

## FOREWORD

*by Professor Constantin Schifirnet, PhD.*

The term *crowdsourcing* was imposed in the academia area and in the public space after Jeff Howe first formulated the concept in 2006, in the article *The rise of crowdsourcing*, from Wired Magazine<sup>1</sup>. Crowdsourcing describes the involvement of a virtual crowd in solving a task. The task is posted online as an open call and members of the crowd self-select the task to be undertaken (Howe, 2006).

Today, due to Internet access, an increasing share of the population is exposed to a massive and exponentially increasing amount of information and news online. It is a common fact that crowdsourcing platforms are a fundamental means for learning, problem solving, decision-making and predictions in organizations that are now increasingly looking to solve complex contemporary challenges.

The book of the university lecturer PhD. Raluca Silvia Ciochină contributes to the study of topics of real interest in the academic world. The paper is indisputably necessary for the development of communication sciences, but also for profile courses in universities.

Raluca Silvia Ciochină proposes, in her work *Crowdsourcing. Engaging Virtual Communities and Generating Collective Intelligence*, to identify the main directions of study on the mechanisms of activation of

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.06/crowds\\_pr.htm](http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/14.06/crowds_pr.htm), - Issue 14.06 - June 2006

the engagement process in crowdsourcing models, undoubtedly an approach without difficulties. We, therefore, appreciate her work as a contribution to the study of the scientifically relevant issues she proposes.

The first chapter, *Challenges and Opportunities of New Media in the Emerging Knowledge Economy*, analyzes the socio-communicative context of affirming participatory behavior, with a focus on the characteristics of new media through Manuel Castells' ideas about the network society. The author mentions that: *With vast networks connecting individual or collective nodes (of information, knowledge, human or financial resources etc.) supporting various roles in the knowledge economy, people are now faced with both the opportunity and challenge of controlling the loose ends of possibility*, thus emphasizing both empowering and responsible perspectives of using the networks. This chapter discusses the main concepts: collective intelligence, social capital, virtual communities, the virtual public sphere, social power and the network society. The author presents theories about new media, especially regarding their relevance for engagement and crowdsourcing.

The second chapter, *Forms of Social Aggregation in Social Media*, deals with user behaviors and participation in online communities, the theory of social capital and the influences it has on development and change in society. A subchapter is dedicated to the concept of collective intelligence. At the same time, the connection between the characteristics of communication through new media and their influence on the engagement process is analyzed, considering that new information and communication technologies have beneficial effects but also negative consequences for the social interaction of users.

Chapter 3, *Collective Participation and the Engagement Process*, analyzes the mechanisms for generating collective participation, with a focus on the concept of engagement. As the author points out, engagement involves commitment to both parties involved in the relationship, so she emphasizes the rise of *we-intention*, which involves the collective commitment and understanding to take part to a collective action. The notion of engagement is based on Habermas' concept of communicative action, which expresses consensus and understanding in an ethical

environment where individuals can work together for a common goal. Communication elements can suggest that individuals act in order to achieve their own goals in the virtual sphere, rather than they do in real life.

Chapter 4, *Conceptual Foundations of Crowdsourcing*, addresses the phenomenon of crowdsourcing, including the definition and typology of crowdsourcing as well as the differences between crowdsourcing and other related concepts, for example open source, open innovation, peer-to-peer production. The author brings a number of considerations on crowdsourcing participation and contributions to community engagement and successful crowdsourcing models. This chapter presents the characteristics of crowdsourcing as informal organizations and how they develop and coagulate as decentralized systems. I noted as significant the idea that crowdsourcing is not only viewed as a production model, but as a paradigm for accumulating a large number of contributions (either in the form of data, information, or knowledge), with the aim of solving different society and economic issues on a larger scale.

Chapter 5, *Paradigms of Crowdsourcing and Collective Participation*, analyzes a variety of theories and ideas from the literature on motivation, participation and contributions in crowdsourcing communities. The chapter is mainly important because it highlights useful perspectives on how to approach large groups of individuals in terms of activating their collaborative potential.

Chapter 6, *Crowdsourcing as Informal Organizations*, highlights that in the network society, organizations are facing transformative changes and agile crowdsourcing models should be taken as examples for the socio-economic challenges arising.

The book systematically approaches the researched issue by presenting the current state of knowledge in the researched field. I would like to emphasize as an element of novelty and originality of the work, and the author's own definition of the concepts of *collective intelligence*, *engagement* and *crowdsourcing*. The work of the author Raluca Silvia Ciochină proves a solid knowledge in communication sciences, marketing and sociology. In each chapter the theoretical developments are

accompanied by significant examples from the researched field. Her work stands out as a contribution to the study of crowdsourcing.

Finally, I consider it necessary to present a short profile of the author of this book. Raluca Silvia Ciochină is experienced in online marketing strategy development, content marketing, social media strategy and in automating marketing processes and aligning them with sales departments, mainly in the B2B sector. In addition, throughout her 8 years of academic activity, she was involved in various research activities and collaborations, and is now experienced in international research projects (such as the multi-partner ALIGN-CCUS project, 2017-2020). She is an active member of the Organizational Learning Research Laboratory, which is part of the Research in Communication Center at the National University of Political Studies and Public Administration. Research topics include: crowdsourcing, communication in social media, entrepreneurship and human resources in the digital era, online consumer behaviors and digital intelligence.

She holds a PhD. in communication sciences with the thesis *Mechanisms and factors for activating collective intelligence. An analysis on a Romanian crowdsourcing model* within the Doctoral School of NUPSPA, Bucharest. I also mention that the author teaches courses on *Digital Marketing, E-business and online promotion strategies, Public Relations in the online environment, and Organizational Communication* at the Faculty of Communication and Public Relations, National University of Political Studies and Public Administration, in Bucharest, courses appreciated by students.