

FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL WITH CITY BRANDING

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Abstract

Brand strategies are becoming more and more common to all of us, irrespective of the field we carry our day to day activities: trade, politics, sports, art, education, fashion, everything is branded. This paper proposes an analysis of city branding process as a response to the local versus global debate, highlighting the city branding status in Romania, from the European perspective, as a first step, and further as an opportunity of accessing global community. In reaching this point, the paper provides a broader examination of city branding process, focusing on few successful city branding stories. The paper uses the experience of other Central Eastern European cities with which Romania shares the same (at a certain degree) political, social and economic background, to notice the similarities or differences between the cities of Romania and other countries' strategies. Second data analysis will offer supplementary information about the effectiveness of city brand strategies. According to our research findings, the city brand is still in its early stages in Romania.

Key words: city brand, globalization, local, Romania

JEL Classification: M30, O18

I. INTRODUCTION

We are moving now to “the age of cities” (Chirico, 2014, p. 452): few facts about city present status and development perspectives should be mentioned. Five of the top ten global cities are located in Asia (Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney and Seoul), three in United States (New York, Chicago and Los Angeles) and only two in Europe (London and Paris) (Chirico, 2014, p. 453). But five of the most powerful cities are located (each) in United States (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Washington) and Asia (Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai, Seoul, Beijing, Osaka, Shenzhen) and six in Europe (London, Paris, Zurich, Brussels, Rhine-Ruhr) (Florida, 2012a), (Florida, 2012b) cited by (Anttiroiko, 2014, p. 28). According to FDI report Global Cities of the Future 2014-2015 (Global Cities of the Future 2014-2015: FDI Strategy, 2015, p. 23), only eight cities out of Top 25 FDI Strategy cities are locate in Europe, four in United States and the other are located mostly in countries with emerging economies. The idea is that the large cities of Asia and South America are recovering and becoming a threat to the European cities. The London School of Economics, in Urban Age Project, predicts that 75% of the global population will be concentrated in a few urban centers by 2050, and even today, 80% of the population of Latin America live in cities; London is responsible “for 20-25% of Great Britain GDP”, and Moscow and St. Petersburg megacities represent 30% of Russia GDP (Nordstrom & Schlingmann, 2015, pp. 25-26).

“Today, the world is one market; the advance of globalization means that every country, city and region must compete with every other for its share in the world’s commercial, political, social and cultural transactions” (Anholt, 2010a, pp. 3-4). “[...] cities rather than states are becoming the islands of governance on which the future world order will be built” (Khanna, 2010).

II. FROM LOCAL TO GLOBAL WITH CITY BRANDING. LITERATURE REVIEW

Global and local are two terms we cannot, for the moment, dissociate or place in an antagonistic relationship. The place brand concept itself associates these terms: globalization (Andrew, 2011, p. 52) is “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”. He considers globalization as a “process of expansion” of “relations between forms and social local and distant events” and “local events” though similarly, may have different interpretations or manifestations, depending on their evolution conditions and exemplify through “global relations can lead to prosperity in a city while the same process can cause a downturn in another city” (Andrew, 2011, p. 52).

Local is not necessarily defined as the opposite of global. The place is defined in the dictionary as “a point, a portion determined in space” and the local is “a characteristic of a particular place or region; specific to a certain place” (www.dexonline.ro).

“Local development is defined as the expression of local solidarity, creating new social relations, revealing the will of the inhabitants in a region to capitalize local resources” (Dinca & Dumitrica, 2010, p. 62). The development involves “shifting from one old qualitative state to another new”, implies not only increase, but also change and determines increased quality of local life (Dinca & Dumitrica, 2010, p. 63). It is a “complex process of improving welfare, in a territory through concentrated actions of local, regional and national players” (Dinca &

Dumitrica, 2010, p. 64). These actions fall within the territory, but in some cases they go beyond it and get overall value – such as environmental protection, measures against pollution or terrorism.

The objectives of local development are – in the economic sense – “economic prosperity and social welfare by creating a favorable business environment...” and involve “the existence of a regulatory and procedural framework, of a local partnership, of a local development strategy and of resources” (Dinca & Dumitrica, 2010, p. 63). In the context of today’s complex changes, the term “local” expands to “intercommunal, interregional and even cross-border level” (Dinca & Dumitrica, 2010, p. 63).

We cannot speak of global and local, without referring to the theory of localization – “part of economic theory which analyses the forces determining the location of economic activities” (Dinca & Dumitrica, 2010, p. 39). Human settlements have developed nearby natural resources needed for daily living, have developed defense systems and communication channels of different complexity, depending on the development phase of engineering and technology. Today, communication and transport are very sophisticated, so the location of economic activity takes on other meanings.

In the evolution of society, locations were well defined in space, being defined as territories, characterized by two axes of study: institutional territory – which belongs to the state and the citizens and relational territory corresponding to the enterprise, the user and the inhabitant” (Dinca & Dumitrica, 2010, p. 69). Currently, there is a tendency to minimize the importance of the borders (territorial demarcations between countries) in supranational organizations (such as the European Union) and emphasize the relational territory in close connection with the “market”.

Considering the territory from these two perspectives, one can notice the (imperfect) delineation of governance, specific to the institutional territory associated to “public sphere” and public management, specific to relational territory associated to “private sphere” (Paunescu, 2008, p. 32). Restraining the state’s role causes the emergence of the new public management and new governance and pluralist governance (Paunescu, Managementul sectorului public, 2008, p. 38). The new public management provides “public sectors being rendered more efficient by reformation according to the model in the private sector [and rely on] the transfer of mechanisms [of the market to] determine its efficiency and awareness to consumer citizen” (Paunescu, 2008, p. 38). It is an entrepreneurial leadership result and competition-oriented style, fostering decentralization of public service, it is based on contractual relationships (Paunescu, 2008, p. 38-39). The new governance aims at the “citizen” and “global needs (quality of life)” that become “central concept” of the doctrine, has rather a partnership than competition nature (Paunescu, 2008, p. 38-40).

“Urban development is a form of local development that is centered on the city as the most dynamic and active center of economic growth, the true engine of growth and development model, the center of scientific research technological innovation and a true economic incubator” (Dinca & Dumitrica, 2010, p. 13).

Considering that we are moving to “the age of cities” (Chirico, 2014, p. 452), few facts about city present status and development perspectives should be mentioned. Five of the top ten global cities are located in Asia (Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney and Seoul), three in United States (New York, Chicago and Los Angeles) and only two in Europe (London and Paris) (Chirico, 2014, p. 453). But five of the most powerful cities are located (each) in United States (New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, Boston, Washington) and Asia (Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai, Seoul, Beijing, Osaka, Shenzhen) and six in Europe (London, Paris, Zurich, Brussels, Rhine-Ruhr) ((Florida, 2012a), (Florida, 2012b) cited by (Anttiroiko, 2014, p. 28)). According to FDI report Global Cities of the Future 2014-2015 (Global Cities of the Future 2014-2015: FDI Strategy, 2015, p. 23), only eight cities out of Top 25 FDI Strategy cities are located in Europe, four in United States and the other are located mostly in countries with emerging economies. The idea is that the large cities of Asia and South America are recovering and becoming a threat to the European cities.

There are two ways of adapting cities to globalization (Anttiroiko, 2014, p. 22): either “cities attract values from global flows and strengthen their export base” or “promote solidarity and sustainability from the local to the global level as a joint effort of local governments and other public bodies and sometimes also in partnership with private sector actors”. Several theories and hypotheses of city development are developed over time, one of the latest being “world city hypothesis”, according to which “economic globalization is articulated through urban nodal points, leading to the restructuring of these cities and the asymmetric relations with cities in terms of a global division of labor” (Anttiroiko, 2014, p. 23). The other hypothesis is based on attracting resources and conceptualizes the transition between globalization and city brand by two specific strategies: attracting foreign investment and industrial specialization (Anttiroiko, 2014, p. 34). The two hypotheses differ in the perspective they address city development. The first is based on “Marxist-inspired world systems theory”, social equity oriented, and the second is “more pragmatic and institutionally oriented” (Anttiroiko, 2014, p. 35).

Definition and characterization of contemporary globalization attract the interest of many researchers (Anttiroiko, 2014), (Chirico, 2014), (Ritzer & Dean, 2015). Our intention is not to thoroughly analyse the theories of globalization, but we review the features of this process today.

We use the term “contemporary” to temporally delineate the evolution phase of this process. There have always been links between states, regions, cities or other forms of social organization (Chirico, 2014, p. 25), with

varying degrees of complexity, characteristics and names (Chirico, 2014), (Ritzer & Dean, 2015), depending on society development level (communication, production and economic exchanges, lifestyle, etc.) – but until today, “societies were more independent than dependent” (Chirico, 2014, p. 25). Today, it is normal that the process be of a qualitative higher level of complexity, and our daily routine life cannot be defined outside of globalization. “Globalization is a transplanetary process or set of processes involving increasing liquidity and the growing multidirectional flows of people, objects, places and information as well as the structures they encounter and create that are barriers to, or expedite, those flows...” (Ritzer & Dean, 2015, p. 2).

World Society Theory defines contemporary globalization as “the most recent period of intensifying patterns of inter-societal connections that have been trending for centuries” and stresses “principal of rationality and of rational organizational forms, such as bureaucratic governments and educational systems” (Chirico, 2014, p. 25). This theory supports the development of global society separate from the state. In other words, although each entity (country, organization, corporation, etc.) has its own conception, in each of these entities one can notice certain common “patterns” it is based on and which form “a world culture” (Chirico, 2014, p. 43).

The theory of global systems considers globalization as “a unique reorganization of social life, altering it in such fundamental ways that globalization should be viewed as marking a new era” (Chirico, 2014, p. 25).

Regardless of the viewpoint and the field of interest, the common element of the concept is the global dimension of the process and the interdependence of its components, the depth down of the process, the theorists agreed that the “Globalization is a gradual macro-structuration of the world order, which implies a development towards a world-scale systemic interdependency and new relationships between national and sub-national political entities” (Robertson, 1990, p. 22) cited by (Anttiroiko, 2014, p. 19).

Washington Consensus stipulates that “stimulating private market forces is considered the engine of growth” (Ritzer & Dean, 2015, p. 86). Neoliberalism connects the development of a country to “its degree of openness to trade and international financial flows” and to “elimination of customs barriers, to trade liberalization” (Dobrescu, 2013b, p. 30). The subtle effect was relocation or moving some production capabilities to countries with cheap, lot, qualified or easily qualifying labor force areas, such as Asian countries, i.e. it made “technology” available for them to combine it with the “population”, thereby preparing the way for development (Dobrescu, 2010, p. 24).

We shall hereinafter characterize these terms from the city brand perspective – a concept that combines globalization – “brand” and local – city. We explain below our view.

In the commercial sense the brand especially developed in the nineteenth century, when transport became possible on long distances and in large quantities and the origin of the goods had to be easily recognized by distant buyers and separated from the manufacturer. They were marked by a distinct sign – the brand, which guaranteed the origin and quality of products (Kotler & Armstrong, 2008, p. 332), (Lipovetsky, 2007, p. 23)). Today branding – techniques, strategies, and management – is found everywhere: “Branding has so much overpassed its commercial origins, that its impact is virtually immeasurable in social and cultural terms. It has spread in culture, sports, fashion, travel, art, theatre, literature, regional and national policy and in almost all other areas we might think of” (Olins, 2010, p. 16). “This new paradigm means that ambitious cities have to proactively shape and influence what people think about them and to position with strategic vision” (Baker, 2011, p. xiii).

Similar to the commercial brand, Kavaratzis & Ashworth (2005, p. 506) and Anholt (2010b) highlight the historic nature of place brand: cities, regions, countries were concerned on the one hand, about individualization as opposed to the other, but also by attracting resources (natural, people, “influence”), sometimes materializing in military alliance, dating, treaties and commercial agreements, etc.

Initially, cities were personalized by coat of arms, logo, flag, and colors. But “the contribution that logo or slogan can have in the management of places as brands is rather limited” (Govers, 2013). Although for some people branding “is about designing the logos and slogans for places, while forgetting that their essence is to make them identifiable as being distinct” (Govers, 2013). And it is further explained that “name or logo is a tool to identify and recognize, but the essence of branding is to ensure that customers attach distinctive associations to this entity (building the reputation)” (Govers, 2013).

“In a globalized world, more and more places compete more intensely, partly because, due to expanded tourism, migration and global access of the media and technology, markets come more frequently in contact with the places and at different levels, and therefore << corporate reputation >> for places becomes more important” (Govers, 2011). It is not about “society merchantability [...] but the awareness that every organization, symbolizing the city or country, must ensure growth and development, attract resources, people, energy and means to itself. To attract them, they must be convenient and it must seduce them – hence, the brand logic” (Kapferer, 2008, p. 126).

On the other hand, it is about the residents, “the public, public or private players who are living the brand” (Govers, 2011), those who should have a favorable perspective and a positive attitude to the city they live in. Affirmation and prosperity of places is conditional today on how they know to use “the business weapons” (Anholt, 2010b). Baker (2011, p. xiii) emphasizes the role of city branding: “Cities and mega-cities, rather than countries, are becoming more and more the protagonists of different geographical regions”.

We wish to distance ourselves from these “classic” definitions of brand (www.ama.org), Kotler & Armstrong (2008, p. 332), Aaker (2005, p. 23) because they highlight the identity, affiliation and differentiation of product /

service in relationship with the manufacturer / owner, which are hardly proven in the place brand context. The place brand is “a network of associations in the consumer’s mind based on visual, verbal and behavioral expression of place, which is represented by purposes, communication, values and stakeholders’ general culture and the overall look of the place” (Zenker & Braun, 2010, p. 3).

Cities are often objectively positioned as native places, where we are born, we grow, and we learn, where we work and where our entire existence is flowing. We are linked to them by unique, unrepeatable experiences. For natives, cities are relatively easy to position. But “the perceptions of those who live in a certain place are often different from perceptions of those who visit this place” (Ries & Trout, 2004, p. 192) or to investors who either place their capital in the city and / or move their families for a new long-term residence.

City branding is not about logo or slogan. Its definition is still in debate. Branding must go beyond the visual elements and add a coherent, long term and encompassing strategy to them.

III. CITY BRANDING – FACTS AND FIGURES

The first part presented few insights of city branding and local – global theoretical aspects. This one presents “facts and figures” about city branding. The objective is to identify strategies, their common aspects and results of city branding, using case studies and secondary analyses of international ranking and statistics documents.

The paper is based on the case studies of Barcelona, Budapest and Shanghai. Barcelona (Belloso, 2011, p. 118-123), is a “classic” of city brand success story. Budapest (Szondi, 2011, p. 124-130) is a capital city and shares the same communist and post-communist history, as Bucharest, the capital of Romania, Shanghai (Wang, Xiaokaiti, Yan, & Zhou, 2012) brings the dynamism of the emerging markets. In the end of this chapter, we shall use the secondary analyses to make a comparison between these cities and prove the efficiency and opportunity of this new strategy applied to places.

The common feature of Barcelona and Budapest is that they belong to the countries ending with a political regime, commit themselves to democracy and have to differentiate themselves from the “compact, undifferentiated, anonymous and boring mass” (Olins, 2010, p. 140-141) as they were known during the communist regime.

The “process of radical and global transformation” (Belloso, 2011, p. 119) of Barcelona has few key success factors: long-term vision highlighted in multiannual strategic plans, proper leadership of the authorities, involvement of the civil society and the city itself values. The first Strategic Metropolitan Plan – more than 10 years period – included new infrastructure, re-urbanization, developing of education and health care systems, new business orientation. At the end of this strategic phase, Barcelona hosted the Olympic Games (1992). The following plans launched in 1994, 1999 and 2003 “continued with the process of redesign and consolidation of the metropolitan area of Barcelona as one of the most important metropolitan areas in the European city network” (Belloso, 2011, p. 122) when the cultural attributes of Barcelona were fully exploited in “thematic years” (The Gaudi Year, The Design Year, etc.). More, the city is facing the future with the project 22@Barcelona – an area “offering modern spaces for the strategic concentration of intensive knowledge-based activities” as well as with the candidacy to host the Winter Olympic Games in 2022 (Belloso, 2011, p. 122-123).

The benefits of the branding are highlighted also by the Eurobarometer (2013) ranks: 66% of the respondents to the survey “are satisfied to live in” Barcelona (p. 16), but it is an expensive city as housing price (61% not considering it “easy to find good housing at a reasonable price) (p. 60). Also, Barcelona is opened to foreigners as 74% of the respondents to the survey considering that “the presence of foreigners is good for” the city, although they are not very well integrated (as 50% stated) (Eurobarometer - Quality of Life in European Cities, 2013, p. 64; 69).

Budapest shares the same experience as Bucharest. But its brand story started in 2009 with the setting up of the City Identity Office as well as with the “development of a detailed typography guidebook [outlining] the visual elements of the official logo of Budapest [and how it to be used] by all institutions that belong to the municipality” (Szondi, 2011, p. 126). The branding strategy had in view also the identification of “brand values, based on organic and induced values” such as “panorama of Budapest, its waters, lifestyle and architectural heritage [... and] induced values such as creativity, knowledge generation or business friendliness business brand” (Szondi, 2011, p. 126). The first concerns had proceeded even setting up of City Identity Office. It is the movement “I love Budapest” in 2004 aimed at “gathering and uniting enthusiastic and involved people who are willing to do something for the city and make Budapest a more exciting, dynamic, successful and likeable place” (Szondi, 2011, p. 127), followed by “Let’s invent Budapest - a platform for exchanging ideas and concepts, discussing views and counterinterviews about Budapest, the city and how citizens would like to imagine it” (Szondi, 2011 p. 127). These actions of gathering people around the brand are beneficial to the brand communities, in terms of content, extend and involvement of young generation.

Another tactic is the organization of mega-events, to attract visitors from Hungary or abroad: Spring and Autumn Festivals, Budapest Fair and Sziget Festival, Budapest positioning itself long time as “Festival City, striving to become one of the leading cultural capitals of Europe” (Szondi, 2011, p. 128). Budapest strategy succeeded in being designated by the European Union “to host the European Union Institute of Innovation and Technology in acknowledgement of the long tradition of excellence in Hungarian education, research and innovation” and it was ranked as “the sixth most attractive international conference destination in 2009, well ahead of any other Eastern

European cities” (Szondi, 2011, p. 127). Budapest is ranked in a minor position (only 43%) than Barcelona (66%), as inhabitants satisfying in living in the city, although only 13% consider to be “easy to find housing at a reasonable price” (Eurobarometer - Quality of Life in European Cities, 2013, p. 16; 60). Its citizens are more generous than Barcelona’s with the foreigners, 43% considering that their presence “is good for the city” and they are better integrated in Budapest (21%) than in Barcelona (14%) (Eurobarometer - Quality of Life in European Cities, 2013, p. 64; 69).

The live radio and TV broadcast of international events offer the cities unbelievable opportunities of promotion. The events organized or hosted by these cities are broadcast “on spot” worldwide. The city brand is associated with the event itself - content, thematic, participants, etc., but also with aspects specifically related to the city – hospitality, logistics, safety, financial potential, landscape, architectural heritage, culture, etc.

The itinerant events as World Exhibitions – themselves branded – help the host cities to globally transmit their identity, image, equity and promise. World Expo 2010 Shanghai gathered 84 mil. visitors from 193 countries during six months period (Wang, Xiaokaiti, Yan, & Zhou, 2012, p. 1284). The mega - events have major implications for the host city or country: creating new jobs for internal publics, changing urban landscape (new constructions, development or modernization of public services, etc.) and involving all the stakeholders, both internal and external, at the event and, finally, improving international relations (Wang, et al., 2010, p. 1285).

The city branding process is perceived as “multilevel communication”: the level of the tangible physical aspects, the level of the propaganda tools of city marketing and the level of people communication about the city, either direct or through mass media (Wang, H. et al., 2010, p. 1285). In this case, Shanghai reduced the gap “between itself and the other superstar cities in terms of economic capacity and dynamics” (Zhang & Wu, 2009) cited by (Wang, H. et al., 2010, p. 1291), and enhanced “the city identity in terms of combination of a strong personality as a former colonial and an energetic economic center” (Wang, H. et al., 2010, p. 1291-1292)

IV. INSIGHTS IN CITY BRANDING IN ROMANIA. RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The objective of our research is to identify the present status of city branding in Romania as an opportunity or potential approach of the general evolution of cities on the global environment.

We would have liked to have followed, in this paper, other similar works (Gertner, 2011), (Hankinson, 2010), (Hanna & Rowley, 2008) but, as there is very little Romanian literature on place (country, city) brand, and the most of it is about country or tourism brand. Sibiu may be considered as an introduction to the theory and practice of city branding due to its experience as European Capital of Culture. Botnaru (2009) and Iohannis (2014) present extensively this project and its impact. Sibiu, therefore, besides the cultural European dimension, use culture to “build social cohesion and local pride” (ECOTEC, 2009, 39) and European Capital of Culture was considered “an engine to propel the development of the city and not [as] an end in itself” (Iohannis 2014. 110).

The motivation of Sibiu was translated into “a number of economic and tourism objectives, including those of raising the international profile of Sibiu, attracting international visitors, creating an economic downstream, improving infrastructure and promoting creativity and innovation” (ECOTEC, 2009, 43). The experience of organizing mega-events and cultural management “will be continued in the coming years, in many other initiatives” (Iohannis 2014, 108).

Bucharest developed few research activities aiming city branding. Bucharest City Hall launches a project to determine the identity of the city, in 2012. Bucharest is defined as “the place where the past meets the future and historical heritage meets modernity - a city alive, vibrant, open and welcoming” and the most representative objective are the Parliament Palace, the Romanian Athenaeum and the Arch of Triumph (www.b365.ro, 2012). Unfortunately, the “new brand” refers to the replacing of St. Dimitrie the Old with the St. Dimitrie the New in the city coat. The new religious picture has a very restrictive impact and it is not, by all means, a brand, but an element in the city coat – purposely a complicate enough logo, not something very accessible, dedicated more to historical objectives, not like a brand. We have found out, from a simple “net information exercise” that Bucharest is a “destination for fun” (Iancu, 2012) or the Russian Church is the symbol of the “Paris of East” or that Bucharest is “one the most liveable cities of the world” (www.wanderingearl.com, 2013).

Comparing Bucharest to other Central – Eastern European cities, we realize its modest rank, according to the European Cities and Regions of the Future 2012/2013 and 2014/2015 (European Cities and Regions of the Future 2012-2013, 2012), (European Cities and Regions of the Future 2014-2015, 2014): the fifth rank on Top 10 East European Cities, in 2012/2013, and the third position in Top 10 Major European Cities – Cost Effectiveness, in 2014/2015.

Having in view the place brand knowledge in Romania is in its very early stage, and mostly oriented to country brand, and not always properly used, we need to go further with our research, to identify on one hand, the attitude of the Bucharest stakeholders about city brand, and on the other hand, to what extent they are familiar with the general geopolitical environment: globalization, emerging economies, European Union present status, etc., in which Bucharest should be struggling for its position on the global city market. We shall use qualitative analyses with in-depth interviews.

We conducted our research only in Bucharest, since this was the most representative city of Romania and it should be an outpost of this innovative strategy. The research is based on a qualitative analyses using in-depth interviews with 15 persons, 20 – 60 years old, employed to state or private companies.

Generally, the respondents are familiarized with the “brand” concept, they understand its meaning in importance as contemporary life elements or trend. Only two of the respondents over 45 years (man, engineer, 46 years, man, teacher, 57 years) were reluctant about the concept, but after discussing about their daily buying preferences, they finally accepted that they are brand-oriented, even without acknowledged it. They also consider that “Bucharest may become brand, if you work hard for this” (man, teacher, 48 years) or “anything and anyhow, only to be better for us, because we cannot continue like this” (woman, private entrepreneur, 51 years).

They consider the final goal of Bucharest brand as a “cleaner” and “more civilized” city, emphasizing that Bucharest should attract “people with money” (woman, veterinarian, 32 years), “young and dynamic persons” (woman, private entrepreneur, 37 years, man, private entrepreneur, 35 years), able and willing “to work, to create, to produce” (man, multinational company, higher education, 42 years, man, private entrepreneur, 35 years). The younger respondents would not wish to emigrate to other countries if they had the same professional, personal and economical perspective in Romania, as abroad (man, doctor, 27 years, woman, manager, 25 years). In their opinion we feel the congruence of Bucharest with Romania, as country, the congruence of the local with the national level. The respondents are unanimous in appreciating Bucharest not only as a tourist destination, but also as cultural center, but “it could become this if someone manages it” (man, doctor, 27 years), “coherently, in a long term project” (woman, manager, 25 years), because “Bucharest is the place where we are living and we shall live all our life” (woman, nurse, 37 years, woman, private entrepreneur, 51 years), “the place where we should live well” (man, teacher, 48 years) and for this reason “we need money, good jobs, great companies” (man, engineer, 24 years, woman, manager, 25 years). In other words, this branding strategy should be oriented “to the businessmen” (man, engineer, multinational company, 42 years), to “investors” (man, engineer, 46 years) because “tourists are good, but they come and go, these one [businessmen, investors] remain here longer” (woman, private entrepreneur, 37 years).

Regarding the values of Bucharest to be used in the branding strategy, the responses are too long and complex, but their common points are historical and cultural heritage and “Little Paris” (woman, nurse, 37 years, man, engineer, 46 years and multinational company, 42 years). The younger respondents referred to the entertainment, clubbing, leisure facilities (woman, student, 21 years, man, engineer, 24 years, man, graphic artist, 30 years), “people hospitality” (woman, pharmacist, 32 years, woman, private entrepreneur, 51 years). The respondents over 45 years old reproached the “pre-revolution economic potential has recently vanished, disappeared” (man, teacher, 57 years, woman, private entrepreneur, 51 years). The regress of the general economic situation generated a discussions with the respondents. They hold as responsible for the regression of the society the entire political class, the leaders of all kind and on all the level, their lack of interest and / or education, lack of patriotism (man, teacher, 57 years, woman, private entrepreneur, 37 years). The same unanimous lack of trust in the authorities is the response to the questions about the persons involved in this project.

The second part of the interview concerning the general economic, politic and social situation raised few issues we have not even think about. First of all, it is the reduction of the general international situation to the incompetence of Romanian political leaders to manage the country: “everything goes wrong because all our politicians are concerned to steel more, not to rule this country” (man, engineer, 46 years, woman, private entrepreneur, 51 years, man, teacher, 57 years). The relation with European Union balances between “Europe Union did not care about us” (man, graphic artist, 30 years, woman, pharmacist, 32 years, woman, veterinarian, 32 years) and “If we had acceded to Europe earlier, we should have had another life today” (man, engineer, multinational company, 42 years) or “Europe is a good market, large enough, but we are not competitive” (man, engineer, 46 years).

Secondly, the respondents seem not to be familiar with or at least interested in the rise of the emerging markets (respondents younger than 30 years) or they pay tribute to the stereotype of “China equal a communist country” (respondents over 35 years) in evaluating the current international realities. Or they are aware or afraid of low quality products: “What globalization? Chinaziation maybe, cheap and low quality products made in the “stomach” of the ships on the worldwide ocean” (man, teacher, 48 years). But all the respondents, unanimously admitted “the danger” (woman, nurse, 37 years) of the refugee crisis. It seems that “not being a successful country is very useful today” (woman, pharmacist, 32 years) because “look, what happened to Germany or France” (woman, private entrepreneur, 51 years), maybe “local is better than global, sometimes” (man, teacher, 57 years). The respondents have different opinions about the recent Brexit. Some of the respondents are quite neutral about it: “it is not our business” (woman, veterinarian, 32 years, man, teacher, 57 years). The younger ones appreciated the “courage” of loudly expressing their [British] own voice in Europe (woman, student, 21 years, man, engineer, 24 years). None of them trust in the finalization of this process: “Nobody in interested in such a change in the world” (man, engineer, 46 years), “More or less we are living together” (man, engineer, multinational company, 42 years), “we all depend on each other, we have lost our independency” (private entrepreneur, 51 years). But there is also a traditional view “Russians, this is only Russians’ hand here. They have just made a big mess and that’s all” (man, teacher, 57 years). It is in fact, in evaluating the Brexit, it is the first time when all the respondents, independently,

admitted that “we were living in an interdependent and global mechanism” (woman, private entrepreneur, 51 years) and any part of it might affect the whole, proving that they are “global-oriented”.

There are few findings on the research about Bucharest as city brand. First of all, the respondents attitude about city branding is encouraging. They are familiar with the brand, in general, and they trust this strategy when applied to Bucharest. They directed the strategy more to economic and social goals, than to tourism. Tourism is not enough for a proper development of the city, although all the preoccupations about city branding (improperly named city branding) are addressed mainly to the tourists, not to all the stakeholders of the city.

V. CONCLUSIONS

The whole world is certainly moving towards new paradigms. One of these is the place brand, respectively the city brand, meaning that cities strongly compete for any kind of resources: financial, intellectual capital, natural resources, etc. During the last decade we have leaved as in a century (Dobrescu, 2013b). The state – as we usually known as the ultimate authority in a country – has some of its attributes and responsibilities to inferior level, public or private sector. In this situation, cities are undertaking (or should) the responsibility of attracting these resources. Some of the cities have understood and complied with these new requirements. Other cities successfully advanced due to their country emerging economies (Shanghai).

The cities that have understood the rules of the places competition develop successful brand stories, like Barcelona and Budapest. Bucharest, although the most important city in CEE Europe, after Warsaw, is in its very early stage of branding, with few timid and hesitating approaches, hardly named “branding projects”. This situation is due to the gap between the theory of place brand and its practice. These preoccupations had been conducted mainly around 2007, within Romania accession process to European Union, but even then there were a confusion between tourist brand, country of origin and country brand. Anyhow, what was studied, written and achieved at that time may be considered as a good start for this new discipline of study in Romania.

But, the proper city branding needs vision, long term perspective, involvement of all stakeholders of Bucharest (and not only) and a central, strong and dynamic element capable to gather all the communities around the project (Szondi, 2011, p. 130, Olins, 2010, p. 146).

There are few strong points and encouraging elements. One of them is the favourable attitude of the Bucharest inhabitants about city branding. Unfortunately, it is difficult in identify the central element capable to gather the energies and prompt up this project, due to the general lack of trust in the political leaders or public persons. On the other hand, there are not notable efforts from the authorities to launch such a project. As the respondents answered, there is a confusion between the local and national authorities, many of the respondents used to put the local, city, municipal jobs and duties on the expense of the national level politicians. There is a misunderstanding (or a lack of knowledge) that the state has reduced its role, in the favour of cities, in this case. Still, the respondents, of all ages, referred to the state as the cause or solution to all their problems.

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