Abstract

Museum of Corruption (MoC) is an interdisciplinary platform for researching, contextualizing, and displaying a virtual collection of corruption mechanisms. By thematizing corruption, MoC intends to redefine the concept of the museum as a place where art is collected and exhibited by promoting it into a cultural laboratory of controversial social phenomena. In order to deal with the phenomenology of corruption, MoC advances various layers which are equally important in understanding how corruption works on a societal level. These layers are organised in six departments of corruption: corruption of time (important in helping people navigate through society); corruption of language and culture (as the symbolical heritages of our civilization); corruption of data (whose importance is increasing in the informational society), and corruption of personality and institution (as strongly interconnected because the agent of institutional corruption is always a person).

Against this background, MoC aims at widening the understanding the phenomenology of corruption by approaching it with reference to the above-mentioned departments of corruption (i.e., on a societal level). Therefore, the present exploratory research followed two approaches: (1) the coverage of corruption on the Internet and (2) the in-depth analysis of each department of corruption – starting from the definition advanced by Calil Simão (2011, p. 27) who regarded corruption as the *inability of the individual to put the wellbeing of the community above their own interest*. The coverage of corruption was performed by analysing the first 50 entries after searching for "corruption in Romania/ Serbia/ Ukraine" on Google, in order to get some explanations about why people might refer to corruption in a certain way (often the same way as the media did). The in-depth analysis of each department of corruption was based on three dimensions, namely academic sources research, public perceptions research, and Internet agenda-setting research. Main results reveal the fact that the majority of Google entries refer to corruption of institution (political institutions). References to other institutional types of corruption are very few. The fact that explicit references to other types of corruption are absent or almost absent could be interpreted in the sense that the Internet agenda is full of references to either corruption in general and corruption of political institutions/ parties/ actors etc. This could be further translated into a difficulty for ordinary people to refer to corruption in other terms which exclude the political sector.

Furthermore, by adopting the above-mentioned general definition of corruption and after taking into consideration all the academic sources analysed, people's perceptions and the Internet coverage of each department of corruption, we might say that defining and analysing departments of corruption is as difficult as defining corruption per se. The more abstract the department the more difficult to be defined. Specifically, the departments regarding time, language, and culture were posing more challenges than the departments referring to data, personality, and institution. Even though they were analysed in separate sections, one must take into account the fact that all of them are interconnected, meaning that corruption in one department might further result in specific outcomes in another department, being in line with the idea that corruption is a "globally circulating concept that traverses geographic boundaries, sociocultural contexts, and institutional structure" (Muir & Gupta, 2018, p. S5).

Depictions from the present study might be useful for both the expert and non-expert. Specifically, the concepts and ideas with reference to each department of corruption could be used by artists who could further imagine representations of those concepts, values, and ideas. This analysis might be of benefit for the general audience as well since the very hard to be digested concepts associated with the concept of corruption will be more easily distinguished, assimilated, and could probably have more chances to result in less corruptible attitudes and behaviours.

1. Context

Museum of Corruption (MoC) is an interdisciplinary platform for researching, contextualizing and displaying a virtual collection of corruption mechanisms. In February 2016, ZMUC and Society against Corruption from Serbia founded a Museum of Corruption with a vision that the musealization of corruption, through artistic research and interpretation, enables public dialogue on this phenomenon. By thematizing corruption, MoC intends to redefine the concept of the museum as a place where art is collected and exhibited by promoting it into a cultural laboratory of controversial social phenomena.

ZMUC, as one of the founders of MoC, aims at fighting corruption by collecting (acts of) corruption. As an initiative, it has conducted numerous projects aiming at deconstructing the term of corruption and the mechanisms of its workings, intending to create a database of corruptive practices. Following up on the idea of museums as "cemeteries of art" (as held by Malevich, Soviet Avant-Garde, Italian Futurism) – regarded as places where art ceases to exist by being displaced from real-life contexts, by manipulating the notion of corruption, museum and contemporaneity, the project intends to move corruption from real-life situations into a museum setting and bury it there.

MoC would be dealing with the phenomenology of corruption on a societal level. At this point, it is important to stress that there is a difference between communal level and societal level, meaning that, this research dealt with the difference between community and society. There is a wide series of theories on social development which rely on the fundamental concepts of sociology – gemeinschaft (community), and gesellschaft (society) – derived from the classical formulations of Weber and Tönnies (Stroper, 2005, p. 2). *Community* can be characterized as a good warm word frequently invoked by citizens, social workers, and politicians, whereas *society* is usually connected to something large and impersonal (Tuan, 2002, p. 309). In addition, Tönnies' differentiation develops both terms on completely different material bases: while community involves a sense of security, supply, happiness, and organic attachment, society is associated with exchange, goods, money, and market (Albrecht, 2019, p. 1219).

Regarding different definitions of community and society, it is notable that the majority understand society as a wider and more abstract term than community. Therefore, while researching corruption on a societal level, different departments of corruption are being discovered, including various layers that are important in understanding society. Thus, this research will focus on corruption of time (as the important orientational phenomenon), corruption of language and corruption of culture (as the symbolical heritage of civilization), corruption of data (whose importance is increasing in the informational society), corruption of personality and corruption of institution (as strongly interconnected because the agent of institutional corruption is always a person).

2. Literature review – corruption as the moral inability of citizens to make commitments aimed at common good

Definitions of corruption vary from one source to another, due to different approaches and the complexity attached to this phenomenon. Some authors stress the importance of political corruption (e.g., "upper-level" and "lower-level" corruption) (Morris, 2011, p. 10); others refer more to practices of corruption in developing countries such as market-restricting, state-constraining, political corruption and primitive accumulation, predation or theft (Khan & Gray, 2020); for administrative purposes, acts of corruptions are usually listed such as extortion, bribery, fraud, influence peddling, nepotism, embezzlement, and favouritism (Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication, 2017), but also specified as bribery in medical service delivery, procurement corruption, improper marketing relations, misuse of (high) level positions, undue reimbursement claims, fraud and embezzlement of medicines and medical devices (European Commission).

In addition to that, the anthropology of corruption stresses that "any analysis of the (anti)corruption complex must refer, first and foremost, to the question of the interpretive communities or publics for whom corruption and anti-corruption exist as significant objects of knowledge, concern, and

praxis" (Muir & Gupta, 2018, p. S13). It is also important to mention one very interesting approach to corruption – specifically, corruption as *jouissance*[1] (a French term referring to a particular form of enjoyment). In this context, Taro Lennefors (2009, p. 417) argues that "corruption here is held to be related to *jouissance*. The person who is not corrupt relates to corrupt people in terms of enjoying what should not be enjoyed".

Likewise, such psychoanalytical understanding of corruption opposes and concurrently completes the modern understandings of *corruption as transgression* (Taro Lennerfors, 2009, p. 412) and premodern understandings of *corruption as degradation*. The latter understandings are not always related to corruption in the moral or political sense, but, sometimes, to "biological degeneration and decay" (Taro Lennerfors, 2009, p. 416). This psychoanalytical approach refers to the "stolen enjoyment" as a means of understanding corruption.

Against this background, we aim at widening the understanding of corruption in the sense that we are dealing with the phenomenology of corruption on a societal level (i.e., based on different departments of corruption). We take into account two main elements: one is the importance of all the mentioned elements that could accompany the question of what could be understood as the wellbeing of the community (in the anthropological sense of understanding the importance of different cultures and communities) and the other is linked to the notion of individual *jouissance*, of enjoying what should not be enjoyed. Therefore, our starting point in the approach of understanding corruption is mainly based on the definition of corruption put forward by Calil Simão (2011, p. 27), namely that "social or state corruption is characterized by the moral inability of citizens to make commitments aimed at common good. That is to say, citizens are unable to do things that do not bring them personal gratification". In other words, this research is intended to shed light on the departments of corruption through the lenses of this definition which focuses on corruption as the individual *jouissance* or the moral inability of human beings to do things that do not bring a certain personal gratification.

3. Methodology

In order to reveal possible definitions and examples of corruption practices associated with the defined departments of corruption which will be part of the Museum of Corruption, this exploratory research was developed based on two approaches which will be detailed below. To the best of our knowledge, there is no other similar approach to date, therefore it might be helpful for other researchers, keeping in mind that it is the first stage of research, to be completed and further revised. In this context, it's worth mentioning the fact that, in the Results section of the present report, sometimes long quotes were kept in order to ensure that the concept reaches the public in its original sense and that the ideas could be further exploited keeping their original substance. As mentioned above, two approaches were followed: (1) the coverage of corruption on the Internet and (2) the in-depth analysis of each department of corruption, according to three main dimensions:

(1) *Coverage of corruption on the Internet* – an analysis of the first 50 entries after searching for "corruption in Romania/ Serbia/ Ukraine" on Google. It is believed that one possible reason why people in general associate corruption mostly with political institutions/ parties/ actors is linked to the fact that they get their information from the media, especially from the Internet – mainly due to accessibility (Fidel & Green, 2004; Xu, Yian, & Yang, 2005). The media might serve as the main means of information and access to social reality (Lang & Lang, 1984; Gitlin, 1980; McQuail, 1994). Therefore, the intent was to analyse how things related to corruption are depicted on the Internet (i.e., Google search engine) – which category is the most prevalent one – in order to get some explanations about why people might refer to corruption in a certain way (often the same way as the media did). This type of Internet agenda-setting research was performed both in Romania and Serbia, due to the fact that, because of the digital algorithms and previous behaviour on the Internet,

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[1] The term *jouissance* emphasises the subject who is not simply satisfied with desire, he rather enjoys desiring (jouit de désirer) which is an essential dimension of his jouissance (Dimitriadis, 2017).

the search results might be different.

(2) *In-depth analysis of each department of corruption*, according to three main dimensions:

The first dimension consists of the research performed on *academic articles* available in online formats from the last 30 years – i.e., from the fall of the Berlin Wall until today, based on the idea that this moment represents a milestone in the story of freedom – regarded from a dual perspective: either as the beginning or the end of freedom, which is quite often associated with the concept of corruption. The scientific articles were extracted from scientific databases such as Google Scholar, SAGE, JSTOR; search keywords were in English, they were depicting the identified departments of corruption (i.e., corruption of time/ corruption of culture/ corruption of language/ corruption of data/ corruption of personality/ corruption of institution) and the unit of analysis was the whole article in which the presence of the keywords were identified. There was a particular interest in finding examples and/ or case studies from Serbia, Romania and Ukraine, based on the concept of geographical Europe. The three countries are located in the same region of Europe – often regarded as an *outer periphery* or *super periphery* (see, for example, Barlett & Prica, 2016). Other theoreticians such as Goldsworthy (1998) and Todorova (2009) offer important insights into the concepts of Balkan identity, Balkanisation, and Balkanism – in association with the idea of Europeanness and the divide between the Western and the Balkan culture and civilization, often depicted from the point of view of the outsider – sharing history, values, ideas etc., therefore being under a high probability of having similar corruption practices. The same idea of divide between the Balkan people and the rest of the world is emphasized by Maja Ćirić who suggests that mostly "fictionalized around the constitutive trauma of the Balkans, the trauma of not having a stable identity and not being Universal." (Ćirić, 2007/08, p. 38)

The second dimension consists of the research of *people's perceptions* of corruption in general and/or of departments of corruption, if applicable. People's perceptions were extracted from the five workshops and four interviews which have been conducted in this project so far. The first workshop was conducted in Kiev, in 2018, within a scope of Ideas for Europe, with approximately 40 cultural workers and professionals from 15 EU and non-EU countries. Two other workshops were conducted with approximately 15-20 postgraduate art students in Sarajevo and Belgrade, in 2019 and 2020. Two others with 15-20 amateur art students in Cape Town, in 2020. People were given a blue envelope and were asked to give one word describing corruption. The same method was used in all the conducted workshops. The four interviews were conducted in 2019 and 2020 with: (1) AB, a journalist and writer from Sarajevo, one of the participants of the regional art residency *theme was Museum of Corruption, ZMUC, organised in 2017; (2) KL, an activist and journalist, ex-director of cantonal TV Sarajevo, cultural worker and editor of an independent publishing house; (3) ZG, a sociologist, head of BIRODI, a Bureau for Social Research, Serbia and (4) AK, a contemporary international artist from South Africa, deeply involved in uncovering various corruption scandals through graphic novels he publishes with his partner.

The third dimension consists of the first five search results that come out from Google while searching for the keywords: corruption of time/ corruption of culture/ corruption of language/ corruption of data/ corruption of personality/ corruption of institution. In other terms, the intent was to briefly analyse the *agenda-setting function of the Internet*. At this level, the unit of analysis was the link to the specific material which came up after performing the search.

The present research was performed within a time frame of 30 days, starting with 2nd of March 2020, by a team of two researchers, one from Romania, and one from Serbia.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Coverage of corruption on the Internet – an analysis of the first 50 entries after searching for "corruption in Romania/ Serbia/ Ukraine" on Google

The Internet agenda was assessed in terms of the first 50 entries that come up on Google after searching for: corruption in Romania, corruption in Serbia, corruption in Ukraine. Specifically, were

scanned the first 50 entries that showed up at the search and each of them were organized in categories (according to the corruption departments). Taking into account the fact that Google algorithms might aggregate different types of entries – based on the country characteristics, previous experience on Google, etc – the Google search was performed both in Romania and Serbia.
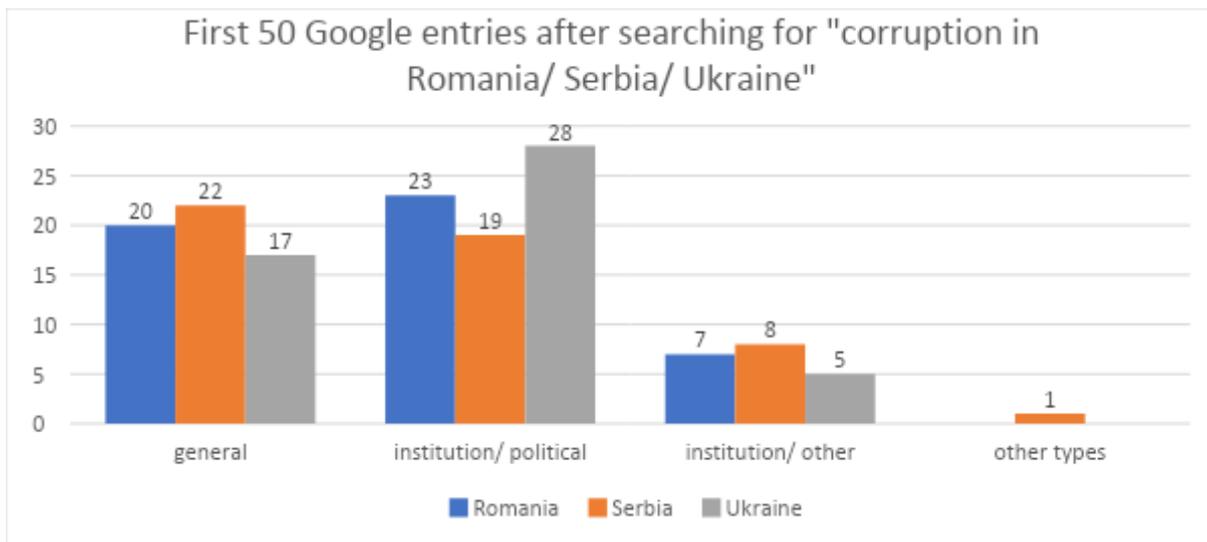

Figure 1. Results from the analysis performed in Romania (dates of search 2.03.2020-3.03.2020)
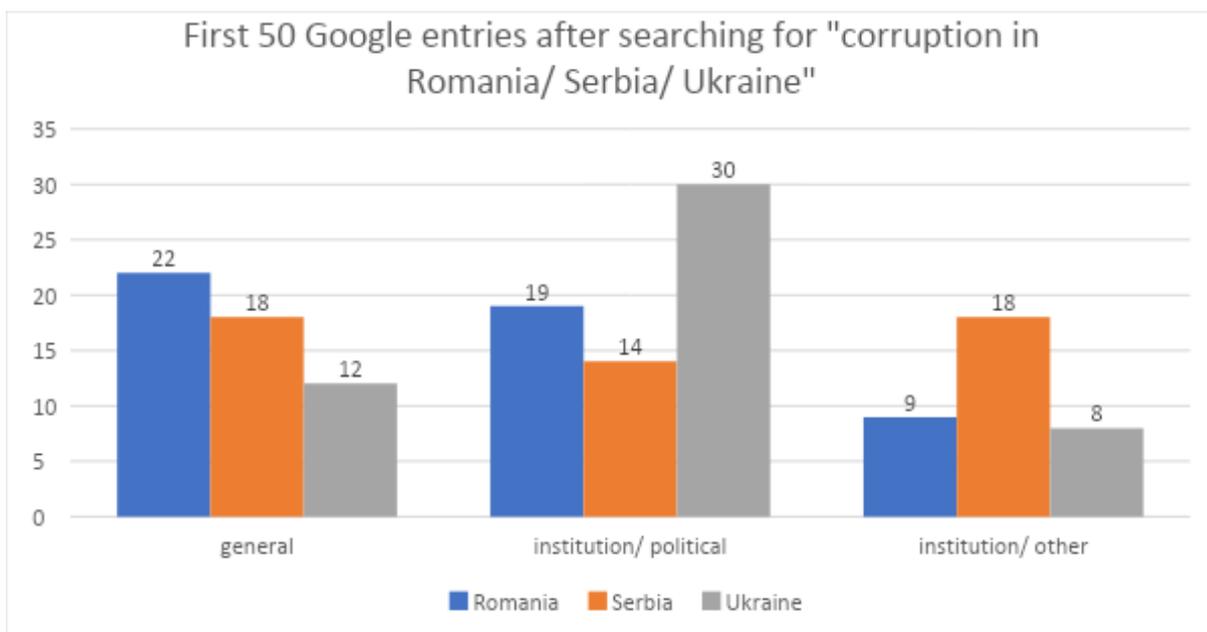

Figure 2. Results from the analysis performed in Serbia (date of search 20.03.2020)

Results show similar Internet agendas when searching for corruption in Romania, corruption in Serbia, and corruption in Ukraine, irrespective of the country where the search was performed (i.e., Romania or Serbia). Both analyses reveal the fact that the majority of Google entries refer to corruption of institution (political institutions). Both figures from above show that while searching for corruption in Ukraine more than a half of the total entries are referring to corruption of political institutions – this might be interpreted in the sense that this country seems to be facing serious political instability issues at the moment. References to other institutional types of corruption are very few (the least being reported in regards to Ukraine). References to other types of institutions include corruption in the medical, police, education, security, media, energy, and investment sectors.

The fact that explicit references to other types of corruption are absent or almost absent (there is only one reference according to the analysis performed in Romania) could be interpreted in the

sense that the Internet agenda is full of references to either corruption in general and corruption of political institutions/ parties/ actors etc. This could be further translated into a difficulty for ordinary people to refer to corruption in other terms which exclude the political sector. In this context, we provide some examples of words that people (who participated in the workshops conducted within the project) used when defining or referring to corruption: "cheating", "social cancer", unjust", "broke", "unquenchable", "decay", "selfishness", "greed", "no strings attached", "Zuma", "Watch out!", "connive", "tacit", "black hole", "auspiciousness", "money in the vicinity", "404", "under the table". Some of these words are self-explanatory and not surprising when used with reference to corruption, but others are quite innovative, for example, "404" – this is a common type of error meaning that a certain digital-related thing cannot be found. The association with corruption is surprising and, yet, very interesting.

The same difficulty might be also present for researchers, in the sense that they might hardly find case study examples associated with corruption from other sectors/ departments (time/ culture/ language/ data/ personality) from sources available on the Internet. Nevertheless, despite this difficulty, one possible way to find more reality-oriented and very specific corruption practices is to develop examples from adapting the agreed definition of corruption to the daily experience, and advance some examples that are open to being debated and criticised, as being part of an exploratory, first step analysis. Such examples are to be found in the following parts of the present research report.