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RESEARCH ON INNOVATION MANAGEMENT WITHIN THE BUSINESS EXCELLENCE MODELS

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ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes the ORBIT model, an original theoretical framework for measuring innovation maturity in SMEs operating in the AEC (Architecture, Engineering and Construction) sector of transition economies. The central contribution is the POPA cycle (*Patient Observation to Pragmatic Action*), a behavioural model that reconceptualises rational hesitation as an active, value-creating phase of the innovation process, grounded theoretically in Real Options Theory (Dixit and Pindyck, 1994) and validated inductively through four independent observatories. The framework introduces the ORBIT productivity equation, which formalises the relationships between Contextual Intelligence (Ci), Patient Observation (Po), Pragmatic Action (Ap), Synergistic Capital (Sc), and Institutional Pull (Ip) as determinants of the Innovation Premium (Pres), alongside the Munich–Bucharest Chasm as an analytical heuristic naming the systemic distance between the innovation logic of frontier economies and that of transition economies.

The third original contribution is the POISE instrument (*Patient Observation and Innovation Strategy Evaluation (POISE) instrument*), a seven-section questionnaire (S2–S8) that operationalises the ORBIT constructs through behavioural indicators and conflict-detection mechanisms, designed to filter Social Desirability Bias. Applied to a pilot sample of N=45 Romanian AEC firms, the instrument returns a composite score of 3.654/5.0 (α=0.801), placing the sector in the *Developing* band of the ORBIT taxonomy. The primary empirical finding is a structural deficit in Synergistic Capital: S5 (Partnerships) records a mean of 2.812 (the only section below the 3.0 threshold) against an internal Innovation Capacity of 4.009 (S8). *The engine is built; the transmission is missing.* Firm size is irrelevant to maturity (H=0.002, p=0.999), while competitive exposure differentiates it significantly (Δ=0.571, p=0.0003). The convergence of four independent observatories on the same structural diagnosis constitutes the thesis's central empirical argument.

Key words: innovation maturity; transition economies; AEC sector; SMEs; ORBIT framework; POPA cycle; Synergistic Capital; Contextual Intelligence; POISE instrument; business excellence

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 1

PART ONE: STATE OF KNOWLEDGE ON INNOVATION MANAGEMENT 8

CHAPTER 1: THE EVOLUTION AND PARADIGMS OF INNOVATION MANAGEMENT 9

1.1. THE ONTOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF INNOVATION MANAGEMENT 11

1.1.1. The Schumpeterian Legacy: Innovation as Creative Destruction 11

1.1.2. The Kirznerian Counterpoint: Entrepreneurial Alertness and Market Discovery 12

1.1.3. The Formalization of Innovation: The Dominance and Decline of the Linear Model 14

1.1.4. Critique, the 'Coupling' Transition, and the Integrated Model 15

1.1.5. Beyond Linearity: The Kline and Rosenberg 'Chain-Linked' Model (1986) 17

1.1.6. Theoretical Implications for Management 18

1.2. THE SYSTEMS APPROACH: NATIONAL SYSTEMS OF INNOVATION AND THE TRIPLE HELIX 19

1.2.1. National Systems of Innovation (NSI): The Freeman and Lundvall Framework 19

1.2.2. The Micro-Foundations of Learning: The SECI Model and Knowledge Conversion 21

1.2.3. The Triple Helix Model: The Evolution of Knowledge Production 24

1.3. THE PROCESS VIEW: FROM LINEAR CONTROL TO ADAPTIVE AGILITY 25

1.3.1. The Stage-Gate Model: How Safe is the Gate? 25

1.3.2. The RPV Framework and the 'Anti-Innovation' Bias of Established Processes 27

1.3.3. The SME Advantage: Agility as an Inherrent Capability 29

1.3.4. The Lean Start-up Methodology in Corporate Settings 30

1.4. STRATEGIC INNOVATION: PARADIGMS OF MARKET DISRUPTION AND CREATION . 31

1.4.1. The Theory of Disruptive Innovation: The Christensen Legacy 31

1.4.2. Blue Ocean Strategy: Reconstructing Market Boundaries 32

1.4.3. Resource-Processes-Values (RPV) Theory 33

1.4.4. Synthesis of Strategic Innovation Paradigms 33

1.5. CHAPTER CONCLUSION: WHAT THE PRAGMATIC EVOLUTION ESTABLISHES 36

CHAPTER 2: MODERN PARADIGMS OF THOUGHT IN INNOVATION MANAGEMENT 38
2.1. THE OPEN INNOVATION PARADIGM: RECONCEPTUALIZING BOUNDARIES 39
2.1.1. Theoretical Foundations: Chesbrough and the Porous Boundary 40
2.1.2. Critical Capabilities and Intellectual Property (IP) as a currency 42
2.2. ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT: ORCHESTRATING COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION 44
2.2.1. The Biological Metaphor and the Genesis of Business Ecosystems 44
2.2.2. Types of Ecosystems and Challenges for Orchestration and Management 45
2.3. DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION: REDEFINING CYCLES IN THE ERA OF INDUSTRY 4.0 48
2.4. SUSTAINABILITY AND SOCIAL INNOVATION: PURPOSE-DRIVEN MANAGEMENT 51
2.4.1. The Triple Bottom Line, Eco-Innovation and Circularity 51
2.4.2. Social Innovation and Creating Shared Value 53
2.4.3. Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) 54
2.5. CHAPTER CONCLUSION: THE FRONTIER AGENDA AND THE TRANSITION ECONOMY GAP 57

CHAPTER 3: THE INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF INNOVATION 59
3.1. THE AMBIDEXTROUS ORGANIZATION: EXPLORATION VS. EXPLOITATION 60
3.1.1. The Marchian Framework: The Logic of Two Worlds 60
3.2. INNOVATION CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP: THE INVISIBLE ARCHITECTURE OF CREATIVITY 63
3.3. METRICS AND KPIs: QUANTIFYING THE INNOVATION INTANGIBLE 65
3.3.1. The Foundational Framework: The IPOO Model 65
3.3.2. The Standardization of Innovation Management 66
3.3.3. Consultancy Frameworks: Strategic Diagnostics 67
3.3.4. The SME Challenge: Lagging vs. Leading Indicators 68
3.4. THE KNOWLEDGE GAP: THEORETICAL BLIND SPOTS AND THE NEED FOR A NEW SYNTHESIS 70
3.5. CHAPTER CONCLUSION: THREE GAPS, THREE QUESTIONS 74

CHAPTER 4: THE MUNICH-BUCHAREST CHASM: AN APPLIED THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR INNOVATION MATURITY IN TRANSITION ECONOMY AEC SMEs 76
4.1. DEFINING THE INNOVATION CONSTRUCT: A TALE OF TWO REALITIES 77
4.1.1. The Paradox of Managed Innovation: Freedom vs. Frameworks 79
4.1.2. Operational Chaos and the Management Muscle Gap 80
4.1.3. Entrepreneurial Bricolage: From Survival Strategy to Dynamic Capability 81
4.1.4. The Strategic Logic of Waiting: Real Options Theory and Patient Observation 83
4.1.5. The POPA Framework: Patient Observation to Pragmatic Action 84
4.1.6. Theoretical Lenses: Ambidexterity and Contextual Intelligence in the AEC Context 87
4.2. THE ARCHITECTURE OF INNOVATION ECOSYSTEMS AND CLUSTERS 89
4.2.1. Defining Ecosystems and Clusters: The Biotic and Abiotic Framework 89
4.2.2. AEC Specificity and the Productive Role of Weak Ties 91
4.2.3. Member Typologies: Donors, Receivers, and the Silent Observer 92
4.2.4. The Paradox of Funding: Capacity over Capital 94
4.3. INNOVATION IN AEC SMEs: RESOURCE SCARCITY, NETWORK AGILITY, AND THE MANAGEMENT MUSCLE 95
4.3.1. Survival Mode and the Theory of Institutional Voids 96
4.3.2. Absorptive Capacity: The Bridge from Potential to Realised Innovation 97
4.3.3. The Integration Paradox and the Limits of Network Agility 99
4.4. THE AEC SECTOR PROFILE: STRUCTURAL FRAGMENTATION, CULTURAL CONSERVATISM, AND THE MUNICH-BUCHAREST CHASM 100
4.4.1. Structural Fragmentation and the Social Contagion of Innovation 100
4.4.2. Cultural Conservatism and the Rational Fear of Operational Chaos 101
4.4.3. The Munich-Bucharest Chasm: Institutional Pull vs. Internal Push 102
4.4.3.1. Cross-Sector Evidence: The Romanian IT&C Precedent 107
4.4.4. BIM in Transition: The Concrete Instantiation of the Digital Mirage 109
4.5. SOFT DRIVERS: CULTURE, LEADERSHIP, AND KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT 111
4.5.1. Culture and the POPA Leader: Avoiding the Innovation Theatre Trap 111
4.5.2. Knowledge Management and the Conversion of Tacit Observation 113
4.6. MEASURING MATURITY: THE DECLARATION VS. ACTION GAP AND THE CASE FOR CONTEXT-SPECIFIC ASSESSMENT 115
4.6.1. Beyond the Accounting Trap: What Standard Metrics Miss 118

4.6.2. The Declaration vs. Action Gap: Filtering Isomorphic Noise 119
4.6.3. The Case for Context-Specific Assessment: Requirements of the POISE Instrument 120
4.7. THE INNOVATION DIVIDE AND CONTEXTUAL INTELLIGENCE: A SYNTHESIS 121
4.7.1. Theoretical Convergence: Bricolage, POPA, and Synergistic Capital as a Unified Engine 122
4.7.2. The Innovation Divide as a Divide of Logic 123
4.7.3. Redefining the Innovation Premium and the ORBIT Equation 124
4.7.4. Four Propositions and the Bridge to Part Two 125

PART TWO: CONTRIBUTION TO THE STATE OF KNOWLEDGE 128
CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN 128
5.1. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY AND EPISTEMOLOGY 129
5.1.1. Research Philosophy and Adaptive Strategy: Pragmatism, Mix-Methods, and the Embedded Researcher 130
5.1.2. Mixed-Methods Triangulation and the Justification of Adaptive Strategy 131
5.1.3. The Reflexive Practitioner: Mitigating Bias in Applied Action Research 132
5.2. THE METHODOLOGICAL JOURNEY: EVOLUTION OF THE RESEARCH SCOPE 133
5.2.1. Phase 1: Multi-Industry Exploration and the Resistance Hypothesis 134
5.2.2. Phase 2: The Strategic Pivot and the Observatories 135
5.2.2.1. Observatory A: The COVID-19 Systemic Shock 139
5.2.2.2. Observatory B: The SICAP Institutional Pull 140
5.2.3. Core Empirical Contexts of Phase II: The Ecosystem Observatories 141
5.2.3.1. The AEC EUROCLUSTER: Contextual Mapping and Pan-European Benchmarking 141
5.2.3.2. The TEC Cluster: A Longitudinal Laboratory for AEC SMEs 142
5.2.3.3. Deriving the POPA Variables: From Observation to Equation 143
5.3. RESEARCH HYPOTHESES AND THE ORBIT MODEL 147
5.3.1. The Hypotheses and the Econometric Model 147
5.3.2. Instrument Development: Design Logic of the POISE 149
5.3.2.1. Construct Operationalisation: From Theory to Measurement Design 149
5.3.2.2. The POISE: Design Structure and The Conflict Detection Logic 151
5.3.2.3. Instrument Validation and Iterative Refinement 152
5.4. PHASE III: EMPIRICAL VALIDATION AND STRATIFIED SAMPLING 153
5.4.1. Multi-Stage Econometric Protocol: Isolating the Innovation Premium 153

5.4.2. K-means Clustering and Sectoral Stratification 154
5.4.3. The ORBIT Productivity Equation in the Regression Context 155
5.4.4. Statistical Validation Framework 155
5.5. VALIDITY, RELIABILITY, AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS 156
5.6. CONCLUSION: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL RESEARCH ARCHITECTURE 158

CHAPTER 6: THE CONTEXTUAL AND INSTITUTIONAL LANDSCAPE: FROM CRISIS TO ECOSYSTEMS 160
6.1. THE EUROPEAN BASELINE: SECTORAL CHALLENGES AND THE STANDARDISATION GAP 160
6.2. THE COVID-19 NATURAL EXPERIMENT: SURVEY ANALYSIS OF 600+ FIRMS 162
6.3. THE INSTITUTIONAL PULL (Ip): LONGITUDINAL ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC PROCUREMENT (SICAP) 166
6.3.1. Methodology 166
6.3.2. The Productivity Paradox: Is This Real Demand? 167
6.3.3. SME Response to Institutional Performative Compliance: Theatre vs Contextual Intelligence 169
6.4. ECOSYSTEM LABORATORY: THE TEC CLUSTER CASE STUDY 171
6.4.1. The Member Typology: Beyond the Membership List 173
6.4.2. The Funding Paradox: The EUR 60,000 Discrepancy 175
6.4.3. Social Contagion: Granovetter's Weak Ties and the Cluster as Innovation Catalyst 177
6.5. CONCLUSION: SYNTHESISING THE LANDSCAPE OF THE RATIONAL AGENCY 178

CHAPTER 7: QUANTITATIVE ASSESSMENT OF INNOVATION MATURITY IN THE ROMANIAN AEC SECTOR: INSTRUMENT DESIGN, APPLICATION, AND FINDINGS 181
7.1. ROLE OF THE CHAPTER IN THE RESEARCH ARCHITECTURE 181
7.2. THE PARTICIPATION GAP AS AN EMPIRICAL FINDING 184
7.2.1. The Campaign: Design, Scope, and Response Funnel 184
7.2.2. Non-Response as Theoretically Legible Behaviour 185
7.2.3. Methodological Consequences and Interpretive Frame 186
7.3. THE POISE INSTRUMENT: DESIGN LOGIC AND CONSTRUCT MAPPING 189
7.3.1. Design Philosophy: Measuring Operational Maturity, Not Declarative Compliance 190
7.3.2. The POISE Construct Mapping 191

7.3.3. Composite Score Construction and the Maturity Taxonomy 197
7.3.4. Standalone Sector-Level Indicators 199
7.4. SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS AND DATA COLLECTION 202
7.4.1. Data Collection Procedure 202
7.4.2. Sample Profile 203
7.5. RELIABILITY OF THE POISE INSTRUMENT 205
7.5.1. Reliability Results 205
7.5.2. Formative Versus Reflective Measurement: The Theoretical Defence 206
7.5.3. Conflict-Detection Items: Features, Not Flaws 206
7.5.4. Structural Validity: Pilot PLS-SEM Evaluation of the POISE Instrument 207
7.6. RESULTS: THE INNOVATION MATURITY PROFILE 212
7.6.1. Composite Score and Sector Positioning 213
7.6.2. The Sectoral Maturity Fingerprint 215
7.6.3. The Partnerships Gap: Quantitative Confirmation of Sc Deficit 217
7.6.4. Sector-Level Attitudinal Indicators 218
7.6.5. Self-Perception Accuracy and the Necessity of Objective Measurement 219
7.7. GROUP COMPARISONS AND HYPOTHESIS-RELEVANT FINDINGS 221
7.7.1. Company Size: A Theoretically Predicted Null Result 222
7.7.2. Primary Market Orientation: Institutional Pull Without Differentiation 222
7.7.3. The Competition Effect: An Important Validity Qualification 223
7.7.4. Company Age: A Weak and Non-Significant Negative Tendency 224
7.7.5. Self-Perception Versus Computed Score: Instrument Validation Evidence 224
7.8. DISCUSSION: CONNECTING FINDINGS TO THE ORBIT FRAMEWORK 224
7.8.1. Cross-Observatory Triangulation: Four Methods, One Diagnosis 225
7.8.2. Implications for the ORBIT Equation 226
7.8.3. Instrument Performance: The POISE as a Theoretical Test 226
7.8.4. Financial Correlation Results and the Question of Instrument Validity 227
7.8.4.1. What a Working Instrument Should Predict 227
7.8.4.2. Why Concurrent Correlation Is a Structurally Weak Test Here 228
7.8.4.3. What the Significant Correlations Reveal 230
7.8.4.4. The Assessment: Established and Remaining Evidence 232
7.9. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS 233

7.9.1. Sample Size and the Bounds of Inferential Scope 233
7.9.2. Sample Composition and Selection Bias 234
7.9.3. The Competition Effect and Residual Social Desirability Bias 234
7.9.4. Sub-Sectoral Imbalance and Under-Representation of Construction 234
7.9.5. Equal Weighting and the Absence of Empirically Derived Section Weights 235
7.9.6. Cross-Sectional Design and the Absence of Longitudinal Evidence 235
7.10. CONCLUSION OF THE APPLIED RESEARCH 236

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 240
8.1. ANSWERING THE RESEARCH PROBLEM AND CLOSING GAPS 240
8.2. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 242
8.3. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH 244
8.4. FINAL CONCLUSIONS 245

BIBLIOGRAPHY 247

ANNEXES 259

LIST OF ACRONYMES AND ABREVIATIONS 344

LIST OF TABLES 347

LIST OF FIGURES 349

LIST OF ANNEXES 350