rabellotti, 2011). The core of these policies was to integrate the efforts of firms, regional governments, and universities to act as a system directed at innovation development (Pietrobelli & Rabellotti, 2004). Smart specialization strategies consist of specialized diversification and branching out related industries to avoid rigid specialization and lock-in (Foray, 2014). The new industries are technologically more advanced and thus either replace the older industries or improve their efficiency and refresh product or service offerings (Foray, 2013; 2017). The innovation policies based on smart specialization promote the internationalization and insertion of clusters to global value chains through setting up collaboration platforms and promoting partnerships among clusters (European Commission, 2016).

The advancements of firms and industries were accomplished with public involvement in developing cluster capabilities, framing the GVC governance conditions for knowledge transfer and learning, as well as driving the cluster life cycle or evolution towards new cycles or renewal.

In the area of capability development, public initiatives should be directed at education, encouraging collaboration among different actors in the innovation system, and at R&D investment (Humphrey et al., 2018). Public-private venture funds could be a tool for high-risk innovation projects (European Commission, 2016). Moreover, the support for retaining major product and process innovations in the region would protect the cluster from knowledge leakage and imitations (Aslesen & Harirchi, 2015).

In the area of the GVC governance conditions, it is recommended that higher value-adding activities are attracted to clusters, such as R+D centers, engineering laboratories, and advanced manufacturing (Rugraff, 2010). In captive production networks, local small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) from lower cost locations occupy a weak position in relation to large foreign investors and have minor possibilities of learning and absorbing knowledge (Gereffi et al., 2005). Regional governments need to work with SMEs and large transnational firms to set up better outsourcing conditions (Gereffi & Lee, 2018). This can be supported by embedding the branches of foreign direct investors with long-term contracts to facilitate knowledge absorption by cluster firms. Possible solutions include developing complex projects locally, such as technology parks, creating favorable infrastructural and institutional conditions, and marketing the regional specialization to create the cluster image in specialized business areas (European Commission, 2016; Humphrey et al., 2018).

Driving the cluster evolution towards a growth stage of the life cycle requires sourcing external knowledge based on deepened and durable networking with collaborators, both out of the agglomeration and within the cluster (Hassink, 2005). Regional governments are encouraged to act as accelerators and mediators in setting up collaboration platforms, including on-line sites, symposia, exhibitions, and fairs. Since both specialization and heterogeneity of technologies are favorable for growth and new grow (new life cycle), the implementation of smart specialization strategies is an appropriate direction for public policies (European Commission, 2016; Pietrobelli & Rabellotti, 2011). The development of smart specialization, in turn, needs to be supported with inward foreign investment in the areas that are crucial for this specialization (Foray, 2014).

Due to combining regional and global foci, the implementation of cluster upgrading policies includes multi-level actors from regional, national, and international institutions (Gereffi & Lee, 2016). For instance, the improvement of the work and contract conditions for local employees and companies outsourcing to global buyers requires the engagement of national authorities that set labor and contract conditions, regional authorities to establish investment opportunities and regulations, as well as international organizations, such as International Labour Organization.

To sum up, *the public interventions approach to cluster upgrading proposes that government policies focus on the development of cluster capabilities, framing favorable GVC governance, and stimulating the cluster life cycle and evolution toward growth or renewal stages. In those interrelated areas, specific measures are recommended, with a focus on innovations systems and smart specialization strategies. The implementation of cluster upgrading in GVCs should engage public actors across multi-level government.*

A framework for studying the antecedents of cluster upgrading

In the preceding sections, we have discussed five approaches that propose antecedents of cluster upgrading within global value chains. These approaches demonstrated distinctive but interrelated causes of advancing the positions of industrial agglomerations, according to positive or normative profiles. The positive stream is represented by the GVC governance approach, the RBV, as well as the concepts of cluster life cycle and evolution. The GVC governance approach puts emphasis on firm-level governance relationships and a positive explanation of how different types of governance affect the advancement of cluster position. However, it is also acknowledged that the governance setup is conditioned by the initial level of supplier capabilities. The capability-related antecedents of cluster dynamics are reflected in the resource-based view,

according to which capabilities are generic antecedents of the governance type, and ultimately, the progress in industrial agglomerations. It should, however, be recognized that the RBV acknowledges the opposite causality, namely, the value of networking relationships in developing capabilities through knowledge transfer and exchange. The RBV offers a positive and firm-level explanation of how clusters improve their positions in GVCs. The positive perspective is also represented by the evolutionary and life-cycle concepts of cluster progressive dynamics, although, this perspective takes a broader view of industries and group processes. Industry life cycles and evolution affect the upgrading indirectly, as a context formed by complex factors of governance, particularly the role of networks, and capabilities.

The approaches that stress the role of lead firms and public interventions as antecedents of cluster upgrading represent the normative research stream. Both the research on focal firms and public interventions draw upon the accomplishments of the positive studies. These studies identify three interdependent variables of capabilities, governance and life cycles or evolutions as the major antecedents of upgrading. The normative research investigates how lead firms and public policies should affect the three determinants to ensure a progressive change of the cluster position in GVCs.

The positive and normative streams of research on cluster upgrading and their interrelations form a framework for studying the antecedents of the upgrading phenomenon (Figure 1).
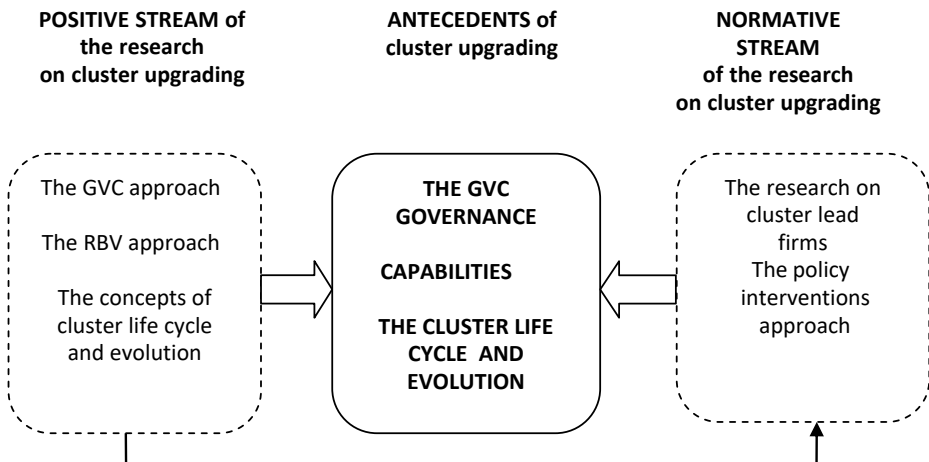
Figure 1. A framework for studying the antecedents of cluster upgrading

Figure 1 underlines the feedback relations between the positive and normative streams. The positive stream explains governance, capability, and life cycle or evolutionary antecedents of upgrading. It provides the knowledge of the determinants of this process. This knowledge forms the basis for the normative streams that should guide the private choices of lead firms and public policy interventions. The strategies of lead firms and policy interventions are directed at the improvement of the capability and governance conditions, and on framing the evolutionary pathways and life cycles of industrial agglomerations.

The above relationships between research streams enable us to formulate the questions for further studies that would integrate extant accomplishments. The current stage of the positive research stream calls for concurrent investigation of all three groups of antecedents within one research experiment. Since the three groups of variables need to be studied, it is important to identify a possible hierarchy, causal relationship among these variables, as well as mediators and moderators of their influence on cluster upgrading. Consequently, we formulate the first research question:

RQ1. What is the hierarchy of importance and causal relationship among capabilities, governance, and the phase of life cycle or evolution in the process of cluster upgrading?

The normative research stream relies upon the findings from the positive stream, but its primary focus is on the recommendations about private choices of lead firms and public interventions to improve the capability and governance conditions, as well as to frame the cluster evolution or life cycle toward upgrading. Therefore, we propose the next set of research questions:

RQ2. How can the strategies of lead firms affect cluster capabilities, governance, and the phase of life cycle or evolution toward cluster upgrading?

RQ2. How can public policies stimulate cluster capabilities, governance, and the phase of life cycle or evolution toward cluster upgrading?

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this paper, we identified and systemized the research streams in regional cluster upgrading, the phenomenon and concept discussed in political economics, economic geography, as well as entrepreneurship and regional

development (Gereffi et al. 2005; Aslesen & Harirchi, 2015; Sturgeon, 2003). Within extant studies on regional clusters, the upgrading concept brings the value of prospective implications, important for planning regional growth in global value chains (European Commission, 2016; Gereffi & Lee, 2018). Based on the narrative literature review, we discussed the major approaches to the antecedents of cluster upgrading and synthesized their propositions. Following this we systemized the approaches into positive and normative streams, pointing to their interrelations. This analytical procedure resulted in an integrative framework for studying the antecedents of cluster upgrading and the questions for further research.

The paper contributes to the literature in cluster dynamics, particularly to upgrading the position of industrial agglomerations in GVCs (Gereffi et al. 2015; Gereffi & Lee, 2018; De Marchi et al., 2018). The first contribution consists of a comprehensive approach to the cluster upgrading theory by integrating the research fragmented into a number of distinctive but interrelated approaches. These approaches included the GVC governance literature, the resource-based view, evolutionary and life cycle concepts, lead firm strategies, and policy interventions. Our synthesis serves knowledge accumulation and advancement by recognizing the extant accomplishments and setting up further research directions (Hoon, 2013; Thomas & Harden, 2008). The second contribution includes a theoretical framework and research questions that stem from it. The framework points to the relationships between positive and normative streams, an issue often overlooked by policy-makers that should draw from the explanatory studies of a positive nature (Foray, 2014). On the other hand, the community of academia needs to recognize the role of positive research as a grounding for policy directions and instruments (Fornahl & Hassink, 2017). The research questions we propose acknowledge this mutually benefitting relation between positive and normative studies, as well as pointing to major variables to be studied explicitly within one research experiment and not separately. This integrative approach should result in establishing the hierarchy of the antecedents of cluster upgrading, causal relationships among them, as well as moderators and mediators of their influence (Leavitt et al., 2010). Moreover, they can be of relevance both for academia and policy-makers to set up a collaborative agenda and feedback between positive and normative objectives (Fornahl & Hassink, 2017).

Finally, the limitations of our study should be explained, as well as research implications that stem from them. The study suffers from the shortcoming common to narrative literature reviews, namely, from the subjective choice of literature sources (Green et al., 2006). This subjectivism was alleviated by clearly setting up the scope of the literature review, the aim, and the research procedure (Jones, 2004). Moreover, the narrative

review was a necessary compromise due to the aim of the study to bridge and systemize a broad literature on the progressive dynamics in the context of GVCs (Green et al., 2006, Jones, 2004). The introductory stage of the research and the scope of literature prevented research profiling methods and systematic literature reviews. These methods require a more focused research theme and search criteria to process the data using quantitative techniques. However, the outcomes of our research may serve as a starting point for systematic reviews, research profiling and exploratory empirical research (Hoon, 2013; Thomas & Harden, 2008).

Acknowledgments

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Abstrakt

Celem artykułu jest identyfikacja i systematyzacja nurtów badawczych dotyczących podnoszenia pozycji regionalnych klastrów w globalnych łańcuchach wartości (GŁW). Problematyka wzrostu pozycji klastrów (cluster upgrading) należy do szerszego, i obecnie uważanego za wiodący, obszaru badań nad dynamiką branżowych aglomeracji. W ramach tej literatury, koncepcja wzrostu pozycji klastrów wyróżnia się koncentracją na ich strukturalnych zmianach pod wpływem włączenia do GŁW. Na podstawie narracyjnego przeglądu literatury, zidentyfikowano i scharakteryzowano dwa główne nurty badań, określone jako pozytywny i normatywny. Ponadto, opracowano model badawczy służący studiom nad uwarunkowaniami wzrostu pozycji klastrów, formułując pytania badawcze, które mogą stanowić punkt wyjścia do systematycznych przeglądów literatury i badań empirycznych. Artykuł wnosi wkład do literatury na temat dynamiki klastrów, ze szczególną uwagą na podnoszenie ich pozycji w GŁW. Po pierwsze, prezentuje kompleksowe teoretyczne ujęcie problematyki pozycji klastrów, dokonując integracji rozproszonej literatury w tej dziedzinie. Po drugie, proponuje model wyznaczający dalsze kierunki badań.

Słowa kluczowe: *wzrost pozycji klastrów, globalne łańcuchy wartości, ewolucja klastrów, cykl życia klastra, zdolności, mechanizmy koordynacji*

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Challenges of Applying Agile Principles and Values to IT Project Management

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Abstract

The theoretical part of this paper focuses on a macro-analysis of the Agile system philosophy, one of the most popular project management frameworks from the software industry. The second part of the paper consists of a case study analyzing the practices of the Agile framework within a corporation at the level of software production. As far as methodology is concerned, the qualitative research was conducted through a case study of a team in a distributed context ("cross-team"). Participant observation was used as a tool for collecting the data about the individuals and the processes within the teams. The purpose of the research was to analyze the current state of implementation, the benefits and challenges of using the Agile project management framework and also the needs of software development teams within a multinational company. At the same time, the paper analyzes the redefinition of roles by applying the Agile project management framework within the distributed teamwork organization. The research aims to identify the underlying reasons for the choice of the Agile type of management instead of Lean management within the software development industry, focusing on the level of implementation of the Agile/Scrum methodology and principles in distributed teams.
Keywords: Agile, Scrum, IT, project management

INTRODUCTION

IT industry changes have determined the rise of different approaches in managerial philosophy which are currently applied in Romanian organizations as well. Software development implies consistent efforts undertaken by IT managers to coordinate teams and deliver quality, as well as the pressure to respond to competitive forces that emerge from a highly dynamic and

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uncertain environment. As Cervone (2011) emphasized, the effort invested in the planning phase is significant and involves using considerable resources before development activities begin. This paper focuses on identifying the approaches and implementation of the Agile project management framework within a distributed working team context and also the reasons why this system philosophy and methodology represents a solution for applications and IT projects design. These concepts are also utilized in other fields of activity such as research projects or various change management programs and initiatives, but the main domain in which the Agile philosophy is currently implemented is IT.

The research questions refer to identifying and defining the principles that led to choosing the Agile management option instead of the Lean management option within the software development industry.

RQ1: What is the level of implementation of Agile principles and methodology within distributed teams?

Also, another focus of this paper was to identify and analyze the roles perspective, especially the responsibilities and attributions of the project manager within the Scrum team, and of their members.

RQ2: Is there a stability level as far as redefining responsibilities in the Scrum team is concerned?

The Agile management framework appears to be a pertinent choice considering the adaptability and innovation principles installed within the IT departments. Agile principles and Scrum methodology are preferred by most Romanian multinational organizations which specialize in software production. The paper is focused on analyzing the Agile principles and the Scrum methodology and their applicability in the software industry, as well as identifying how the roles are being redefined within this new management context.

LITERATURE REVIEW

History of the agile principles and philosophy

Agile represents a set of principles developed by 17 software designers in February 2001, in the USA. Unsatisfied by project evolution and processes and by the fact that teams were getting more and more limited by various procedures, which affected their performance, the team of software

developers generated a set of ideas and principles which regularly appeared in successful projects. These ideas were put together in the Agile Manifesto (Martin, 1991).

This manifesto consists of the following ideas: finding new, efficient and inventive ways for software development practices and coordination. The following core principles were stated: (1) individuals and their interactions are more important than processes and tools; (2) functional software is prioritized over complex documentation; (3) client collaboration is more important than inflexible contracts; (4) adapting to change is more important than following fixed planning (agilemanifesto.org). All these elements have their own value and impact project management in their own specific way, adding value to both clients and developers, and also bringing satisfaction to team members (Aubry, 2011). The focus is set on two concepts: minimalizing risk through short iterations of defined deliverables and direct communication with collaborators in the development process (p. 19). This type of management can be seen as opposed to other project management models, specifically to Waterfall methods that represent the typical approach to managing large projects, which focus on specifications and linear management. The waterfall approach is called as such because each stage of the project falls into the next one, without the possibility of reiteration or the possibility of revisiting past steps (Sutherland, 2014), which is opposite to the iterative process of Agile project management. The Agile Manifesto also includes the internal learning of facing and accepting that unpredictable events can happen at any time, which is why it is essential to collaboratively work as a team, where individuals and their interactions are more important than documentation. The general idea behind Agile is that flexibility is primary to everything else: instead of debating documentation requests, new processes should be implemented that allow client-team adaptability and ongoing communication.

From an economic perspective, the Agile movement refers to multiple aspects regarding project management within the current organizational culture. Throughout time, different kinds of implementations in various industries appeared, each organization starting to develop internally their informational library based on the proprietary experience with the projects that were conducted, demonstrating the need to develop their own iteration based on specific needs (Kerr & Hunter, 1993).

Agile represents the management paradigm that cannot be applied within traditional organizations. The Agile mind-set is ideal in situations where novelty is present (dynamic requests, evolving priorities, flexible results, etc.). It is worth mentioning that Agile methods are not efficient in industries such as construction or manufacturing. The Agile mind-set can be implemented in

other industries as well, but the human factor remains a challenge and studies still need to address how it can successfully be implemented in this sense.

The Agile principles

"The Agile concepts represent a natural response to the evolution and dynamics of competitive industries, which allow the multitude of concepts such as adaptability and dynamic performance to thrive inside an organization" (Vickoff, 2009).

The Agile philosophy is defined by key values such as *collaboration*, *communication* and *multidirectional feedback*. Implementing a project is difficult without direction parameters and without efficient practices, as unexpected situations emerge all the time. In this sense, repeated errors and inefficient work can affect client feedback, who can become disappointed by the low quality of the delivered products, by delays and increasing budgets (Martin & Martin, 2006). When measured, project success also takes into account the level of client satisfaction and the quality of the end result – the product must apply to what was initially expected and it should be delivered within the established terms (time, costs) and within budget. All organizational projects are influenced by organizational culture, organizational climate and identity, by role and responsibility definition, and by organizational communication. Some organizational cultures favor support, responsibility and ownership within the project team; some do not.

The 12 Agile principles differentiate Agile practices from other complicated processes. The priority of Agile management is to satisfy the client through early delivery of valuable software. The second priority is to deliver results frequently, through a functionality system that allows constant feedback. Thus, clients can choose to place these systems in production if they consider that these are functional or they can test the existent functionality by requesting future changes to be implemented. For implementing successful Agile management, frameworks or management systems have been developed and implemented, such as Scrum and Kanban (Anderson, 2000). Scrum refers to the management process of product development within a changing environment; an iterative process "used to help enable improvement in communication, maximize cooperation, as well as protect the team from disruptions and impediments" (Cervone, 2011, p. 20). Therefore, the Scrum method implies adaptation according to both internal and external factors.

Scrum was first created by Ken Schwaber and Jeff Sutherland, who are the authors of *The Scrum Guide*. This framework for project management can be used in any domain as it is not a predictable process, but a heuristic

and iterative one. Schwaber (2004) insists on the flexibility of Scrum and on transparency, which are most important to managing software production. According to the author, the Scrum Master has the project manager role but undertakes the responsibility of managing the Scrum process and not the tasks. The roles that are most common are Scrum Master, Product Owner and the Scrum team (developers, designers, analysts, testers). In this sense, the process includes practices and terminology and the Scrum Master should know how to apply them in the right manner (Schwaber, 2004).

In a research conducted by França, da Silva, and de Sousa Mariz (2010), analysing the perspective of the software team on the relationship between the adoption of the Agile attributes and project success, 8 attributes where significantly correlated to project success: (1) regular delivery of software, (2) delivering the most important features first, (3) correct integration testing, (4) high competence of team members, (5) following the agile requirement process, (6) following the agile configuration management process, (7) self-organizing teamwork, and (8) good customer relationship. Considering the Scrum main activities, including sprint planning meetings, sprints, daily Scrum and the sprint review meeting (Cervone, 2011) and the focus of these activities on committing to delivering functional products through teamwork, it can be suggested that agile management success is connected to the attitudes and behaviors of team members involved in the project.

In Scrum sprints, commitment and transparency are important as the team is empowered to choose specific tasks and deliver them within the upcoming sprint (Cervone, 2009; Lehnen, 2016). At the end of the sprint, the team "critically discusses current sprint deliveries jointly" (Lehnen, 2016, p. 224), when challenges and setbacks are being discussed, while sprint retrospectives are useful mainly for identifying what could have been done better and what best practices can be developed from the past sprint experience. Constant inspection is required as an essential step in the Scrum methodology, even though it is an on-going process which takes time and effort on behalf of all the members involved (Denning, 2016). Understanding the setbacks, challenges and the successful practices within the project is essential for both project life cycle and team collaboration.

Agile management seeks to develop projects around motivated individuals, as they are one of the most critical factors for project success. Time pressure and deadlines can determine certain productive behaviors, but this is not enough.

By conducting a systematic literature review of motivation in Software Engineering, Beecham et al. (2008) found that earlier models did not take into account cultural and environmental settings, besides factors such as career stages or personality. Amongst the most successful factors described

as motivators were recognition and employee participation and involvement, or, generally speaking, working with others. Additionally, clear goals and tasks and the way they fit into the business and qualitative work were also the most frequently cited motivators in the academic literature (p. 12). As DeMarco and Lister (2013) pointed out, working under time pressure does not necessarily imply success of the overall task: "People under time pressure don`t work better – they just work faster" (p. 18). All the other factors (process, environment, management) are secondary factors and sensitive to change if they have antagonistic effects over individuals.

However, Rasnacis and Berzisa (2015) found that the cooperation motives and the working environment are important to Scrum team members from a Latvian organization, emphasizing that "if the basic needs of group members are not satisfied (utility-pragmatic motives), then group members are not motivated towards more important motives for the development of Agile projects – personal growth, competition, challenge and creative activity" (p. 127). As a result of the case study, the authors suggested introducing the role of project manager when the team did not apply the self-organization principle and the final result was problematic. Therefore, there are many aspects to be analyzed when investigating the success of Agile project management methods, as challenges can emerge especially when group needs are not met.

The most efficient and effective information transfer within a development team is face-to-face communication. Within Agile projects, through Scrum methods, team members discuss and negotiate, the first means of communication being direct face-to-face communication within Scrum meetings. The documentation is created and updated incrementally on the same schedule as the software and only if needed. Working software is the main indicator of progress. Agile projects measure progress by evaluating the quantity of software that satisfies the client`s needs; they do not measure progress based on the volume of documentation or the quantity of the developed code. The result percentage is directly proportional to the percentage of the requested functionality (Stellmann & Greene, 2014). Agile teams appear to have a medium rhythm, working with a speed that allows them to keep the highest standards throughout the entire timeframe of the project.

Agile management encourages continuous attention for technical excellence, focusing on the qualitative factor. Maximum quality represents the scope for Agile projects (Misra, Kumar, & Kumar, 2010). Another specific characteristic refers to the capacity to self-organize: responsibilities are not set for team members individually, they are communicated to the team as a whole, as the team is the one determining the best way in which it can deliver those responsibilities. Thus, Agile teams constantly adjust their structure,

organization, rules, norms, relationships, knowing that the environment is dynamic and changing (Martin & Martin, 2006).

The primary objective of Agile management is to optimize, from a functional perspective, the intermediary management layers of the organization. Intermediary management represents the privileged target of coaching. Agile stands at the basis of the transition program, as well as at the individual and collective levels. The Agile manager needs to be rigorous, open towards new and alternative solutions, available, organized, anticipating, and actively listening to the team. Besides this, leadership, transparency and relational qualities are also outstanding. In a permanently expanding and development environment, the manager needs to deliver fast results by using limited resources and the results need to be of high quality (Rota, 2010).

As a project management professional, the Agile manager needs to know and use these techniques, to be able to explain them and justify the choices, to be able to reproduce practices that worked and ended with positive results into similar contexts or to adapt them in new contexts. Agile managers should also know how to accentuate knowledge and how to inspire trust, for being properly recognized as a professional. Within the project team, the Agile manager should share their vision with the other team members so it can be accepted – a key element for the well-functioning of the project.

Agile management also involves efficiently prioritizing activities, using the Urgency-Important Matrix and taking relevant action if the tasks fit into the first category (Crises Category). For the second category, goals and planning, the manager will plan and delegate tasks, for the third category, interruptions, the manager will delegate efficiently, and for the fourth category, distractions, the manager should abandon all unnecessary activities as these could interrupt optimal working flow.

Using 360 Feedback means integrated feedback on behalf of management, collaborators, clients, with teams using Agile principles at the same time. The main purpose of 360 Feedback is to obtain objective, but diversified feedback, to build trust in the organization, to offer a consistent level of transparency, to reduce the distance between the manager, collaborators and other stakeholders, at a punctual and communicational level, as well as for identifying the strengths and the development axis of the projects.

Management by walking around and listening (MBWAL) (Peters & Waterman, 2006) represents one of the indispensable tools of Agile management as this allows the manager to create and maintain a trustful relationship with the team members and to eliminate the distance between him/her and other collaborators, to promote bidirectional communication and less formality. Another vital tool is one-to-one communication, which can last between 10 minutes to half an hour between team members and the manager. These short

meetings are held weekly with each team member, showing the manager`s availability to listen, support and provide feedback (Schwaber, 2004).

For beginner managers, it is tempting to start a Gantt chart or PERT map for coordinating the project, as this can provide project control. Even though these instruments can analyze the progress of individual tasks and help in pinning the ones that are finalized, comparing current completion with planned tasks, they still lack the unpredictability tracking of the project. As the team gathers information about the system and the client obtains information about the team needs, a part of the marked tasks will become irrelevant, while new tasks will be identified and will have to be included. Therefore, the plan will change as far as structure and content are concerned.

More efficient planning strategy includes making detailed plans for the following week, general plans for the next three months and very schematic planning for more than three months. This Agile approach suggests that immediate-task planning is an optimal approach to software development, at least.

RESEARCH METHODS

For the purposes of our exploratory qualitative research, we chose the case study method. We chose an in-depth investigation of a working environment where Agile project management methods are applied. Participant observation was used as a tool for data collection purposes, specifically for analyzing the attitudes, behaviors and processes of a distributed team managed in the Agile framework. A series of declarations regarding the Agile practices were gathered from the software development teams in a distributed context (cross-teams). The organization we selected is an IT organization, focused on delivering IT applications. The two software development teams are situated in Bucharest and Brussels. The teams are newly formed and they implemented Agile practices within the last year as they are still in a transition period. The ownership of the organization is in Brussels. The observations we conducted have the purpose of analyzing the current state of implementation and usage of Agile practices, the needs of Scrum teams within a multinational organization, and understanding the ways in which responsibilities are being redefined.

The participants of this study include three development teams (between four and nine members), one IT project manager (focusing on the transition to Agile) and Human Resources personnel. The research interval was between January 2017 and March 2017. In terms of data collection, the observations grid was used four hours/day, by three trained researchers. Informal conversations with developers were necessary for clarifying the findings

we found from the observations and for a more complex understanding of whether Scrum methodology and implementation is reflected in the attitudes and perspectives of the software team. The trained researchers added notes on the observation sheet with details reflecting the context and notes from discussions with staff members.

The observations were specifically focused on the Bucharest teams and their level of knowledge, implementation and stability of Agile practices and the coordination practices. The three levels included in this evaluation refer to the following concepts: Value (Level 1), Stability (Level 2), and Speed (Level 3). For the first level, the drive is that of delivering value for both individuals and processes. The business overall, as well as the IT department, collaborate to add value.

For the second level, *stability* was considered: product stability, for instance, or consistent value flow within a specified time interval. Quality is defined in the development process by the business as well as the IT department (which define product value and final value).

The third level includes *speed*: the value needs to be delivered rapidly and efficiently. The developers and the operations team need to share the same purpose, to deliver value on a frequent basis, with low risk. The delivery procedures are automated. The dates are collected and used systematically as product feedback.

The observation grid included a series of dimensions that were established to identify the level of applicability of Agile principles and Scrum practices. At the general flow level, we analysed concepts such as: team, power delegation, autonomy, ownership over processes, technical management, command and control approach, Application Manager visibility and transparency, planning, estimation, design session, decision making, collaboration between development and business teams, understanding of business value, progress and improvement measurement, user experience and acceptance criteria, prioritized backlog, effort estimation, continuous improvement process, client feedback, and team visualizing. The analysis included examining the decision making flow and its specificity, how leadership is implemented, the execution strategy, user experience and characteristics, product feedback and evaluation, end product value, transparency and communication specifications, and business model typology. The aspects that were investigated are relevant for identifying whether Scrum implementation is successful within the analyzed teams. As far as Agile practices are concerned, we concentrated one part of the analysis of visual management and Scrum ceremonies.

For conducting this analysis, we also included a section dedicated to the team platforms, analyzing a series of technical aspects: Cloud, applicative configuration, IDE (Integrated Development Environment), implementation

processes, packaging, software production, system configuration, analysis platforms, performance testing and unit tests.

ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH RESULTS

A series of observations over general flow were made as a result of this qualitative research approach. We chose to regroup these observations according to the fundamental concepts on which they are based. The analysis shows that Agile project management implementation is not an easy process. For reaching a stability level, the individuals and the teams, in general, need to develop an Agile mind-set. As far as role redefinition is concerned, the analysis shows a somewhat level of conformity of the roles within a distributed context. A part of the Agile responsibilities cannot be undertaken by the working groups as they are in a transition context. The research lot included only the team members from Bucharest, so within the Brussels team, the results could be different.

General flow observations: As far as the team is concerned, we noticed that not all groups form a team – the development teams do not work together to reach a common purpose. They do not represent a team as Agile defines a team to be. Agile suggests that the team members share common values and principles for functioning, while in the analyzed context, the cross teams face this major drawback due to work distribution and geographical separation.

In terms of delegating power, we observed that the teams do not have enough decisional involvement as far as tasks are concerned. When team members do not have the authority to ask for changes, the team is constrained to accept tasks and responsibilities as they are given, even if these have a negative reflection on their daily activity.

Regarding autonomy, in most cases, Bucharest teams are not completely autonomous due to the distributive factor, as they are dependent on the defined processes in Brussels. The activity in distributed teams should follow the same set of rules, principles and values. Otherwise, challenges may appear when a group holds the decisional factor over the other one. Team autonomy is suppressed in this context. If Bucharest teams had the capacity to get involved in the decision making processes and, as such, gain independence in Scrum sprints, these could be useful factors in team self-organization.

Further analysis showed that the Bucharest development teams do not have a stable level of process knowledge and neither do they have a level of autonomy over the property of the process knowledge. Therefore, once again, the Romanian teams depend on the Brussels teams. According to Agile principles, the software team should self-organize to end a task.

In regard to technical management, although all teams have technical capacities and skills, these are not included at a managerial level, as this level involves the business area. Considering the fact that most applications have high complexity from a technical perspective, as well as from a business perspective, by using these, a superior design can be applied, and also information transfer could become efficient enough to gradually coordinate these aspects.

By analyzing the aspects related to the command and control approach, we observed that this dimension does not totally belong to the Bucharest teams. When teams do not have the possibility to decide how to self-organize, due to problematic communication or inappropriate informational exchange or due to artificial dependencies, a series of problems appear as well as duplicate tasks. This context is not compatible with Agile practices either.

Planning visibility and estimation practices were also analyzed. Bucharest development teams are not involved in planning decisions neither in estimation, design, nor feedback sessions. Most of the time, they do not have access to the person handling the Application Manager, as the responsibilities are not clearly set. When the development team from Bucharest is not involved in this set of activities, the knowledge exchange opportunities are wasted. Due to the lack of transparency the team`s growth is ceased, creating a context in which the team from Bucharest performs some tasks for the Brussels teams, drastically decreasing the chances to function independently.

Regarding the concept of value from a business perspective, we noticed that a full understanding of this concept is still lacking. As far as measuring progress and ongoing improvements are concerned, although the cross teams engage in video-conference meetings on a daily basis, these do not have a specific and stable way of measuring progress. Decisions and improvements are often difficult to achieve as they are based on a series of false assumptions.

We also analyzed the user experience and the acceptance criteria and in almost all cases the dialogue between the development and business teams is not guided by user experience. On the other hand, developers are being given technical tasks which do not have clear acceptance criteria. Working directly on technical tasks reduces the involvement levels in designing the software and also in decision making. Without value based user experiences, the chances of understanding a whole perspective decreases. Also, without the acceptance criteria, defining and visualizing work becomes deficient: the lack of automated acceptance testing, error protection, and unwanted items in the production environment can emerge.

As far as task prioritization is concerned, we found that the Romanian teams do not have full visibility over this, suggesting that a series of problems can appear. Understanding the greater perspective can help developers

apply the existent information on current platforms. Also, these priorities are essential for developers and the entire team in order to focus on the most important aspects of the project.

Analyzing the team estimation efforts, we noticed that not all the development teams are involved. Most of the times, the estimations are not conducted by the individuals working on the product or the project. Not incorporating user experience factors can cause many problems including developers not being able to adopt pertinent solutions in the functionality implementation. The estimation process should provide the capacity to guide any team member in adequately leveraging tasks.

Moreover, as far as continuously optimizing processes are concerned, most teams are not efficient with the activities and functional improvement initiatives. This aspect is due to the lack of continuous optimization processes which should be defined – such as retrospective analysis (within meetings). Without these processes, teams do not have the capacity to repair autonomous problems appearing at a local level, and several evolving opportunities can be missed. This can lead to low morale at a collective level due to frustrations and functional blockages (Sutherland, 2014).

As far as feedback is concerned, an analysis of the results showed that this was not made visible to all team members. So, in terms of feedback transparency, the teams are still at a beginner level and their ability to self-regulate and learn from their own mistakes becomes difficult. Feedback and dialogue help in building trustworthy relationships between the client and the development teams, offering a sense of belonging when the work is appreciated by others.

With regard to the level of propriety of the knowledge process flow and that of team value, we observed that a Jira table was used. Even so, not all the teams have access to it and, as such, knowledge over process is deficient. The teams cannot visualize the entire process on the Jira table. When the ownership over processes is not complete, introducing and implementing improvements become difficult. A series of opportunities can be missed and wasted, as longer tasks, blocked items and dependences interfere. In the meantime, this challenging context is exposing the lack of understanding roles: who is responsible for what in the process. This can lead to decisional issues over the degree of work efficiency according to necessities.

Some observations were made over continuous delivery as well, where we noticed that there is no visibility or collaboration between the Operational-Development departments. In most teams, there is no visibility amongst the developers and the operational department and this is a problem mainly because, without this collaboration, enhancement opportunities

over delivery process, software quality and non-functional requests such as performance and implementation rapidity are lost.

Observations about the Agile management and principles. We noticed that, at a company level, Agile managing principles have a fundamental basis of implementation, but at the Scrum methodology level, as far as the roles are concerned, there is still a consistent difference between the desirable agile framework and the actual application. Perhaps this is due to the transition period or is due to the fact that the teams are newly developed, but this still needs to be investigated. Within the Scrum teams, there are only three main roles (development team, Scrum Master and Product Owner), and their understanding of these self-organizing roles is fundamental to the success of the entire project. The development team represents a significant investment of the business line, being essential to maximizing winnings (ROI).

On an executive level, Agile principles reached a somewhat level of stability, as the managers use all the available tools for creating a comfortable environment for development. At the Scrum team level, the principles cannot be applied thoroughly, making team responsibilities and role definition hard to define. As a result of our analysis, we concluded that, at the development team level, there is no homogeneity for standard roles, each of them having a more precise role. Also, the lack of self-regulated capacity at a regional level could lead to undermining trust and ceasing cross-team cooperation.

Throughout our analysis, the lack of proper disclosure of information regarding task setting and project evolution affects transparency that should be present at all the levels of team engagement. Unfortunately, due to the Scrum management processes being in the early stages of team adaptation, communication and collaboration for achieving common objectives appear to be challenging.

Regarding the Scrum sprint activities, challenges emerge during actual implementation. Only a part of Scrum activities can be successfully implemented considering the distribution of the teams` authority: the development teams from Bucharest depend to a large extent on the Brussels teams. Scrum team members are not involved in the planning, estimation, and decision-making sessions. Even though sprint planning appears to be present, with the Brussels team describing specific functionalities required for the final product, full access to the backlog is not possible for the Bucharest team. Moreover, the Scrum team (the developers) from Romania does not have the authority to choose subsets of tasks for the next sprint, as these are chosen for them by the Brussels team. Even though Scrum meetings are conducted with the Brussels team through video conferences, these are not necessarily conducted on a daily basis, unless needed when unexpected requirements interfere. Considering the lack of the decisional factor at the

team level, critical or constructive retrospective sessions are absent, at least at a local level. As there is no clearly defined method for measuring progress, optimization criteria cannot be established. As far as the developer`s role is concerned, Scrum methodology involves a high degree of authority. What we noticed is that most of the tasks are set by others and not by the developer. Not having ownership over the set of tasks impedes the developer to perform properly, not being able to have a position over the equity and distribution of the task set, and withholding the possibility to engage in continuous learning.

The role of the Scrum Master can coincide with the role of the line manager or with the role of the IT manager, whose task is to supervise and make sure that the transition finality and implementation of a project are according to plan. This is the case for the newly formed teams which are in a transition process. From a traditional perspective, the role of the project manager is to coordinate the entire project and to maintain its planning within the initial parameters. The project manager is responsible for developing and maintaining the relationships with the project stakeholders, for setting and delegating tasks and for creating a working calendar. The working team, in this context, is not accountable for project failure. This aspect represents one of the main value pillars of the Scrum methodology, as the project manager role is completely eliminated, with the responsibilities being shared by the Product Owner, Scrum Master and the development team (Stellman & Greene, 2014). However, in new teams such as the ones we investigated, four roles were identified: project manager, developers, Scrum Master and Product Owner.

Within IT departments, and within the software production environment, the IT project manager has a similar role to the Application Manager who does not have the possibility of maintaining a status for the KPIs, due to not having access to budget planning. This is why the involvement of a project management cell is useful to maintain this activity. We noticed that a part of these attributions are given to an external team, not to the Scrum team.

Therefore, as far as redefining responsibilities is concerned, within new Scrum teams, we can conclude that the motto is that of delivering value (Level 1). As the maturity level of the Scrum teams is relatively low, a plan of action is necessary for training Scrum teams into the Agile mind-set: for working independently, for self-organization, and for cooperation purposes. In the current context, responsibility management cannot be undertaken by developers or by the Scrum Master or Product Owner, as the adopted management framework is Scrum-Waterfall. Even though the Scrum Master and Product Owner coordination involvement exists, at the technical, as well as at the functional level, the teams are still in a transition period, with global project coordination being conducted by the IT project manager and by

a project management team which has the responsibility for managing tasks and following their development and implementation progress.

It can be concluded that the Agile methodology implemented within the IT project management presented in this paper is still at its infancy level. Even though Agile project management first emerged as a response to the highly competitive and dynamic environment determining organizations to focus on their internal strategic agility to cope with external factors by efficiently managing projects, the case study presented herein showed many challenges with respect to self-organization, decisional factors and collaboration between distributed Scrum teams. Moreover, a deficient collaboration between the distributed developer teams and with the Product Owner lead to misunderstandings in product deliveries and a long-lasting functionality production process, which are contradicting two of the core principles of the Agile philosophy: fast delivery of functional software and collaboration between developers and clients.

DISCUSSION

Agile principles and Scrum methodology were analysed within distributed teams. There are communication risks, production and efficiency risks at stake, and also cultural and leadership elements that need to be considered in future research. Also, quantitative research methods should be included, such as surveys, in order to identify what are the perceptions of team members over these types of principles and how these perceptions affect their attitude and behaviors to any kind of Agile and Scrum efforts. For Agile to work, an *agile mind-set* should be developed at a team level, and this does not refer exclusively to training and keeping Scrum methods active, but more on understanding why openness, cooperation, accountability and ownership represent important factors in reaching project success. As Theocharis, Kuhrmann, Münch and Diebold (2015) emphasized, the Scrum methods used in software development projects are set especially to provide fast reactions to dynamic and changing demands from clients, and proper monitoring is expected in order to make the necessary adjustments. Within our case study, no monitoring of the project progress was made and, as such, proper optimization of processes was lacking.

In the software industry, particularly within distributed teams, the challenge to understand and to implement the methodology seems to become a paradigm. In this context, we state that the human factor and delivering an integrated environment are key elements that still need an attentive and unitary implementation within the analyzed segment. This implementation needs

a qualitative guide, as well as training and a specific period in which information, practices, principles and experiences are understood and integrated.

Also, the Agile project management implementation is challenging from a role definition perspective, as the results showed that there was still a tendency to ask for the help of the IT project manager (traditional implementation) for guiding transitory projects. This manager`s roles and attributions are limited considering the lack of homogeneous knowledge within the project. Role definition is dependent on team maturity and on finalizing transition projects that still require specific traditional guidance. When distributed teamwork organization is present, we must consider the characteristics of collaboration and communication between team members. Efficient communication is needed when teams work jointly on projects, but merely setting common objectives is not enough for enhancing collaboration between team members. According to Vlaar, Van Fenema, and Tiwari (2008), the quality of interaction appears as the most crucial factor for successful collaboration and communication between team members working in software development. As far as our research results are concerned, client feedback is not visible for the Bucharest teams and deficient communication is present between the Product Owner and the developers.

From a broader perspective, this methodology may appear to be readily applicable, but its implementation can be considered linear (Kenneth, 2012). Modus operandi is essential, as far as cohesiveness and clarity are concerned, and this should be implemented at a functional and operational level over all the projects, for allowing improvement at the production efficiency level, as well as at the product delivery level and at reducing the time in which these are generated.

The increasing spiral of the process inflation is responsible for at least a part of this failure, even if it is emerging on the basis of good intentions. The Agile principles were created as a means for helping teams to step out of the process inflation and for focusing on easy techniques to reach different objectives (Martin & Martin, 2006). Scrum methodology, in particular, cannot be applied everywhere, but it can be a basis for supporting complex development efforts.

Research limitations

The limits of this research paper include the non-homogeneous character of the teams being evaluated. Half of the Scrum teams are working in Bucharest offices, while half work in Brussels. From this perspective, we analyzed exclusively the Bucharest teams. Therefore our information access was limited: we did not have a holistic perspective of the project management processes and over the decisional factors specifically. Access was restricted to the team from Brussels and, as such, we were only able to gather some level of data

from the Bucharest teams. Also, no access to spontaneous communication between the distributed teams was granted: the teams communicate with each other for solving specific tasks, but the communication flow and the content they share was not available to us for analysis for our research purposes. Work-related tasks were also difficult to follow as the tasks were being distributed regionally and, considering we did not have access to the backlog, we based our notes on what the team members communicated.

Furthermore, the collection of data was difficult because the software developers were not very open, especially at the beginning, and transparency was difficult to attain. Understanding the level of implementation of Agile principles and Scrum methodology is challenging when a proper understanding of the technical language does not exist, which represented another limit of this research. Additional explanations were required by the team of researchers when they were confronted with technical concepts they did not know.

Therefore, the flow of the working tasks was challenging to identify, as they were distributed regionally and full access was not granted in this sense. In this type of research, observing task flow management is very important. The results of this research cannot be extended or generalized outside the context of the case study that was presented in this paper.

CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of developers and development teams in general is to deliver functional software within an optimum timeframe that can bring the highest value to all the stakeholders involved, including employees and clients. However, most projects fail on a general level or do not manage to deliver the desired value.

Our research showed many methodological and practical aspects regarding the implementation of Scrum methodology, including the fact that distributed teams require continuous orientation and involvement on behalf of the management level so as its evolution can become progressive towards homogenous practices. Irrespective of the analyzed environment, the Agile framework brings a series of benefits to projects and general mind-sets, as it is focused on people and on delivering value, being an iterative and incremental process. Agile management promotes receptivity, value and collaboration within and between teams, ensuring the development of a value-added framework in which tasks are set only by urgency and importance factors.

To conclude, the research results showed that teams have a collective mentality built around Agile principles, focused on people and result, which

could result, in the future, in an identical plurality on a mind-set level that could overcome regional and cultural challenges, but this still needs to be investigated. Training practices have the capacity to grow teams from the concept level of value, in which collaboration is focused on the business and information technology lines, where constant feedback flows are present, and transparency is critical. At this stage, Scrum teams can reach the point at which they are focused on frequent delivery of value, with low risk over automation delivery and over using dates systematically as a way of gathering product feedback. As the results showed, ongoing improvements need to be made.

The declarative evaluation that we conducted over Scrum team members from Bucharest did not include measuring the performance of teams within the distributed context we investigated. However, it offered, however, a general view over the evolution of implementing Agile principles in project management and, of Scrum methodology, evaluating the transformative flow of redefining responsibilities in a distributed context.

The methodological foundations of Agile and Scrum have started gaining popularity in the software industry and continuous research over implementation techniques should be conducted. As far as this aspect is concerned, not all software production companies follow the same implementation model, as this is dependent on the organizational culture of the business and local factors as well.

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Abstrakt

Część teoretyczna niniejszego artykułu koncentruje się na analizie makro filozofii systemu Agile, jednej z najpopularniejszych ram zarządzania projektami w branży oprogramowania. Druga część artykułu zawiera studium przypadku analizujące praktyki Agile w ramach korporacji na poziomie produkcji oprogramowania. Jeśli chodzi o metodologię, badania jakościowe przeprowadzono na podstawie studium przypadku zespołu w kontekście rozproszonym ("cross-team"). Obserwacja uczestników była wykorzystywana jako narzędzie do zbierania danych o osobach i procesach w zespołach. Celem badań było przeanalizowanie obecnego stanu wdrożenia, korzyści i wyzwań wynikających z zastosowania platformy zarządzania projektami Agile, a także potrzeb zespołów programistycznych w ramach wielonarodowej firmy. Jednocześnie w artykule przeanalizowano redefinicję ról, stosując ramy zarządzania projektami Agile w ramach organizacji pracy zespołu rozproszonego. Badanie ma na celu wskazanie przyczyn leżących u podstaw wyboru metody zarządzania Agile zamiast Lean Management w branży rozwoju oprogramowania, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem poziomu wdrożenia metodologii Agile/Scrum i zasad w rozproszonych zespołach.
Słowa kluczowe: *Agile, Scrum, IT, zarządzanie projektami.*

Biographical notes

Carmen Novac teaches at the College of Communication and Public Relations at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration in Bucharest. She has participated as an expert in various national and international projects such as Instruments, Analysis and Screening Techniques for the Regional Policy Institution at the European Integration Office (2005), Developing entrepreneurial competencies through transnational transfer of good practices and professional training of Romanian entrepreneurs – STEPS (2011-2013), HER – Entrepreneurship for Human Resources (2012-2013). She is interested in researching professional performance evaluations, but she also focuses her research on personnel management, project management, employee motivation, and innovative teaching methods.

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Communicating Museums: A Textual Analysis of Content and Interaction Management

Monica Bîră¹ iD

Abstract

Museums, through their institutional discourses, are playing an important but sometimes neglected role in enforcing social practices and creating social identities. With the new digital era, museums had to adapt to new forms of communication: in an environment that, at least, gives everybody an equal voice, museums managed to communicate themselves without renouncing their position of depositaries of knowledge and authority. By analyzing online communication, through content management and interaction management (on websites, Facebook pages) the current study aims to explore the mechanisms enabling museums to convey information about their specific features (space, access, learning and interpreting) while retaining a main role not only as communicators, but also as actors reinforcing the larger system of beliefs and knowledge that govern what counts as right or wrong, good or bad, normal or abnormal, in a particular society. Thus, by combining communication seen as a management tool and textual analysis, this study illustrates the application of diverse qualitative research methods in the fields of management, and, specifically, in the field of communication management.

Keywords: *toys museum, communication management, content management, textual analysis.*

INTRODUCTION

Museums, like so many institutions that are shaping our representations of the world and our education related to everything from history to science – are creations of the 19th century. In a broad sense, their mission – at least in Europe - was defined two centuries ago, reflecting the priorities of western

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societies (Poulot, 2009) and of societies going through a westernization process, as was the case in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

Basically, a museum was a depositary of things considered to be 'important': artifacts coming from long-lost empires or from the more recent past (e.g. archaeology museums, art museums), representative items related to natural history (natural history museums), or items documenting a way of life, an extinct culture or a culture about to become extinct (e.g. ethnographic museums). The primary purpose of creating a museum was to save all those items from being lost, but also to enable a more significant number of persons to benefit from making contact with past cultures and civilizations. Additionally, museums also had an essential role in research, especially by funding expeditions aimed at exploring nature or archaeological sites and by studying the objects thus acquired (Poulot, 2005). The role played by museums (all over Europe) as part of the national construction process should not be ignored, especially since, even today a significant number of museums in Eastern Europe are still tributary to this vision – either by the content of their collections or by the general frame of interpretation still in use.

The present study aims to explore how museums are nowadays managing communication by proposing a double angled perspective that addresses both the context of museum discourse (Richardson, 2007; Jones, 2002; Fairclough, 2003) and the way in which, through various strategies of content management and interaction management of online communication, a contemporary museum is still able to enforce social practices and to create social identities (Jones, 2012, p. 15).

LITERATURE BACKGROUND

Toy museums and interactive online and offline communication

Within the rather large family of museums, toys and children museums are a specific category and while it would be difficult to consider them as "underrepresented," over the time, they have been less interesting for scholars. Regardless of the theoretical perspective (whether it is history, museum studies or ethnography), studies dedicated to toy museums are usually pointing out the insufficient work done in this direction (Girveau & Charles, 2011). Contrary to what one may think, toys are not so scarce within museum collections: a recent study pointed out that the number of items qualifying as "toys" would be significantly more critical within museum collections if some objects were to be reconsidered as to their function or use (Brookshaw, 2009).

Most studies that have focused on toy museums are adopting a historical perspective. They are aiming to document the slow process of transforming

a somewhat marginal category of objects into a collection within its own right (Burton, 1997) or they propose an investigation into social representations related to toys and the societies producing them (Girveau & Charles, 2011). Also, studying the portrayal of childhood and children through play objects, or studying the way in which different items dedicated to children were actually used – are expressing the same historical vision upon items contented in a toy museum (Brookshaw, 2009).

Museum studies, combining history and sociology, are proposing an approach based on acquiring a better knowledge about the specificity of collections (if we are thinking in terms of curatorship and museology) (Gilmore & Rentschler, 2002). In some cases, they explore or merely illustrate the active role that museums play in shaping today's society (Mayfield, 2005), (Hooper Greenhill, 1992).

Toy museums are sharing a series of common challenges with "classical museums." However, given their specific collection and public, we assume them to be more inclined towards outreach activities and also to have a higher degree of visitor-oriented communication. Moreover, this regardless the fact that they are addressing a variety of public, just like "usual" museums and they also have to adapt their tone of voice and messages to different audiences such as educators, children, parents, grandparents, or other adults (simply as visitors).

Studies related to museums in the digital era are covering a large area, exploring the adaptation of museums to the computer era, both in term of collection management but also in terms of communication (Pary, 2010). (Liu, Liu, & Lin, 2015). More specifically, previous studies are already pointing towards the limited use of web 2.0 tools when it comes to creating a more interactive and collaborative form of communication between museums and their audiences. For example, when analyzing content and interaction management, researchers determined that museums are not using the Internet as a bidirectional communication tool (Capriotti & Kuklinski, 2012; Capriotti & Gonzalez-Herrero, 2013; Badell, 2015).

METHODOLOGY

Taking into consideration that managing online communication is instrumental in building, shaping and maintaining a museum's relation with its audience, the current study aims to investigate the way in which content management and interaction management in online communication (via websites and Facebook pages) enable museums to strengthen the relationship with their audience. Using textual analysis (Duriau, Reger & Pfarrer, 2007) to identify and

to explore the functioning of museums' online communication contributes to a broader understanding of museum management: online communication management is a powerful instrument used not only to attract visitors but also to express and reinforce a museum's mission and role within society.

In order to asses online communication management, the study addressed two specific processes: *content management* (the way the content is displayed and organized, the language in which it is communicated) and *interaction management* (is the website providing interaction opportunities for the prospective visitors? What type of interaction is proposed? In what way is the Facebook page engaging audiences? What can be considered as interaction on Facebook?). Further, those two categories (content and interaction) were analyzed in connection with activities specific to the museum practice itself: defining a space, providing access, proposing an interpretation and facilitating learning. Exhibitions and objects were not included in this analysis because the purpose was to focus on the process of communication and not on its objects.

The analysis covers texts extracted from four Facebook pages and four websites managed by museums in Europe (two in France, one in Great Britain and one in Spain). All museums are a part of the extended family of toys museums and three of them are proper children museums. The selection is based on a previous survey targeting toys museums across Europe and the USA[2]. The main criteria of selection: to be a European based museum, to propose a variety of activities promoting visitor engagement and to be a registered museum in its specific country. However, since there is an increasing number of organizations that are calling themselves museums but are not "proper" museums (not according to the law, anyway) the analysis also includes such an establishment, which is more of an art gallery than a museum and which fits within two criteria: it is European based and it has a consistent policy of engaging with visitors.

These are the museums whose websites and Facebook pages were analyzed within the current study. (1) *Art Ludique* in Paris is a private initiative and, at least judging from its website and the Facebook page seems to be a thriving organization and an economic success. It is owned by a couple of French art-connoisseurs with previous experience within the world of art galleries, exhibitions and contemporary art. (2) Toy Museum / *Musée du Jouet in Moirans-en-Montagne*, Jura region, France is a museum perfectly fitting into the category of "classical museum": it has a valuable and significant collection, an institutional tradition (founded in the 1980s), an emblematic building and it engages with its community (3). *Museo Valenciano del Jugete*

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2   Alexandra Zbuchea, Monica Bîră, Exploring the universe of toys – toys museums and collections in Europe and the USA, book chapter, to be published in 2017, in Romanian.

(Alicante, Valencia region, Spain) also falls into the category of "classical museum" (established during the 1980s, it has its own collection). This museum is deeply rooted in the local tradition of toy manufacturing and its headquarters is located in a restored former toy manufacture dating back to the beginning of the 20th century. (4) ***The Victoria & Albert Museum of Childhood Bethnal Green***, in London was established during the late 19th century and it is today the UK's National Museum of Childhood and the largest institution of its kind in the world. The museum sees itself as an "international leader in engaging audiences in the material culture and experiences of childhood." To sum up: there are four museums, one of them is private, the other three are funded by the state and/or local collectivities; at least one museum is assuming and declaring a wide involvement with an international audience (The V&A *Museum of Childhood*). Meanwhile, two are positioning themselves either by name or by policy as "regional museums." Art Ludique, although not nominally addressing an international audience, targets such visitors by its communication practices.

MAIN FINDINGS

The main findings of the present study are organized around two main themes: content management and interaction management which, in their turn, were explored by analyzing practices related to communication on the websites and Facebook pages. Within those specific categories of "content" and "interaction" I specifically followed how the interaction between the "voice" of the museum and the voices of its visitors are creating and referring to: **space, access, interpretation & learning – as basic categories related to museum activities.**

It is important to mention that there are at least two levels in assessing every one of the above-mentioned characteristics and that both of them will be addressed. The first level is associated with tangible reality and is usually constructed by using narration, description and pictures. The second one is connected with virtual interaction and concerns the way in which a user is interacting with the museum but also with other users. This interaction is mediated mainly by text and sometimes by images (e.g., emoticons or images used by museums to advertise their activities).

Constructing a space and a discourse about the world

When referring to space, this is defined as a place where a specific interaction happens, or where communication is performed. Describing, presenting,

narrating or showing that specific space to the visitor is contributing to construct a specific discourse. In the following paragraphs, the study explores what techniques are used by museum in order to define their space of action and, implicitly, the space of social interaction between them and the visitor.

Art Ludique, a new establishment, only refers to its space by naming its location within the city, mentioning the surrounding architecture and the general atmosphere. Words suggesting dynamism, progress and novelty are used, such as "innovation and avant-garde." Mentioning the Seine river ensures that every foreign tourist will associate the location of Art Ludique with an emblematic place of interest in Paris:

"The iconic avant-garde architecture of Les Docks - Cité de la Mode et du Design, is perfectly suited to the universe of Art Ludique. Overlooking the Seine in the southeast of Paris, in a resolutely innovative neighborhood, *Les Docks* offers both the space and location to receive thousands of visitors each year"[3].

The other three museums, each one in its own way, are paying considerable attention to the building where their collections are on display. Their long or very long history, the economic costs involved in building, renovating or improving conditions and keeping everything up to date might by enough justification for making good use of the building in order to promote a general discourse about the museum and its place in a community/society. *Museo Valenciano del Jugete* uses narration as the main canvas for presenting its building. Meanwhile the Musée du Jouet in Moirans-en-Montagne uses a detailed description supported by narration; however, narration comes second.

Paying tribute to local traditions, the *Museo Valenciano del Jugete* highlights its location in an ancient factory, that underwent a long restoration process which was completed in 2013.

"Renovation work in the first stage of the project was done to the central bay area of the factory, dating back to 1912 that was rebuilt in 1962, and the workshops that were built in 1915. They were fitted out as the permanent exhibition area and the temporary exhibition room respectively. The definitive home for the museum was opened on the 29th of November, 2013"[4].

The different years, 1912, 1915, and 1962, mentioned when narrating the museum history emphasize the importance attached to traditions, to

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3   http://www.artludique.com/musee2.html accessed 01.10.2017
4   http://www.museojuguete.com/en/museum/ accessed on 01.10.2017

continuity and to the past. The conversion of different parts of the factory into new spaces provided with new functions and in relation to a new institution (the museum) is also suggesting adaptability. The new space being in close connection with the former establishment is actually conveying the idea of continuity and stability.

The other "classical museum," the *Musée du Jouet* in France also communicates about its building in a manner that enables the "voice of the museum" to be placed in a position of authority and prestige. This authority is expressed by mentioning the local administration that funded the project and but also is also the power and the will of a community supporting this long-term project. Another manner of creating authority is by naming the experts that participated in the construction and design of the building and its permanent exhibition: the architect of the first museum (Guy Bonivard), the two architecture bureau (Blanc Potard and Duboin) responsible for designing and improving the building, and the expert group of museographers – The Kiko Workshop and a multi-disciplinary visual artist **Françoise Petrovitch**). As to the detailed description of the building, its main purpose is to convey a message about community and collaboration: respect, coherence and harmony - are the words of choice in stressing the development of the museum within its milieu:

"(…) the extension doubled the museum's surface, increasing it to 3400 m2. The architectural complex is coherent and attractive, and the identity of the site has been renewed while respecting initial options. An east/west axis leading into the town harmoniously federates these spaces with other adjacent activities[5].

The *V&A Museum of Childhood* is privileging narration as a way of presenting its space. However, this narration is deeply embedded, not only with local history (as is the case with the two previous museum), but also with national (Great Britain's) and world history, if we consider the fact that during the 19th century the British Empire led and made possible a series of worldwide changes. The narration about the museum alternates at least three plans: (1) the "official", political history shaped by government authorities and worldwide events such as the International exhibitions; (2) the local history, connected with the Bethnal Green suburb of London, and (3) the museum's history which is linked to both political history and local history. References to the museum building are inserted in all those plans and, therefore, even if there isn't a distinct presentation of the building –

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5   http://www.musee-du-jouet.com/en/the-architectural-project accesed on 01.10.2017

using both pictures and text – one can imagine its atmosphere. There is also a certain circularity of the text: the narrative about the museum begins with mentioning the initial intent of the local gentry that bought the plot where the museum is situated today. It was about preserving some land for feeding the neighboring population. Now, as the author puts it:

"So it is that the V&A Museum of Childhood at Bethnal Green continues to open its doors daily. In sympathy with the Tudor gentry, this plot of land still feeds the people of East London (and further afield), but as Prince Albert, Henry Cole, W J Wild and other mid-Victorians anticipated, it is their minds that continue to be nourished"[6].

Showing (in pictures), narrating and describing are the three techniques used by museum management in order to communicate about its space. However, in conveying different information about the history of the building and its surroundings, the "museum voice" also positions itself as an expert authority. Either by mentioning names and positions of persons having the status of an expert in museum matters, or mentioning the "founding fathers" and "the founding events" – the museum is stressing the idea that knowledge is its authority and power.

Designing virtual space

The other kind of space constructed by museums is the space of the website and the space of the Facebook page. Therefore, the study first analyzes the website design, in terms of how the information is organized and what content is provided.

The museum websites from France and Spain contain information about: the history of the museum, the collection (composition and history), and representative objects, permanent and temporary exhibitions and proposed activities for children. The Childhood museum in London also includes a new label: *learning* (which partially corresponds to the categories of activities and exhibitions that we find in another museum).

This way of selecting and displaying information reaffirms a traditional discourse about museums. The information made available to the public contributes to enforcing/confirming the idea about what a museum should be. First and foremost a museum should have its own assets (collection), a history to be shared and it should also propose a series of activities and

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6 http://www.vam.ac.uk/moc/about-us/history-of-the-museum/ accessed on 01.10.2017

learning experiences. *History, heritage and learning* are the main three attributes emphasized by museum communication via a website.

Permanent exhibitions, and some temporary exhibitions & activities, are only secondary attributes of an ideal museum. Those secondary attributes are connected to, and even derived from, the main frame *history, heritage, and learning*. It goes without saying that if you have your own collection of toys, you are supposed to display it in a specific manner: first, by organizing a permanent exhibition and then by organizing temporary exhibitions. However, the only museum that tackles a permanent exhibition as a core characteristic of a museum is the Musée du Jouet in Moirans-en-Montaigne. In addition, this museum is also the only one referring to research and conservation as specific attributes of the museum. The Childhood Museum and the Museo Valenciano del Jugete are also proposing permanent and temporary exhibitions – but they do not emphasize the exhibition per se: they are referring to current activities and collections and the existence of a permanent exhibition is more an agreed convention between the museum and the visitor. The *Art Ludique* museum is briefly referring to history (better said to the origin of their enterprise), but they do not make any reference to heritage or learning. Art Ludique does not possess a collection of their own and, the learning seems to be replaced by visits and playful activities, conveying the idea of entertainment rather than learning.

As opposed to websites, the interaction space created by Facebook pages is characterized by a form of bidirectional communication. Its specificity, however, lies not in an actual dialogue, but in enforcing the already existing disparity between the museum and its public. One may think that if people are not involved in creating the content on websites, they might be content creators on the Facebook page. However, this is not the case. In their capacity as visitors and Facebook friends, members of the public can create some forms of content, but only in a manner that is filtered and organized by the community administrators. For example, visitors (and especially children) are showed images posted on the website and the Facebook page; also, by taking part in different activities (workshops, volunteer programs, guided tours, toy confectioning), the public participates in the process of creating content for the Facebook page. Of course, that means only images of smiling children will end up on Facebook – so their participation to content creation is filtered. By allowing visitors to participate only in an indirect manner to the process of content producing, the museum, once again, asserts its institutional power over individuals.

The only space where the public is allowed to create content is the space allowed for comments (and reviews) on Facebook. However, the content creation is managed by the institution, firstly by setting the topic of discussion: an exhibition, a contest, or a workshop. Secondly, the community

manager follows all the comments and from time to time is mixing the institutional discourse with the discourse of individuals. Art Ludique is using this technique of content management: it follows interaction between users and intervenes in the forum, managing content either by responding to direct questions or by ignoring them, as in the example below:

Example 1[7]

"Solange Becker question: everybody stands to win, or a draw will take place afterwards, comprising all the winners?
Art Ludique le musée Hello, the winners will be all those who responded correctly to all the questions, including the subsequent question. 😊
Loulou Town Grégoire Rey
Fatiha Chellali Kweoly Na 😄
Kweoly Na Thank you
Ornella Lorme Will you go there Paloma? 😛
Paloma Cattelan Lome: No, you have already won the WW and, besides, I am not such a great fan 😛
Bérénice Elie Guillemette Cotrie Alezais
François Villechenon And where is the quizzes[8] ;) 😜 pls
Art Ludique le musée Hello, the quiz will be available on site. Have a good evening
François Villechenon Art Ludique le musée Good evening. Agreed. But where is the link for booking 😊?! So I will not play.
Solange Becker a last question: all those items from the picture (whaou) are part of the prize, or is just one of them? »[9].

A different type of interaction management takes place when the "museum voice" uses intertextuality by mixing its discourse in conversations taking place only between Facebook users. As seen in the previous example, there is a current practice amongst Facebook users to tag their friends in order to invite them to take part in an activity proposed by the museum. Starting with this tagging, small "publically performed conversations" are then developed. Tagging someone on Facebook is a sign of involvement, and the museum is using this involvement in order to tag people when engaging in a conversation with them, although in many cases there is obviously no need to tag them, because participants to this polyphonic conversation have enough context elements as to figure out who the indented recipient of the

8   The translation tried to maintain the grammar used by the Facebook user: the verb is 3rd person singular meanwhile the noun is in plural.

answer is. The museum is usually blending in the conversation in order to give useful information about the venue or the rules of specific activities, as in examples below. Last, but not least, Facebook users are using various registers of language: they are never formal and quite frequently they neglect orthography and punctuation. The "voice of the museum," on the other hand, is always formal, albeit it tries to convey some casual and friendly feelings to its communication.

Example 2[10]

« Veronique Lombardo I adorrrrrred this exhibition
Allisson Francois Hello, where is it situated pls
Veronique Lombardo Near the Austerlitz railway station in Paris
Art Ludique le musée *Allisson Francois* Hello, the museum Art Ludique is at 34, quai d'Austerlitz 75013 Paris »[11].

Example 3[12]

Meggie Wayling *Nadia Plat* I don't know where it's at!
Art Ludique le musée Hello, it is at 34, quai d'Austerlitz 75013 Paris 😙
Meggie Wayling Thank you 😄 [13]

At this point, some conclusions regarding the management of content and interaction within a given space (static - like the website or dynamic - like the Facebook page) can be drawn. All the instances of communication involving the "voice of the museum" and the online users are placing the museum in a position of power, either by setting the main frame as to what to expect from a museum or by selecting the conversation topic. The museums are in this way asserting their position as a depositary of knowledge, by providing some part of that knowledge (via narratives, descriptions and pictures) to the public, and by using a formal register of address.

Access

10 Author's translation from French. The original lines are in the appendix.
11 https://www.facebook.com/ArtLudiqueLeMusee post from 8 November 2017
12 Author's translation from French. The original lines are in the appendix.
13 https://www.facebook.com/ArtLudiqueLeMusee post from 8 November 2017

When communicating online, access is always, in one form or another, limited and there is no need to further insist on limitations generated by age, computer literacy, economy, geographical situation, etc.

Online communication via websites and Facebook pages implies a specific pattern of organizing access. Access means, first, the possibility to read and understand the information made available via the website and Facebook. The Childhood Museum in London is the only museum that doesn't have a web page in a different language than the official language of the country. Art Ludique and the Musée du Jouet in Moirans-en-Montaigne in France, as well as Museo Valenciano del Jugete in Spain, have translated their website into English (not quite entirely although - some nonessential secondary pages are missing, such as "research" or "conservation"). Because it specifically targets Anglophone audiences (by its exhibitions related to the productions of Pixar, Marvel, and Blue Sky studios), Art Ludique makes a further effort in order to translate (using subtitles) in English all the video materials in French that are posted on the website. As a counterpart, all video materials in English (e.g., interviews with cartoons creators) are subtitled in French. Another particularity is to be found in Spain: the website of the museum in Valencia is translated not only into English but also into the local dialect.

Another form of understanding access is programming/coding the site in order to comply with a specific standard. The only museum that has a section that includes a website accessibility statement is the V&A Museum of Childhood at Bethnal Green.

Interaction on Facebook pages supposes to engage with audiences in a friendly manner that is in a language accessible to them. In France, both museums are communicating in French with other users of Facebook. However, at least in the case of Art Ludique, Facebook users from other countries are using the Facebook page much in the same way as francophone audiences (e.g. tagging friends and engaging in small conversation): the only different thing is the language, as they do not use French but other idioms (e.g., Italian, Dutch). Also, Museo Valenciano del Jugete is once again an exception: its logo on Facebook contains the name of the museum written in local dialect. However, the most of communication is done in Spanish and only one post in 6 (in average) is in the local dialect.

The level of interaction on Facebook is quite low for all museums, except for Art Ludique where interaction consists mainly of tagging friends and asking for practical information (direction, reservation, opening times).

Interpretation and learning

Interpreting the collections and facilitating the learning process are necessary activities for every museum, and especially for museums dedicated to children and imaginary universes. By interpretation and learning, museums are playing their part in shaping our representations of the world, of plays and toys, on childhood, and finally, they draw upon and reinforce the more extensive system of beliefs and knowledge that govern what counts as right or wrong, good or bad, normal or abnormal, in a particular society.

Providing learning opportunities and creating an environment that enables the learning process seems to be at the core of all activities proposed by museums (Art Ludique is an exception in this respect, but I already discussed its case in a previous section). Learning opportunities are communicated both through the website and Facebook and they refer to opening a new temporary exhibition, late opening hours, organizing a contest, organizing thematic workshops in relation to local celebrations, historical events or "universal" holidays (e.g., Christmas).

However, by carefully following how museums are managing the interaction on Facebook, it becomes clear that they do not want to engage with audiences on social media platforms in order to deliver learning opportunities. They are using Facebook interaction and they create content on the website in order to attract visitors to the real museum (which is, after all, only average). Nevertheless, if museums are to be defined as places of learning, there is an expectation to enforce the learning process both online and offline.

By communicating online, museums are setting an educational agenda and audiences are engaging (or not) with that agenda. An example of how a seemingly "innocent" educational activity is shaping public understanding of the world and is reinforcing specific ideas, comes from the V&A Museum of Childhood. On the occasion of the 100th commemoration of the Bolshevik Revolution the museum is organizing a lecture announced on Facebook as follows:

Example 4

"How did the Russian Revolution impact on childhood? Join us on Thurs 16 Nov for an evening of talks by leading academic experts on Soviet history & culture marking the 100th anniversary of the Russian Revolution. Presentations by leading academic experts will look at the Soviet children's film studio Soiuzdetfilm & the Society for Co-operation in Russian & Soviet Studies' incredible children's literature collection, as well as exploring children's literature & film as an escape from reality"[14].

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14 https://www.facebook.com/museumchildhood/ post from 01.10.2017.

Once again we notice how the museum is using the expert as the depositary of knowledge ("leading academic experts"), reinforcing in this way its own status as an expert. However, what is more, interesting is the implicit assumption that children's literature and the film was "an escape from reality" because a Soviet childhood could only be so horrible as to require an escape from reality via books and films. This implicit assumption reaffirms (at least) the pertinence of the old division happy West/unhappy Eastern bloc and the underprivileged position of a Soviet childhood. In addition, when analyzing any given text, it is important to point out the presence of concepts and ideas, their importance and their role within the text; but it is equally important to notice the absence. By referring only to the use that children may have made of books and films, and by not mentioning that, in fact, books and films are designed by adults in order to shape children behavior and minds, much like any other educational item designed for children – the museum is not only ignoring the propagandistic function of such materials, but it is once again reinforcing its own position. After all, museums are never ideologically neutral and saying that children's books were propaganda is equal to saying that behind every book for children there must be an agenda (not necessarily a political one).

Analyzing the Facebook pages and the websites, specific patterns/models may be observed in the way museums are approaching the idea of "learning." There is a British model, which is truly emphasizing learning by the way the website is organized (The V&A Museum's website has a dedicated section for "learning"). On Facebook, The V&A Museum is also enforcing learning: it is the only museum that, besides communicating about activities and events, is also communicating about rare items from their collections, thus providing further education about the museum's assets. On the other hand, the French model (illustrated by Musée du Jouet in Moirans-en-Montaigne) is noticeable because it takes particular care to provide useful information for parents and educators, in order to facilitate the learning process (at the museum).

CONCLUSION

Creating social identities and social practices through communication management

With museums entering the digital era, more things have changed than having the opportunity to buy tickets online or to make a virtual tour of an exhibition. There are indeed domains specific to the "digital museum" (keeping up to date records of collections, having a digital inventory, digitizing collections – especially books and other valuable documents) where museums are

often challenged by the lack of resources or by the lack of trained personnel. However, in communicating the museum as a whole, its mission, its attributes, in constructing its own narrative and its own space or in enforcing learning – the museum has got a powerful management tool. By managing the content of communication and by managing the online interaction, a museum is reasserting its social identity as a place of knowledge and as a place of power. It also creates a social role for its visitors: the museum proposes activities, workshops, charitable events, concerts, even free debates (on a set topic, related to the activity of the museum of course). The visitor (or the potential visitors, the Internet user accessing the website or the Facebook page) has its role well defined, always being at the receiving end of the museum wisdom and knowledge. In terms of social practices, by managing the preliminary with a potential visitor, the museum is preparing the prospective visitor to act out its role. The visitor's expectations are set, and the overall context of the future visit to the museum is already conveyed via online communication. Therefore, the social practice that consists of going to a museum to spend some leisure time and to perform a learning activity is rehearsed, and in this way reinforced, by online communication.

By providing content (for the online communication) and also by engaging in online interaction, museums are performing (or they could perform) an essential phase of any management plan: the execution of their mission. As textual analysis revealed, both content management and interaction management are instrumental in constructing social identities and social practices.

Appendix - original text in French

Example 1

"Solange Becker question: tout le monde peut gagner ou est-ce ensuite un tirage au sort parmi les gagnants ?
Art Ludique le musée Bonjour, les gagnants seront ceux qui auront bien répondu à toutes les questions, y compris la question subsidiaire 😉 ;
Loulou Town Grégoire Rey
Fatiha Chellali Kweoly Na 😄
Kweoly Na Merci
Ornella Lorme Y irais-tu Paloma ? 😛
Paloma Cattelan Lome : Non tu as déjà gagné WW puis je ne suis pas une grande fan 😜
Bérénice Elie Guillemette Cotrie Alezais
François Villechenon Et ou est le questionnaires? ;) 😊 svp

Art Ludique le musée Bonjour, le questionnaire vous sera remis sur place. Bonne soirée

François Villechenon Art Ludique le musée bonsoir. D'accord d'ou le lien pour réservé😉?! Donc je ne jouerais pas

Solange Becker une dernière question : est-ce tout le lot (whaou) ou uniquement l'un des cadeaux sur la photo ? »[15]

Exemple 2

« Veronique Lombardo J'ai adorrrrrré cette expo
Allisson Francois Bonjour elle se passe situe ou svp
Veronique Lombardo Près de la gare d'austerlitz à Paris
Art Ludique le musée *Allisson Francois* Bonjour, le musée Art Ludique est au 34, quai d'Austerlitz 75013 Paris »[16].

Exemple 3

Meggie Wayling *Nadia Plat* je sais pas où c'est !
Art Ludique le musée Bonjour, c'est au 34, quai d'Austerlitz 75013 Paris 😉

Meggie Wayling Merci 😄 [17]

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Websites and Facebook pages

Art Ludique http://www.artludique.com/musee2.html, https://www.facebook.com/ArtLudiqueLeMusee

Musée du Jouet in Moirans-en-Montaigne http://www.musee-du-jouet. com/ https://www.facebook.com/Musee.du.jouet.moirans

V&A Museum of Childhood at Bethnal Green http://www.vam.ac.uk/moc/ https://www.facebook.com/museumchildhood/

Museo Valenciano del Jugete http://www.museojuguete.com/en/ https:// www.facebook.com/museo.deljuguete.1

Abstrakt

Muzea, poprzez swoje dyskursy instytucjonalne, odgrywają ważną, ale czasami zaniedbaną rolę w egzekwowaniu praktyk społecznych i tworzeniu tożsamości społecznej. Wraz z nową cyfrową erą, muzea musiały dostosować się do nowych form komunikacji: w środowisku, które, przynajmniej pozornie, daje każdemu równy głos, muzea zdołały się porozumieć, nie rezygnując z pozycji depozytariuszy wiedzy i auto-

rytetu. Analizując komunikację online, zarządzanie treścią i zarządzanie interakcjami (na stronach internetowych, na stronach Facebooka), obecne badanie ma na celu zbadanie mechanizmów umożliwiających muzeom przekazywanie informacji o ich specyficznych cechach (przestrzeń, dostęp, uczenie się i interpretacja), zachowując jednak główną rolę jako komunikatora, ale także jako aktora wzmacniającego system wierzeń i wiedzy, który rządzi tym, co uważa się za poprawne, niepoprawne; dobre lub złe, normalne lub nienormalne w danym społeczeństwie. Tak więc, łącząc komunikację postrzeganą jako narzędzie zarządzania i analizę tekstową, niniejsze badanie ilustruje zastosowanie różnych jakościowych metod badawczych w dziedzinie zarządzania, a w szczególności w dziedzinie zarządzania komunikacją.
Słowa kluczowe*: muzeum zabawek, zarządzanie komunikacją, zarządzanie treścią, analiza tekstowa.*

Biographical note

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Nation Branding in Transition Countries: A Multimodal Analysis of Romania and Moldova Tourism Campaigns

Bianca-Florentina Cheregi[1]

Abstract

The nature of nationhood is changing in the age of globalization, marketization, and mediatization. In this context, the nation is built as a brand with the aim of attracting tourists and increase economic development. A particular case of nation branding is to be found in Romania and Moldova, two countries that started to reposition themselves after the fall of communism. In this context, this paper focuses on a comparative semiotic analysis of two nation branding campaigns initiated by the Romanian and Moldavian Governments: "Discover the Place Where You Feel Reborn" (Romania, 2014) and "Discover the Routes of Life" (Moldova, 2014). In so doing, a multimodal approach (Iedema, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Van Leeuwen, 2001) is employed, highlighting the importance of image, sound and text as semiotic resources in the discursive configuration of Romania's and Moldova's nation brands, comparatively. Special attention is given to the analysis of logos, websites and videos, comprising different communication situations used to create meaning in the tourism campaigns. The paper investigates how elements of neoliberal ideology are addressed in two governmental campaigns, comparatively, considering the "marketization of public discourse" (Fairclough, 1993).

Keywords: nation branding, transition countries, multimodal analysis, social semiotics, neoliberal ideology.

INTRODUCTION

In today's digital era, nation branding campaigns use strategies such as *user-generated content* or 'crowd-sourcing' in order to encourage citizens to became 'brand ambassadors' of their country. For instance, one example is the 2016 "Call a Swede" tourism campaign that connected callers from all over the

world with random Swedes who had signed up to be *de facto* ambassadors. The initiative was based on citizen participation, giving regular people based in Sweden the opportunity to talk with people from other countries, answering any questions they might have about visiting the country.

As one can see, today's increased use of computer and information technology affects the construction of the nation brand through advertising tourism campaigns. The public's imagination is now shaped though *transmedia engagement*, which goes beyond the notion of a single content adapted from one media format to another, unfolding "across multiple media platforms, with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" (Jenkins, 2006, pp. 97-98). For example, the 2010 Tourism Australia campaign, "There's Nothing Like Australia", was a 'crowd-sourcing' initiative encouraging citizens to share photos of their holidays in Australia via social media networks, "claiming to empower them in the construction of a more democratic and authentic image of their country" (Volcic & Andrejevic, 2016, p. 6).

Nation branding has become an "important yet contested topic in research, attracting an interdisciplinary interest, from areas such as marketing, international public relations, and public diplomacy" (Cheregi, 2018, p. 17). The term was first mentioned in 1996, by the British brand practitioner Simon Anholt (2007, p. 3), who defined it as the practice of building and communicating the country image to the rest of the world, through diplomacy, trading, export, and tourism.

Nation branding should also be understood in the contemporary *fake news* phenomenon, which puts an emphasis on fabricated content, aiming to generate maximum attention and, therefore, maximum profit. According to Kaneva (2018, p. 6), "nation branding is nothing more than a tool or a technology, which can be used by 'responsible governments' to ensure 'fair, true, powerful, attractive, genuinely useful' representations of their nations."

Drawing on Baudrillard's (2001) post-structuralist media theory we can "see nation brands in a new light, namely, as *simulacra* which exist within a transnational media system for the creation, circulation and consumption of commodity signs" (Kaneva, 2018, p. 3). The idea of the *simulacra* in societies leads further to the state of hyper-reality where the distinction between the real and the simulation is not so clear. For Kaneva (2018, p. 10), products of nation branding campaigns are, in fact, *simulation nations*, understood as "contradictory compendium of signs, flashing through global media circuits, trying to seduce various audiences." We can notice here the semiotic structure of the nation brand, which "presupposes a broader intertextual field to be managed in order to create nation brand recognition and distinction" (Graan, 2016, p. S102).

One of the most essential functions promoting the country image overseas is to communicate the idea of a nation. In this regard, Szondi (2007, p. 11) argues that branding has had an important role in generating a discussion about identities, mainly because it can help define a particular type of *country identity* that can be communicated to other nations. Furthermore, the audience must identify itself with the brand, so the citizens should become "brand ambassadors" (Szondi, 2007, p. 19).

There is a relation between nation branding and neoliberal ideology, taking into account the fact that nations are perceived as brands in the age of globalization. This happens because of the capitalist logic, which puts an emphasis on competitive markets. In this context, "neoliberalism is both an approach to government and a defining political movement," using the "market to govern, distributing services and benefits according to the market logic of efficiency, competitiveness, and profitability" (Bockman, 2013, pp. 14-15). In the case of nation branding, the competitive advantage is given by national values, culture, and economic structure. Varga (2013, p. 1) develops this idea further, stating that nation branding is "a political marketing strategy that targets external markets to establish and communicate a specific image of national identity."

A particular case of nation branding is to be found in Romania and Moldova, two countries that started to reposition themselves after the fall of communism. In transition countries, nation branding is often mentioned because of the constant need to reconfigure national identity by dissociating from the communist past (Kaneva, 2011).

Moldova and Romania are two countries that share common traditions and folklore, along with the same official language – Romanian and a common name for the monetary unit – the *leu*. They also share a common history, since in 1918, at the end of World War I, Bessarabia, part of the Principality of Moldovia, united with Transylvania, Bukovina, and the Romanian Old Kingdom. Bessarabia was under Romanian jurisdiction until 1940, when a Soviet ultimatum to give up Bessarabia and Northern Bukovina came along. Russia, and later the Soviet Union did not recognize the Romanian rule over Bessarabia, although it lasted for twenty-two years.

The unification of Romania and Moldova is a popular concept in both countries, that began after the fall of the communist regime in 1989, and the independence of Moldova in 1991. An interesting fact is that "the question of reunification is recurrent in the public sphere of the two countries, often as speculation, both as a goal and a danger" (Academic Dictionaries and Encyclopedias, n.d.). The idea is widespread in Romania and the individuals who advocate the unification are called "unionists," while opponents are known as "Moldovenists."

Nation branding is seen as a panacea for small and under-developed countries, as a need to enhance the competitive advantage on the global stage (Anholt, 2003; Dinnie, 2008; Olins, 2002; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002). Romania is a post-communist country with a bad image internationally, that is why the nation branding phenomenon has the mission of improving the competitive advantage.

The country image of Romania became "the object of an *institutionalization* process" (Beciu, 2011, p. 110) starting in 2005. The EU integration process facilitated the orientation towards a neoliberal discourse in promoting the national image overseas.

In Romania, nation branding is a step in the process of discursively constructing the country image as a public issue (Cheregi, 2017, 2018). Moldova is a country at a crossroads, struggling between a pro-Western and pro-Moscow foreign policy orientation (Buduru & Popa, 2006, p. 171) that is reflected in the country's branding initiatives as well.

In this context, the present study focuses on a comparative semiotic analysis of two nation branding campaigns initiated by the Romanian and Moldavian Governments: *Discover the Place Where You Feel Reborn* (Romania, 2014) and *Discover the Routes of Life* (Moldova, 2014). This paper aims to provide a cross-cultural comparison of nation branding in two transition countries that share common traditions and Romanian as a native language. Thus, there is controversy over the national identity of Moldavians, asking whether they constitute a subgroup of Romanians or a separate ethnic group. The controversy is also part of Moldova's political agenda since there are Moldovan politicians that insist on the idea of a Moldovan language.

The next two sections introduce in more detail the theoretical framework, presenting the fields of research in nation branding, and drawing attention to different areas and schools of thought. A multidisciplinary perspective is necessary in order to understand the global phenomenon of nation branding, dwelling upon a semiotic lens to deeply explore the meanings employed in the tourism advertising campaigns. Then, the paper moves forward to a brief overview of nation branding campaigns in Romania and Moldova, comparatively. The methodological tools for analyzing the importance of image, sound and text as semiotic resources in the discursive configuration of Romania's and Moldova's nation brands are presented in-depth. Finally, the discussion views the findings resulting from the social semiotic analysis of the two governmental campaigns, outlining types of national identity discourses and elements of neoliberal ideology employed in the campaigns.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Fields of research in nation branding

Why is nation branding such a debated issue nowadays, in areas such as consultancy, marketing, politics, and media? Nations have always been preoccupied with their image on the international stage, even if the process was not named as "nation branding." Not all researchers agree with the term, considering it imperfect. For Dinnie (2008), a more appropriate term would be "reputation management," "competitive identity" or "public diplomacy," while Surowiec (2012) and Volcic (2012) prefer to use "neoliberal corpo-nationalism" or "commercial nationalism."

There are no universal recipes to promote the nation as a brand. In this regard, there are two forms of manifesting nation branding: *country-of-origin-effect*, referring to the "made in" products, commercialized on the global marketplace and *destination branding*, related to promoting a country in order to attract tourists. The *country-of-origin effect* (COO) concept was first mentioned in 1965 when Schooler (1965) started to study the products' image considering their country-of-origin. He concluded that the prejudices have appeared as an economic and political phenomenon, and people's perception of a nation-state leads to the emergence of stereotypes. Roth and Romeo (1992) argue too that the country image is a perception of a country's products, based on the previous consumers' perceptions about that state's productivity. As a matter of fact, the products' image is *biased* by the stereotypes about the country-of-origin, and this can impact the economic development of the nation-state.

The touristic brand is strongly connected to the nation brand. In this regard, Crompton (1979, p. 18) considers that the country image is, in fact, the sum of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination. For Kotler, Haider and Rein (1993), the concept of *tourism image destination* (TID) is more appropriate, being defined as the effect of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that a person has of a destination. Thus, a clear distinction has to be made between *destination branding* and *country branding*. Foremost, "the aim of *destination branding* is to attract visitors and boost tourism (inwards direction), while *country branding* promotes economic, commercial and political interests at home and abroad" (Szondi, 2007, p. 9). The country image is presented through elements such as beautiful landscapes, monumental buildings, museums, local cuisine, folk costumes, music, or national dances.

In the last few decades, nation branding has become an important topic in research also, attracting an interdisciplinary interest, from areas such as

marketing, international public relations, and public diplomacy, but also from schools of thought such as cultural studies and social constructivism.

The marketing approach (Anholt, 2003; Buhmann & Ingenhoff, 2015; Fan, 2006; Hall, 1999; Kotler & Gertner, 2002; Kotler et al., 1997; Marat, 2009; Olins, 2010; Papadopoulos & Heslop, 2002; Will & Porak, 2000) is functionalist, focusing on understanding nation branding in relation to commercial practices (Anholt, 2005; Olins, 2010). For instance, both nation brands and commercial brands are preoccupied with creating clear, simple, and different propositions, sometimes based on emotional qualities which can be symbolized verbally and visually (Olins, 2002, p. 145). In the case of nation branding, the emotional qualities are strongly connected to the national identity concept, strongly tied to nation branding.

On the other hand, the international public relations approach (Aronczyk, 2008; Dinnie, 2008; Dolea, 2015; Dolea & Țăruș, 2009; Jordan, 2014; Kunczik, 1997, 2002; Szondi, 2008; Volcic, 2008, Wang, 2006a, 2006b, 2007; Zhang, 2007) insists on contextualizing the study of nation brand and analyzing, beside promotion campaigns, the contribution of political, cultural and economic agents in the nation branding practices. Public Relations are connected with nation branding because of the branding initiatives and also because they facilitate the coordination between the institutions and actors involved in the nation branding campaigns.

The public diplomacy perspective (Calabrese, 1996; Jansen, 2008; Gilboa, 2008; Mosco, 1996; Murdock & Golding, 1991; Schiller, 1976; Szondi, 2008; Van Ham, 2001; Zhang, 2006) puts an emphasis on the fact that nation branding is a continuation of public diplomacy and a neoliberal project. In this globalized world, promoting the nation internationally is an effort driven by global capitalism. Public diplomacy is understood as the Government's use of *soft power* (Nye, 1990) in order to promote national interests to political actors, NGOs, and corporations. From a public diplomacy perspective, nation branding is a postmodern mutation of diplomacy and represents an evolution of diplomatic practice (Van Ham, 2001). Globalization is closely linked to the development of nation branding, while commercial neoliberalism privileges market relations in articulations of national identity (Jansen, 2008, p. 121). In this context, globalization has the power to articulate a country's aspirations for wealth, power and enhanced visibility.

Studies on nation branding also work in different paradigms, such as cultural studies or social constructivism. A key promoter of the cultural studies approach is Stuart Hall (1996), who operationalized Gramsci's concepts of ideology and hegemony in order to analyze the relationship between culture and power. A major premise of the cultural studies approach is to understand the meaning of discourses constructed by social actors in

a specific cultural space. The focus is on the ways in which people interpret the dominant discourses about politics or national identity. Special attention is given to discourses and their manifestations, along with the analysis of textual representations.

The cultural studies approach on nation branding (Aronczyk, 2007; Bârdan & Imre, 2012; Iordanova, 2007; Jansen, 2008, 2012; Kaneva, 2012, 2018; Kaneva & Popescu, 2011, 2014; Kania-Lundholm, 2012; Surowiec, 2012; Volcic, 2008; Widler, 2007) insists on the discursive practices of the nation brand, in relation to elements such as national identity, culture, and diplomacy. Moreover, the nation brand can be analyzed as a *discourse*, and social acts are treated as texts. This leads to a constructivist approach as well, in which the model of textual representations (Barker, 2011; Kaneva, 2012) is dominant, while the production and reproduction of national identity discourses is closely analyzed.

The relationship between nation branding and national identity is a central issue in the cultural studies area (Aronczyk, 2007; Kaneva & Popescu, 2008; Volcic, 2008). For Aronczyk (2007, p. 107), nation branding is a logical extension of a particular way that national identity has long been construed and communicated in time and space. If flags represent nations in war and diplomacy, brands and logos represent them in commerce and leisure. Aronczyk gives the example of Poland, whose nation branding campaign from 2002 changed the red-and-white flag, a stock symbol of national identity, into a red-and-white toy kite. The campaign was initiated by Poland's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and an advertising agency. The flag was the symbol of the country's political identity, while the kite was meant to bring a break from the past, a *post-political* national identity. The shift from political to "post-political" representations of national identity "appears to signal a change in the way we think about the idea of nation" (Aronczyk, 2007, p. 105). That is why the corporate and state interests intermingle in the process of branding a nation in commodity form. Hence, national identity is created through a specific branding and marketing process.

Another school of thought investigating the nation branding phenomenon is social constructivism. Constructivist approaches to nation branding are to be found in the public diplomacy field of research, leading to a multidisciplinary perspective. For Van Ham (2001), nation branding represents a neutral form of nation-building, which creates a well-functioning public sphere. In fact, this form of nation-building lacks "the deep-rooted and often antagonistic sense of national identity and uniqueness that can accompany nationalism" (Van Ham, 2001, p. 2). Therefore, nation branding can channel national sentiments into collective national identities, generating a sense of belonging.

This article fills a gap in the literature by drawing attention to a *multimodal* approach to nation branding in transition countries. In Romania, research on nation branding (Dolea & Țăruș, 2009; Dolea, 2015; Andrei, 2017, Popescu, 2007) relies on international public relations or marketing perspectives. Special attention is given to the legitimation strategies of public actors such as the Romanian Government in (re)branding the country (Dolea, 2015). Compared to other research, this article proposes a multidisciplinary approach, combining areas such as public diplomacy, cultural studies, and constructivism. The aim here is to explain that nation branding in transition countries share discursive practices to redefine and reconstruct national identity, taking into account different communication situations.

Towards a social-semiotic approach of nation branding

Brands can be regarded as particular signs, mental constructions that evoke a wide array of meanings (Danesi, 2006; Semprini, 1992). In this regard, the nation brand is an advertising sign and promoting the country image involves the appeal to signs and symbols which resonate with internal and external audiences.

A semiotic analysis of nation branding permits "an in-depth investigation of meanings employed in the campaigns to promote the country image to an international audience" (Cheregi, 2017, p. 29), it being an advertising sign and a semiotic artifact.

Research on nation branding from a semiotic perspective concentrates on spatial semiotics (Giovanardi, Lucarelli, Pasquinelli, 2013), on social semiotics (Thurlow & Aiello, 2007), modality (Koller, 2008) and intertextuality (Graan, 2016). Thus, their "focus is not on the nation brand *per se*, but more on a nation brand's forms of manifestations, such as destination branding, country-of-origin effect, or city branding" (Cheregi, 2017, p. 29).

For example, Giovanardi et al. (2013) apply a semiotic framework to analyze three Italian territories (Montefeltro, Val di Cornia, Romagna), based on the constructs of syntax, semantics and pragmatics. By following an interpretive approach, their study shows that each place brand is characterized by a specific level of integration ('symbiosis') between functional and representational dimensions. Giovanardi et al. (2013) propose the concept of *brand ecology* in order to conceptualize the interrelation between place brands' functional (syntax) and representational (semantics) dimensions.

Another study about the semiotic explorations of nation branding is that of Thurlow and Aiello's (2007), examining how airlines are linked to national identity concerns. Drawing on a social semiotic approach, based on Kress and van Leeuwen (2001), they examined 561 different airline tailfin designs as visual genre, revealing how the global-local binary may be managed

semiotically. Thurlow and Aiello (2007, p. 337) show that globalization is typically invoked as a discursive resource to explain and justify the ongoing re-orderings of global capitalism. In this particular case, visual discourse works to reinscribe or reproduce patterns of economic exchange, because "just as globalism keeps reconfiguring itself, so too it seems the global semioscape is constantly being refashioned" (Thurlow & Aiello, 2007, p. 338).

In order to see how city brands are encoded in different semiotic modes, Koller (2008) proposes a comparative study. The study proves that "cities have been reconceptualized as corporate brands as far as their nature allows," but "branding practices and discourses originating from the corporate sphere can only be transferred in parts" (Koller, 2008, p. 446). Therefore, citizens have been defined as customers and councils as service providers. Because of the global competition between cities, the appropriation of corporate discourses (branding) redefines and depoliticizes the relationship between council and citizens.

On the other hand, recent research (Breman & Wilson, 2016; Burdick, 2016; Del Percio, 2016; Graan, 2016; Kelly-Holmes, 2016; Moore, 2016; Woolard, 2016) focus on nation branding as semiotic resources and on essentialized discourses around language and national identity. For instance, Andrew Graan (2016) analyzes the forms of metasemiotic regimentation in state-sponsored nation branding project for the Republic of Macedonia, from the perspective of communication and publicity as semiotic processes. In this particular context, nation branding and its attendant forms of brand management are understood as "a set of metapragmatic practices that aim to regiment public speech to define what counts as permissible public communication" (Graan, 2016, p. S78).

In fact, in the "Macedonia Timeless" campaign, nation branding works on numerous communicative levels - it serves to promote the country as a tourist or business destination and presents Macedonia as a fairytale literally coming to life. The results show that "the language of nation-branding advertisements often sounds the same" and "the logos and slogans, excepting difference in country name, appear interchangeable" (Graan, 2016, p. S86).

This leads further to a discussion about the economic logic of nation branding, connected to the conditions of finance capitalism, revealing the multilayered politics inherent to nation branding as a state pursuit. The relationship between nation branding and neoliberal commercialism will be explored later in the analysis section, focusing on social semiotic analysis of two governmental campaigns aiming to promote Romania's and Moldova's country image on the international stage.

Nation branding in Romania and Moldova

Generally, in transition countries, there are similarities regarding the promotion of the country image, because of the constant need to reconfigure national identity by dissociating from the communist past (Kaneva, 2011). This is also the case with Romania and Moldova, which used the nation brand instrument in order to build their credibility, after the fall of the communist regime in 1989. In fact, "country branding is particularly relevant for developing countries in their struggle to define their political, economic and social roles" (Florek & Conejo, 2007, p. 53).

Since 1996, the Romanian Government has started to promote Romania's country image overseas, and one of the first initiatives was the launch of the "Eternal and fascinating Romania" project. Nevertheless, only since 2005 has the "theme of Romania's country image been the object of an *institutionalization* process" (Beciu, 2011, p. 110), so the Government assumes responsibility for promoting the country internationally, working with consultancy agencies in order to initiate campaigns such as *Romania Land of Choice* (2009) and *Explore the Carpathian Garden* (2010). The last one generated a reaction from the media, which started to criticize the Government for its lack of professionalism. Moreover, nation branding is not just a concept, being also a type of public issue (Cheregi, 2015, p. 296) which "passes from the area of institutional and expertise discourses into the area of the public sphere, and generally, in the public discourses, including the quotidian life" (Beciu, 2013, p. 43).

Romania's first branding activities at a governmental level were more isolated actions that integrated communication campaigns (Dolea & Țăruș, 2009). Put simply, the first approaches "have promoted tangible objects: places to visit in Romania, food, and only after 2005 appeared integrating concepts to present a more complex picture of the country and also to embrace customs, traditions, theatre plays and documentary films" (Dolea & Țăruș, 2009, p. 84).

Currently, the Agency for Tourism in the Republic of Moldova is responsible for Moldavian nation branding projects. Since the collapse of the Iron Curtain in 1991, Moldova has become a "nationalizing nation" (Brubaker, 1996), with state formation preceding nation building. In this context, "tourism is considered to be a valuable tool to project perceived conceptualizations of the nation, its history, identity and the national territory" (Posch, 2015, p. 163).

In 2006, the Moldavian Government launched the *Moldova Discover Us* campaign, with a new brand logo in the shape of a cube. The concept was presented at the First International Conference Promoting Moldavia, but it

seems that the campaign was not implemented and "the new brand initiative has been unexpectedly placed 'on hold'" (Florek & Conejo, 2007, p. 57).

In 2013, *Lonely Planet* declared Moldova as Europe's least visited country according to a Traveler's Choice poll (Pettersen, 2013). Put simply, Moldova is the second off-the-beaten-path destination in the world, according to *Lonely Planet*. In this context, in 2014, the Agency for Tourism in the Republic of Moldova launched a new brand campaign, entitled *Discover the Routes of Life*, focusing on a complex symbol of national culture, inviting tourists to follow a path towards new discoveries, through hospitality, history, wine, gastronomy and Moldavian traditions (AGEPI, 2014). The advertising spot was promoted on the Euronews channel, focusing on destination branding. More recently, in 2016, the *Discover the Routes of Life* concept was presented at IMEX Frankfurt, dedicated to MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) tourism. Here, the focus was mainly on wine incentives, in order to attract professionals to visit the Republic of Moldova for the cultural experience, competitive prices and rich vineyards.

RESEARCH METHODS

In order to explore the differences and similarities of two governmental campaigns aiming to promote Romania's and Moldova's country image on the international stage, the research draws on a *multimodal* approach (Iedema, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Van Leeuwen, 2001), in order to highlight the importance of image, sound and text as semiotic resources in the discursive configuration of Romania's and Moldova's nation brands, comparatively.

Special attention is given to the analysis of logos, websites and videos, comprising different communication situations used to create meaning in the tourism campaigns. The corpus is heterogeneous, based on two nation branding campaigns initiated by the Government: *Discover the Place Where You Feel Reborn* (Romania, 2014), *Discover the Routes of Life* (Moldova, 2014), along with the official websites (www.romania.travel and www.moldova.travel).

This paper investigates how elements of *neoliberal ideology* are addressed in two governmental campaigns comparatively, considering the "marketization of public discourse" (Fairclough, 1993). In so doing, the research questions underlying the social semiotic analysis are:

RQ1: What are the main semiotic resources employed in the two nation branding campaigns, comparatively, and how are they organized?
RQ2: What types of national identity discourses are employed in the nation branding campaigns (symbols, myths, language)?

RQ3: How are elements of neoliberal ideology addressed in the two governmental campaigns, comparatively?

The social semiotic perspective (Bell, 2001; Hodge & Kress, 1988; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; Jewitt & Van Leeuwen, 2001; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006; Van Leeuwen, 2001, 2005) derives from the work of Michael Halliday and focuses on the uses of semiotic systems in social practice. The key term is "semiotic resource," preferred instead of "sign" because it avoids the impression that "what stands for it is somehow pre-given, and not affected by its use" (Van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3). In this regard, the meanings expressed by speakers are first and foremost social. An iconicity is always an act of perception, while symbolism relies on inference and judgment (Hodge & Kress, 1988).

The article proposes a methodological framework that employs a set of categories from social semiotics: semiotic resources, modality (high/medium/low), contact (offer/demand) and mode.

First of all, semiotic resources are the products of cultural histories and the cognitive resources we use to create meaning in the production and interpretation of visual and other messages (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 136). Resources are also signifiers, observable actions and objects that have a theoretical semiotic potential constituted by all their past uses and all their potential uses. Visual modality refers to the

"degree to which certain means of pictorial expression (color, representational detail, depth, tonal shades, etc.) are used. Each of these dimensions can be seen as a scale, running from the absence of any rendition of detail to maximal representation of detail, or from the absence of any rendition of depth to maximally deep perspective" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 256).

Given the sensory coding orientation, based on degrees of color saturation, modality has three values: 'high' (image uses highly saturated colors naturalistically), 'medium' (image uses less saturated colors) and 'low' (image is monochrome).

Another important category is contact, establishing a relationship between the visual and the viewer/the audience. According to Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), there is a distinction between 'demand' and 'offer' pictures. For instance, in 'demand' pictures, people represented in the image symbolically demand something from the viewer. Facial expressions and gestures are important indicators to see exactly what they 'demand.' On the other hand, the 'offer' visuals are based on the fact that an 'offer of information' is made (Jewitt & Oyama, 2001, p. 146).

The social semiotic approach to visuals (Bell, 2001; Jewitt & Oyama, 2001; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Van Leeuwen, 2001) focuses on the inter-personal semiosis of images, where images may be analyzed without any recourse to the verbal or written information that may accompany them (Jewitt & Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 6).

Another key term in social semiotics is *semiotic landscape* or "the place of visual communication in a given society" that can only be understood in the context of "the range of forms and modes of public communication available in that society and, on the other hand, their uses and valuations" (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 35). The features of a landscape only make sense in the context of their environment and the history of its development. Further, the realities of the semiotic landscape are brought about by social, cultural and economic factors. The *semiotic modes* complete the landscape, being shaped both by the intrinsic characteristics and potentialities of the medium and by the requirements, histories and values of societies and their cultures.

These analytical instruments are applied to examine the discursive construction of nation branding in two governmental campaigns, comparatively. We will see how meaning is constructed in different communication situations, starting with campaign logos, slogans, typography, and then continuing with a social semiotic analysis of the campaign websites. Last, but not least, we will examine the tourism videos, taking the frame as a unit of analysis.

RESULTS

If we look at the two campaign logos comparatively (Figure 1), one can notice that both logos are polysemous, leading to multiple significations and appeal to cultural symbols. The green color from *Explore the Carpathian Garden* campaign is, in fact, a metonymic resource for iconically representing nature, being also an icon and symbol of Romanian nature attractions. Conversely, the logo from *Discover the Routes of Life* campaign is a metonymic image of Moldavian wine-making traditions, being an icon and symbol of grape vines. If in the Romanian campaign the focus is on destination branding (Kotler et al., 1993; Pike, 2009), in the Moldavian campaign the focus is mainly on the country-of-origin effect (Schooler, 1965), emphasizing two of the most important forms of manifestations of the country as a brand.

Both slogans (*Explore the Carpathian Garden*, *Discover the Routes of Life*) are built on a "call-to-action" technique, borrowed from successful marketing case studies. Overall, the techniques used to promote the country image are

inspired by marketing, so the nation branding phenomenon is linked to the "marketization of public discourse" (Fairclough, 1993).

The green leaf logo from *Explore the Carpathian Garden* campaign was intensely criticized by Romanian bloggers, because of its resemblance to the logo of British company Change Transport. The information first appeared on a blog, with the headline "Discover the differences between the two images. The Ministry of Tourism is stealing images for the nation brand logo" (Dorombach, 2010). The Romanian media has rapidly disseminated this information, debating about the necessity of a country brand. The Tourism Minister Elena Udrea was criticized for the nation branding campaign, and several articles in the media mentioned "Elena Udrea's leaf."

Figure 1. *Explore the Carpathian Garden* (2010) and *Discover the Routes of Life* (2014) campaign logos

The typography of the logos serve as a semiotic resource with its own meaning potential, so "rather than acting as a naturalized conduit for the communication of a verbal narrative, the typographical elements have become an integral part of the narrative itself, a semiotic resource" (Serafini & Clausen, 2012, p. 5). In the Romanian logo, one can notice a medium modality, with natural colors and a rounded font. As for the Moldavian logo,

the colors are highly saturated, leading to a high modality. The font is bold, drawn in black, symbolizing the fertile soil from which the tree of life grows. The Moldovan five petal rose is placed in the center, at the end of the grape vines, being a national symbol.

The Romania Travel homepage (http://www.romania.travel/, accessed on June 10, 2018) offers an interactive experience (Figure 3), with a horizontal user journey and a "carousel" presenting key touristic objectives and cultural symbols (Capșa House, the meeting place of many Romanian intellectuals of the nineteenth century, Sibiu, the European Capital of Culture in 2007, Brașov's coat of arms, citadels, the Merry Cemetery, and Christmas traditions). The modality is medium and one can notice authentic photographs of touristic objectives. The text is personal ("My view of Romania"), inviting the tourists to create their own travel experiences.

Figure 2. Romania Travel homepage (http://www.romania.travel/, accessed on June 10, 2018)

On the other hand, the Moldova Travel homepage (http://www.moldova. travel/, accessed on June 10, 2018) offers a static user experience (Figure 3), and the user journey is vertical, similar to personal blogs. The modality is high and one can notice highly saturated colors in the background image sending to an autumn landscape. The button is a direct call-to-action ("Subscribe"), creating a connection with tourists interested to discover Moldova.
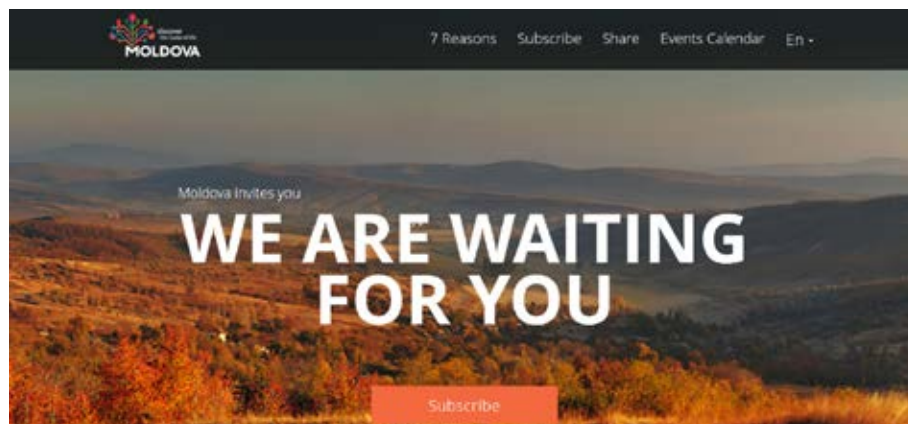
Figure 3. Moldova Travel homepage (http://www.moldova.travel/, accessed on June 10, 2018)

The analysis of the tourism campaigns shows that both videos make *demands* on the viewers. The *Discover the Place Where you Feel Reborn* campaign was launched in 2014 and is part of the "Explore the Carpathian Garden" governmental campaign. The story follows a man passing through different places in Romania and we listen to a narrator describing his own experiences:

"Here, in these places is where I wish I was born. Every time I discover the traditions and the culture from these places I feel alive, I feel reborn. Romania, Explore the Carpathian Garden".

The commercial starts with a frame showing a young man with long hair drinking water from a traditional clay pot. He is wearing a backpack and travels to different places in Romania. Next, the visuals show a frame with the man visiting Voroneț monastery, one of the painted churches of Moldavia listed in UNESCO's list of World Heritage sites. The frescoes at Voroneț feature an intense shade of blue known in Romania as "Voroneț blue." The young man is touching the wall of the monastery featuring the "Last Judgement" theme. In the next frame, we can see a nun playing a semantron right in front of the monastery.

Further, the man is making a traditional Romanian clay pot, with the help of a village lady. The next frames present one of the most important Romanian cultural symbols, Brâncuși's Endless Column. The column is linked to the infinite sacrifice of the Romanian soldiers during the First World War. Besides this, the Endless Column is also the *axis mundi* or the axis of the world, expressing a point of connection between Heaven and Earth. This space serves as a microcosm of order. For Mircea Eliade (1991, p. 39), "every

microcosm, every inhabited region has a Centre, that is to say, a place that is sacred above all." The rhomboid shapes of the column represent the idea of infinity, connecting Heaven with Earth. In this commercial, the young man is touching the Endless Column, a sculpture linked to the mythical past and distant cultural memory of the Romanian folkloric tradition.

The tourism spot shows the "Dracula castle" from a panoramic view. Therefore, Dracula's myth is appealing to foreign audiences by interpolating neoliberal commercialism. In the particular situation of Romania, Bârdan and Imre (2012) consider that we are dealing with "vampire branding," because of the multiple uses of the Dracula story in the promotion campaigns. A possible explanation for using the Dracula story in nation branding campaigns is that they aim to attract Western audiences. Thus, the myth is not representative for Romanian people, even though foreigners are more familiar with the bloodthirsty Vlad Țepeș, because of Bram Stoker's successful novel. An interesting fact is that the young man is charmed by beautiful Romania women when discovering the castle. They symbolize feminine mythical creatures in Romanian mythology, known as "iele"1. Similar to the *samodivas* in Bulgaria; the Romanian fairies have great seductive power over men and magic skills. They are also known as singing and dancing fairies of the night.

In the *Discover the Place Where You Feel Reborn* campaign, national identity discourses are constructed by appealing to traditions (a man creating a traditional clay pot, the presence of the Romanian "evil fairies" known as "iele"), religion (painted monasteries, a nun playing the semantron), culture (Brâncuși's Endless Column) and architecture (the medieval Sighișoara, Bran Castle). Elements of the neoliberal ideology are addressed by commercial discourses ("Romania, Explore the Carpathian Garden"), reinforcing the cliché representation of what capitalist economies offer.

As for the *Discover the Routes of Life* campaign, it was launched in 2014 in the Republic of Moldova, as a response to *Lonely Planet*'s declaration that Moldova is Europe's least visited country. The concept was based on Moldova's long winemaking tradition, being one of the top wine-producing countries in the world. Visual representations of Moldovan heritage and history are not dominant, even though the video features some key touristic objectives.

The video starts with a frame showing a car passing through a nature scene with red, green and yellow leaves. In the following frame, the car stops and the driver starts a short dialogue with the tourist: "The driver: It will take an hour, maybe two. The tourist: Well, I'll just go, I'll go for a walk then". As in the *Discover the Routes of Life* campaign, the story follows a man passing through different places in Moldova, discovering pristine places and one of the most important historical sites, Orheiu Citadel, known for the foundation walls of the Tatar-Mongol baths.

Next, the tourist sees a man and a woman on an ox cart, leading to a famous picture with the same name, made by the Romanian painter Nicolae Grigorescu. The appeal to religion and Moldavian monasteries is very subtle, showing an image of a Russian Orthodox Church in the background of the image. A keyframe is the one in which the man stops near a grapevine and tastes grapes, a symbol of Moldavia's new tourism concept. A Moldavian family invites the tourist to join them, although initially, the Moldovan man has a suspicious look. The focus is on the hospitality of Moldovans, on gastronomy (stuffed vine leaves with polenta) and on traditional music and dance.

In the end, the voiceover turns directly to the viewers to visit Moldova: "Find yourself in the heart of the countryside. Rediscover what it means to be the most welcomed guest. Visit the authentic Moldova". The commercial discourses are to be noticed here, with a strong focus on rural Moldova and hospitality.

In the *Discover the Routes of Life* campaign, national identity discourses are constructed by appealing to nature (a tourist walking on pristine landscapes, Moldovan grapes as a symbol of wine-making traditions); history (Orheiul Vechi citadel); traditions (Moldavian songs and dance, traditional food), religion (an Orthodox church in a frame), hospitality (Moldavians are presented as being friendly with foreigners), and architecture (the Moldavian rural houses).

Elements of neoliberal ideology are addressed by commercial discourses ("Discover the routes of life," "Be our guest," "Visit the authentic Moldova"), also reinforcing the cliché representation of what capitalist economies offer.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results show that a social semiotic analysis of Eastern European nation branding campaigns help us understand how different *modes* of the nation are constructed in the public space through tourism promotion and marketing. *Discover the Place Where You Feel Reborn* (Romania, 2014) and *Discover the Routes of Life* (Moldova, 2014) are both *semioscapes,* understood as "globalizing circulation of symbols, sign systems and meaning-making practices" (Thurlow & Aiello, 2007). Therefore, the semiotic resources circulate between different scopes, leading to different understandings of national and cultural symbols.

Both of the nation-branding campaigns appeal to two of the most critical forms of manifestations of the country as a brand. If, in the Romanian campaign, the focus is on destination branding (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993; Pike, 2009), presenting mainly touristic objectives, in the Moldavian campaign the focus is mainly on a country-of-origin effect (Schooler, 1965), revealing the Moldavian grape vines tradition. The campaign logos are polysemous, leading

to multiple significations in the *semioscape*. The logo from the *Explore, the Carpathian Garden campaign,* is a semiotic resource representing nature, being an icon and symbol of Romanian nature attractions. Conversely, the logo from the *Discover the Routes of Life* campaign is a metonymic image of Moldavian wine-making traditions, being an icon and symbol of grape vines. Both slogans (*Explore the Carpathian Garden*, *Discover the Routes of Life*) are built on a "call-to-action" technique, borrowed from successful marketing case studies, leading to the "marketization of public discourse" (Fairclough, 1993).

The social semiotic analysis of the tourism campaign websites shows that the Romania Travel homepage (http://www.romania.travel/, accessed on June 10, 2018) offers an interactive experience, with a horizontal user journey and medium modality, while the Moldova Travel homepage (http://www.moldova.travel/, accessed on June 10, 2018) offers a static user experience and a high modality, with a vertical user journey, similar to personal blogs.

Both campaign videos make *demands* to the viewers, inviting them to discover a life experience. The *Discover the Place Where You Feel Reborn* campaign is based on a first-person narrator, presenting a man with a long hair, traveling through different places in Romania, discovering Bukovina painted monasteries, traditional clay pots, Brâncuși's Endless Column and Bran Castle. In the *Discover the Routes of Life* campaign, the story follows a man discovering pristine Moldavian places and one of the most important historical sites, Orheiu Citadel, known for the foundation walls of the Tatar-Mongol baths.

Nation branding is also connected to national identity discourses, especially in the particular case of post-communist countries such as Romania or Moldova. The results show that in *Discover the Place Where You Feel Reborn* campaign, national identity discourses are constructed by appealing to traditions (a man creating a traditional clay pot, the presence of the Romanian "evil fairies" known as "iele"), religion (painted monasteries, a nun playing the semantron), culture (Brâncuși's Endless Column) and architecture (the medieval Sighișoara, Bran Castle). On the other hand, in *Discover the Routes of Life* campaign, national identity discourses are constructed by appealing to nature (a tourist walking on pristine landscapes, Moldovan grapes as a symbol of wine-making traditions); history (Orheiul Vechi citadel), traditions (Moldavian songs and dance, traditional food), religion (an Orthodox church in a frame), hospitality (Moldavians are presented as being friendly with foreigners), and architecture (the Moldavian rural houses).

Elements of the neoliberal ideology are addressed in both tourism campaigns ("Romania, Explore the Carpathian Garden," "Discover the routes of life," "Be our guest," "Visit the authentic Moldova"), reinforcing the cliché representation of what capitalist economies offer.

Overall, this study proves Kaneva and Popescu's (2011, p. 201) claim that "national identity is appropriated for the purposes of neoliberal globalization." As we have seen in the Results section, both nation branding campaigns employ semiotic resources that circulate between different scopes, leading to multiple understandings of national and cultural symbols.

The question that emerges here is whether there is an oppressive side to branding national identities. For Kaneva and Popescu (2014, p. 509), discourses of branded nationhood have the power to reproduce hierarchies of othering. Nation branding also becomes an instrument used in the construction of alterity. The effort to fight against stereotyping is also connected to the nation brand, launching a debate about stereotypes about a nation that influence the country image, or about the country image that leads to further stereotypization. Future studies should consider cross-cultural approaches between transition countries, in order to see whether there is a significant resemblance between different *semioscapes*, trying to detach themselves from a communist past.

The nature of nationhood is also changing in the age of globalization, marketization, and mediatization. In this context, nation branding should also be understood in the contemporary *fake news* phenomenon, relying on the achievement of the sense of belonging through *soft power* (Nye, 2004) practices. The "imagined community" (Anderson, 1991) is now reconfigured to the logics of fabricated content, which affects nation branding projects as well. The question that should be addressed here is: how does the aim to generate maximum profit affect destination branding or the country-of-origin effect. Future research should investigate this further.

Notes

"Iele" is the name of "evil fairies" in Romanian mythology. They are mentioned in old Romanian folktales and legends and they have been a constant source of inspiration for many Romanian writers.

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Abstrakt

Natura narodowości zmienia się w dobie globalizacji, uprzemysłowienia i medi-atyzacji. W tym kontekście naród budowany jest jako marka w celu przyciągnięcia turystów i zwiększenia rozwoju gospodarczego. Szczególny przypadek brandingu narodu można znaleźć w Rumunii i Mołdawii, dwóch krajach, które zaczęły repozycjonować się po upadku komunizmu. W tym kontekście niniejszy artykuł koncentruje się na porównawczej analizie semiotycznej dwóch narodowych kampanii brandingowych zainicjowanych przez rządy Rumunii i Mołdawii: "Odkryj miejsce, w którym czujesz się odrodzony" (Romania, 2014) i "Odkryj drogi życia" (Moldova, 2014). W tym celu stosuje się podejście multimodalne (Iedema, 2003; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1996; Van Leeuwen, 2001.), podkreślając znaczenie obrazu, dźwięku i tekstu jako zasobów semiotycznych w dyskursywnej konfiguracji narodowych marek Rumunii i Mołdawii. Szczególną uwagę zwraca się na analizę logotypów, stron internetowych i filmów wideo, zawierających różne sytuacje komunikacyjne, które mają znaczenie w kampaniach turystycznych. Artykuł analizuje, w jaki sposób elementy neoliberalnej ideologii zostały poruszone w dwóch kampaniach rządowych, porównując je i biorąc pod uwagę "urynkowienie publicznego dyskursu" (Fairclough, 1993).

Słowa kluczowe: *branding narodu, kraje transformacji, analiza multimodalna, semiotyka społeczna, ideologia neoliberalna.*

Biographical note

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Methodological challenges of research on crowdsourcing

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Abstract

Crowdsourcing is a relatively new concept and, despite the interest of researchers, still little is known about it. At the same time, one observes difficulties of a cognitive and practical nature. This has become a premise for a reflection on the methodology of research on this subject. The subject of the article is the identification of the existing procedures of studying crowdsourcing, with particular inclusion of the methodological challenges that researchers of this concept may face. The article was written based on a systematic literature review. Its results enabled the formulation of some methodological guidelines for further research. Research should be conducted taking into account three levels of crowdsourcing: organization, technology, and participant. In addition, a quantitative and qualitative approach will enable the expansion of knowledge about crowdsourcing.

***Keywords:** crowdsourcing, methodology, research procedure, research methods*

INTRODUCTION

The notion of crowdsourcing appeared in the subject literature for the first time in 2006 owing to Howe. At first, crowdsourcing gained popularity in management sciences due to its potential in the scope of innovative problem solving (Afuah & Tucci, 2013). In the next years, researchers saw its benefits related to, inter alia: developing business processes, creating open innovations (Burger-Helmchen & Pénin, 2010), building competitive advantage (Leimeister & Zogaj, 2013), and accessing experience, innovativeness, and information (Aitamurto, Leiponen, & Tee, 2011). Crowdsourcing also enables crisis management, expands an organization's existing activity, creates an organization's image, improves communication with the environment, and optimizes the costs of an organization's activity. For these reasons it has

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become a megatrend in economic practice – more and more organizations reach for it taking into account just the potential business value alone (Leimeister, Huber, Bretschneider, & Krcmar, 2009).

Currently, one may observe a gradual interest in crowdsourcing, both of scientists and practitioners (West, Salter, Vanhaverbeke, & Chesbrough, 2014). It is possible to indicate many reasons for the growing attention to this process, which argue for the currently observed, and postulated in the future, intensification of the discourse on crowdsourcing. Brabham (2008) formulated an ascertainment that crowdsourcing is a new, exciting direction for research, which is of great importance to the whole organization (Colombo, Buganza, Klanner, & Roiser, 2013). It is considered in the literature as a rising phenomenon based on Web 2.0, which draws the attention of both practitioners and scientists. It is the possibilities and benefits that come from using crowdsourcing, which constitute the source of its popularity. There is even a conviction that crowdsourcing in the next years will be a dynamic and active area of research (Zhao & Zhu, 2014). Moreover, crowdsourcing is beginning to play a very important role in a number of fields (Tapscott & Williams, 2007). One observes the growing importance of these problematic issues in medical sciences (Callaghan, 2014), technical sciences (Halder, 2014), and management sciences.

Despite the importance and establishment of crowdsourcing in management sciences, it seems that it has not yet seen comprehensive and cross-case analyses. The existing scientific output is mediocre and its nature is mainly conceptual. Therefore, one may ascertain that the research field under consideration is in a phase of early growth – it also concerns the methodology of research. Crowdsourcing may be considered a highly topical area of consideration.

The article aims to identify the existing procedures of studying crowdsourcing, with particular inclusion of the methodological challenges, which the researchers of this concept may face. In addition, based on other researchers' recommendations, methodological guidelines for further research were formulated. The article was written based on a systematic literature review. The biggest, full-text databases, i.e. Ebsco, Elsevier/ Springer, Emerald, Proquest, Scopus, and ISI Web of Science, which include the majority of journals on strategic management were analyzed. In order to establish the state of knowledge and existing findings, a review of databases in Poland, BazEkon and CEON, was also conducted. 54 elaborations of English language databases and 41 from Polish language databases, from the period 2006-2017, were analyzed.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of crowdsourcing was introduced into economic literature by J. Howe, the editor of Wired magazine, in June 2006. In his article entitled "The Rise of Crowdsourcing," he describes various organizations making use of the Internet to establish cooperation with customers and engaging them in creating innovations. The definition of crowdsourcing proposed by Howe, after consulting with his editorial colleague M. Robinson, appeared one month after the article was presented in a blog run by the editor (www. crowdsourcing.com). He defined crowdsourcing in the so-called White Book as the "act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call. This can take the form of peer-production (when the job is performed collaboratively) but is also often undertaken by sole individuals" (Howe, 2006). The second definition proposed in the so-called "Soundbyte" considers crowdsourcing as the "application of Open Source principles to fields outside of software" (Howe, 2008). The author considered crowdsourcing as a tool or a way that helps organizations acquire free or inexpensive workforce.

Howe points out, that crowdsourcing is a notion which owes its beginning to Surowiecki. Howe exposes in crowdsourcing the importance of the crowd and the forces that activate it to take action. He assumes that the crowd is distinguished by wisdom and each of its members possesses knowledge or skills which may become valuable to someone. The basis here is collective intelligence and cooperation, which may contribute to creating values, choosing the best solutions, gathering opinions, and formulating judgments.

A continuator of Howe's concept is Brabham. He proposed the first definition following numerous publications in the years 2008-2012, in his book entitled "Crowdsourcing" in 2013. According to Brabham's, crowdsourcing is not "just old wine in new bottles." The author gives examples of open calls for solving difficult problems: creating the Oxford English language dictionary in 1800 by means of open discussions and the Alkali prize for developing an alkali method founded in 1775 by Louis XVI. In Brabham's opinion, they are not examples of crowdsourcing since it is only present when the organization has a task to be performed, whereas the online community carries it out voluntarily. A result of these actions there are mutual benefits for both parties. For Brabham, crowdsourcing is an Internet-dispersed model for solving problems and production, a tool for social participation, a planner for governments, and a method of building and processing a significant number of shared resources.

With time new definitions started to appear, which considered the role of the Internet as a characteristic moderator (Quinn & Bederson, 2011). It had become linked with establishing collaboration and relations with virtual communities (Yang, Adamic & Ackerman, 2008), by making use of their wisdom (Surowiecki, 2004) to solve problems (Vukovic, Mariana, & Laredo, 2009), and creating innovative solutions (Sloane, 2011) and open-source software. In crowdsourcing, it is the wisdom and collective intelligence that gain importance. The crowd becomes wise, rational, kind, and useful (Gloor & Cooper, 2007; Wexler, 2011). Most authors acknowledge that a crowd is a general group, usually an undefined, large group of people - an online public (Kleemann, Voß, & Rieder, 2008) which is often called users, consumers, clients, voluntary users, or online communities (Chanal & Caron-Fasa, 2008; Whitla, 2009). It is accepted that the crowd in crowdsourcing constitutes a group of amateurs, composed of students, young graduates, scientists, or organization members (Schenk & Guittard, 2009). Other authors point to network employees (Heer & Bostok, 2010) emphasizing their education and intelligence.

The definitions of crowdsourcing define a particular conceptual framework (Table 1), including common features of crowdsourcing, i.e.: (1) crowd (who forms it?, what is she/he supposed to do?, what does she/he get in return?); (2) initiator (who is it/she/he? , what does it/she/he get in return from the crowd?); (3) process (type of process, way of joining the crowd, way of mediation between the organization and the crowd).

The indicated levels correspond with the fact that crowdsourcing is a complex and multidimensional concept. Nevertheless, there are discrepancies when it comes to their number. Some authors indicate five levels (Leicht, Durward, Blohm, & Leimeister, 2015): organization, intermediary, system, user, and application and evaluation. Whereas Hetmank (2013) also identified four levels, but they were named in a different way: organization, technology, process, and human-centric. Based upon the research by Zhao and Zhu (2014) they combined all the findings of other researchers and indicated three levels of crowdsourcing: organization, participant, and system. The researchers' findings are reflected in the work of other authors (Vukovic et al., 2009; Zogaj, Bretschneider, & Leimeister, 2014). Moreover, so, the organization level refers to the premises for involvement of the organization in crowdsourcing (Schenk & Guittard, 2009), identification of the critical success factors, involvement consequences (Sims & Crossland, 2010), possible benefits to be achieved (Stol & Fitzgerald, 2014), conditions, and implementation barriers.

Table 1. Crowdsourcing levels

Author/authors	Level	Thematic scope	Analysis level
Babham, Sanchez & Bartholomew, 2009; Chen, 2016; Oomen & Aroyo, 2011;Seltzer & Mahmoudi, 2012; Stiver et al., 2014; Bayus, 2012; Basto, Flavin & Patino, 2010; Dunn & Hedges, 2012; Budhathoki & Haythornthwaite, 2012; Lönn & Uppström, 2013; Sinha, 2008; Crossan & Apaydin, 2010; Schenk & Guittard 2009; Sharma, 2010; Hsueh et al., 2009; Poetz & Schreier, 2009; Wiggins & Crowston, 2011	Organizational	Crowd capital, participational management, managing innovations	Participant (motivation, behavior) Organization (acceptance, implementation, coordination, management, quality, evaluation, adaptation to the organization's mission and goals, establishing collaboration with the crowd, effective use, barriers, success factors, quality of acquired information)
Minner, Holleran, Roberts & Conrad, 2015; Green, 2016; Estermann, 2016	Technical	Software, technical functions, user interface, user accreditation, user profiles, search history, mechanisms of payment for ideas	System (incentive, mechanisms, technology, efficiency, technological problems in designing crowdsourcing systems)
Mergel, 2015; Agapie, Teevan & Monroy-Hernandez, 2015; Hudson-Smith et al., 2009; Schwarz, 2016; Cullina, Conboy & Morgan, 2015; Hiltunen, 2011; Bott & Young, 2012; Aitamurto & Landemore, 2013; Byren, 2013	Process/system	Structures, typologies, organizational processes, submitting, distribution, accepting ideas of the crowd, specifying and division of the crowd's tasks, interactions between the organization and the crowd	Participant (motivation, behaviors) Organization (coordination, task type)
Chesbrough & Crowther, 2006; Chesbrough, 2011; Huston & Sakkab, 2006	Individual	Employee attitudes	Internal resistance to external knowledge
Gregg, 2010; Leimeister, 2010; Brabham, 2008, 2010; Lakhani et al., 2007; Yang et al., 2008	Virtual communities	Motivation, behaviors	Participant (motivation in different contexts of crowdsourcing, factors impacting motivation) Organization (the crowd as a partner, division of the virtual community)

A question appears at this point about the initiator of crowdsourcing, namely who it/she/he is? What are the benefits it/she/he obtains? (Burger-Helmchen & Penin, 2010). Assuming the participant's level means that, owing to cumulating knowledge and skills, the virtual communities are able to solve problems, design new products and services, large aggregate amount of data, or collect funds for a given goal. Crowdsourcing at a system level is a social and technical system which supports interactions and communication between the people and the organization. Apart from the technical or IT aspects, the issue of how the virtual community integrate their ideas with the organization's specificity (Steiger, Albuquerque, & Zipf, 2012) arises. Others think that understanding the motivational mechanisms of crowdsourcing (Archak & Sundararajan, 2009; DiPalantino & Vojnovic, 2009; Horton & Chilton, 2010; Wilcox, 2000) may contribute to the greater involvement of the virtual communities (Zhao & Zhu, 2012).

RESEARCH METHODS

The review of research on crowdsourcing was conducted based on the results of a systematic literature review. One of the main reasons for using this methodology is the need for a methodological regime, which is essential if we are willing to fulfill the rule of continuity. As opposed to traditional literature reviews, a systematic literature review avoids the dangers stemming out of subjectivism, the lack of a systematic approach, and prejudice. According to its methodology, the entire procedure includes three stages: (1) selecting databases and a collection of publications, (2) selection of the publications and development of a database, (3) bibliometric analysis, contents analysis, and verification of the usefulness of the obtained results for further research.

The first stage constituted a choice of the subject of research. This concerned specifying a collection of publications, which would be analyzed. The basis at this point was selecting the databases. The analysis covered full text, greatest databases which include the majority of journals dealing with strategic management, i.e. Ebsco, Elsevier/Springer, Emerald, Proquest, Scopus, and ISI Web of Science. In order to establish the state of knowledge and existing findings, a review of Polish databases, BazEkon and CEON, was also carried out. They were selected owing to their integrity and completeness. The reason for using several databases simultaneously is due to their diverse range and the gathered resources and sources. The principal issue in defining the collection of publications is the choice of keywords connected with the subject of the research, in order to identify potentially significant scientific articles from the point of view of the analyzed problematic aspects. In each of

the databases mentioned above, keywords were used which met the following criteria for inclusion: "crowdsourcing," "crowdsourcing" in the abstract, title, and keywords. The base of publications obtained in such a way was further analyzed and selected in the next stages. As a result of searching through the chosen databases over 46,000 publications were obtained selected from English language bases and 388 selected from Polish language bases.

The second stage is based on imposing limitations and database selection according to the "snowball" procedure. Therefore, the following limitations were imposed on the identified articles: full text, reviewed publications and the area of management sciences. Publications related to IT, social, technical, mathematical, medical sciences, and humanities were excluded from the collection. Duplicating publications, books, dissertations, and book chapters were eliminated. Articles in their full version, published in journals and the so-called proceedings were included.

The third stage is the basis for identifying the areas for further research exploration, valuable from a cognitive point of view, and important for the development of the theory of management. At this stage, the usefulness of the obtained elaborations for realization of the research aims was verified. Those publications, which did not strictly concern crowdsourcing, but instead treated it as a secondary subject, were discarded. Only those publications, whose leading object of analyses had the term "crowdsourcing" placed in the title and keywords, were deemed important from a research point of view. As a result, a literature base was obtained in the form of 54 publications selected from English language bases and 41 publications selected from Polish language bases. In the next stage, that total of 95 publications were further analyzed using bibliometric techniques, including the frequency, number of publications, and citations. Also at this stage, an analysis of the contents was also carried out, which determined the findings of other researchers and their evaluation, and also organized the research findings. The results of this systematic literature review have been presented in the second part of this article.

ANALYSIS

Interest in the subject of crowdsourcing started in 2006 with the first publication by Howe entitled "The Rise of Crowdsourcing." Since then crowdsourcing has started to receive the attention of researchers. Most publications still refer to Howe and the continuator of his concept Brabham (2008). One may observe that J. Howe's publication deserves to be called a seminal study and, therefore, the leading one, constituting an inspiration for further scientific studies (according to Google Scholar the number of

daily citations for 30.10.2016 was 3276). The conducted analysis of the number of publications devoted to crowdsourcing enables one to ascertain that this subject enjoys researchers' interest. The figure for the trend of publications contained in the English language databases is $R^2=0.668$, which proves a growing tendency of the publications. In the case of Polish language databases, the figure for the trend of publications is $R^2=0.133$. This result clearly shows that the number of publications in the last ten years has been going up slightly. However, it is difficult to consider this result as spectacular.

Based on a frequency analysis it was found that most of the contents of the publications which qualified for analysis were of a theoretical and review nature (22 publications-foreign bases, 41 publications out of 43 analysed-Polish bases). They were reviews of the definitions or the current state of knowledge on crowdsourcing. The remaining publications were articles that present the results of original research of an empirical nature, in particular, case studies or descriptions of events. This statement also concerns national publications: most of them, apart from the theoretical layer, which constitutes a literature review, included descriptions of examples of good practices or quoted data of the Central Statistical Office of Poland.

It is pointed out in the literature that the measurement of crowdsourcing is a great challenge for the researcher (Cullina et al., 2015) – some authors include the measurement of this particular term among the most difficult ones (Hirth et al., 2015). Despite the difficulties, it is an important and significant issue. As ascertained by Afuah and Tucci (Afuah & Tucci, 2012), studying crowdsourcing is promising and it may be a source of theoretical, empirical, and scientific knowledge. This is because the measurement will enable organizations to obtain different advantages (Malone, Laubacher & Dellarocas, 2010), but above all, it will contribute to understanding this phenomenon (Wilson, 2015). However, despite the recommendations and need for conducting research in this regard, in the existing research output there is a lack of conceptual coherence, an insufficiency related to a holistic perspective of crowdsourcing which hinders making comparisons, a diversity of methodological approaches, as well as inaccuracy and inadequacy in the measurement methods used. In the author's opinion there is a need for identifying the inaccuracies, and limitations should be one of the key guidelines taken into account when formulating the methodological indications and recommendations for future research projects.

The first problem is the nature of the studied phenomenon alone. The differences between the authors result from a number of difficulties, adopted definitions, or conceptualization. In addition, a significant part of the existing measurement proposals does not refer to the notion's conceptualization. It is only limited to the choice of variables, without indicating the

multidimensionality or an ambiguous nature. The importance of the process of arriving at understanding the term, identifying, and defining how a given term is understood should be emphasized in the research procedure (Babbie, 2008). Conceptualization, which is discussed here, is a process of agreeing on the meaning of the terms. Its result is giving meaning to a term by means of indicators, and thus marks of presence of the notion studied. It constitutes the necessary condition for further actions in favor of operationalization and implementing empirical research on crowdsourcing. The most often quoted paper related to crowdsourcing defines it as "the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call. This can take the form of peer-production (when the job is performed collaboratively) but is also often undertaken by sole individuals" (Howe, 2008). In his, work Howe points out the affinity of outsourcing, peer-production, and crowdsourcing.

Nonetheless, Howe's approach seems to have some constraints. The author indicates the similarity between crowdsourcing and outsourcing and peer-production. In outsourcing, a supplier, selected by the organization, carries out some specific actions in accordance with the requirements and agreement. Peer-production assumes decentralization of tasks, large dispersion of the team, independent choice of tasks based on a self-assessment of skills and interests and treating the products or services being created as common goods available for a wider circle of recipients. In crowdsourcing, we are dealing with the crowd which is difficult to specify or define. Concluding agreements may prove to be impossible. Crowdsourcing should, however, be considered as a broader term: the crowd can focus its actions also on other activities. In the author's opinion, Howe's concept may be assumed as the principal definition, but at the same time connecting crowdsourcing with outsourcing and peer-production should be rejected.

The next issue is the need for a holistic look at crowdsourcing – this is required by the high level of this term's complexity. What is more, the methodological rigor requires its development according to the rule of continuity, namely taking into consideration previous studies. The research on crowdsourcing is not made easier due to its multidimensionality and many-sidedness (Cullina et al., 2015). The authors Zhao and Zhu (2014), based on a review of 55 articles from the years 2006-2011 devoted to crowdsourcing, ascertain that future research should be conducted taking into account three perspectives or levels: organization (acceptance, implementation, management, quality, evaluation), technology (incentive mechanisms, technological issues), and participation (crowd motivation, organization employees' behaviors). However, in all of the existing research, a simplified

approach has been used which is limited to one level, selected by the researchers. Among the thirty-two research projects (foreign bases) which refer crowdsourcing, twenty-five take into account the participant level, especially the virtual communities, five take into account the technological level, and two the organizational one. In the case of domestic bases, two research projects consider the virtual community level. Such limitations omit the holistic look at crowdsourcing or even the relationships between each level. The organizational level cannot exist without the technological level. In turn, the participant's level may exactly be a result of the organizational level. Instead of studying each level separately, future research should expand the scope of study by introducing new measurement scales as well as new mediation and moderation variables. Only on this basis may one conduct a detailed study of the elements and their mutual relations.

The second problem concerns the methodological approach used by researchers. The existing research on crowdsourcing is conducted according to a constructivist belief. It assumes that the nature of social reality is subjective and it only exists owing to an agreement between people. From this point of view, reality is changeable and not durable. Organizational cognition results from constantly occurring activity of the organization's members in the reality which surrounds them. Organizations should be treated as systems of knowledge composed of the knowledge of the members of these organizations and the social interactions between them (Petit & Huault, 2008). Such an approach to the issue decreases the coherence of the empirical research conducted in the literature and it reveals a peculiar research gap, consisting in the lack of an overall look at crowdsourcing.

The third problem is the research tool. There is still a lack of an unequivocal standpoint when it comes to the method of measuring crowdsourcing (Exel, Dias, & Fruijtier, 2011). The existing measurement tools differ depending on the research study. Tendencies are being observed to develop one's own instruments or adapting the existing ones. Scientists attempted to study crowdsourcing including examples of good practices and case studies (Brabham, 2008; Leimeister et al., 2009; Huang, White, & Dumais, 2011; Jain et al., 2011; Hutter, Hautz, Füller, Mueller, & Matzler, 2011; Yang, Ackerman, & Adamic, 2011; Zheng et al., 2011; Hung, Lai, & Cho, 2014; Munro, 2012; Rotman, 2012; Mason & Suri, 2012; Shao, Shi, Xu, & Liu, 2012; Sun, Wang, Yin, & Che 2012; Tokarchuk, Cuel, & Zamarian, 2012; Mortara, Ford, & Jaeger, 2013). In addition, experiments were conducted; Horton, 2011; Blohm, Leimeister, & Krcmar, 2013; Morris, Dontcheva, & Gerber, 2012; Franke, Lettl, Roiser, & Tuertscher 2013; Kazai, Kamps, & Milic-Frayling, 2013). The researchers also used survey questionnaires, and interviews (Sun et al., 2012). Nevertheless, most papers were conceptual publications. The research ones focused on task

designing (Zheng et al., 2011), motivation problems (Leimeister et al., 2009; Frey, Lüthje, & Haag, 2011; Moris et al., 2012; Zheng et al., 2011; Zhao & Zhu, 2014), systems (Satzger et al., 2013; Hong & Pavlou, 2012), task coordination (Skopik, Schall, & Dustdar, 2010; Schall, 2012; Satzger et al., 2013), control of work quality and results (Satzger et al., 2013; Műller, 2010; Ryu & Lease, 2011; Xu et al., 2012).

As a result, one observes a multitude of approaches, which have their limitations. In order to indicate them, two purposefully chosen articles were analyzed: one which takes into account the quantitative studies, whereas the second one the qualitative studies. For example, in the quantitative approach, the researchers search for a model of statistically proven relationship between the variables. A contribution to testing this doubt is the research on crowdsourcing conducted by Yejun Xu, Enrique Ribeiro-Soriano and Gonzalez-Garcia in 2013. The research sample included the biotechnical industry and telecommunications enterprises operating in the Chinese market. A questionnaire survey was conducted, composed of 8 questions. The sample size was 393 enterprises (201 from the biotechnological industry and 192 from the telecommunications market). Hypotheses were studied which concerned the relationship between crowdsourcing and innovative competencies, the key competencies according to J. Schumpeter's approach, continuous improvement of competences. Taking into account the lack of earlier research studies and by the same token lack of measurement tools – the authors used the Delphi technique. They invited 24 experts: company managers, biotechnological and telecommunications industry specialists, and professors who deal with research on crowdsourcing. They received a proposal of a survey questionnaire composed of 14 items. Finally, they were reduced to 8 items. A Likert-type scale was used, with a range of five points from 1 – "much worse" to 5 – "much better". The obtained results confirm the relationships between crowdsourcing and the dependent variables distinguished during the study. The quoted results of empirical studies have their limitations. Firstly, the test sample, which includes just two industries in China, and therefore, is potentially affected by factors specific to these types of entities. In addition, markets were considered in which expenditure on research and development is very high. Secondly, the respondents were managers of the highest level responsible for the whole enterprise, which could have distorted their perception of crowdsourcing in the direction of innovations or cost optimising. Thirdly, limiting crowdsourcing to 8 items may constitute another limitation. Asking the respondents if they possess a crowdsourcing platform and whether they possess security systems protecting against data leakage, seems inadequate. Fourthly, it needs to be borne in mind that the quantitative approach has some specific threats,

inter alia: it does not enable disclosing the best combinations and the most effective strategies. Testing hypotheses are connected with searching for existing models of dependencies and, to a limited extent, it formulates their practical implications.

It is pointed out in the literature that a case study may be used for identifying motivation in crowdsourcing, complementing internal competencies, acquiring ideas, solving problems, impact on business models, obtaining benefits for the organization and its clients, knowledge production, and collaboration with various entities (Flyvbjerg, 2004; Sarker, Xiao, & Beaulieu, 2013; Yin, 2013). One example is the studies by Schlagwein and Bjørn-Andersen conducted at LEGO. The study covered the LEGO Cuusoo platform. In the years 2010-2014, a total of 19 in-depth interviews were conducted with managers and 25 informal personal discussions or online discussions with 25 internal and external stakeholders. It aimed to identify the importance of crowdsourcing for organizational learning. The authors ascertained that the necessities connected with explaining research issues, complex cause and effect relations, the researcher's interest in a contemporary phenomenon and its context, not evident borders between them, lack of possibility to influence them, and the need to evaluate the studied phenomena, support the choice of a case study as the research method. The case study may constitute an answer to the arising problems related to measuring crowdsourcing, i.e., early stage of knowledge development, need to identify the phenomenon in a given context, unclear borders between the phenomenon and its context, developing the existing theory, explaining phenomena, which have not been identified so far, analysis of organization behaviors, testing theory and understanding the circumstances of events, processes without conducting any manipulation related to their course. Moreover, the case study is a useful research method when testing hypotheses, particularly the hypothesis, which supposes the existence of a necessary condition and sufficient condition. This means orientation on preparing the actions of the decision-maker, studying the issues connected with the context of a given phenomenon and people's behaviors participating in it.

In conclusion, a synthesis of the above-mentioned considerations and the identified methodological challenges enables bringing to light some methodological guidelines for future research on crowdsourcing:

1) The measurement tool should cover by its range all three crowdsourcing levels, i.e., organizational, technological, and participant.
2) A quantitative-qualitative approach may make it possible to achieve testing and theory creating goals. For instance, a multiple case study may be a reference to the recommendations of other researchers identified,

based on the systematic literature review. The quantitative-qualitative approach is recommended by Brabham and it will enable the expansion of knowledge on crowdsourcing.
3) Research should be conducted taking into account the constructivist paradigm. Such approach to the issue increases the coherence of the empirical studies conducted in the literature and fills in the specific research gap, consisting of the lack of a comprehensive look at crowdsourcing.

CONCLUSION

Based on the conducted systematic literature review a few methodological guidelines for future studies on crowdsourcing may be proposed.

Firstly, crowdsourcing is a relatively new concept. Focusing on theoretical considerations means that in the theoretical and practical aspects there is still "terminological chaos," that too high an advantage of theoretical approaches persists, and many areas are completely untouched or poorly clarified in the literature. Most domestic publications focused on an analysis of best practices, also showing the benefits coming from crowdsourcing and the possibilities of its use.

Secondly, the crowdsourcing analysis presented in this elaboration points to generally accepted convictions in the literature on the impact of crowdsourcing on innovativeness or competences. Nevertheless, despite the recommendations included in the subject literature, crowdsourcing is not formulated holistically. The empirical study of these relations focuses only on individual levels: organization, technology, and participant. Thus, the identified relations will take place only for one, chosen level. An answer to these problems may be the quantitative and qualitative approach – on the one hand; it will enable achieving the testing goals and, on the other, the theory genic ones.

Thirdly, the multitude of crowdsourcing definitions or interpretations does not facilitate the development of adequate measurement tools. Nevertheless, there is a need to analyze the existing methods of measuring crowdsourcing, elimination of limitations and inaccuracies of the present methodologies of measuring crowdsourcing – based on it developing an appropriate measurement method taking into account the realization of goals of other researchers' work. This is important due to the fact that a proper definition and, next, operationalization, constitute the basis for conducting a proper measurement of this interesting, although difficult, concept.

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Abstrakt

Crowdsourcing jest pojęciem stosunkowo nowym i pomimo zainteresowania badaczy nadal niewiele o nim wiadomo. Obserwuje się jednocześnie trudności natury poznawczej i praktycznej. Stało się to przesłanką do podjęcia refleksji na temat metodologii badań nad tym pojęciem. Przedmiotem artykułu jest identyfikacja dotychczasowych procedur badania crowdsourcingu, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem wyzwań metodologicznych, jakie mogą pojawić się przed badaczami tego pojęcia. Artykuł powstał w oparciu o systematyczny przegląd literatury. Jego wyniki pozwoliły sformułować pewne wskazówki metodologiczne dla dalszych badań. Badania powinny być prowadzone z uwzględnieniem trzech poziomów crowdsourcingu: organizacja, technologia, and uczestnictwo. Dodatkowo podejście ilościowo-jakościowe pozwoli na poszerzenie wiedzy o crowdsourcingu.
Słowa kluczowe: *crowdsourcing, metodologia, procedura badań, metody badań*

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