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Research Note

A Critical Analysis of UNDP-Supported "Social Innovation" Projects in Local Governance in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan

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The publication researches and evaluates 68 projects labeled as 'social innovations' in/for local governments and communities, that have been undertaken by Kolba Lab (Armenia), Social Boost and other organizations (Ukraine) and UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project (Uzbekistan) with development assistance from the United Nations Development Program (UNDP). It contributes to knowledge on the concept of social innovation through the yet missing critical analysis of social innovations in local governments and communities of post-Soviet republics. Theoretical and empirical analysis is achieved by applying 'connected difference' approach, social innovation cycle, and social practice theory to theoretically formulate, and empirically apply the concept of social innovation. To contribute to scientific research on social innovations, this study critically evaluates projects in local governments and communities, as perspective social innovations on micro (local) level, namely combination of new social practices.

Key words: Social Innovations, Armenia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Local Governance, Local Communities

Introduction

There is a significant amount of literature on social innovations where one can find demonstratively opposite definitions of this concept or even a strong belief that social innovation is an empty concept. Attempts to conceptualize social innovations are challenged by the lack of clarity and overwhelming number of various definitions of the concept. For instance, based on four dimensions proposed by Eduardo Pol and Simone Ville one defines 'social innovation' based on the following correlation: (1) social innovation and institutional change, (2) social innovation and social purpose, (3) social innovation and 'public good', (4) social innovation and needs not considered by the market. Furthermore, definitions of 'social innovation' can be drawn from Murray et al. who provides the following definition of social innovations:

> "…innovations that are social both in their ends and in their means. Specifically, one defines social innovations as new ideas (products, services and models) that simultaneously meet social needs and create new social relationships or collaborations. In other words, they are innovations that are both good for society and enhance society's capacity to act".[1]

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[1] Murray et al. *The open book of Social Innovation.* London, United Kingdom: The Young Foundation, 2010, p. 5.

Leadbeater complements Murray's definition of social innovation and describes 'social innovation' even broader, using institutional and personalized dimensions. He writes: "Social innovation – like many other forms of innovation – is a process of collective innovation involving many players: social enterprises, companies, service users, regulators, funders, politicians".[2]

In fact, there is a significant number of attempts to theoretically and empirically define social innovation. One of them is to distinguish social innovations from business or technological innovations, or to compare it (social innovation) to institutional change in the society. From a developmental perspective, social innovation is approached through its ability to produce social impact. But social impact is not the single element of social innovation envisioned by development organizations. Since, in this article, the researcher discusses projects supported by United Nations Development Program (UNDP) through different organizations, it primarily refers to UNDP's definition of social innovation discussed below.

For the sake of the clarity and complementarity of definitions relevant to the research purpose of this study UNDP's definition of social innovations is going to be primarily discussed. According to UNDP Social Innovation for Public Service Excellence Report:

"Social innovation refers to new ideas that work in meeting social goals. A social innovation approach puts capacity to harness innovation at the core of public service (…). A feature of social innovation is that it combines multiple disciplines, types of actors and sectors. Social innovation is also more than just invention; it describes a process from initial prompt through to scale and systemic change".[3]

In the theoretical part of the study this definition will be used as the point of departure in extensive discussion of criteria of social innovations. Scrutinizing projects supported by the UNDP and relevant organizations in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan provides empirical findings of theoretical approach to social innovation.

The study compiles and critically analyzes up to 68 projects supported by the UNDP through Social Innovation Kolba Lab in Armenia, SocialBoost and other organizations in Ukraine, and UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project. A separate part of this article is dedicated to the description of above mentioned organizations. These case study countries and organizations were selected for further analysis after careful examination of social innovation related initiatives in post-Soviet republics. Only in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, by the time of the current research, are there UNDP supported projects which were aimed to be social innovations in local governments and communities.

1. Theoretical contribution/Significance of the research

Scholars and practitioners have been using the term 'social innovation' extensively for the last two decades. Though different theories (e.g. structuration theory, structural function theory, actor-network theory, development theories, etc.) discuss the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings of social innovation as an independent theoretical and practical unit, they remain silent about clear-cut criteria of social innovation. Furthermore, a variety of uses and interpretations of social innovation makes this concept loosely used by scholars, politicians, international and governmental organizations, etc. In this regard these problems in the theory and empirics of social innovations are being addressed by the research project. To tackle them the research critically evaluates projects supported and labeled by UNDP as 'social innovations' against criteria of 'connected difference' approach, social innovation cycle, and social practice theory.

Selection of the case studies: Kolba Lab in Armenia, Social Boost (other organizations) in Ukraine and UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project are organizations/projects selected for the analysis of social innovations in/for local governments and communities. These organizations/projects are the best choice to fit in the study, and correspond with the goals of the current research. Besides being the only projects/organizations in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, as well as on the post-Soviet Eurasia space, dealing with social innovations. They possess a multispectral approach in the introduction of 'social innovations'. This approach allowed specific selection of projects labeled as 'social innovations' in local governments and

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[2] Leadbeater, *Social enterprise and social innovation: Strategies for the next ten years.* London: Office of Third Sector, 2007, p. 14.

[3] Tucker, *Social Innovation for Public Service Excellence.* UNDP Global Centre for Public Service Excellence. Singapore: United Nations Development Programme, 2014, p. 4.

communities. The study does not expect that projects labeled as 'social innovations' would reach a systemic change stage that would promote debate about newly introduced and widely accepted new practices. However, the study is going to consider projects moving towards this stage after completion of the previous stages.

Gap in the literature and Contribution to theory: While many studies have been conducted on the theory and practice of 'social innovations' in different countries, hardly any scholarly research has thus far been done on the experience with 'social innovations' in post-communist countries. It is argued that in the UNDP's approach, 'social innovation' is seen as something that can be volitional and developmental. Most scholars analyze 'social innovations' post factum. UNDP views 'social innovation' as something that can be aspired and worked towards. Based on conducted research and critical analysis, the study checks the projects against the criteria of 'connected difference' approach, social innovation cycle, and social practice theory to provide scholarly assessment of local projects advancing towards being local social innovations. By this, the study will generate, yet still missing, scholarly analysis (and literature) on the social innovations in post-Soviet republics.

(1) Research Questions

The purpose of the study is to critically analyze whether projects supported by the UNDP and Kolba Lab (Armenia), SocialBoost (and other projects) (Ukraine) and UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project (Uzbekistan) in/for local governments and communities can become social innovations. Therefore, the study formulates research questions designed to critically approach the projects:

1. What have been the gains and shortcomings of these UNDP-supported projects in terms of 'social innovation'?
2. How have projects maintained by Kolba Lab (Armenia), SocialBoost (and other projects) (Ukraine) and the UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project (Uzbekistan) and supported by UNDP advanced towards bringing social innovations in local governments and communities?

(2) Argument

Social innovation is a multidimensional concept that is inversely used in various contexts. UNDP in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan has introduced projects labeled as 'social innovations' to address issues in local governments and communities. 'Social innovation' projects in Uzbekistan have failed to become true social innovations as the projects suffered from weak civic activism, accountability, ICT infrastructural problems, and the lack of the true commitment from policymakers. While projects in Armenia and Ukraine have likewise experienced intermittent support from the government, they have benefited from active local community participation, a stronger ICT component, and easy access to open data.

While they have a long way to go before achieving institutionalization, some of the Armenia and Ukraine projects show hopeful signs of developing into real 'social innovation.' These projects can potentially advance towards being new social practices in social contexts and, subsequently, social innovations on micro (local) level.

2. Theoretical foundations of the research

Theoretical debate concerning social innovations is ongoing since the concept is still undertheorized but is beginning to catch up to the practice. Scholarly debate is happening as Domanski points out: "around definition of it (social innovation) either through social relations, or 'social' in terms of societal impact".[4] One could have a quite different perspective on social innovations if asked a question whether any innovation has a societal impact or compels social relationships that, by default, makes any innovation 'social innovation'.

Subsequently, numerous social science theories have contributed to the theoretical discourse on social innovation. Practically speaking, the scope of discussion covers development theories, theories of entrepreneurship, theories of sociology etc. that try to conceptualize social innovation and provide definition of this term. In this article, given the task of the current research, the researcher applies a 'connected difference' approach and social practice theory to evaluate UNDP supported projects in local governments and communities. The rationale to opt for this combination of theoretical approaches is explained below.

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[4] Domanski., *Exploring the Research Landscape of Social Innovation.* Dortmund, Germany: A deliverable of the project Social Innovation Community (SIC), 2017, p. 20.

(1) 'Connected difference' approach and social innovations

Social innovation is often regarded as a separate unit of analysis sometimes overlapping with business and/or technological innovations. Numerous recent studies (Evers 2012, Bhatt 2013, Barraket 2015, Howaldt 2015, Ionescu 2015, Oosterlynck 2015, Domanski 2017, Howaldt et al. 2018) emphasize the growing role of social innovations for development. Based on theoretical methodology, development, sociological, entrepreneurial approaches the researcher tried to analyze social innovations. To set scholarly criteria for the analysis of social innovations, critical analysis of those theories has led to the selection of 'connected difference' approach and social practice theory for the further analysis. Those theories have been applied for the first time to analyze projects on micro (local) level in post-Soviet republics, labeled as 'social innovations'.

Mulgan et al. (2007) in his study points out that:

> "Social innovation plays a decisive role in development. Past advances in healthcare and the spread of new technologies like the car, electricity or the internet, depended as much on social innovation as they did on innovation in technology or business. Today there are signs that social innovation is becoming even more important for development. This is partly because some of the barriers to lasting growth (such as climate change, or ageing populations) can only be overcome with the help of social innovation, and partly because of rising demands for types of economic growth that enhance rather than damage human relationships and well-being".[5]

Clearly, development agencies and donors are also introducing innovations in design of the new development programs in various countries and sectors where change is required. For instance, United Nations Development Program Global Center for Public Service Excellence (UNDP GCPSE) is concerned about Public Service Innovations and the introduction of social innovations in the public sector.

It should be noted that UNDP in its work uses methodology developed by the organizations with expertise in social innovation, such as NESTA Global Innovation Foundation or/and Young Foundations. UNDP uses Mulgan et al. 'connected difference' approach with emphasis on three key dimensions of social innovation:

1. They are usually new combinations or hybrids of existing elements, rather than being wholly new in themselves;
2. Putting them into practice involves cutting across organizational, sectoral or disciplinary boundaries;
3. They leave behind new relationships between previously separate individuals and groups. These new relationships which matter greatly to the people involved contribute to the diffusion and embedding of the innovation. Also, they fuel a cumulative dynamic whereby each innovation opens up the possibility of further innovations.

This approach highlights the critical role of 'connectors' in any innovation system – the brokers, entrepreneurs and institutions that link together people, ideas, money and power – who contribute as much to lasting change as thinkers, creators, designers, activists and community groups.[6] The 'connected difference' approach functions in the frame of practice-led methodology that explains generation of social innovation. The essence of the approach is in connecting different elements, individuals, organizations and groups not otherwise connected. By doing so, it creates new social relationships which matter in enabling social innovation. In addition, the generation of social innovation is also addressed by Murray and Mulgan's 'stages of social innovation', also known as social innovation cycle (see Figure. 1). According to the social innovation cycle the ultimate goal of any social innovation is systemic change that includes many elements and happens over long period of time.[7]

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[5] Mulgan et al. *Social Innovation: what it is, why it matters and how it can be accelerated?* The Young Foundation. Oxford: Basingstoke Press, 2007, p. 5.

[6] Mulgan et al. *Social Innovation: what it is, why it matters and how it can be accelerated?* The Young Foundation. Oxford: Basingstoke Press, 2007, p. 5.

[7] ibid

Figure 1. Social Innovation Cycle

Source: Murray & Mulgan, 2010: 11

Guide for social innovation (2013) describes this process as follows:

> They [social innovations] start as ideas, which may then be piloted or prototyped. If successful there is a process of sustaining the new model in the implementation stage – perhaps as a new venture or as a new policy within an existing institution. The final stage is to scale up so that the new approach makes a real impact and becomes part of the norm.[8]

Yet the combination of the 'connected difference' approach and Mulgan's explanation of the process of the creation of social innovations alone are not sufficient for understanding and explaining how projects supported by UNDP advance towards being social innovations in local governments and communities. Although the ways by which a new idea becomes an everyday practice, sustainability (meaning availability of budget), legislation etc. is addressed by Mulgan, he does not touch upon the mechanism that "transforms innovations into social structures and practice" - imitation/repetition.[9] Moreover, nothing is said about interruptions that lead to social innovation as new social practices, once they are transferred and imitated from person to person.[10] In other words, theoretical instruments explaining creation of social innovations on the local level is missing and should be supplemented. Social practice theory is very helpful in tackling this gap.

(2) Social practice theory and social innovation

Social practice theory emphasizes that social innovation is not just an invention but "a new combination and/or configuration of social practices prompted by certain actors or the constellation of actors in an intentional targeted manner with the goal of better satisfying, or answering needs and problems, than is possible on the basis of established practices".[11] For social practice theory invention is a central element for social development[12] but imitation/repetition is the central mechanism of social reproduction and social change (see Figure 2).[13]

The process of social innovation, according to social practice theory, goes through the stages of implementation through planned, or unplanned, intervention, prototyping/piloting of a new idea in an existing social context. Institutionalization follows the implementation stage to assure that a new social practice becomes an everyday routine. The diffusion stage advances imitation to the level of new social practice that potentially changes existing social structure enabling social change. These key stages of generation of social innovation are helpful in understanding how a new social practice is able to make social change and create a new social reality. To embody anticipated social innovation, the following key elements of social practice described in Table 1 should be present:

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[8] European Commission, *Guide to Social Innovation.* Brussels: European Commission, 2013, p. 9.

[9] Tarde cit. in Howaldt, *Theoretical Approaches to Social Innovation - A critical Literature Review.* Dortmund, Germany: A deliverable of the project: 'Social Innovation: Driving Force of Social Change' (SI-DRIVE), 2014, p. 19.

[10] ibid

[11] ibid, p.16.

[12] ibid, p. 19.

[13] ibid

Table 1. Key elements of Social Practice

Physicality	Materiality	Competencies
Sociality and physicality carried out practices	Things, technologies in and for social practice	Know-how, practical knowledge, background knowledge, understanding

Source: Howaldt et al. 2014: 13

According to Tarde, "Novelty can go out of each of these elements. New practices thus arise from the combination of new and existing elements". [14] As mentioned above, social change may occur through the mechanism by translating invention through imitation into a reproduced new social fact able to change the existing structure.

Figure 2. Mechanism of Social Reproduction and Social Change

Source: Howaldt et al. 2014: 19

Tarde's theoretical contribution might be used to study social innovation as a mechanism of social change on the micro and meso levels. Thus, social practice theory has been applied for analytical purposes of the study to scrutinize projects aimed to be social innovations on the micro (local) level. Mulgan's 'connected difference' approach to social innovation, has been primarily applied to analyze projects labeled by UNDP as 'social innovations' as the point of departure of theoretical analysis in this study. Since UNDP used this approach for nurturing social innovations in local governments and communities, the primary task of the research was to evaluate the projects supported by UNDP against criteria applied by this development organization. Additionally, social practice theory addressed the projects supported by UNDP and checked them against its criteria and stages of a generation of social innovation. The application of two approaches allowed using an analytical mechanism of double control and check of projects against their potential social innovation characteristics throughout the social innovation generation process.

(3) Methodological guidelines

The study applied qualitative methods of data collection, including analysis of documents, projects related documents, and other available sources of information. On the level of primary data collection, the research uses in-depth interviews for the collection of qualitative data. Interviews have been carried out in person and via skype/messengers during 2017-2018, with 23 respondents from Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan who supported and/or introduced projects in local governments and communities labeled as 'social innovations'. With the permission of respondents, interviews were recorded. Permission to directly quote respondents in the research has been obtained. The data gained from the interviews was combined with the data consisting of project documents available for analysis from 68 projects. The following categories of respondents have been covered:

1. UNDP staff members in charge of 'social innovation' projects,
2. Individuals/team members of Kolba Lab, Social Boost (and other organizations), and UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project in charge of 'social innovations' in local governments and communities,
3. Local civil society leaders, members of interest groups, activists and advocates implemented 'social innovation' projects in local governments and communities.

While conducting Skype/Messenger interviews with respondents in Armenia and Ukraine, limitations related to the usage of English or Russian languages have occurred. Respondents without good command of either English or Russian have not been interviewed. The researcher does not possess adequate knowledge of Armenian

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[14] ibid, p. 14.

and Ukrainian languages to collect primary data from interviews, or secondary information from other sources.

Respondents from UNDP and Kolba Lab, SocialBoost (and other organizations) and UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' organizations/projects have been chosen based on: a) engagement in 'social innovation' activities in/for local governments and communities in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan confirmed by official programs and/or project documents; b) confirmed and documented cooperation with UNDP in the creation and delivery of 'social innovation' solutions in local governments and communities.

Local civil society leaders, members of local interest groups, activists and advocates have been chosen based on: a) leadership in 'social innovation' initiatives and 'social innovation' projects; b) Implementation by them of 'social innovation' solutions in local governments and communities.

To obtain primary data through interviews a networking strategy has been applied to contact respondents, who introduced 'social innovations'.

Questions of the interviews have been related to the background information and the argument derived from theories. The questionnaire for the interview has been prepared in Russian and English.

(4) Evaluation criteria of social innovation applied in the study

The criteria and the basis for interpretation of the results of the study have been drawn from the theoretical framework, encompassing a 'connected difference' approach, to the social innovation cycle and social practice theory. The 68 projects in Armenia, Ukraine, Uzbekistan mentioned earlier have been evaluated based on criteria formulated and explained below.

The criteria applied in the analysis encompasses the following explanation:

(1) Project ideas should be new to the social contexts of local governments and communities in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan;

(2) Social impact is a change occurring in local governances or communities, as the result of intervention of the project;

(3) The criterion of interaction of different actors/sectors/disciplines involved in idea generation and implementation implies that the projects should be cross-cutting several sectors (market-state-civil society), involve different actors interacting in the network, and across disciplines;

(4) The involvement of technology criterion considers technology, basic or advanced electronic, engineer or ICT tools introduced by the project;

(5) The process of generation of social innovation being a final criterion in the study should track whether the project followed the accepted order from prompting to ideation/proposition, prototyping, sustaining, scaling, and finally, to systemic change. Social innovation cycle has been applied for this purpose.

Projects have been additionally evaluated against key elements of social practice such as physicality, materiality and competences, as well as being checked against social practice generation stages of social practice theory chosen as one of the theories framing the study. The stages of the social innovation cycle and social practice theory are explained in Tables 2 and 3 below. A social innovation cycle starts with the diagnosis of the problem and identification of the need to innovate. This stage is dedicated to prompts, inspirations and diagnoses. The next stage is dedicated to proposals and ideas, ideas generation.

Social practice theory marks this stage as invention. In the table below, the example of social innovation cycle and social practice theory. Those primary stages have been eliminated because the projects supported by UNDP have advanced to prototyping or implementation stage. Some of them, however, have not moved forward and remain at those stages. Thus, being a critical point for analysis, evaluation of the projects starts from the prototyping/implementation stages of generation of social innovations.

Table 2. Social Innovation Cycle

Stages	*Prototyping*	*Sustaining*	*Scaling*	*Systemic change*
Explanation	Testing ideas in practice	Idea becomes everyday practice	Growing and spreading innovation	New frameworks and/or architectures made up of innovations

Source: Murray & Mulgan, 2010: 12

Table 3. Social Practice Theory

Stages	*Implementation*	*Institutionalization*	*Diffusion*	*Social change*
Explanation	Introduction of idea into context of use	Idea becomes a regular practice or made routine	Fast and sustained spread of innovation	Change in the social structure of a society, its underlying institutions, cultural patterns,

Source: Howaldt et al. 2014: 19

The philosophy of UNDP supporting social innovations was to change its approach to development work. By introducing social innovations UNDP withdraws itself from complex political economy analysis and needs assessment, and regards individuals facing certain development problems as experts able to find solutions of these problems. Thus, individuals (not UNDP) should identify the challenges which required efforts for change. This approach is called a human-centered approach. Hence, any initiative or project introduced and led by individuals experiencing those challenges, and not initiated by UNDP or any organization, are considered in this research as a potential 'social innovation'.

3. Evaluation of solutions supported by UNDP in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan against their social innovation characteristics

Armenia is the first country in the World where United Nations has based a Social Innovation Laboratory. – Kolba Lab in 2013, was funded by the European Union to design and implement 'social innovations' for development.[15] While the idea behind Kolba Lab was to embrace new technologies and methodologies in development work, it incubated social startups and selected ideas through local government Challenge, *mylocgov*, to tackle problems in local governments and communities. Kolba Lab has had two approaches to the generation of 'social innovations' in Armenia: 1) Innovation Challenges - Ideas competing for social startups in local communities, and 2) Local government Challenges for 'social innovations' in local governments.

In Ukraine UNDP supported 'social innovation' projects through National Hackathons and Municipal Innovation Labs. Differently from Armenia and Uzbekistan, 'social innovation' projects in Ukraine were supported by diverse organizations. Many of these organizations engaged with UNDP as a partner and as a donor. A lot of emphasis was made on open data and technology involved in innovation. The major organization supported 'social innovation' projects with UNDP was SocialBoost[16] which did a massive amount of socially significant projects involving ICT solutions in partnership with international donors, global corporations and partners. In addition to SocialBoost, E-Governance for Accountability and Participation (EGAP) Program, Transparency and Accountability in Public Administration Services (TAPAS), Eidos Centre for Political Studies and Analysis, as well as other programs have also nurtured local and national projects. Some of these organizations, for instance EGAP, explicitly promoted social innovations, intending to promote higher quality governance, and cooperation between citizens and governments. Others, like TAPAS and Eidos, promoted cooperation between governments and citizens, and governments' accountability based on open data.

In Uzbekistan, The UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project led by UNDP was the first and, as yet, only social innovation initiative. The Project was directly implemented by UNDP Good

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[15] What is Kolba Lab? Retrieved February 13, 2017, from Kolba Lab: http://kolba.am/en/FAQ
[16] SocialBoost. Retrieved February 13, 2017, from SocialBoost: http://socialboost.com.ua/

Governance Unit, allowing cooperation with national partner organizations based on Memorandums of Understanding. [17] Two national organizations in Uzbekistan worked with UNDP/UNV. 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project in Uzbekistan, the National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi, and the Centre for Youth Initiatives "Kelajak Ovozi" were selected. The choice of these organizations as the partners of the Project has been made based on several factors.

The first reason was the Project objectives related to involvement of young people into social innovation and volunteerism activities – two overlapping areas in understanding of UNDP in Uzbekistan. Since the major share of the population of Uzbekistan is young people under thirty, UNDP saw the biggest potential for innovation from extensive involvement of youth in social innovation projects. Moreover, volunteerism was another area that might be of interest for young individuals. The second reason UNDP was chosen is that organization was seeking ways for the institutionalization of its social innovation and volunteerism related initiatives. Since, the Project was directly implemented by UNDP, commitments from local organizations to maintain performance of the initiatives after the completion of the Project was crucial. Hence, the National Library of Uzbekistan and the Center for Youth Initiatives agreed to cooperate with the Project and commit their resources and institutional capabilities. Additionally, the Project collaborated with private companies in Uzbekistan to institutionalize its 'social innovation' initiatives. Two companies, namely, the biggest retail chain Korzinka.uz and the taxi company 'Perekrestok' have been contacted for cooperation. Further in the analysis we refer to these and other initiatives inspired by UNDP as UNDP-led ideas.

(1) Generation of 'social innovations': how it worked

All three-country projects/organizations followed the process of creation of 'social innovation' projects in local government and communities:

Proposition. Identify and set priority development challenges. After identifying development problems, propose the list of problems which call for innovative solutions from individuals. Individuals/users then come up with their shortlist of priorities.

Prioritization. Do preparatory work on identifying and setting development challenges. It, allows users experiencing certain problems to agree or disagree with proposed challenges. Users can actually disagree with all propositions and prioritize different development challenges which they intend to tackle. End-users challenges are always chosen to announce an open call for ideas and projects able to solve these challenges. At this stage UNDP supported organizations assist potential trouble-solvers in learning, pitching, and idea/project presentation techniques. Those skills are required for presenting/pitching their ideas/projects in front of an experienced selection board of experts from different sectors. For this purpose, Kolba Lab, SocialBoost (and other organizations) and UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project organize Hackathons, Municipal Innovations Lab, Social Innovation Camps, Trainings, etc. At these events ideas are usually being revised and selected for the next stage – incubation.

Incubation. Selected ideas are taken to the incubation process supported by Kolba Lab, SocialBoost (and other organizations) and UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project. Ideas receive mentorship support, and assistance in connecting them to the existing eco-system in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan. Moreover, Kolba Lab, SocialBoost (and other organizations), and UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project provide seed funding to the best ideas and help in turning ideas into minimum viable products (MVPs) or workable business models. Incubation stage is/was usually followed by the Demo Day or Implementation stage.

Implementation. Once the ideas/projects are incubated Kolba Lab, SocialBoost (and other organizations) and UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project as well as authors of the ideas/projects work on implementation of these ideas/projects together with local partner organizations and government authorities. In the case of local governments and communities, Kolba Lab, SocialBoost (and other organizations) and UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project were able to support ideas coming from

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[17] UNDP/UNV Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan Project. Retrieved February 13, 2017, from Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan Project Goal:
http://www.uz.undp.org/content/uzbekistan/en/home/operations/projects1/democratic_governance/social-innovation-and-volunteerism-in-uzbekistan.html

individuals within the organizations. Those individuals were aware of the problems, and possessed sufficient knowledge to offer solutions to the existing problems. Moreover, projects would not succeed without social capital integrated into them as a substantial element. The role of those social relationships (or social capital of individuals) has not been researched. Their input was not comprehensively assessed nor explained, to better understand how social innovations can be created. Also, in the case of governance institutions in Armenia, public sector employees actually understood the problem of, say, violation of consumers' rights, better than end-users, and/or citizens in local communities. For instance, an accessibility map was created by users, for consumers' rights protections. The application was proposed by mid-level government employee to inform citizens about their rights and allow them to report violations which they experienced. Policy level innovation and free legal tools for analyzing court decisions and cases allowed analysis of statistics and visualization tools that permitted citizens to stay informed about court decision. To make these projects work, two components were required: 1) involvement and commitment of individuals in governments and communities; 2) ICT tools and access to open data.

Obviously, though all projects pass through very careful selection process, not all of the proposed solutions turn out to be sustainable. This research covers and analyzes all projects and discusses them in accordance with theoretical framework. Besides explaining why certain projects fail to be social innovations in the future, it determines those potentially able to be social innovations in local governments and communities.

(2) Towards being a "social innovation"

Armenia. Due to the Kolba Lab assistance every project has been connected to organizations and partners from different sectors. Projects in/for local governments have been designed in a way to involve ICT sector representatives, public and private organizations. 13 out of 14 projects involved technology usually in form of IT tools (apps, websites etc.). All 14 projects were designed in accordance with criteria applied by UNDP. Since criteria that UNDP applied on the projects were met, all projects also went through the stages of creation of social innovations both by social innovation cycle and social practice theory. Tables 4 and 5 covered all projects and demonstrate how each of them advanced towards being social innovation. Key elements of social practice such as physicality, materiality and competences were addressed by the projects in local communities and governments. They consisted of aspects required for new social practices, technology and knowledge of the project team. Also, Kolba Lab invested in building missing capacity of the projects' members and assisted in making necessary connections between the projects and interested organizations.

Table 4. Social Innovation Cycle (Projects in Armenia)

Projects	Prompts	Proposals	Prototypes	Sustaining	Scaling	Systemic Change
Quality of Life Calculator	✓	✓	✓			
Hosanq. Info & Armenian meteo project	✓	✓	✓			
Taghinfo	✓	✓	✓			
ARVest art education board game	✓	✓	✓			
Consumers' rights protection Chat bot	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Free legal tool for analyzing court decision and cases	✓	✓	✓			
Smart City solution (condominium management system)	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Garbage Management optimization tool	✓	✓	✓			
Online School registration	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Monitoring spending of government officials for business trips	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Monitoring relocation of government vehicles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Interactive city budget (in 6 cities)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Blood control application	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Seeing hands	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Source: Table compiled by author based on data from the interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects.

It is important to mention that Kolba Lab and UNDP were primarily considering two aspects in any project to be qualified as 'social innovation': 1) social impact and 2) human-centered principal. In this regards, Marina Mkhitaryan says:

"Impact is the key word. Kolba Lab sees what is the impact and what is the likelihood of impact for those ideas, and how effective they are in terms of what has been spent in terms of resources, time, human resources on implementing this idea. If the ratio is optimal then this is a social innovation. If it is responding to the human-centered principal, this is social innovation".[18]

Also, Kolba Lab and UNDP have not tried to replicate and scale up all solutions offered by the projects. Provoking innovative thinking inside the system and/or organization, that could be used after the completion of the project has been regarded as the very good accomplishment. Mkhitaryan argues:

"Not all solutions, according to the philosophy of Kolba Lab, have to be replicated, accelerated or expanded, but they can provoke innovative thinking inside the existing system, which can be also a great achievement".[19]

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[18] Mkhitaryan, *UNDP Armenia, Kolba Innovations Lab lead.* (B. Radjabov, Interviewer, 2017, December 22).
[19] Mkhitaryan, *UNDP Armenia, Kolba Innovations Lab lead.* (B. Radjabov, Interviewer, 2017, December 22).

In other words, UNDP and Kolba Lab in Armenia were predominantly concerned about the social impact from the projects designed by the individuals experiencing the problem, and less about the replication of the solution that helped to solve the problem. This, in accordance with the approach of Kolba Lab, was sufficient for the project to progress towards being a 'social innovation'.

Table 5. Social Practice Theory (Projects in Armenia)

Projects	Invention/ imitation	Implement- ation	Diffu- sion	Institution- alization	Social change
Quality of Life Calculator	✓	✓			
Hosanq. Info & Armenian meteo project	✓	✓			
Taghinfo	✓	✓			
ARVest art education board game	✓	✓			
Consumers' rights protection Chat bot	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Free legal tool for analyzing court decision and cases	✓	✓			
Smart City solution (condominium management system)	✓	✓		✓	
Garbage Management optimization tool	✓	✓			
Online School registration	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Monitoring spending of government officials for business trips	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Monitoring relocation of government vehicles	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Interactive city budget (in 6 cities)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Blood control application	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Seeing hands	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Source: Table compiled by author based on data from the interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects

A human-centered approach was applied to every project. Though not all projects could become social innovations, as any innovation possesses failures as a part of the process, Kolba Lab could establish a systemic innovations generation mechanism that could advance the number of projects to the stage of social/systemic change in the existing social structure. Thus, by the introduction of new social practices on the local level, projects supported by Kolba Lab and UNDP might advance towards being social innovations. Projects have been evaluated against the stages of generation of social innovations in accordance with the social innovation cycle and social practice theory. Both approaches showed that out of 14 projects only 7 advanced towards the scaling/diffusion stage (Figure 3). The major reason for this was political dynamism and change of decision-makers that committed to introduce projects. Political change being in general a positive trend, nevertheless, turned out to be a challenge for institutionalization and diffusion of the projects.

Figure 3. Projects evaluation against SIC and SPT (Armenia)
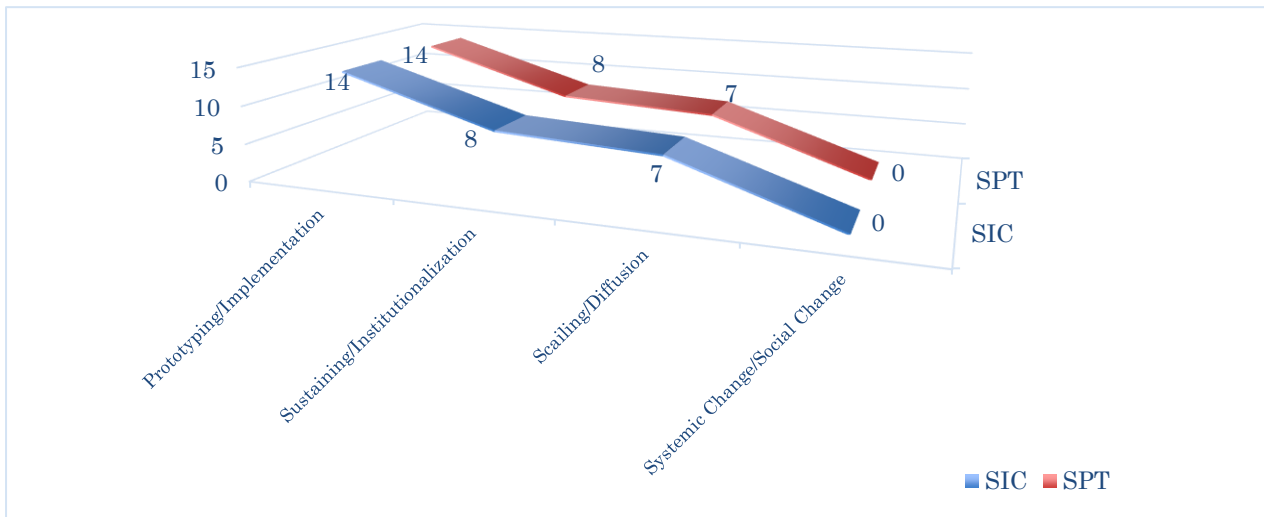
Source: Figure compiled by author based on data from the interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects

Ukraine. Almost all projects supported by UNDP, SocialBoost and other organizations were hi-tech initiatives, in which advanced technologies were used. The criteria of involvement of technology, mostly in form of ICT solutions, were introduced by the projects. All projects accomplished the criteria of interaction of different actors/sectors/disciplines and engaged with numerous actors locally, which allowed project ideas cross-cutting several sectors. All project ideas proved to be new in the social context of local communities in Ukraine, albeit proving their social impact was problematic due to the absence of indicators, proper pre and post-analysis of the problem, and the lack of access to open data. Since criteria that UNDP applied on the projects were met, all projects also went through the stages of generation of social innovations both by social innovation cycle and social practice theory. Tables 6 and 7 covered all projects and demonstrated how each of them advanced towards being social innovation. Key elements of social practice such as physicality, materiality and competences were addressed by the projects in local communities and governments. They consisted of aspects required for new social practice, technology and knowledge of the project team. Also, SocialBoost and other organizations invested in building missing capacity and mentorship of the projects' members and assisted in making necessary connections between the projects and interested organizations.

UNDP and partner organizations in Ukraine have also emphasized two aspects, namely 1) human-centered approach and 2) social impact, that could make the project a 'social innovation'. Former UNDP Ukraine staff member in charge of social innovations, Maksym Klyuchar emphasizes the human-centered aspect that should prevail in any project that is supposed to be called a 'social innovation'. He argues:
"Social innovation is tried and tested approach. And by tried and tested I mean tried and tested by people, not by the designers of an idea, but rather than by actual future users of this approach. So, tried and tested approach of making a public service, or making a polity closer to the citizens, more user friendly and accessible for the citizens, and trying to reduce the costs to deliver this service, or making this service faster".[20]

The co-founder and the lead of SocialBoost Denis Gurskiy adds the aspect of social impact through the extensive use of technology, that is required for the project to become a 'social innovation'. He says:
"Social Innovation in 2018 is definitely the reinvention or redesign of social, economic or political processes which directly impacts peoples' lives. And this definitely happens with extensive use of technology".[21]

As in the case of UNDP and Kolba Lab in Armenia, in Ukraine human-centered approach and social impact, have been highlighted as the core aspects of 'social innovation'. Additionally, technology was mentioned as the

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[20] Klyuchar, *Knowledge Management Expert at United Nations Development Program at Ukraine under the Democratization and Human Rights Program 2013 – 2016.* (B. Radjabov, Interviewer, 2018, March 5).

[21] Gursky, *Lead of Social Boost, Co-founder of 1991 Open Data Incubator* . (B. Radjabov, Interviewer, 2018, March 5).

mean of introduction of 'social innovation'.

Table 6. Social Innovation Cycle (Projects in Ukraine)

Projects	Prompts	Proposals	Prototypes	Sustaining	Scaling	Systemic Change
SemaSearch	✓	✓	✓			
Swiss knife	✓	✓	✓			
B-beeper	✓	✓	✓			
POIZDka" (TRAINride)	✓	✓	✓			
I Gave A Bribe" (later merged into CorruptUA)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Moya Oselya	✓	✓	✓			
My e-school	✓	✓	✓			
Open budget visualization	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mobile Ivano-Frankivsk	✓	✓	✓			
One-Stop-Shop Centre for Administrative Service Provision in Novograd-Volynskiy Municipality	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Participatory budget in 63 cities (IT tool)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Municipal Open Budget Platform	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Open Data Bot	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
ReDonbass mobile app	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
1991 Open Data Incubator	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
E-cemetery service (booking places for dead in cemetery)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Navizor data set	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Agri-eye e-data set	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Anchor is me (E-service on energy utilities for households)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Service for local petition	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Marking dogs in the cities with censors	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Source: Table compiled by author based on data from the interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects

Table 7. Social Practice Theory (Projects in Ukraine)

Projects	Invention/imitation	Implement-ation	Diffu-sion	Institution-alization	Social change
SemaSearch	✓	✓			
Swiss knife	✓	✓			
B-beeper	✓	✓			
POIZDka" (TRAINride)	✓	✓			
I Gave A Bribe" (later merged into CorruptUA)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Moya Oselya	✓	✓			
My e-school	✓	✓			
Open budget visualization	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Mobile Ivano-Frankivsk	✓	✓			
One-Stop-Shop Centre for Administrative Service Provision in Novograd-Volynskiy Municipality	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Participatory budget in 63 cities (IT tool)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Municipal Open Budget Platform	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Open Data Bot	✓	✓	✓	✓	
ReDonbass mobile app	✓	✓	✓	✓	
1991 Open Data Incubator	✓	✓	✓	✓	
E-cemetery service (booking places for dead in cemetery)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Navizor data set	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Agri e-data set	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Anchor is me (E-service on energy utilities for households)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Service for local petition	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Marking dogs in the cities with censors	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Source: Table compiled by author based on data from the interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects

Projects have been evaluated against the stages of generation of social innovations in accordance with social innovation cycle and social practice theory. Both approaches showed that out of 21 projects, 14 advanced towards scaling/diffusion stage (Figure 4). The major reason for this was political dynamism and change of decision-makers that committed to introduce projects.

Figure 4. Projects evaluation against SIC and SPT (Ukraine)
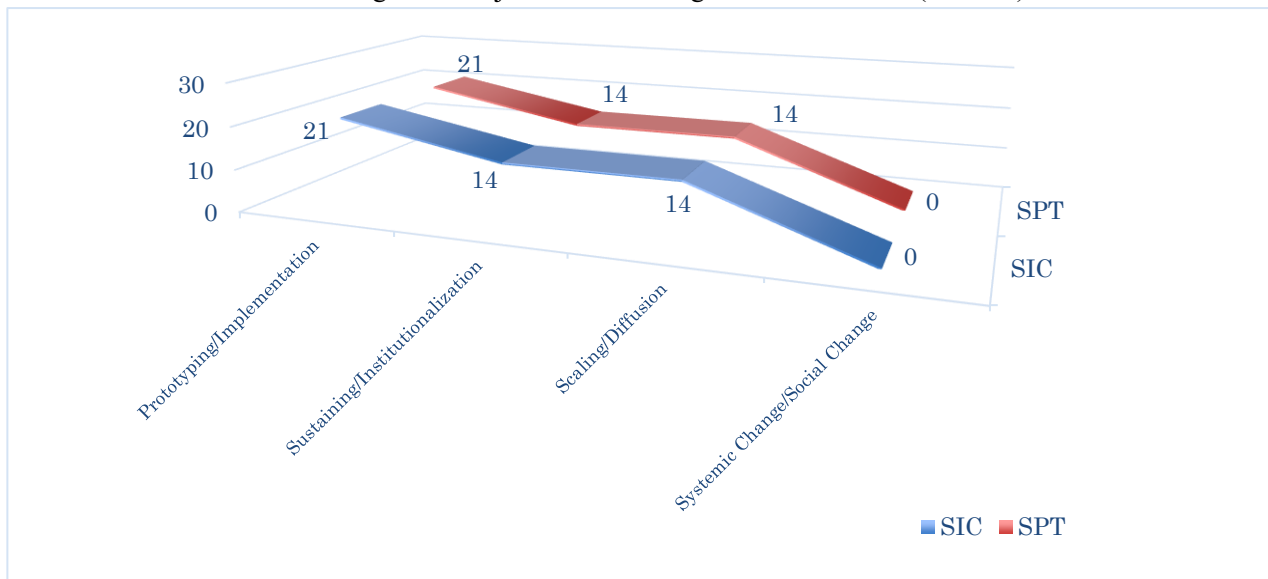
Source: Figure compiled by author based on data from the interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects

In Uzbekistan almost all projects and UNDP proposed ideas were low-tech initiatives, meaning that advanced technologies were rarely used. Special attention was given to criteria of interaction of different actors/sectors/disciplines involved in idea generation and implementation. Almost all projects accomplished this goal and could engage with numerous actors locally, in order to propose project ideas cross-cutting several sectors. All project ideas proved to be new in the social context of local communities in Uzbekistan, albeit proving their social impact was problematic. Having UNDP-led initiatives for the analysis, together with small scaled projects, showed that development projects driven by donor can go through the similar stages of social innovation cycle. However, it does not make them social innovations. Tables 8 and 9 summarize projects and UNDP-led initiatives and demonstrates that several UNDP-led initiatives could advance to the stage of scaling. None of the projects or UNDP-led initiatives could make a systemic change that requires more time and efforts.

UNDP in Uzbekistan highlighted two characteristics of 'social innovation' such as: 1) being new for the social context, and 2) delivering the public good. In this context, UNDP Good Governance Unit Program Associate Ms. Emiliya Asadova says:

"Social innovations are solutions that work for resolution of social problem/issue. They do not have to be scientifically new. Sometimes they can be new for the certain area/context. For example, something used in farming can be used in medicine".[22]

Manager of the UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project Mr. Bokhodir Ayupov argues that:

"Social Innovation is an innovation that is social, that is beneficial for the society, especially for vulnerable groups of the society, not as a priority, but as an additional aspect. I have never considered financial component excluded from social innovation. In other words, social innovation can be profitable, though the practice shows that such examples are quite rare. Many people see social innovation as a charity. But the essence of social innovation is delivering public good. As for innovation itself, it is about unconventional approaches and using existing systems and opportunities by integrating them for public good. It can be an invention in the core of social innovation".[23]

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[22] Asadova, *Program Associate at UNDP, Good Governance Unit.* (B. Radjabov, Interviewer, 2017, August 27).

[23] Ayupov, *Project Manager at UNDP/UNV Project 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan'.* (B. Radjabov, Interviewer, 2017, August 7).

In Uzbekistan, UNDP has viewed 'social innovation' as something that might have the invention in its core, and be relatively (not necessarily absolutely) new for the certain social context. Also, 'social innovation', according to UNDP, should deliver a public good desirable for the society.

Table 8. Social Innovation Cycle (Projects in Uzbekistan)

Projects	Prompts	Proposals	Prototypes	Sustaining	Scaling	Systemic Change
"Fantasy-Club" Initiatives	✓	✓	✓			
"Crafty Master"	✓	✓	✓			
"IT masters"	✓	✓	✓			
"The week of football"	✓	✓	✓			
"Mobile electro station"	✓	✓	✓			
'Afishka' Festival of auteur theory and social films	✓	✓	✓			
Film on TB prevention	✓	✓	✓			
Summer Camp and DIY Labs in Muynak						
Web site of Muynak						
Debates Tournament in Andijan	✓	✓	✓			
Voice of Volunteerism	✓	✓	✓			
Training on reproductive health among Roma population						
Translations of audio and video for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	✓	✓				
Theatre by children	✓	✓	✓			
Module "All the money under control"	✓	✓	✓			
Raising awareness campaigns on Breast Cancer prevention among women in Jizzakh.	✓	✓	✓			
"Enjoying old age"	✓	✓	✓			
"Inspired Teachers"	✓	✓	✓			
"English guides"	✓	✓	✓			
Video project about people living with HIV	✓	✓	✓			
'Social Entrepreneurship skills'	✓	✓	✓			
Constructor	✓	✓	✓			
E-dairy	✓	✓	✓			
Infobox.uz	✓	✓				
Peers club	✓	✓	✓			
Eco bags with Korzinka.uz (UNDP-led)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Taxi for people with disabilities with 'Perekrestok' Taxi company (UNDP-led)	✓	✓	✓			
Promotion of local tourism in social networks (with LGSP project) (UNDP-led)	✓	✓	✓			
Café Scientifique (UNDP-led)	✓	✓	✓			
Iact. Volunteers platform (UNDP-led)	✓	✓	✓			
Volunteers engagement (in the NatLib (UNDP-led)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Do It Yorself (DIY) Lab (UNDP-led)	✓	✓	✓			
"Shower and water supply" in the fields in rural areas plus foil to warm up water	✓	✓	✓			

Source: Table compiled by author based on data from the interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects

Table 9. Social Practice Theory (Projects in Uzbekistan)

Projects	*Invention/ imitation*	*Implement- ation*	*Diffu- sion*	*Institution- alization*	*Social change*
"Fantasy-Club" Initiatives	✓	✓			
"Crafty Master"	✓	✓			
"IT masters"	✓	✓			
"The week of football"	✓	✓			
"Mobile electro station"	✓	✓			
'Afishka' Festival of auteur theory and social films	✓	✓			
Film on TB prevention	✓	✓			
Summer Camp and DIY Labs in Muynak					
Web site of Muynak					
Debates Tournament in Andijan	✓	✓			
Voice of Volunteerism	✓	✓			
Training on reproductive health among Roma population					
Translations of audio and video for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing	✓				
Theatre by children	✓	✓			
Module "All the money under control"	✓	✓			
Raising awareness campaigns on Breast Cancer prevention among women in Jizzakh.	✓	✓			
"Enjoying old age"	✓	✓			
"Inspired Teachers"	✓	✓			
"English guides"	✓	✓			
Video project about people living with HIV	✓	✓			
'Social Entrepreneurship skills'	✓	✓			
Constructor	✓	✓			
E-dairy	✓	✓			
Infobox.uz	✓				
Peers club	✓	✓			
Eco bags with Korzinka.uz (UNDP-led)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Taxi for people with disabilities with 'Perekrestok' Taxi company (UNDP-led)	✓	✓			
Promotion of local tourism in social networks (with LGSP project) (UNDP-led)	✓	✓			
Café Scientifique (UNDP-led)	✓	✓			
Iact. Volunteers platform (UNDP-led)	✓	✓			
Volunteers engagement (in the NatLib (UNDP-led)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Do It Yourself (DIY) Lab (UNDP-led)	✓	✓			
"Shower and water supply" in the fields in rural areas plus foil to warm up water	✓	✓			

Source: Table compiled by author based on data from the interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects

To carry out new social practices, key elements have been covered. Projects have possessed physicality, new things (and sometimes new technologies), as well as practical knowledge and understanding of new social practices. They were intended to be introduced into the existing social structure in local governments and communities in Uzbekistan. These key elements of social practice were achieved due to the mixture of existing expertise and knowledge of leaders of the projects and specialized training conducted for them by UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project. This capacity helped to reach prototyping or implementation stage by the

majority of projects. However, only 2 could advance towards the next stage of sustaining/institutionalization and scaling/diffusion (see Figure 5), due to the lack of civic activism, and commitment to introduce innovation and new social practices. Out of 33 submitted projects supported by UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project, 28 advanced to prototyping stage, and 11 projects involved new technology. Only 2 could proceed to the stage of diffusion and have later been institutionalized. These two projects have not corresponded with criteria of social innovation and were full UNDP-led initiatives. Moreover, to make a social change that would require turning social invention into social innovation that consequently creates new social facts widely accepted by the society, would certainly require more time. Since, at the moment, UNDP/UNV 'Social Innovation and Volunteerism in Uzbekistan' Project has been completed in 2014, one concludes that it has not generated social innovations.

Figure 5. Projects evaluation against SIC and SPT (Uzbekistan)
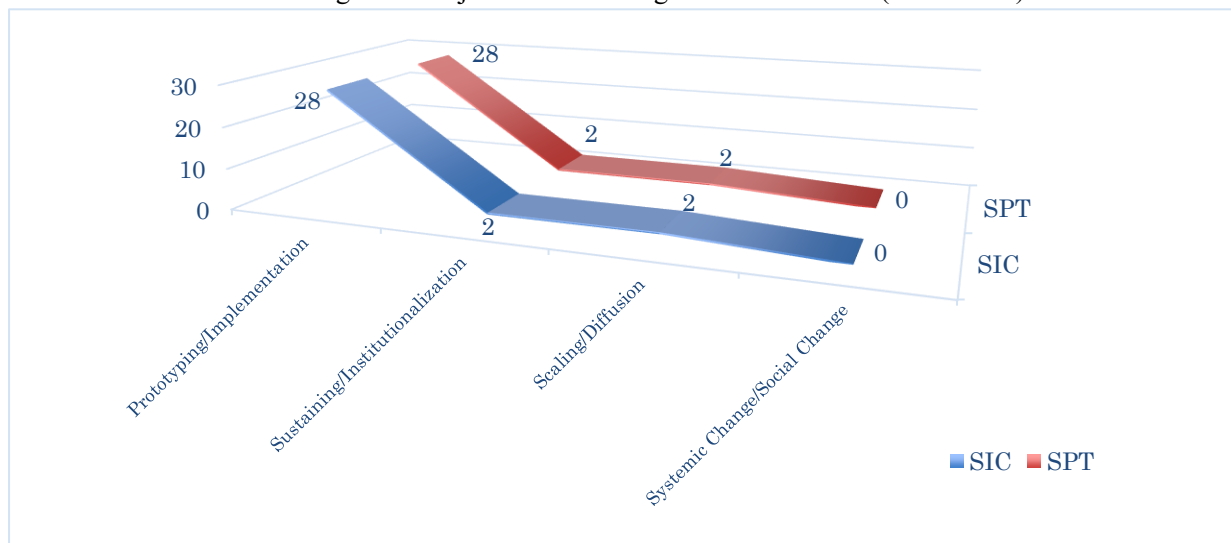
Source: Figure compiled by author based on data from the interviews, documents and online sources related to the projects

4. Conclusion

Analysis of projects supported by UNDP has been conducted in accordance with the theoretical framework of the current study. Based on this, the study has the following findings: UNDP in all countries implied (but not always applied) a human-centered approach in the projects to generate 'social innovations'. Not all of solutions offered by UNDP in Armenia, Ukraine and Uzbekistan were sustainable social practices. Not all of these solutions were institutionalized/sustaining, diffused/scaled. Hence, not all of them are likely to be social innovations.

In Armenia 7 projects are likely to be seen as social innovations; The major reasons for projects not to advance towards being social innovations are: *(a)* political dynamism and *(b)* lack of personal commitment of policy makers to introduce innovation; In Ukraine 14 projects are likely to be seen as social innovations; The major reasons for projects not to advance towards being social innovations are: *(a)* political dynamism and *(b)* lack of personal commitment of policy makers to introduce innovation; In Uzbekistan 0 projects are likely to be seen as social innovations; The major reasons for projects not to advance towards being social innovations are: *(a)* 2 projects at scaling stage were UNDP-led development projects, not social innovations and *(b)* lack of personal commitment of policy makers to introduce innovation.

The study found that in Armenia and Ukraine, where civil society was relatively strong, communities could advocate for more accountability and transparency of government institutions on local and national levels. Raising public awareness and public control, through citizens' participation, and their access to the open data, enabled the introduction and implementation of projects that might advance towards being social innovations which make systemic/social change. Projects which failed to advance towards making social/systemic change, and possibility of becoming social innovations, were projects where private sector (market), public sector (state) and civic sector (community) failed to cooperate. Across the countries, this study found the following problems challenging

advancement of the projects towards social innovations: (a) Lack of data (open data) (b) Lack of civic activism; (c) Lack of institutionalization possibilities of social innovations due to the missing personal commitment of policy makers. Theories discussed in this study have not covered social capital and the role of 'intrapreneurs' or 'insiders', who contribute to generation of 'social innovation' projects in local governments and communities. Although not underestimating the role of other elements of social innovation, this study highlights the role of social capital as an element that was overlooked in the analysis of generation of social innovations on local level. Strictly speaking, theories and evidence from the case studies embody a massive amount of social interactions happening among various actors. The human-centered approach and the support of the projects led by individuals (mid-career employees in Armenia or project leaders in Ukraine and Uzbekistan) have been highlighted in the study. However, social relationships making resources of interacting individuals, or in other words a social capital, available for solution of a problem was not researched. It is required to further study this area to understand the significant role of social capital and add it as an element helping to generate the social innovation.

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Research Note

Japan's Practice in the Tourism Development of Uzbekistan:

Tourism Strategy in the Japanese and Uzbek Economies

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Tourism is a rapidly developing and highly profitable sector of the economy. It is capable of raising the level of the economy to a new height of development. In Uzbekistan, tourism is given great attention and at the same time, large investments are being made to improve its infrastructure. Cooperation between Japan and Uzbekistan has been continuing for a long time and the support from Japan represents such great significance. Currently, a large number of joint projects are being implemented between the two countries, and in the long term, this will lead to an unprecedented success of the tourism sector. The main purpose of this study is to reveal the essence of tourism and its role in the economy of two countries – Japan and Uzbekistan. Moreover, to explore the experience of tourism development of aforementioned countries and the possibility of applying Japan's experience in Uzbekistan. The study begins with the consideration of the goals of tourism, its prospects, tourist infrastructure that includes the hotel business, transportation, and communications. Further, the study discusses past experiences in the development of tourism, its present situation, as well as prospects for development in Japan and Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Japanese Practice, Tourism Development, Hotel Industry, Tourism Infrastructure, Uzbekistan

Introduction

The tourism industry is one of the most powerful global industries that exist today. For its rapid growth, the industry is recognized as an economic phenomenon of the latest century. The tourism industry possesses immense economic potential through which it can create new employment opportunities, tax revenues, and economic diversity (Andereck et al., 2005). Therefore, in various countries, tourism plays a substantial role in the formation of GDP, the creation of additional jobs, and employment. In addition, the industry has a huge impact on key economic sectors such as transportation, communications, construction, agriculture. In other words, it acts as a kind of accelerator for social and economic development. Moreover, it can offer tourism companies the potential to play a leadership role within the tourism industry and the business community (Ashley et al., 2007).

The previous years have seen certain "growth in the attention paid by governments, development experts, and industry leaders to the contributions made by the tourism sector in many countries, especially in the developing world" (Ashley et al., 2007, p.6). Some of them are "within the United Nations (UN), the UN Commission on Trade and Development promotes the importance of tourism to least developed countries; and the UN Environment Program promotes sustainable tourism. The UN World Tourism Organization is not only exclusively devoted to tourism but has even created an international foundation to enhance its contribution to development" (Ashley et al., 2007, p.6).

The importance of tourism as a source of foreign exchange earnings and expanding international contacts is

constantly growing. Tourism is an extremely competitive, specialized, swiftly evolving commercial sector. It is composed of a variety of large companies and an excess of small owner-operated firms running on tight profit margins (Ashley et al., 2007). These companies work for the development of the country economy, as well as to enhance the lives of the population. Tourism brings much profit to the state budget, enriches people's attitude toward a diversity of world cultures, and shares experience in lifestyles.

The tourism sector consists of so-called infrastructure, which is an interconnected system of enterprises and entrepreneurs that provide tourists with all the tourism services, works, and goods necessary for consumption and sufficient for the implementation of the tourism process itself. The rapid development of mass tourism globally caused the equivalent development of the tourism industry and related sectors of the economy, science, culture, and the education system. Proceeding from these prerequisites, the tourist infrastructure is a set of hotels and other means of accommodation, vehicles, catering facilities, entertainment facilities and facilities, cognitive, medical, health, sports, religious, business, and other purposes; organizations that carry out tour operator and travel agency activities, as well as provide tourist and excursion services. Most studies adopt total revenue as output variable (Assaf et al., 2010; Anderson et al., 2000).

The size and degree of influence of international tourism in the world can be assessed by the following indicators. In 1950, the number of international tourists in the world amounted to 25 million people; in 2000, 674 million people, and receipts from international tourism reached USD 423 million. The number of tourists in the world reached a record level of 1.235 billion (UNWTO, 2017). This is 3.9% more than in 2016 (see Figure 1).

According to the annual report of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), the contribution of tourism to the world economy is 10.9% of world GDP, and tourism provides 30% of export services (USD 1.5 trillion) and 6% of export goods and services (UNWTO, 2017; UNWTO, 2014). In addition, every 11th working place in the world economy is created in the sphere of tourism (UNWTO, 2017). To service such a large number of people moving around the world, more and more specialists from many tourism-related industries are involved, which are the essence of the industry and tourism infrastructure.

Figure 1 Dynamics of world tourist growth in the period from 1950 to 2030, (in millions of people)
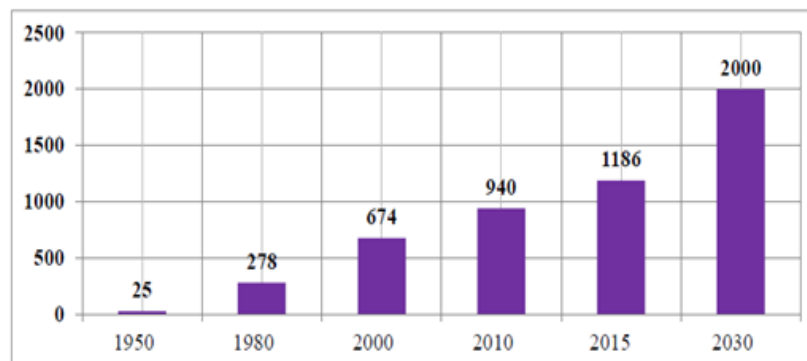
Source: Compiled by the authors based on Tourism News UNWTO (2016) http://www.tourprom. ru/news/34796/ (accessed 3 June 2018).

Today, the governance of Uzbekistan pays a great deal of attention to the tourism sphere, adopting programs at the state level for developing tourism, and setting the task to study international advanced practices in the field of improving the tourism industry. Furthermore, Japan is an advanced developed country with high-level tourist infrastructure and great tourist potential from where a large flow of tourists comes to Uzbekistan. Moreover, for the last several years Japan has done many improvements in the tourism sphere. Japan has already developed its domestic tourism, while Uzbekistan is in its first steps to broaden its so-called *ziyorat* tourism. One of the key points is the similarity of the mentality of the Japanese and Uzbek peoples, which is manifested in hard work, hospitality, and respect for history. The next important thing is a student exchange program. For example, every year, five to eight Japanese students from the University of Tsukuba, the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, and Hosei University arrive at the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies (TSIOS) to learn the Uzbek language and culture. In turn, annually 20 to 30 students from TSIOS go to Japan for three-month or one-year programs. Similarly, there are several mutual programs in the tourism sphere between Japan and Uzbekistan. It should be taken into account that the Japanese mass media play an important role in the promotion of the Uzbek brand. This leads to strengthening Japanese-Uzbek cooperation, including contribution to the development of each country's tourism potential.

1. Improved Infrastructure Leads Active Tourists Flow

(1) General Information on Infrastructure Development in Uzbekistan

In the Republic of Uzbekistan over the past few years, there has been an increase in extra-budgetary investments in tourism infrastructure. Recently, the largest investment projects have been implemented in the field of tourist infrastructure development, including the restoration and reconstruction of the historical part of the city of Shakhrisabz, construction of the Hyatt Hotel in Tashkent, cultural and entertainment parks in the cities of Andijan and Tashkent, the Angren-Pop railway, stretching the Tashkent-Samarkand railway line to the cities of Karshi and Bukhara, and three Boeing-787 aircraft (Shaherezada Sam Star Tour, 2018).

Through the efforts of the republic's leadership, tourism infrastructure has been raised to a rather high level in recent years. In the country, in particular, 1,176 tourist organizations, including 621 tour operators and 555 accommodation facilities function successfully.[1] It should be noted that tourism service exports increased by 24% to USD 1,557 billion compared to 2016. In addition, 101 placement facilities were created in 2017, with a total number of 1,355 places, and 128 legal entities providing tour operator services are registered (Shaherezada Sam Star Tour, 2018). Under the package of measures to ensure tourist safety and health, 442 organizations are certified to provide tourist services, of which 221 provide hotel and 221 provide tour operator services. During the period under review, issuing licenses for the right to conduct tour operator activities for 128 entrepreneurs was organized. An extensive network of hotels for more than 25,000 rooms meet modern international standards.[2]

As a result of the large-scale work on the construction and reconstruction of infrastructure facilities in Uzbekistan, 11 airports have received the status of international airports during the years of independence. In 2016, the country's civil aviation fleet was supplemented by two modern Boeing Dreamliners.

(2) Hospitality Industry

In our time of expansion of international cultural ties and globalization, the issue of the development of modern, comfortable hotels, ready to open wide the doors to guests from other countries, was especially acute. It is important to create so-called hotel chains, i.e. network hotels, which have their own special, recognizable image and high-level service, as well as effective tourism agencies with highly qualified staff.

The hospitality industry is a sphere of entrepreneurship consisting of such types of services which are based on the principles of hospitality, characterized by friendliness towards the guests. An important place in the industry is occupied by the hotel business, the wide and diverse nature of which encompasses elements of the related sectors of the industry, for example, food, recreation, and entertainment. Accordingly, the hotel business demonstrates a broader and more diverse organizational structure than other sectors of the industry.

The development of international tourism in the background of the improvement of small business and private entrepreneurship in Uzbekistan has led to the fact that in practice in the international tourist market of the country, hotels of different levels of comfort are offered at different price categories (www.un.int, 2016). Every year the mass media inform about new forms of this service for numerous clients.

At the moment, the government repairs roads, facilitates bureaucratic delays in documentation, actively implements investments in this field, and gives guarantees to foreign investors. It is necessary to take advantage of this situation and start activities in the sphere of tourism services. Taking into account the peculiarities of the regions and other aspects of tourism, it is expedient to organize tourism centers in all the cities of Uzbekistan. Effective management of such an enterprise will be fully paid for by investments and will be released on profit within the first seven years from the beginning of work. The payback period of interest (at discounted values) is seven to twelve years. The effectiveness of the project is confirmed by the positive value of the net present value (NPV) criterion.

In addition, hotels provide a range of related services in accordance with the wishes of customers: booking tickets to theaters and cinemas, stadiums, concerts, etc., providing reference information, guides, and interpreters, as well as renting vehicles to other travel agencies.

As of 2017, there were 851 hotels and similar accommodation facilities in Uzbekistan, which is 8.3% more than in 2016 (compared to 2011, an increase of 32%), and the average annual growth rate for the period 2011-2016 was 9.2%. The one-time capacity in these accommodation facilities was 17,779 rooms (compared to 13,485 rooms in 2011) and 34,898 beds (compared to 25,526 beds in 2011). The largest concentration of accommodation facilities falls on the city of Tashkent (19.8%), Samarkand (16.4%) and Bukhara (15.4%), and the lowest are in Djizak (2.8%), Namangan (2.8%) and the Syrdarya (1.6%) regions. The number of accommodation in hotels and similar

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[1] The permanent Mission of the Republic of Uzbekistan to the United Nations. https://www.un.int/uzbekistan/news/развитие-туризма-в-узбекистане

[2] Information from the interview of A. Abdukhakimov, the Chairman of State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development. http://uznews.uz/ru/article/8547; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

accommodation facilities in 2016 amounted to about 13 million people, which is 4.2% more than in 2016 (compared to 2011 by 18.1%), the average annual growth for 2011-2017 was 7.1%. A large proportion of visitors using the services of hotels and similar accommodation facilities were for business and professional purposes (54.7%), followed by tourists for leisure and recreation (36.2%), and finally for other objectives (9.1%) (Uzbek Government Portal, 2018). As for Japan and Uzbekistan, an increase in the number of hotels and other accommodation facilities, tourist firms and organizations contributes to the increase in the level of employment by creating additional jobs in the tourism sector.[3]

(3) Transport Infrastructure

An important factor in the development of tourism in Uzbekistan is the condition of a sufficiently developed transport infrastructure. Thus, the total length of the railway lines (for 2017) is more than 6,020 km. There are 4,237.5 km of public roads, and 19.5% of the roads are electrified. There are 20 international transport routes and destinations throughout Uzbekistan[4] (Toshshahartranshizmat, 2018). The number of passengers carried is steadily growing. In 2017, 20.1 million people were transported by rail, which was 5.4% higher than in 2016, due to an increase in the volume of passenger transportation in domestic communications.[5] By automobile transport, 7.2 billion passengers were transported in 2017, which is 3.8% more than in 2016.[6] Despite the positive developments that have taken place in recent years in the passenger rail transport has unresolved problems such as the shortage of rail transport in high season, the difficulty of buying train tickets, and no electronic tickets for international shipping.

Air traffic is widely developed with routes to more than 40 cities of the world including Europe, Asia, and America).. At the end of 2017, there were 22,950 flights on provided by the national airline and 2.7 million passengers were transported. In total for the year 2017, the airline carried 489,000 tons of cargo, including tolls and mail, an increase of 11.6% compared to the previous year.[7] Despite the renewal of the aircraft fleet and reconstruction of airports in certain regions, certain issues remain unresolved. For example, the following do not contribute to the development of the tourism sector and the increase in the tourist flow: the low level of service at airports, the monopoly position of the national carrier for domestic and international flights, the lack of budget aviation transportation, the underdevelopment of domestic flights and the weak marketing policy of the national air carrier.

Visiting tourists in Uzbekistan have the opportunity to get to the sights of the republic by rail. Thus, in addition to the usual trains, high-speed "Afrosiab" trains produced by the Spanish company Talgo run daily between Tashkent, Samarkand, and Karshi, which have considerably improved the quality of customer service and reduced travel time. Moreover, in June 2016, another breakthrough in the development of the tourism and transport industry in Uzbekistan happened via the opening of the electrified railway line Angren-Pop that connects the Fergana Valley with the rest of the country (Uzbek Government Portal, 2018).

2. Uzbekistan Turns to be one of the most Attractive Countries for Tourists

(1) Past Situation

The geopolitical location of Uzbekistan in Eurasia is the main factor in the development of international tourism in Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is a novelty for tourists who are lovers of antiquity, nature, and traditions of the ancient East. The Government of the republic comprehensively supports tourism. In recent years, regulatory acts have been adopted ("Tourism Act," 1999; State Program for the Development of Tourism, 2005) for the development of tourism in Uzbekistan. Rich nature, numerous historical architecture, economic and political stability, and relatively inexpensive prices are the main factors attracting tourists to Uzbekistan. To date, the attendance of the Republic by tourists of different classes is more than 2 million people and increased by 24.3% compared to 2016, while export of tourism services increased by 24% compared to 2016 to USD 1.557 billion.[8] In the republic, there was a program created to increase the flow of tourists to 3 million people per year by 2018.[9]

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[3] The concept of development of the tourism industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan for the medium term, available at: <https://my.gov.uz/en/getPublicService/332?item_id=1296&action=view>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

[4] Information from the website of "Toshshahartranshizmat" Joint Stock Company, http://tshtx.uz/index.php?lang=en, (Accessed 3 June 2018).

[5] Information from the website of "Uzbekiston Temir Yullari" State-owned Joint Stock Railway Company, http://railway.uz/en/; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

[6] Information from "Toshshahartranshizmat" JSC, http://tshtx.uz/index.php?lang=ru; (Accessed on 3 June 2018).

[7] Information from the website of "Uzbekistan Airways" National Airline Company, https://www.uzairways.com/; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

[8] Information from the website of State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, https://uzbektourism.uz/ru/novosti-turizma-uzbekistana/press-reliz-press-konferentsiya-na-temu-perspektivy-razvitiya-turizma-v-uzbekistane-i-ego-znachenie-v-ekonomike-strany; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

[9] Information from the interview of A. Abdukhakimov, the Chairman of State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism

The growth of real GDP in 2016 by 7.8% was mainly due to the dynamic development of the basic branches of the economy[10] (World Bank Group, 2018). Last year, industrial production increased by 8%, agricultural production by 7%, construction by 18%. In addition, systematic work was continued to ensure the dynamic development of the service sector as one of the most essential factors and directions for extending structural transformations and diversifying the economy, increasing employment, income, and quality of life for people (Stat.uz, 2017). Over the years, the program for the development of the service sector in the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2012-2016 increased the contribution of the industry to GDP. At the beginning of the program, the share of services in GDP was 50.5%; by 2016 it reached the level of 56.5%[11] (Stat.uz, 2017; Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016).

Accelerating the transformation and economic development of Uzbekistan and, in particular, its regions, is facilitated by the establishment and development of the tourist industry. The main share of tourists who visited Uzbekistan last year were visitors from Russia (22.4%), Korea (8.2%), Germany (3.8%), France (3.6%), and other Western countries, Europe and South-East Asia (Rasulova, 2016). Over the past three years, the number of foreign tourists arriving in Uzbekistan has increased by more than 30%.[12] Demand for the organization of leisure among foreigners and citizens of the country is growing, and the number of proposals is increasing proportionally.

Moreover, in recognition of the special place of the republic in the global tourism industry, in 2004, in Samarkand, a regional UNWTO office was opened to coordinate tourism development on the Silk Road. It should be noted that such an office exists only in two countries—Japan and Uzbekistan. Its main function is to designate directions in the development of not only regional but also international tourism. Uzbekistan's opportunities are evidenced by the presence of over 7,000 sites of material cultural heritage from different eras and civilizations, including the historical centers of Bukhara, Khiva, Samarkand and Shahrisabz, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. World-famous historical monuments, modern cities, the unique nature of Uzbekistan, unique national cuisine, as well as the unsurpassed hospitality of the people attract travelers (Rasulova, 2016).

All above-mentioned results were accomplished under the leadership of the first President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov. The development of a unified state policy in the sphere of comprehensive modernization and development of the tourist industry is being carried out by the Uzbektourism National Company, established by a Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated 27 July 1992.

The Decree of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On measures for further support and development of tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan" dated October 10, 2012, and the Presidential Decree to the Republic of Uzbekistan served as important guides to the development of tourism and tourism infrastructure, as well as active promotion of national tourist services to international tourism markets.

Great attention was also paid to the education of future experts. Several higher education institutions in the country produce specialists in the field. For instance, the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies, the Samarkand Institute of Economics and Service, the Tashkent State Economic University, the Bukhara and Urgench State Universities, and the Singapore Institute of Management Development in Tashkent are amongst such institutions. Annually more than 500 students graduate from universities in this specialty and receive bachelors' diplomas and over 40 receive master's degrees. In addition, more than 3,500 professionals are nurtured in 12 specialized professional colleges.

At present, the Republic of Uzbekistan has consolidated its presence in the world tourist market, but it is too early to speak about significant progress. This is confirmed by the fact that, according to the rating of the competitiveness of countries in tourism, which defines 140 tourist destinations with the highest level of attractiveness (cultural resources, affordable infrastructure, prices of tourist products, security level, international openness), Uzbekistan is not included. At the same time, Japan ranks 9th in this rating; Kazakhstan, 85th place; Kyrgyzstan, 116th; and Tajikistan, 119th (Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index, 2018).[13] According to the estimates of the World Tourism and Travel Council (2018), Uzbekistan ranks 115th among countries in terms of

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Development. http://uznews.uz/ru/article/8547; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

[10] Information from the website of World Bank Group, http://www.vsemirnyjbank.org/ru/country/uzbekistan/overview; (Accessed on 3 June 2018).

[11] Information from the website of Ministry of Economics of the Republic of Uzbekistan, https://mineconomy.uz/ru/node/1098; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

[12] Rasulova N.N. (2016). "Potential and prospects of tourism development in Uzbekistan" Young Scientist, Vol. 13, pp. 500-502, available at: <https://moluch.ru/archive/117/32279/>; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

[13] Travel and Tourism Competitiveness Index 2018, http://reports.weforum.org/travel-and-tourism-competitiveness-report%E2%80%932017/; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

total contribution to the country's GDP formation, 103th place in the use of investments, and 69th in terms of the number of employed in the industry, and 150th in terms of tourist arrivals, accounting for 0.2% of the total flow.[14]

However, there have been some problems hindering the development of tourism. First, the potential of Uzbek tourism has not been fully realized since the development of this sphere directly depends on the formation of a modern competitive tourist complex with the necessary infrastructure of the transport and logistics system. Therefore, according to experts, it has been necessary to reconstruct the checkpoints across the state borders (aviation, road, and railway) and improve the process of crossing borders, making it relevant to the needs of foreign citizens in tourist services. The second problem has been high prices for air travel, low coverage of potential markets for domestic and international airlines, as well as poor visa policies, registration system, and security issues in Uzbekistan. Other problems include inaccessibility and low levels of service in recreation areas.

(2) New Era in Tourism Sector and Further Problems

Shavkat Mirziyoyev, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, after coming to power in December 2016, adopted the Strategy of Action on the five priority directions of the development of the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2017-2021, which have served to promote the modernization process and bring it to a new level. The goal of the Strategy of Action is a radical increase in the effectiveness of the reforms being implemented, the creation of conditions for the comprehensive and accelerated development of the state and society, as well as the modernization of the country and the liberalization of all spheres of life. Concerning the world practice, tourism plays an important role in the economy of the country: firstly, it is an increase in foreign exchange earnings; secondly, it is a solution for social problems by creating new jobs, as well as the development of other sectors of the economy, in particular, social and industrial infrastructure; and it is a positive impact on sustainable economic growth.

On the basis of the Uzbektourism National Company, the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development was formed in 2017. Priority directions of the State Committee are the development of legal and economic bases of tourism, improvement of the country's infrastructure due to the attraction of foreign investment, and the wide propagation of historical heritage and tourist opportunities in Uzbekistan.[15] Regulation of the tourism industry in the country is carried out on the basis of regulatory documents presented in the form of laws "On Tourism", "On Insurance", "On Certification", "On the State Border", "On Measures to Ensure Accelerated Development of the Tourism Industry of the Republic of Uzbekistan", the "Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on the Authority Activities of the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development", and government decrees. These documents are aimed at forming an investment climate, denationalization, and privatization in the tourism sector, providing benefits, improving the hotel infrastructure, as well as building roads and resorts.

With a view to sustainable and balanced development of tourism activities and the creation of the necessary material and technical base, ensuring the safety of life and health of foreign tourists and citizens of the Republic, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev issued a decree "On measures to ensure the accelerated development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Uzbekistan". Consequently, there have been positive changes in the development of tourism. One example of this is the above-noted fact that Uzbekistan has now become more open, which is manifested in the simplification of the visa system for 39 countries. This results in Uzbekistan becoming a more tourist-friendly country.

The President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is highlighting the role of tourism in the economy and is analyzing in detail the current state of the sphere and the measures taken to develop it. A program of priority measures for the development of tourism for 2018-2019 was adopted, also it is planned to adopt a strategy until 2030. The adoption by the President only in February of this year of four important documents related to this sphere is evidence of the high attention paid by the government to tourism development. These documents set priority tasks for solving existing issues in the industry, developing tourist potential, and providing various benefits and preferences for the

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[14] World Travel & Tourism Council (WTTC), https://www.wttc.org/research/economic-research/economic-impact-analysis/; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

[15] After the transformation, the Committee for Tourism Development increased its status to the state, increased the staff, expanded its powers, and opened branches in all regions of Uzbekistan. Its tasks and functions are to ensure the formation and implementation of a holistic concept of tourism development; to carry out marketing research in foreign and domestic tourist services markets; to ensure the creation of new tourist routes in the regions; to develop proposals for optimizing state and market regulation in tourism and developing competition in the tourist market of services; expanding international cooperation in the field of tourism activities, primarily with the United Nations World Tourism Organization, authoritative international and national tourism organizations, as well as foreign companies operating in the field of tourism; introducing into the practice of tourist activities international and interstate standards and norms; making proposals for training personnel for the tourism industry; organizing regular retraining and raising the qualifications of employees of tourism activities; assisting the development of industry-specific tourism science (Embassy of Uzbekistan in New Delhi, 2017)

continuous development of domestic tourism. Moreover, it attempts to attract tourists to experience pilgrim tourism (a.k.a. *ziyorat*) through visiting holy places in Uzbekistan with the solution of logistics issues, including the organization of charter flights.

The development of tourism infrastructure is now becoming important for increasing the competitiveness of tourist destinations, and has an impact on the volume of tourist flows and economic indicators not only of the tourism industry but also of the region as a whole.

Due to the efforts of the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan, fundamental, qualitative and institutional changes took place in the sphere of tourism and its infrastructure, and market elements of market relations began to be widely introduced. State-owned enterprises operating in the industry have been transformed into joint-stock, collective, private, leased and joint ventures. In order to strengthen the position of tourism and improve its image, also in order to widely advertise the cultural, historical, and spiritual heritage of Uzbekistan in foreign countries, close cooperation with international tourism organizations; in particular, the World Tourism Organization has been established.

Among other achievements, there are such key moments as:

- The introduction of a visa-free regime for transit passengers from 101 countries for a period of not more than five days;
- In 2017, Uzbekistan introduced a single tourist visa issued for a month and reduced its cost to USD 40;
- In 2017, the introduction of smart tourism in historical cities of the country. A project of allowing foreign tourists to obtain information about sightseeing via QR codes was tested in Khiva;
- Since July 15, 2018, the launch of three methods for remote registration of foreign citizens: via the "emehmon.uz" website, a mobile application, and in accommodation facilities (hotels, hostels). At the same time, tourists were exempt from registration. This responsibility is imposed on the receiving party. Independent tourists can also register online;
- At the beginning of July 2018, the concept of "Safe Tourism" was introduced in Bukhara. Within the project, Huawei Tech Investment Tashkent was supposed to donate modern terminals and smart video cameras with face-recognition function and base stations operating on the LTE band to the tourist police of Bukhara;
- From February 10, 2018, citizens of South Korea, Singapore, Turkey, Israel, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Japan are granted visa-free travel for a period of 30 days from the date of entry into the territory of Uzbekistan;
- Since July 15, the system for processing and issuing electronic entry visas in Uzbekistan E-VISA.UZ has been introduced along with abolishing the appeal of foreign citizens to diplomatic missions and consular offices of Uzbekistan abroad. Through this service, in one month, Uzbekistan issued 5025 electronic visas;
- The open sky regime will be introduced in Karshi and the low-cost posters will be allowed to fly there;
- By the end of 2018, three additional visas will be introduced: Silk Road, Vatandosh and Golden Visa;
- Many changes relate directly to the guest accommodation: Now hostels can be located in high-rise buildings, which will reduce the cost of tourists to expensive hotels. The certification system for family guest house services has also been simplified;
- Regular inspections of travel agencies by government agencies have been reduced, and hotels have been freed from paper reporting—all activity has been transferred to reports in electronic format;
- For the development of the industry, entrepreneurs are provided with tax and customs benefits:
  - Companies that build theme parks are exempted from taxes for three years;
  - Five years may not pay taxes to entrepreneurs who build four-star hotels;
  - Customs privileges for five years are provided for equipment and materials for hotels (see Figure 2).

Figure 2 Development of Tourism in Uzbekistan
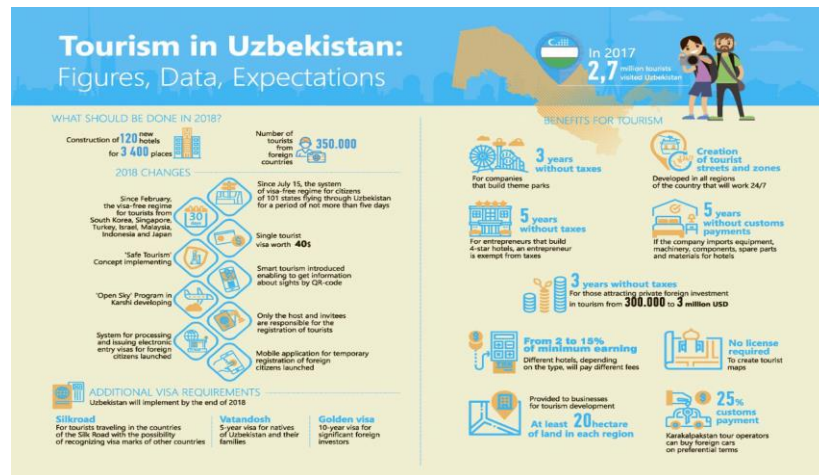
Source: Compiled by the authors from the data by Development Strategy Center of Uzbekistan, Tourism (2018) https://www.spot.uz/ru/2018/08/24/tourism/?fbclid=IwAR2xCOFd-yoJX_PAJ8Y qx1AFnVsO7D7qf-fc1iJ9Z9BZ5LEHw-dgfkCKyrg (accessed 14 November 2018).

In recent years, new types of travel have been actively introduced in Uzbekistan, including ecological tourism. Presence of reserves, national parks, nurseries, reserves, natural monuments, and a biosphere reserve in the republic makes ecotourism a very promising area.

In addition, in Uzbekistan, various forms of tourism including geotourism, medical tourism, along with rock climbing and rafting have been developed. In the regions, recreation areas and comfortable infrastructure facilities are being built. For example, in the sports and health centers "Chimgan", "Beldersay", and "Charvak" located in the Tashkent region, necessary conditions for skiing and other winter sports have been created (Embassy of Uzbekistan in New Delhi, 2017). There are mountain routes of different types with a length of 300 to 3,000 meters. Vacationers can climb the ropeway using a special lift. In Uzbekistan, the gastronomic direction of tourism is gaining popularity, making it possible to make *plov* and other national dishes a recognizable brand of the country.

A major role in ensuring the accelerated development of the tourism sector in Uzbekistan, the formation and maintenance of the country's image on the world market is played by large-scale events held regularly in the republic. One of the most important annual events is the Tashkent International Tourism Fair "Tourism on the Silk Road". Today it is the largest forum in Central Asia where industry professionals meet and various negotiations are held including business-to-business negotiations. In addition, the Hosted Buyers program is being implemented for buyers of the national tourism products and various conferences are being held on topics concerning the questions of development of the tourism industry in the country and worldwide.

Representatives of Uzbekistan also regularly participate in international fairs and exhibitions held abroad to present the tourism potential of the republic. Participation allows them to keep abreast of the latest trends in the world tourism market, concluding business contracts, and developing cooperation with foreign partners (Uzbek Government Portal, 2018).

Thus, the intensive development of the tourism industry in Uzbekistan, including a careful attitude to the historical and cultural heritage, the creation of an infrastructure that fully meets global standards, the establishment of international relations have made our country one of the most visited destinations in the world.

However, despite positive changes in the tourism industry, there are still problems that require obligatory qualitative and responsible solutions. Among them, the inadequate use of tourist potential, the need to improve the quality of servicing tourists to the level of world standards, the lag in the training of personnel from the current level of tourism development should be noted.

The first problem is that at the moment Uzbekistan as a tourist destination is unknown to most tourists due to the lack of a multi-purpose PR strategy of the country. Secondly, there is a lack of qualified personnel in the field. Nevertheless, Uzbek government is attracting highly qualified foreign experts to enhance the tourism sector. Other problems include a poorly developed transportation system, social and engineering infrastructure, and underdeveloped roadside infrastructure.[16]

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[16] The government systematically meets with representatives of international financial organizations to provide loans for infrastructure development.

(3) Perspectives of Uzbekistan on Development of Tourism

Transport and infrastructure

The "Karshi" international airport will be transferred to the management of a specialized company and withdrawn from the national joint stock company (NJSC) "Uzbekistan Airways". The regime of "open skies" will be launched.

In Bukhara, preparations for the launch of the rent-car service have been started. The project will be launched on the basis of public-private partnership. Pilot projects are also planned to be launched in Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khorezm. Cars will be leased without a notarized registration and registration with the internal affairs bodies.

In Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, shuttle buses will run between airports, railway stations, bus stations, large hotels. The project will be implemented on the basis of public-private partnership.

In addition, it is planned to establish tourist signs, symbols, and signs in the framework of the introduction of the concept of "safe tourism" in Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva, and Shakhrisabz. The hotels will implement security systems and 24-hour video surveillance.

Tourist information centers will be set up on the territory of cultural heritage sites, railway stations, airports and hotels, where they will sell SIM cards, tickets for cultural events, short-term tours, as well as rail and air tickets.

There will be fixed and mobile info kiosks providing tourists with maps, information about public catering establishments, accommodation facilities, as well as allowing them to call a taxi, purchase tickets to museums, souvenirs, and SIM cards. The project will be implemented including the public-private partnership scheme.

Development of new directions of tourism

The plan sees prosperity in building thematic parks taking into account the landscape design of the adjacent territory from organizations of places for recreation, planting of greenery, construction of a cafe, reconstruction of adjoining streets, establishment of outdoor equipment with illumination. Earlier versions noted what theme parks are and why they are needed in Uzbekistan. In the Bukhara region, it is planned to organize safaris, camel riding, fishing, hunting, pilgrimage and beach holidays. Also, it is planned to develop aeronautics. By the end of the year, 15 balloons will be launched in the cities of Uzbekistan. It is planned to organize spectacular thematic festivals with the involvement of international balloonists. Previously, the first launch of a balloon with tourists on board successfully took place in Bukhara. Annually, the Forum of Investors will be held in the tourist industry of Uzbekistan with the involvement of a wide range of investors, including foreign ones.

The State Committee for Tourism Development and the Spanish company Innova Taxfree have decided on the joint preparation of a strategy for the development of shopping tourism in the country. Duty-free shops will be opened in the tourist cities of Uzbekistan. The President pointed out the need for the production of souvenirs and their sale in special kiosks, the opening of duty-free and tax-free shops operating in airports, as well as the organization of car rental centers and wi-fi zones with the involvement of business entities (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan, 2016).

In every major city, there will be a shopping street. On the city streets, stores will be placed, as well as supermarkets, shopping centers, and complexes. It is planned to create pedestrian areas with souvenir shops, cafeterias, restaurants, teahouses, shops, handicrafts, and other entertainment places in all major cities. Moreover, platforms for trading goods of domestic manufacturers with seasonal discounts and application of discount systems will be created in such cities.

Establishing a concept for the development of medical tourism with appropriate mechanisms of legal regulation is particularly important. It is planned to create modern medical complexes to simplify the entry and exit of foreign citizens with organizational and consultative support during their stay in Uzbekistan.

The Samarkand region will develop "*ziyarat* tourism." Projects are being prepared for tourists from Turkey, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Tatarstan, which include visiting places sacred to Muslims. In Samarkand, there will be a tourist zone on 20 hectares of land, where it is planned to build a number of new hotels and restaurants for tourists from Asia and Europe. Bukhara should become another center of countryside tourism. In the new city, there will be a tourist center with hotel complexes, a park zone with a lake, restaurants, and villas for VIP guests, an entertainment complex and a nightclub. The project is planned to be introduced in 2019. Furthermore, foreign tourists will be given free Uzbekistan Pass cards upon receiving entry visas to enter the country.

Promotion of the brand

There will be ambassadors of Uzbekistan tourism in foreign countries. These will be prominent representatives of political, cultural, sports, and business circles of foreign countries. Promoting the tourism brand of Uzbekistan and tourist sub-brands of the regions will also be conducted through the creation of a national PR-center in the sphere of tourism.

Exporters of domestic products will use the trademark "Welcome to Uzbekistan" on packages and technical passports, and manuals on the use of exported products with the indication of the portal "Uzbekistan.travel" and the

corresponding QR code.

3. Role of Japan in Reinforcing the Tourism Sphere in Uzbekistan
(1) The case of Japanese Tourism Development

Every year, tours to Japan are very popular with sophisticated travelers of Europe and demanding American tourists. In Japan, there are undoubted advantages: an extremely diverse, sometimes grandiose mountain landscape, an exceptionally rich cultural and historical heritage, and a highly developed tourist infrastructure. According to the statistics of the "Japanese Economy 2015-2016" published by the Cabinet in December 2015, the Japanese economy in 2015 saw a moderate recovery trend, compared to the previous year, which was facilitated by the employment and income situation. As in the previous year, Japan had many opportunities to share the country's global attractiveness in 2017 (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

In June 2015, it was announced that the G7 summit would be held at Ise-Shima in 2016 on May 26 and 27. In July 2015, "The place of the Japanese Meiji Industrial Revolution: iron and steel, shipbuilding and coal mining in Japan" was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage List. The place of the Japanese industrial revolution in the Meiji era consists of 23 assets in eight prefectures (Iwate, Shizuoka, Yamaguchi, Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki, Kumamoto and Kagoshima). This is the first world heritage designation in Japan where there are facilities that are still partially functioning, for example, the Yawata iron and steel works. As of 2017, the transport infrastructure of Japan has steadily improved. The opening of the extended Shinkansen line to Kanazawa on March 14, 2015 in Hokuriku resulted in a significant reduction in travel time between Tokyo and Kanazawa from 3 hours 50 minutes to 2 hours 28 minutes. To meet the growing demand for LCC (low-cost carriers, which means low-cost transportation) at Narita International Airport, on April 8, 2015, a terminal was opened exclusively for LCCs. The Ken-O Expressway (Metropolitan City Expressway) entered service in part in the prefectures of Saitama and Chiba in March, June, and October of that year. The Higashi (Eastern) Expressway section of Kyushu between Saiki and Kamae was put into operation in March, directly linking the city of Kitakyushu, north Kyushu, with the city of Miyazaki in the south, through the city of Oita (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018). This reduced the travel time between Kitakyushu and Miyazaki.

Japan is positioning tourism as a main and promising branch of the economy. According to the Japanese National Tourism Organization, in 2017, about 28.7 million foreign visitors came to Japan (see Table 3). This is 19.6% more than in 2016, and a new record number for the fifth consecutive year. Of the 20 countries from which most tourists come, the largest number of visitors came during the holidays. This was announced by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, Keichi Ishii. For the first 9 months of 2017, almost 18% more foreigners arrived compared to a year earlier. The cost of foreign residents is 900 billion yen. The number of tourists from different countries has proportionally increased: for example, 24.03 million people (89.7%) came from Asia. Tourists from Asian countries (two-thirds of the stream) and the United States visit Japan for leisure, and Europeans visit for business purposes. Summer in Japan is humid and warm, so the best time to travel is the end of spring and the beginning of autumn. In 2017, foreign tourists in Japan spent 3.871 trillion yen, which is 73.5% more than a year earlier, and this amount has grown even more than the number of tourists. The government has revised its target to 40 million by 2020 and to 60 million by 2030 (JNTO, 2018).[17]

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[17] Information from JNTO, https://www.jnto.go.jp/jpn/statistics/data_info_listing/index.html (Accessed 3 June 2018).

Table 3 Some indicators of tourism development in Japan

Year	Expenditure on tourism sector in Japan		Number of inbound tourists to Japan (million people)
	Value (million USD)	Trend (%)	
2017	-	-	28.69
2016	25.783	10.80%	24.03
2015	23.252	-19.13%	19.74
2014	28.608	-11.28%	13.41
2013	32.244	-21.29%	10.36
2012	40.967	3.04%	8.36
2011	39.760	1.16%	6.22
2010	39.306	12.99%	8.61
2009	34.787	-10.74%	6.79
2008	38.971	4.60%	8.35
2007	37.258	-1.05%	8.35
2006	37.655	-21.71%	7.33
2005	48.096	-0.16%	6.73
2004	48.175	31.97%	6.14

Source: Compiled by the authors from data made available by World Bank http://data.world bank.org/indicator/ST.INT.XPND.CD?locations=JP&start=2004, and the Japan Tourism Ag ency

According to Table 3, tourism infrastructure spending in Japan in 2016 was USD 25 billion, in 2015 it was USD 23 billion, in 2014 it was USD 29 billion, which is USD 3.64 billion less than in 2013 (USD 32 billion). The rate of decline compared to 2013 was equal to 11.3%. During the period from 2006 to 2014, tourism spending in Japan fell by USD 9.05 billion to an average value of USD 38 billion.

The cost of tourism as a percentage of total imports is 2.9%. Employment in this industry is 4.3 million people (6.7% of the population). In 2017, the share of tourism in the country was 4.7% of GDP (see Figure 3).

Figure 3 Share of Tourism in Countries as a % of GDP, 2017
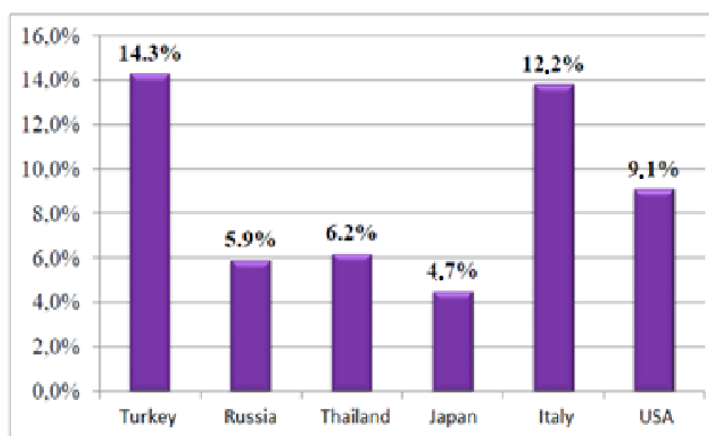
Source: Compiled by the authors based on the data from The Travel & Tourism Competitiveness Report (2017) of the World Economic Forum (WEF) (accessed 3 June 2018). https://www.weforum.org/reports/the-travel-tourism-competitiveness-report-2017 (accessed 3 June 2018).

The cost of passenger transport was USD 9 billion, expenditure on travel goods was USD 19 billion, income from international tourism was USD 21 billion, income from international tourism as a percentage of total exports was 2.4%, receipts from passenger transport were USD 2 billion, and revenues from travel goods were USD 19 billion.[18]

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[18] Information from JNTO, http://www.jnto.go.jp/jpn/reference/tourism_data/visitor_trends/ (Accessed on 3 June 2018).

Figure 4 shows that revenues from the tourism sector in Japan were mostly obtained in April and October, at JPY 23.2 billion and JPY 23 billion respectively.

Figure 4 Japan tourism revenues, Mar 2017- Feb 2018 (JPN thousand)
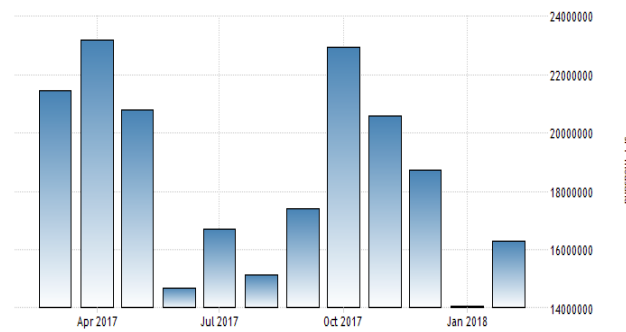
Source: Compiled by the authors based on the data from Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Tra nsport and Tourism (2018), https://tradingeconomics.com/japan/tourism-revenues (Accessed 3 June 2018).

In these revenues, the main role is played by Tokyo, since a large number of tourists come to this region. The second in attractiveness and profitability is Osaka.[19] This is all due to a development of the potential of regions, which are actively improved by the government.

The Japanese government has promoted programs such as the Visit Japan Campaign to revitalize tourism and increase the influx of foreign tourists (Honma & Hu, 2012). To justify its status of "Japanese quality" and improve the efficiency of tourism and hotel activities, initiatives are being proposed for prefectures that have been implemented to some extent, as well as awaiting implementation (White Paper on Tourism in Japan, 2016).

1. Hokkaido. About 70% of foreign visitors to Hokkaido remain in Sapporo or elsewhere in central Hokkaido. Various efforts have been made: Demonstration experiments using wi-fi routers installed in intercity buses to test connections to wi-fi networks to improve the comfort of tourists who spend long hours enroute from the central region to the eastern regions of Hokkaido, the creation of a website to provide tourist information covering a large territory, marketing and promotion of tourism, easy and reliable booking of rooms in hotels of different types from traditional to business hotels, preparation for the reception of foreign tourists and the dissemination of tourist information (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

2. Tohoku. In June 2015, the "Study Deeply the North of Japan" plan was approved, which was developed by the Tourism Development Organization in Tohoku to create an extensive survey route in the Tohoku region. Marketing efforts have been made in Taiwan, Hong Kong, China (Shanghai and Guangzhou), ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member countries, Europe, the United States and Australia to promote historical tours, culture and food in the Tohoku region, where landscapes are distinctly beautiful in each of the four seasons The environment is characterized by natural splendor, and a special climate attracts many literary figures of exquisite taste (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

3. Kanto. Regional cooperation should be strengthened for tourism in Kanto because of the need to host an increasing number of international tourists in anticipation of the 2020 Olympic and Paralympic Games. In this regard, in April 2015, the Association for Promoting Regional Cooperation campaigns in the Kanto region was founded by tourism organizations, railway operators, travel agencies, retailers and local governments of eight prefectures in the Kanto region (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

4. Hokuriku. On March 14, 2015, the Hokuriku Shinkansen line was extended from Nagano to Kanazawa. Since the expansion, foreign visitors have gathered in the sightseeing areas along the Shinkansen line, as well as tourists from all over the country. In response to a sharp increase in the number of tourists, the main hotels in Kanazawa began to actively provide information on the availability of rooms, and the tourist information office at Kanazawa Station helps visitors to book hotels on the day of their stay. In Japan, a system of exemption from consumption tax for foreign guests was introduced (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

5. Chubu. The Association for the Promotion of the Shorudo Project aims at achieving by 2018 an annual target of six million guest nights of foreign guests. However, the Association decided to set an ambitious goal of 11 million guest nights by 2019. In order to popularize regional tourism with a focus on sake (rice wine), within which

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[19] Information from the website of Japan Tourism Statistics. https://statistics.jnto.go.jp/en/graph/#category--6; (Accessed 23 October 2018).

breweries of special brands are located, dishes with which paired sake were well served were offered. These dishes are shown in combination with various brands of sake on the Shorudo site (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

6. Kinki. "The Flower of Japan, Kansai" is the name of an extensive sightseeing route that covers five World Heritage sites and seven superb natural scenery objects in Kansai. This route was proposed to attract foreign visitors, who tend to concentrate in the so-called Golden Way, in the vicinity of Kansai. Efforts were made to ensure that 40% of foreign visitors to Japan visited Kansai, and this increased the total number of foreign visitors to Kansai to 8 million people and consumption of foreign tourists to JPY 1 trillion (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

7. Chugoku. On May 28, 2015, the Omotecho Shopping Center and the Romantic-dori shopping center in Okayama jointly installed a counter for tax exemption procedures at a department store in the city. These were the first shopping centers in Japan to introduce a system of collective exemption. A committee on increasing the attractiveness of shopping centers was organized for the following purposes: Increase the number of stores offering consumption tax refunds in these shopping centers and combine the efforts of these shopping centers in creating conditions in which foreign visitors can enjoy comfortable shopping (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

8. Shikoku. In June 2015, the "Spiritual Island Project: Shikoku HENRO", developed by the Travel Agency Shikoku, was approved by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism as one of the projects promoting the development of extensive survey routes. In this project, there is a sustainable culture (hospitality) that is unique to Shikoku Henro (the pilgrimage of Shikoku whose history dates back more than 1200 years) so that visitors can experience this spirit. In order to increase the number of repeat visitors, comprehensive strategies have been developed in Shikoku (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

9. Kyushu. In June 2015, the project for the creation of the "Extensive Route for the Inspection of the Island of Kisyu Onsen" was approved by the Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism as one of the projects promoting the development of extensive inspection routes. In the first year of the project, marketing research was conducted to complete the compilation of route plans and identify typical routes. A contest for articles for the blog and a contest for hot springs were held for international volunteers. These competitions were a way to disclose the opinion of foreign people about the appeal of regional tours in Kyushu (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

10. Okinawa. As a result of the increase in the number of cruise ships and ports, the number of domestic and foreign visitors to Okinawa increased for the third year in a row and reached a record level. In 2014, South Korea moved Hong Kong to second place after Taiwan on the total annual number of visitors to Okinawa. Against this backdrop, efforts aimed at South Korea's air carriers and travel companies were aimed at attracting more visitors to Okinawa. The year 2015 marked the 50th anniversary of the restoration of diplomatic relations between South Korea and Japan. This year's event facilitated the expansion of tourism exchange between South Korea and Japan through tourism and deepening mutual understanding between the two countries (www.mlit.go.jp, 2018).

(2) Implementation of Japanese Practice in the National Economy

Uzbekistan and Japan have been cooperating and developing mutually beneficial relations since 1992, the year of establishing diplomatic relations. Based on the strategic partnership established in 2002, bilateral cooperation is expanding in all areas. As a result of official high-level visits—the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I.A. Karimov to Japan in 2011 and the Prime Minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe to Uzbekistan in 2015— there have been joint documents, contracts and agreements on the implementation of investment projects for a total of more than USD 11.5 billion.[20] At the moment, cooperation in the educational, scientific, technical, telecommunication and energy spheres is also gaining momentum.

In the development of economic relations between Uzbekistan and Japan, the main task is to expand cooperation in the field of foreign trade, investment, and finance. The volume of foreign trade does not yet correspond to the available potential, but it should be noted that there is direct air communication between Uzbekistan and Japan twice a week. Of particular importance is the further development of cooperation in the energy sector and tourism. A project is underway to build a Japanese hotel in Uzbekistan.

Japan has a developed hotel sector, which presents various types of hotels for different classes and categories of tourists, which is an undoubted advantage of the tourist infrastructure. Japan's hotel sector is represented by various types of hotels: *hoteru*, *ryokan*, traditional Japanese hotels, *minshuku*, onsen hotels, business hotels, capsule-type hotels, dating hotels, luxury hotels, and youth hostels. The downside of Japanese hotels is considered to be their high cost, and pluses include national identity and atmosphere of Japanese hospitality.

Another positive side that attracts tourists to Japan is the cherry blossom. In the flowering season of cherry blossoms—a symbol of Japan—hundreds of thousands of tourists come to the country. The dates of the beginning of flowering in different parts of the country vary, so a pink "wave" is rolled across Japan, followed by tourists. In

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[20] Information from the website of Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Uzbekistan,
http://mfa.uz/ru/press/news/2016/08/8103/; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

the past, cherry trees blossom in Fukuoka and Tokyo, and lastly, the trees in Sapporo in the north of the country are covered with flowers. You can usually see lush cherry orchards in bloom from late March to early May. This year, one of the "control trees" in the territory of the Yasukuni temple in Tokyo, cast buds five days earlier than usual, Interfax reported, citing the Japanese media. To catch the "wave" of flowering, tourists are recommended to use a special card on the site of the Japanese National Tourist Organization.

In addition, the most popular sight among tourists is the Mount Fuji volcano, which has a conical ideal shape only for a short time as the snow disappears from its peaks, and the island of Matsushima with its magnificent pine forests. And also mountain skiing and snowboarding offer tourists active pastimes of more than 500 ski resorts in Japan, the best of which are located on the islands of Honshu and Hokkaido. On the territory of this beauty of the mountains, there are various excursions lasting a whole day. While in Uzbekistan in the mountains of Chimgan and Beldersay all year round there are various kinds of attractions, from skiing to riding on horseback. It is also possible to promote excursion trips, giving even more popularity among tourists.

One of the ways to improve the quality of hotel business is to obtain a qualified education in the sphere of tourism and hotel services. It seems that the first years of bachelor's studies should be devoted to a practical acquaintance with the tourism and hospitality industry, which is done in Japanese universities. It is quite logical that students begin to study management and other disciplines of specialization only at senior courses when they already know the work of hotels or travel agencies from within. In the universities, in the first and second years, the main place in the curriculum is occupied by general educational subjects, and specialization and production practice begin only in the last two courses of study. One of the features of foreign hotel schools is the practice that students take for several months each academic year. Any successful trainee may, at the end of the practice, receive an offer to take up a certain position.

The practical use of the program proposed by K. Ishikawa[21] is another direction for improving the studied industry. This program provides for a thorough study of the quality management system. Having understood this document, it is possible to apply it to the training of personnel, which undoubtedly will give its results already at the first stage of its application. Therefore, the importance of studying the Ishikawa program is very high.

The next possibility of applying the Japanese experience to Uzbekistan is that the Japanese government considers the potential of its prefectures and provides solutions for their improvement. Uzbekistan would have an advantage in doing something like that. Trends in world economic development are in constant change; therefore, Uzbekistan needs a continuous study of the situation on the world market of services and the desires of consumers of the hotel industry. And the best experience, accumulated abroad, undoubtedly, it is necessary to apply in the development of hotel business in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

A new priority direction in the development of economic cooperation between Uzbekistan and Japan is the sphere of innovation. Following the visit of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Uzbekistan in 2015, a lot of work was done to create the Japanese-Uzbek Youth Innovation Center with the participation of universities in both countries. This center opens unique opportunities for the development of mutually beneficial relations between the two nations, taking into account the availability of rich resources of Uzbekistan and high technologies and innovative ideas of Japan. The possibility of applying the Japanese experience of development of this sector for Uzbekistan lies in the fact that the Japanese government considers the potential of its prefectures and provides solutions for their improvement. Uzbekistan would have advantages in doing something like that.

Comparing the experience of development of the tourist infrastructure of Japan, certain transformations should be made in the Republic of Uzbekistan for the development of tourism infrastructure in the international and domestic tourist markets which assume:

- Attracting investments and innovative technologies to the hotel sector for the development of its infrastructure and improving the quality of construction of buildings and structures related to and servicing segments of this infrastructure;
- Improvements in the quality of transport infrastructure, the construction of an interconnected land transportation system in the country, similar to the Keisei and Japan Railways train system among Japan's prefectures;

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[21] The aim is to promote quality management with the participation of all links, training in quality management methods should be organized among all the company's employees - from the president to the worker on the assembly line. Quality management provides for the restructuring of the management of the entire company, which requires a change in the thinking of all employees of the enterprise. To solve this problem, the learning process must be continuous. In Japan, detailed training programs have been developed for each service level, including the president of the company, members of the management board, managing directors, department heads and participants, engineers, craftsmen, promoters of quality circles, leaders and members of the quality circles and production workers; Special courses for employees of sales and logistics departments have also been established.

- Strengthening the operation of segments of the tourism infrastructure in the Internet space, including the placement of information through search marketing, banners on specialized websites, mobile advertising, and the creation of a specialized online platform that reflects all tourist offers in Uzbekistan and provides online booking functions;
- The opening of information centers in the republic, providing free tourist information, the possibility of booking, the acquisition of souvenirs, books, and maps, especially at airports and railway stations;
- Encouraging the participation of tourism organizations in the promotion of their tourism products on the international market, including through the partial subsidization of participation in international tourism exhibitions;
- Holding major international conferences, symposia, congresses, and other events on the basis of bilateral and multilateral international cooperation, as well as cooperation with major intergovernmental organizations;
- Creation of an integrated nationwide multi-level system of continuous professional tourism education (training, retraining, advanced training) that meets international requirements;
- Ensuring the interaction of educational institutions and tourism entities by increasing the number of communication platforms in the form of conferences, educational events and seminars;
- Promotion of best practices of public-private partnership in the system of higher and secondary specialized vocational education for the possibility of investment by private companies in future labor resources and monitoring the learning process in accordance with the needs of the tourist market;
- Development of mandatory qualification requirements/standards for tourism industry employees who directly provide tourist services (guides, instructors, workers of tourist duration entities, public catering establishments, transport, etc.) in the field of inbound and domestic tourism.
- The implementation of these measures will contribute to the strengthening of the modern highly efficient and competitive tourist complex, the expansion of opportunities to meet the needs of tourists due to the high quality and diversity of the tourism product line of the regions of Uzbekistan and the intensification of its promotion to foreign consumer markets.

(3) Cooperation Projects between Japan and Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan considers Japan as one of the key and reliable partners in the field of joint development of tourism. Our mutual cooperation is confirmed by many striking examples. As shown in Table 4, in 2017, 3,992 Japanese people with tourism purposes came to Uzbekistan. That year became the peak within five years. Compared to 2013, the number of travelers from Japan with general purposes increased by 46% in 2017. This means that further partnership between Japan and Uzbekistan is actively developing and progressing. Moreover, this table shows that each year people from Uzbekistan are visiting Japan more and more. The peak flow of visitors was in 2017, at 2,856, out of which 660 came with tourism purpose.

Table 4 Japan–Uzbekistan: Cross-country Number of Tourists in 2013-2017

Years	Citizens of Japan visiting Uzbekistan		Citizens of Uzbekistan visiting Japan	
	General	Tourism purpose	General	Tourism purpose
2013	2194	2131	1445	328
2014	2423	2340	1439	281
2015	2306	2225	1859	332
2016	3012	2918	2075	340
2017	4086	3992	2856	660

Source: Compiled by the authors based on the materials of State Committee of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development.

A Japanese delegation of 93 people led by APA Group Chairman Toshio Motoya visited Uzbekistan on May 26-29 of this year to discuss promising areas of partnership in the field of tourism (Samarkand Regional Government, 2018). The delegation included businessmen and representatives of APA Hotels. APA Group was founded in April 1971 and is engaged in town planning, as well as the management of hotels, restaurants and other facilities in the leisure industry. The APA Group owns 449 hotels with a total room stock of 75,370 rooms. The staff of the State Committee for Tourism of the Republic of Uzbekistan and representatives of the Uzbek Embassy in Japan participated in the organization of the visit. The delegation was received by the Chairman of the State Committee

of Tourism of Uzbekistan, Aziz Abdukhakimov. At the meeting, there was a presentation of the tourist potential of the republic, acquaintance with the infrastructure, as well as discussion of cooperation issues, attracting investments to Uzbekistan and construction of hotels. The parties agreed on the assistance of the APA Group in promoting the tourism potential of Uzbekistan and issuing a number of publications in the pages of their own magazine, the circulation of which exceeds 80,000 copies and is distributed in the hotels of the APA Group.[22] Another delegation with magazine publishers is coming in the middle of June 2018.

Annually, the two countries hold business forums, meeting, and expositions to show the potential in the tourism sector. One of these events took place in Japan, where the Embassy of the Republic of Uzbekistan in Tokyo took part in the 13th Tourism Exhibition and Forum "Activation of Tourism in Japan" in Kochi Prefecture (Shikoku region), which took place on February 13-14, 2018. Another conference held in Tokyo in March 2018, where the Chairman Aziz Abdukhakimov visited, was also devoted to the issues of tourism. The events was organized by the All Nippon Travel Agents Association (ANTA) with the support of the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry of Japan, the Japan National Tourism Organization, the Japan Travel Agents Association, the Japan Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Kochi Prefecture. About 200 tourist companies and organizations were represented at the exhibition and forum, the event was visited by more than 10,000 people. Participants of the forum got acquainted with tourist opportunities, sights, and national traditions of Uzbekistan. The great interest of visitors was caused by the materials devoted to the rich history and original culture of Uzbekistan, architectural monuments of Termez, Karakalpakstan, Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Tashkent, which were important points on the ancient Great Silk Road. Moreover, on September 20-23, 2018 Tokyo welcomed a delegation from Uzbekistan for an exhibition of tourism potential and ways to enhance it.

On December 27, 2017, there was the meeting of the Chairman of the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, A. Abdukhakimov, with the Ambassador of Japan to the Republic of Uzbekistan, N. Ito. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the prospects for the development of bilateral cooperation in tourism. The parties also discussed the issue of developing a "road map" to attract tourists from Japan to Uzbekistan. In particular, it was noted that three Japanese experts in the field of tourism, staying in the Republic of Uzbekistan through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), are actively involved in the development of this document.[23]

Another important vector of mutually beneficial cooperation will be the involvement of leading Japanese media to promote the tourism potential of the republic among the Japanese public through television. Hence, in order to prepare video materials about tourism in Uzbekistan, an agreement was reached on organizing study tours for a number of Japanese media: TBS, Fuji TV, Nippon Television Network Corp., NHK, Asahi TV, and TV Tokyo. In addition, in 2018, together with the Japanese company Loaded films Inc., under the direction of film director K. Kurosawa, a full-length film about Uzbekistan will be shot. It is going to be widely shown in 2019. Following the meeting, the parties agreed to make the necessary efforts to further deepen bilateral cooperation in the field of tourism, as well as to regularly hold consultations on various topical issues of partnership in the field of tourism.[24]

During the stay of the delegation of the State Committee for Tourism in Japan to participate in the work of the global tourism forum and the presentation of the national stand of Uzbekistan at the exhibition "JATA EXPO-2017", the Chairman of the State Tourism, A. Abdukhakimov, spoke with the director of the Japanese promotion company "Foresight Marketing", Mr. S. Noto. The meeting was held in the format of a constructive dialogue. The parties reaffirmed that increasing the popularity of Uzbekistan among the Japanese people is an important area for increasing the number of reciprocal tourist traffic between the two countries. In this context, the sides discussed practical aspects of cooperation on the promotion of the tourist potential of Uzbekistan in the Japanese market. Mr. Noto suggested considering the possibility of concluding a contract for three years to promote the Uzbek tourism potential. In turn, the Uzbek side became interested in the forecasts of this cooperation with the company "Foresight Marketing" in digital terms. The agenda raised the issue of concrete proposals of the company, taking into account the planned growth of the flow of tourists from Japan to Uzbekistan. For his part, Mr. Noto proposed stable cooperation, which over the next three years will increase the flow of tourists from Japan to Uzbekistan by half, without taking into account the ongoing charter flights between the parties.[25]

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[22] Information from the website of State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, https://uzbektourism.uz/ru/novosti-turizma-uzbekistana/goskomturizma-respubliki-uzbekistan-prinyal-predsedatelya-apa-group-iz-yaponii; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

[23] https://www.uzbektourism.uz/ru/novosti-turizma-uzbekistana/sostoyalas-vstrecha-predsedatelya-goskomturizma-uzbekistana-s-poslom-yaponii-v-uzbekistane; (Accessed 3 June 2018).

[24] Ibid.

[25] Information from the website of State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, https://uzbektourism.uz/ru/vstrechi-i-intervyu/yaponskaya-kompaniya-foresight-marketing-predlagaet-promoutorskie-uslugi;

In April 2018, there were direct flights opened for tourists from Japan. This project was implied by the State Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan for Tourism Development, the Embassy of Japan in Uzbekistan and the Samarkand regional *hokimiyat* together with the Japan International Tourist Association. Over the past year, Japanese citizens traveled to Uzbekistan through ten charter flights, this year the number of such flights is planned to be increased to 15. It is planned that about 3,000 Japanese tourists will arrive in Uzbekistan by charter flights. During the week, tourists will visit Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Tashkent, and get acquainted with their historical and cultural monuments, national traditions and values. This year, special attention is paid to the development of tourist routes and programs based on the wishes and interests of the guests. "Within the framework of the upcoming evening program for Japanese tourists, an exhibition of products of local craftsmen, national costumes, performances of folklore groups, as well as 3D shows will be organized on Registan Square" (Uzbekistan National News Agency, 2018). Additionally, it is planned that 1,500 Japanese tourists will visit Uzbekistan in December this year.

4. Conclusion

This study describes the important role that tourism plays in the sustainable development of the economy of the two countries. The service industry plays a big role in the economy of Uzbekistan. It is no accident that in recent years, serious changes have been paid to the development of this segment in the process of structural transformation and diversification of the Uzbek economy. As a result, all its directions are developing at an accelerated pace, and especially tourism, which is an important factor in providing employment for the population, raising incomes and improving people's quality of life. The policy of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, is aimed at Uzbekistan's openness and the formation of a new image of Uzbekistan, and a tremendous work has been done in this direction for two years of his presidency.

The main goal of the state policy of tourism development in the Republic of Uzbekistan for the period 2017-2021 is the creation of a modern highly efficient and competitive tourist complex that provides ample opportunities to meet the needs of citizens of Uzbekistan and foreign visitors in a variety of tourist services and its integration into the global tourist community.

Uzbekistan has a huge tourist potential due to its geographical location and natural and climatic conditions. Today, according to the number of historical sites, Uzbekistan firmly occupies a place in the top ten of the world's countries. There are more than seven thousand monuments of architecture and art in the territory of the republic, which are taken under state protection. The cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Shakhrisabz are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Known in the world as an "eternal city," Samarkand is recognized as one of 50 cities on the planet, which must be visited at least once in a lifetime.

The most important role in the further development of tourism and hotel business is the benchmarking of proven experiences of developed countries. Thanks to this, today the tourist industry and hotel industry are developing at a fast pace. This, in turn, opens up broad prospects for recovery in such related sectors as the food industry, agriculture, transport, and services.

The Japanese tourism industry is one of the most developed in the world. Japan together with other powers largely determines the new trends in the development of the tourism services market, takes part in the creation of global alliances and strategic alliances in various areas of the tourism industry, in the air travel market, as well as in the online travel product reservation system.

Japan and Uzbekistan are cooperating in many areas such as politics, economics, and social sector. Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan, as in Japan, is seen as a priority sector in the structure of the national economy and one of the main factors of regional development. At present, the leadership of the country pays much attention to the development of the tourism industry in the Republic of Uzbekistan.

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Review Essay

Traditional Japanese Arts and Crafts

Historical and Political Trajectories from the Meiji Period until Today[1]

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What do we talk about when we talk about traditional Japanese arts and crafts? What types of objects are included in this category and what cultural, social and ideological meanings do they entail? And finally, how have traditional Japanese arts been invented and reinvented throughout the history of modern Japan in order to shape a unified and monolithic image of Japanese culture in a period of national identity making? In the popular imagination, the expression "traditional Japanese arts and crafts" often entails cultural expressions connected with the past and that convey specific ideas of "Japaneseness", such as the tea ceremony, flower arrangement, martial arts, woodblock prints and ceramics, amongst others. In this article, we will not to discuss the origin and features of these arts, but will instead examine them in the context of an institutionalized national discourse that reflects historical, political and social processes involved in the making of images of Japan. The goal is to discuss the definition of traditional Japanese crafts and show how their identity is intertwined with political ideologies, historical constructions and cultural representations. Starting from the first participations of Japan in the International Exhibitions of late nineteenth century, the rediscovery of old pottery kilns and the revival of tea ceremony amongst the urban elite in the 1920s, the folk crafts movement of the prewar and postwar years, the creation of the title of Living National Treasure in the 1950s and the more recent "Cool Japan" nation branding, this article will illustrate the main historical moments that have contributed to the definition, reinvention and revitalization of certain traditional Japanese arts in the last one hundred and fifty years, drawing on authors from the field Japanese studies, social sciences, philosophy and art history from a transnational and transdisciplinary perspective.

Keywords: images of Japaneseness, cultural nationalism, traditional arts and crafts

Introduction

In the last three decades, many authors (Sugimoto & Mouer, 1986; Befu, 1987, 2001; Oguma, 1995, 2002; Morris-Suzuki, 1998; Lie, 2001) have questioned the notions of natural nation and ethnic homogeneity in the context of Japan disseminated by the so-called theories of Japanese uniqueness (*nihonjinron*). Concomitantly to the deconstruction of the idea of nation (see Anderson, 1983), the concept of tradition has also been conceptualized as something "invented" in order to inculcate a set of normative values and behaviors through the establishment of a continuity with the past (Hobsbawn and Ranger, 1983). Similarly, the definition of art has also been a field of ongoing dispute and recently started being regarded not as something fixed but as a modern invention (Shiner, 2003) and a social system with origins in the eighteenth century Europe (Luhmann, 2000).

Accordingly, the question of authenticity frequently arises when talking about national culture and cultural traditions. And while no cultural practice is truly authentic, the Japanese government has taken an active part in reframing (trans)cultural practices within a quintessential and monolithic idea of "Japaneseness". Furthermore, popular images of the country and its traditional culture still reproduce simplistic stereotypes that often disregard

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[1] This essay is based on an oral presentation given at the XI International Congress of Japanese Studies in Brazil and published in Portuguese in the Conference Annals as an earlier version of this essay.

ethnic and minority groups as well as important cultural variations at a local and regional level, overlooking questions of gender, class and, often times, historical period. Therefore, the expression Japanese traditional arts possess the same issues as the words that compose it and is thus invariably shaped by history, society and political ideologies.

1. Meiji period

Cultural and artistic exchanges between Japan and West started with the arrival of European Jesuits to the Japanese archipelago in 1549, prompting the first exports of Japanese objects to Europe. However, it was only in the second half of the nineteenth century that Japanese objects became available to a wider audience, after the period of seclusion ended with treaties to open Japanese ports that would eventually lead to Meiji Restoration in 1868. This coincided with the beginning of the World Exhibitions that took place in Europe and the United States from the second half of the nineteenth century with the goal of promoting the culture and industry of participating countries. As a newly formed nation, Japan was aware of the importance of presenting itself to the public on the international stage (Irvine, 2013).

While the first of the World Exhibitions took place in London in 1851, it was only two years later that Japanese objects would first be seen in Dublin. In 1867, Japan sent delegates to the Paris World Exhibition, which received over nine million visitors and marked the beginning of the fad for Japanese things. This gave birth to the term 'Japonisme', with Japanese crafts having a great impact on Western artists. But it was in the Vienna World Exhibition of 1873 that the recently formed Meiji government officially participated in the international event for the first time. It was also then that the word *bijūtsu* appeared as a translation of the word "art" and the word *kōgei* as the translation for *"craft"* and, from then on, craft would come to refer generally to manufactured products, such as pottery, lacquered woodwork, metal or any other type of "artistic" utilitarian objects that didn't fit in the Western category of art, which was essentially restricted to works of painting and sculpture.

In fact, while certain crafts, in particular the ceramics related to the tea ceremony, have been seen as "artistic" in Japan since feudal times, the existing word for "art" (*geijutsu*) in premodern Japan used to comprise a broader meaning than its Western counterpart (Moeran, 1997: 13). According to art historian Doshin Sato (2011: 76), *geijutsu* was originally used to refer to the six skills (*rikugei*) that any Chinese man must possess: moral behavior, music, archery, equestrian art, calligraphy and mathematics, thus generally denoting "an extremely high level of achievement in technical areas". However, with the importation of the Western concept of art to Japan, which became dominant from the late nineteenth century onwards, the focus on the idea of skill was changed to the concept of beauty (*bi*), creating a separated word for craft (*kōgei*).

Yet, the Meiji government's engagement with Western concepts, technologies and institutions, encouraged by a need to equal the West as a modern world power, did not only lead to the creation of two new words (*bijutsu* and *kōgei*) that originally encompassed cultural practices expressed by only one (*geijutsu*). It also created a previously nonexistent hierarchy between cultural expressions that took root in the newly-created Japanese art world. In fact, one of the most important Japanese art exhibitions of the early twentieth century, the Ministry of Education Art Exhibition (*Buten*), created in 1907 and renamed Imperial Art Exhibition (*Teiten*) in 1919, only exhibited works of fine art, such as painting and sculpture, excluding craft from its categories. Because of that, Japanese craftsmen were confined to the crafts exhibitions organized by the Ministry of Commerce and Agriculture, even though it was mainly by virtue of crafts that Japan was greatly praised in the global stage (Moeran, 1997: 14).

In fact, the international success of Japanese crafts in the 1873 Vienna exhibition led the Meiji government to realize the potential of Japanese exports and thus, in 1876, the Government Craft Design Office (*Seihin Gazugakari*) was established as a department within the Ministry of Internal Affairs with the role of defining guidelines for the designs to be created for the Paris Universal Exhibition of 1878 (Yokomizu, 2013: 68). The Government Craft Design Office led to the creation of the Japan Art Association (*Ryuchikai*) in 1879, which aimed to promote the national industry and craft by encouraging the creation of designs that appealed to a Western audience.

As a result, the Western fad for things Japanese led Japanese crafts to become an important export product under the policy of industry and manufacture promotion (*shokusan kogyo*), acquiring high status as industrial goods (Sato, 2011: 192). However, for its industrial character, *kogei* (crafts) began to be confused with *kogyo* (industry), since similarly to Europe before the widespread of industrialization, not only it was difficult to separate art from craft, but also craft from industry in late nineteenth century Japan (Moeran, 1997: 13). Thus, in order to stress the artistic qualities of Japanese crafts, the word *bijutsu kogei* (artistic crafts) started to be used from 1885 at the industrial domestic exhibitions. According to Kamogawa (2015: 17), the term was created in order to stress the position of handicrafts as an art form, distinguish it from the manufacturing industry and establish its cultural role as a uniquely Japanese form of art.

In 1890, the Ministry of Education and the Imperial Household Agency took over the development of artistic crafts (*bijutsu kogei*), naming artisans under the title of "Imperial Arts and Crafts Experts", who received support in exchange for producing works for the international exhibitions. Through these, the Meiji government took an active part in the construction of an idealized quintessential image of a Japan, which responded to Western anxieties about industrialization and romantic visions of a rural past (Karatani, 1998). The discovery of Japanese art by the West

represented, in part, a search for Europe's lost pre-modern past, making Japan a ghost of that past and an idealized reflection of it.

Because of its international success and marketability abroad, craftwork was supported by the Japanese government to increase its trade revenue and adopted as a symbol of the newly created nation. High-quality handmade crafts not only distinguished Japan from the West, who had lost a great part of its craft traditions after the Industrial Revolution but also showed to Western nations that Japan had something superior to them. Furthermore, this period of asserting itself towards the West was also characterized by an ideology that was verging upon nationalism, prompted by the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1894. In that way, the revaluation of almost obsolete craft practices, which were reinvented and considered traditional, reveals the Meiji government's attempt to build a continuity with the past, a practice that has often characterized nationalist policies. Waal (2002: 190) has compared the Japanese government's approach to crafts during this period to Germany's Third Reich support and promotion of *volkisch* craftwork as a way of exalting national identity.

The inflow of Japanese things into Western middle and upper-class daily life led to the need to keep up with the high demand through mass production and a consequent fall in the standards of craft objects, as revealed in the criticism to the Japanese participation in the 1900 Paris Exhibition (Pollard, 2003: 80). At this time, art had started to occupy a central place in the international exhibitions and Japanese objects were criticized for its lack of progress in comparison to the West since only in non-industrialized countries art was synonymous with handmade goods (*op. cit.*). Therefore, mechanization, industrialization and mass production deflated the "aura" of Japanese crafts in Western eyes.

All in all, in a wish to catch up with the West, Japan's rapid industrial advancements clashed with Europe's romantic nostalgia for its own pre-industrial past. Feeling discontent with its own modernity, the West had found in Japan a glimpse of its lost pre-industrial past and therefore Japanese modernization, industrialization and militarization appeared as a threat to an idealized, innocent and peaceful image of a "traditional Japan" promoted by the Japanese government itself. Thus, after capitalizing on Western tastes and industrializing its production to meet foreign demand, the craze for Japanese things started gradually fading as Japan emulated the modern West, establishing itself as a colonial power after the Russo-Japanese War in 1904-1905.

2. Interwar developments

While the development of Japanese crafts from the second half on the nineteenth century was dominated by a tendency towards mechanization and standardization, the beginning of the new century saw the rise of artist-craftsmen who stressed the importance of individual creative expression influenced by the Western modernist movement. In this context, after the Taisho era (1910-1926), craft began to be recognized as an artistic expression and a crafts section was introduced at the Imperial Arts Exhibition (*Teiten*) in 1927. The appearance of artist-craftsmen was parallel with other movements that sought to acknowledge the beauty of handmade mass-produced objects, such as the folk crafts movement (*mingei*) and the peasant art movement (*nomin bijutsu*), which aimed to raise the manifestations of everyday, rural and simple life to the level of art. The growing modernization and urbanization of the Taisho era (1912-1926) also brought anxieties with modernity to Japan, propelling a search for its own endangered past and traditions. The expansion of the Japanese Empire led to the need to recover a shared past, boosting folklore studies and archaeological excavations, which in turn led to a growing interest for Japanese traditional practices that had been ignored during the first decades of modernization (Moeran, 1997: 14).

In fact, during this period, Japan saw the development of a new urban and educated middle class, which appropriated forms of recreation and consumption that had before been limited to the enjoyment of a mostly male aristocratic and intellectual elite (Brandt, 2007: 74). According to Atsushi (2014: 4-7), the beginning of Taisho era marked the first stage of Japan's consumer society, which developed between 1912 and 1941 exclusively in major metropolitan areas such as Tokyo, where the population grew from 6.6 percent in 1920 to 10.2 percent in 1940. Still, this increasingly urbanized and westernized middle class only accounted for between 10 to 20 percent of the Japanese population. Thus, the majority of the Japanese still lived poverty in rural areas and some still earned their life making handmade goods in small family enterprises, which were then consumed by a small minority of the middle and upper class (*ibid.*: 10). In this context, the revival of Japanese traditions appeared as a reaction to urbanization, modernization and westernization and saw cultural traditions that had only been practiced within old aristocratic families being appropriated by this growing urban middle class as symbols of wealth, social status and a shared sense of national identity.

One of the most emblematic Japanese cultural practices that underwent significant reappraisal during the beginning of Showa era was that of the tea ceremony, which would come to represent a quintessential image of "Japaneseness" until today. One of the factors that contributed to the revival of the "way of tea" (*chado*) was the success of Kakuzo Okakura's (1862-1913) seminal monograph *The Book of Tea*. Originally published in English in 1906 with the aim of reaching a Western audience, it was only translated into Japanese twenty-three years later, in 1929, coinciding with the peak of Japan's imperial venture and the ideology of nationalism. In his work, Okakura defines Japanese identity through the tea ceremony, which he considers one of the most representative symbols of Japanese aesthetic culture, emphasizing its superiority based on the precepts of Zen-Buddhism and harmony with

nature. Influenced by the idealism of the German philosopher G. W. F. Hegel (1770-1831), Okakura is considered the founding father of the "myth of Asian spiritualism" (Marra, 1999: 65-71) and thus, it was largely thanks to him that *chanoyu* came to be seen as a metaphor for Japan's cultural identity, a paradigm of the "Japanese soul" or an ideal representation of it (Rocha, 1996). Kristen Surak (2013) has also thoroughly examined the relationship between the tea ceremony, Japaneseness and cultural nationalism. In fact, through its institutional organizations, the way of tea still acts as an important tool in the maintenance and reproduction of the ideology of homogeneity not only in Japan but also abroad, where the Urasenke school is established in over one hundred different countries. This role of tea as a representation of a "Japanese spirit" is also visible in the fact that the tea ceremony is almost always present in events related to Japanese culture abroad, as explored by Guichard-Anguis (2001).

Another author that attempted to define Japan by the contrast between Western materialism and Asian aesthetics and spirituality was Sōetsu Yanagi (1889-1961), who founded the *mingei* (folk arts) movement together with potters Shoji Hamada and Kawai Kanjiro in the mid-1920s. Seeking the recognition of the cultural, artistic, social and spiritual role of traditional handicrafts in a moment when Japanese traditions seemed endangered by the fast-paced modernization and urbanization, it praised the beauty inherent to objects handmade by anonymous craftsmen to be used in the daily lives of ordinary people. Fueled by the growing urban middle-class and its nostalgia for a Japanese rural past that was slowly disappearing, it drew on a combination of Western romantic ideals with Zen Buddhist concepts and the aesthetics of the tea ceremony.

In her study about the politics of folk craft in imperial Japan, Brandt (2007) has shown how, in the interwar period, the concern for traditions endangered by modernization, together with the development of a new urban consumer culture, contributed to the promotion of a new aesthetic based on traditional cultural practices, which was reflected in the growing popularity of folk crafts. In particular, department stores, which sprang across Japan's major cities from the 1920s, had a major role in the sale and promotion of *mingei* products, not only through commercialization but also through temporary exhibitions that presented the latest trends (*ibid.*: 106-107). According to the author, the popularity of folk crafts derived in part from its connection to a quintessential "Japanese spirit" that matched the nationalistic thinking of the time (*idib.*: 123).

The success of *The Book of Tea* and the impact of the *mingei* movement led to the proliferation of archaeological excavations in traditional areas of ceramic production, prompting a resurgence of the ceramics used in the tea ceremony during the Momoyama period (1568-1615). This gave birth to a movement known as Momoyama revival in the 1930s, mostly translated into ceramics and which had potters Toyo Kaneshige (1896-1967) and Toyozo Arakawa (1894-1985) as its most representative artists. Encouraged by the nationalistic climate of the time, artists interested in the technical aspect of utensils for the tea ceremony began to investigate the works produced in the so-called six ancient kilns of Japan (*rokkoyo*). By reproducing the techniques used in those containers, which had lost popularity during the Edo period, they contributed to establish a continuity with the past through their artistic work (Moeran, 1997). In fact, Moeran (1990) argues that many of the regions known today as old traditional ceramic kilns, such as those named after the styles Mino, Karatsu, Bizen and Mashiko, were rediscovered by the potters Toyozo Arakawa, Muan Nakazato, Toyo Kaneshige and Shoji Hamada respectively in the 1930s. Furthermore, while the famous six-old kilns terminology was created by potter and scholar Fujio Koyama in the post-war era, the terminology doesn't reflect the diversity of regions with active pottery kilns in the medieval period, which well exceeds the count of six.

In sum, while at the beginning of the Meiji period, Japanese crafts were seen as important export items, functioning also a symbolic resource to convey images of Japan as a modern nation to the West, in the interwar period they started to be appropriated by a growing middle class as distinctive everyday commodities and a vanishing cultural resource, encouraged by feelings of nostalgia and a quest for an idealized and soon to be lost past. In addition to folk crafts, the interest in rurality and tradition acquired new meanings, strengthened by the threat that industrialization and urbanization posed to the preservation of traditional lifestyles. This contributed to the rise of domestic tourism as a form of recreation of a new urban middle class, fueled by a growing infrastructure of railways and inns leading to a domestic tourist boom in the postwar era.

3. Post-war period

After a period of cessation of craft activities during the Second World War, the postwar era saw the establishment of several governmental measures put in place to protect traditional culture in a context of redefining national identity after the Japanese defeat. At an international level, there was a need to change the image of the country from military aggressor to a peace-loving democracy and the traditional arts and crafts, associated with Zen aesthetics, cooperative work, and harmony with nature, had also a role to play in this process.

Originated from a series of measures for the preservation of historical, artistic and cultural heritage that date back to the Meiji period, the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (*Bunkazai Hogōhō*) was first enacted in 1950 as a reaction to a fire in the Hōryūji temple in Kyoto. The original provisions of the law included three categories: tangible cultural properties, such as buildings, paintings and crafts; intangible cultural properties, which include endangered traditional techniques and various performing arts; and historic sites, places of scenic beauty and natural monuments. The enactment of the law led to the establishment of the Committee for the Protection of

Cultural Properties, a precursor of the Agency for Cultural Affairs (*Bunkacho*), created in 1968 as an extra-ministerial bureau of the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture.

Since 1954, the Agency for Cultural Affairs has been responsible for selecting individuals and groups as official carriers of intangible cultural properties, a title colloquially known as Living National Treasure (*ningen kokuho*). The receivers of the title are bestowed with an annual stipend of two million yen, as well as national and international prestige, in order to give continuity to traditional techniques through the training of successors and documentation. However, in 1955, the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties was revised in order to include not only endangered traditional techniques but also "important intangible cultural properties". Rupert Faulkner (2001: 3-4) argues that the initial scope of the measure was extended in order to cover practices that were not necessarily in danger of being lost but that were important for historical or artistic reasons, showing a cultural agenda that has been institutionalizing preferred models, such as those of the tea ceremony. By receiving this title, a named craftsman is recognized not only in the artistic qualities of his work but also in the regional and national relevance of his techniques, with his social importance impacting directly on his local community.

Harumi Befu (2001) has also argued that the governmental measures for the protection of cultural properties often reflect the state's approval of certain types of art and the institutional promotion of aesthetic values seen as traditional. One example is the case of the ceramics of the Bizen region, where between 1955 and 2004 five potters have received the title of Living National Treasure, not because the technique was in danger of extinction, but because it represents a quintessential Japanese character, particularly through its identification as one of the "six old kilns of Japan" and its close connection with the aesthetics tea ceremony. However, other crafts that do not conform to the state's ideal of "Japaneseness" do not often receive the government's support and thus struggle for survival.

Besides these symbolic power unbalances, the title of Living National Treasure has also perpetuated gender inequalities that are due, in part, to the traditional system of *iemoto*, in which the transmission of craft techniques is passed down through patrilineal lineage. This is observable in the fact that, in a total of seventy individuals considered Living National Treasures today, only eleven are women, most of which produce works traditionally associated with female domestic activities, such as textiles and dolls.

Yet, the institutionalization of preferred models includes not only the aesthetics of the tea ceremony and the ancient pottery kilns with centuries-old history but also the more recent *mingei*. In fact, Brandt (2007: 225) argues that the relations between the Mingei Association established in 1934 and the state during the war period are visible in "the very identification of traditional handicraft techniques as an invaluable national resource, along with the high proportion of mingei artist-craftsmen among those first named Living National Treasures". The author further points that, within the first four Living National Treasures designated by the Japanese government in 1955, two were related to the *mingei* movement. This shows how, by the end of the Second World War, *mingei* had received official approval and ratification from the Japanese state, becoming known to almost all Japanese by the 1960s and thus turning into a "household word, a widely diffused type of commodity, and a seamless part of the common sense of Japanese cultural identity" by the 1970s (*ibid.*: 2).

As a result, the 1960s and 1970s saw an enormous demand for folk crafts known as the "*mingei* boom", which coincided with a process of avid Americanization and the consequent nostalgia for Japanese tradition and the rural countryside (Moeran, 1997: 211). According to the author, the boom contributed to the revitalization but also the standardization of traditional pottery centers, leading to the establishment of new kilns around Japan and the expansion of crafts exhibitions in urban centers. Furthermore, the development of domestic tourism encouraged urban and suburban Japanese to travel to remote sites of Japan and discover traditional aspects of their culture before it was lost forever, contributing to this boom. Besides *omiyage*, many Japanese tourists began collecting objects associated with the rural past, leading to a growing interest and consumption of folk crafts in the post-war period.

In this context, during the postwar years, department stores continued to play an important role in the promotion and commercialization of Japanese cultural traditions, leading to a retro boom in the 1970s and 1980s. According to Creighton (1998), the flourishment of Japanese consumer society in the decades after the war, together with the fact that most Japanese now lived in metropolitan areas and led a modern, westernized and affluent lifestyle that had allowed them to obtain a high level of consumer goods, led department stores to start focusing on leisure activities by helping more affluent customers to discover fulfilling lifestyles. Thus, the focus on the selling of things was redirected to the selling of experiences, leading to what the author calls "a marketing age of *mono igai no mono*, or selling 'things other than things'" (*ibid.:* 128.). This tendency is visible in the expansion of cultural and art institutions, learners and enthusiasts during this period. This shows how, in this context of economic abundance, the Japanese urban middle class started pursuing a better quality of life, engaging in different cultural, recreational and leisure activities as a way of reaching personal and spiritual fulfillment (Watanabe, 1999: 61).

As for domestic cultural policy, the 1980s and 1990s saw a tendency to return to old traditions, which are seen as "the foundation upon which future cultural development will be built" (Watanabe, 1999: 77). In fact, if we look at the Agency for Cultural Affair's budget for 2017, we realize that only less than one third of it is allocated for the promotion of arts and culture, including the training of artists, while the other two thirds are designated for "enhancement of cultural properties protection" and "national cultural facilities" (Commissioner's Secretariat

Agency for Cultural Affairs, 2017). In turn, artistic and cultural creation is relegated to the Japan Arts Funds and private contributions.

Two decades after the promulgation of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, the Japanese government launched the Law for the Promotion of Traditional Craft Industries (Densan Act) in 1974, under the responsibility of the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). Until today, this law has designated 225 group products as Traditional Japanese Crafts, 31 of which are ceramics. According to its brochure, the Densan (Association for the Promotion of Traditional Craft Industries), created in 1975 as a consequence of the METI law, "actively promotes Japanese Handicrafts on a global scale and contributes to their market expansion". The leaflet also states that for a craft to be recognized as Traditional Craft of Japan, it must fulfill all of the following conditions: to be used mainly in everyday life; to be primarily manufactured by hand; to be manufactured implementing traditional techniques of at 100 years old; to be produced with raw materials that have remained unchanged for at least 100 years; and to maintain a certain scale of production and be established as a local industry.

4. Recent trends

The economic and social conditions of the postwar period led to a growing interest in Japan's "soon to be lost" traditions and the objects that represented that vanishing past within the Japanese themselves. This moment coincided with a boom of the *nihonjinron* literature, prompting a search for the Japanese uniqueness in a moment of rapid economic growth and the consequent regain of confidence and national pride. During this time, the diffusion of Japanese culture abroad was made mainly through the marketing and selling of industrial and consumer products through a process that Burgess (2015) calls "economic diplomacy", accompanied by the discourse of internationalization (*kokusaika*) from the part of the Japanese government during the 1980s as an attempt to control foreign images of the country.

However, the 1990s brought the end of the bubble economy to Japan, leading to economic deflation, instability and the consequent collapse of Japan as a manufacturing society. In particular, the change to a post-industrial model was expressed in the development of service and creative related industries from the mid-1990s, coinciding with the popularity of Japanese popular cultural abroad, which peaked in the 2000s. Thus, in this context of economic instability, the Japanese government took advantage of the attractiveness of its popular culture to pursue national interests abroad through what Koichi Iwabuchi (2015) calls a "pragmatic and opportunistic" national branding cultural policy program known as "Cool Japan". According to Burgess (2015: 113), the expression "Cool Japan" has been used by the government since 2005 but it was only in 2010 that the Creative Industries Promotion Office was established and, from 2013, it was included in prime-minister Shinzo Abe's political strategy with a budget of 50 billion yen. Thus, in an attempt to expand its soft power in a context of increasing globalization, Japan shifted its focus from economic to cultural diplomacy, thus further influencing the cultural diffusion and imagining of Japan.

However, the Cool Japan program is not limited to *anime* and *manga*, including everything related to a "Japanese lifestyle", from fashion to food, including traditional handicrafts and the so-called "Japanese sense of beauty". In May 2017, as a part of its Creative Industries policy, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry released a concept book titled *Wonder Nippon!*, which aims "to convey Japan's unique sensibilities and values to the rest of the world as the foundation of commodities and services provided under the Cool Japan Initiative" (Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry, n/d). The program describes several "traditional" Japanese values, many of which are supposedly derived from the Japanese relationship with nature, and its impact on craft production. This reveals how Japanese crafts and its associated ideas of Japanese craftsmanship are still deeply intertwined with what the state wants to convey to the world as Japanese culture, cultural values, tradition and identity.

Likewise, Japanese cultural events sponsored by the Japanese Embassy, other governmental agencies and many private organizations often rely on traditional performing arts and handicrafts to convey images of "Japaneseness" abroad. In her analysis of French images of Japan, Sylvie Guichard-Anguis (2001) has pointed out the role of "ephemeral" cultural productions such as those of the tea ceremony, flower arrangement and incense in the presentation of Japanese cultural values such as peace, harmony, tranquility and love of nature, which have been seen by the Japanese government as valuable resources of soft-power. Therefore, similarly to what happened in the World Exhibitions of the Meiji period, when the Japanese state deliberately made its first systematic efforts to promote a distinctive and often "self-exoticizing" image abroad, contemporary developments of Japan-related events in the global stage have been responsible for creating an appealing but also often stereotyped image of "Japaneseness" through the expansion of cultural exports.

Thus, as Goldstein-Gidoni (2005: 157) has argued, the concept of Japanese culture promoted by cultural events related to Japan abroad is strongly influenced by how Japanese culture is presented by the Japanese, both in Japan and in the structure of international organized contacts. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the Japanese government to control the national image of Japan abroad in a context of intensive globalization, since there are many actors besides the government who are involved in the creation of the images of the nation, such as private foundations, universities, museums, Japanese people abroad and foreigners living in Japan. While the "Cool Japan" project has spread Japanese culture abroad, creating what some authors have called a new vague of

"Japonisme", reflected in the expansion of Japanese-language learning overseas, the exponential growth of overseas tourists and the rise of international students, the policy hasn't kept up with the increasingly multicultural reality in contemporary Japanese society.

In fact, Watanabe[2] claims that overlooking the situation of foreigners in Japan might actually subvert the success of the "Cool Japan" policy. This is because, in today's globalized world, foreigners living in Japan are in daily and direct contact with their families and friends overseas through Social Networking Services and thus are active actors in the creation and propagation of images of the country. In this sense, engaging with multicultural policies and acknowledging foreigner nationals as active contributors to Japanese society and culture and to the continuity, renewal and transmission of its cultural values and traditions, might not only be necessary but also a strategic endeavor from the part of the Japanese government if it wants to maintain the attractiveness of Japan abroad.

5. Conclusion

Throughout this article, we have examined some of the political projects, cultural negotiations and social relations involved in the construction of specific features associated to Japanese traditional crafts, which are a result of historical processes specific to Japanese modernity. The image of Japan centered on millenary traditions is still reflected in the image of its arts and crafts disseminated inside and outside of Japan today. However, many of these "traditional" traits are a product of Japanese elites' culture and had little to do with most of Japan's population until the modern era. It was only after the democratization of society motivated by Japan's modernization that objects, rituals and practices that once belonged to the elite were officially institutionalized and started to circulate among the general population. This process was called as "samuraization" by Befu (1971: 50), who defined it as "the spread of the ideology of the ruling warrior class" amongst common people, and it was not restricted to the arts and crafts. It extended to food, religion, ethics, marriage, family organization and other sectors of Japanese life. In this process, some traditions were invented, others were restructured and an ancient shared past was redefined in order to legitimate the present. Even the popular art movements such as the folk and farmer crafts happened from top to bottom, being led by urban intellectuals and bureaucrats, who believed to know the best practices of production that craftsmen should follow. At the same time they contributed for the preservation and appreciation of these expressions, their paternalist and reforming character also led to stereotyping and standardization, homogenizing their identity in order to represent a "unique" local character while also being connected to national ideas of "Japaneseness".

The purpose of this essay was thus to question concepts and ideas usually associated with Japanese traditional arts, showing how, rather than something fixed and innate, they are the result of historical, social and political projects, which include, amongst others: the dialogue between local production and Western standards and tastes; manifestations of wealth and social status; democratization of practices that once belonged to the elite; nationalist projects to promote traditional values; as well as local, individual and artistic specificities not mentioned here. For, as anywhere in the world, Japanese arts and crafts embrace multiple realities and features which vary depending on the region, period or social class, as well as the history, values and beliefs of the person or group that produces it. In this sense, besides the historical, social and cultural context in which different practices are developed or preferred, we should also look and give voice to specificities and subjectivities of groups and people whose material and artistic expressions are often overlooked as representative of a culture or nation. By understanding the ideologies intertwined with the construction of an identity of Japanese traditional arts and crafts, we can acknowledge the various cultural manifestations of a nation or group without resorting to simplifications that ignore the diversity and multiplicity of expressive forms, traditions and populations existing in Japan and worldwide.

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[2] Yashushi Watanabe in a seminar entitled *The Politics of Japan's Soft Power*, held at Maison Franco-Japonaise, Tokyo, on November 17th, 2017.

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