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Education and Financial Crisis: The Case of Greece

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Received 10 December 2017 • Revised 1 May 2018 • Accepted 10 May 2018

Abstract

The financial crisis and the subsequent social change in Greece had a direct impact on the institution of education. This paper presents the effects of austerity on school operation and the measures Greek schools take to overcome problems caused by education cutbacks. The study took place in schools of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace, a region in northern Greece that has been severely hit by the financial crisis. The population of the research was teachers of primary and secondary education and the sample came from 119 schools. 752 teachers answered to a closed questionnaire with some open items stating their views on school operation in times of austerity and mentioning the strategies that schools develop in order to cope with recession. The main finding suggests that school operation and the quality of education in Greece have deteriorated since 2009. However, the study reveals that schools have developed social support systems and new skills to respond to the crisis.

Keywords: Greece, crisis, education, social change.

1. Introduction

The financial crisis led to rapid social change in Greece, with some of its regions, especially Eastern Macedonia-Thrace, severely plagued by poverty and unemployment. This paper presents the findings of a study, regarding teachers’ opinions about the effects of austerity on the institution of education in Greece. It also describes the strategies Greek schools develop in order to cope with austerity. The paper is divided into four parts. The first part provides the theoretical framework of social change. The second section explains the methodology used for the research that was administered in schools of northern Greece. The key findings are presented in the third section and conclusions are drawn in the final part.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1. Social change and crisis in Greece

Society is the changing pattern of social relationships. Social change can be defined as the change of social relationships and, according to Jones (1949: 96), it is a “term used to describe variations in, or modifications of, any aspect of social processes, social patterns, social interaction or social organization”. The functional theory holds that stability and cohesiveness in a society depend on increased differentiation and mutual dependence (Andersen & Taylor, 2008: 621). In this context, society is conceived as a “complex and interconnected pattern of functions” and change is the by-product of the constant search for equilibrium (Ritzer, 2007: 4370). Changing
societies can “become increasingly complex” and change in one part of the system may bring changes in other parts (Cooper, 1996: 171). Likewise, changes in a social institution can lead to changes in other social institutions (Little, 2014). A new equilibrium can be found through differentiation (Harrington, Marshall & Müller, 2006: 554) and the formation of new specialized roles, structures and institutions.

- The financial crisis and the subsequent abrupt social change in Greece had a direct impact on the institution of education.
- Schools in Greece face serious operational difficulties that also affect lesson quality.
- Schools adapt to the new financial standards by developing management skills.
- Schools develop new support systems and a new culture of frugality, cooperation and solidarity.

Social change may appear in the aftermath of sustaining social problems and can affect attitudes, institutions and value systems. It can take a “variety of directions and forms”; it can be a painful process caused by shocks and crises, but it can also create new opportunities (Garrona, & Triacca, 1999: 50). Social change can have cultural and psychological implications and brings about shifts in values, learning environments and human behavior (Greenfield, 2016: 84). In the modern world, financial globalization is responsible for the global impact of crises (Bordo, & Landon-Lane, 2010: 29), afflicting world societies. Social movements formed after a crisis can bridge the gap between institutions that cannot cope with social change and people's needs (Henslin, 2012: 452-453). It can be, therefore, argued that social change nowadays is reinforced by modern world complexity, has both a global and local character and it is systemic in nature, as it can create bigger or smaller-scale chain reactions to individuals, groups, institutions and societies.

The financial crisis, which originated in the United States, spread over Europe and affected seriously the economy of Greece. The structural weaknesses of the Greek economy led to increased foreign lending, growing payments of debt and a vicious cycle of debt accumulation (Michael-Matsas, 2010: 499). The recession affected the Greek society with the highest rates of unemployment ever recorded in Greece (Tsoulfidis, Alexiou & Tsaliki, 2016: 390) and the institution of education with cutbacks and austerity measures (Kantzara, 2016: 46). Between the years 2010 and 2016, there were dramatic changes in the institution of education in Greece. Namely, there were public sector cuts (European Commission, 2016: 5), decrease in government expenditure in education, school mergers and closures, freezing of new appointments, transfers of personnel, increase in the number of students per class and increased number of substitute teacher appointments. There has also been degradation of newly established education institutions established by major educational reforms (Vergeti, 2014: 83).

![Map of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Macedonia_and_Thrace)

This paper presents the impact of the financial crisis on education according to the views of teachers in northern Greece and the strategies schools undertook in order to cope with austerity. The study focused on Eastern Macedonia-Thrace, one of the most severely affected areas.
regions by the financial crisis (OECD, 2013: 17), and one of the poorest regions in Greece during austerity (Karantinos, 2013: 5).

3. Method
3.1 Purpose
The purpose of the study was to detect how social change afflicted the institution of education in Greece. To achieve this, it investigated teachers’ beliefs regarding the effects of the crisis on schools and asked teachers to describe how schools cope with austerity and what strategies they have develop in order to adapt to the new circumstances. More specifically, the study focused on the following research questions:

- In what ways has the financial affected primary and secondary education in Greece during the last years?
- Have schools developed strategies in order to adapt to the changes caused by the crisis?

The key findings present the impact of the financial crisis on the institution of education in Greece (both in primary and secondary education) during the years 2009-2016.

3.2 Sample
The population of this research consists of teachers who work in state schools in Eastern Macedonia-Thrace region. The sample represents the 15.4% of state schools in the selected region. Schools were chosen on the basis of the following school selection criteria: geographical spread in the region, school location, school size, school type and school grade.

3.3 Questionnaire
A closed questionnaire was distributed to schools, asking questions about all consequences of the crisis on the Greek education system. The questions referred to school operation during the years 2009-2016 and school strategies to cope with cutbacks. The questionnaire also included some open-ended questions aimed at a more in depth data analysis, as the use of quantitative and qualitative data approaches research questions from different viewpoints (Mason, 2011: 271), and better depicts the complexity of human behavior (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007: 189). Data was statistically processed with the aid of the statistical package SPSS 17.0 for Windows installed at the Democritus University of Thrace, Department of Primary Level Education.

4. Results
4.1 Demographic and school data
The study took place in the selected primary and secondary schools of Eastern Macedonia-Thrace in 2016. The questionnaire was answered by 752 respondents in 119 schools (65 in primary and 54 in secondary education), that represent the 15.4% of state schools in the selected region. In terms of school location, 71% of the questionnaires came from urban, 16% from suburban and 12% from rural areas. More than half (54%) of the responses were from schools with big student population (over 200 students) and 18.8% teach at small schools (less than 100 students). Most teachers and parents who answered the questionnaire were women (70.8%), and
the majority of respondents belonged in the age group 41-50 (44.5%) and 27.7% were below 41 years old.

4.2 Effects of the financial crisis on the institution of education

According to the majority of teachers, cutbacks in education sector since 2010 have influenced negatively (33.8%) and very negatively (42.8%) school operation (Figure 1). In contrast, only 6.7% of the respondents were positive and 16.6% were neither positive nor negative. It is, therefore, indisputable that, in teachers’ views, the financial crisis has had negative repercussions on the institution of education in Greece.

Respondents who had negative and very negative views were asked to explain in which areas educational cutbacks affected schools. As their open answers suggest, education cutbacks in schools have severely deteriorated school operation and have also had a negative effect on human resources and the learning process. More specifically, they report shortages in resources, such as stationery and books, teacher and school staff shortages, fewer opportunities for professional development, disdain of the teaching profession, bad working climate and worse working conditions. They also observe negative consequences on learning outcomes due to class malfunctioning, lack of students’ motivation, cutbacks on educational programmes and school trips and underfunctioning of educational supporting structures. The following answer of a high-school teacher is representative. According to him, “the effects refer to a) the moral and emotional debilitation of the workforce (teachers), b) the inactivation or shortage of material-technical infrastructure and media (development of new books, equipment/teaching aids, school buildings, teacher training etc.) and c) the coverage of vacancies”. Similarly, an upper high-school teacher in an urban area said that “schools need classrooms with projectors and internet access. Only then will the lessons be interesting and exploratory”.

Figure 1: Education cutbacks and school operation
Regarding school mergers (Figure 2), 74% of the respondents agreed that mergers and increase of the number of students per classroom created problems to teachers and pupils, with only a very small percentage disagreeing. In the open question that followed, asking teachers who answered positively to define specific problems being caused (Table 1), 32% of them reported teachers’ inability to focus on each student’s needs and 31.2% of them referred to classroom management difficulties. Also, a lot of respondents mentioned that students’ behavior problems have increased, many teachers work to more than one schools and more teachers suffer from stress and fatigue. Some respondents were also worried about the reduction of established posts for teachers, as a direct impact of austerity politics. According to a high-school teacher, there is “difficulty in teaching, in communication, in students’ understanding and performance in classrooms of 26-27 students. School closures in remote areas have a deterring effect to disadvantaged social groups, leading them to school dropout. Mountainous villages [are] at risk of depopulation”. A kindergarten teacher in the Regional Unit of Xanthi stated that “the teachers can’t have enough time to fully respond to pupils’ learning needs. The accumulation of many children in a classroom creates many problems: narrowness of space, hygiene, [children] don’t have time to participate in the lesson, small-scale conflicts between children”. A primary school teacher in an urban area mentioned that “there are now schools with more students than those (they can house) they were designed [to house]”.

Table 1. Problems created by school mergers and students’ increase per classroom

| What problems do mergers and increase of student number per classroom cause to teachers and students? | Responses | Percent of cases |
|---|---|---|
| Inability to focus in students’ individual needs or inclination (personalized learning) | 235 | 32.0% 50.4% |
| Classroom management difficulties | 229 | 31.2% 49.1% |
| Problems with students’ behavior in the classroom. | 71 | 9.7% 15.2% |
| Students and teachers are “on the move” | 98 | 13.3% 21.0% |
| Stress and fatigue of teachers | 42 | 5.7% 9.0% |
| Less teachers’ appointments due to less posts | 60 | 8.2% 12.9% |
| Total | 735 | 100.0% 157.7% |

Also, music schools, which are secondary education schools specializing in the study and training of music, appear to be severely affected by the financial crisis. According to a representative answer, “every year, there are teacher shortages for music subjects […] inability
for the school to buy stationery and music equipment, inability to [financially] cover the need for concerts and events”.

In the question about school staffing (Figure 3), the majority of respondents (56.8%) had neutral views about the placement of staff in empty school posts in 2016 compared to 2009, which means that schools had already had school staffing problems before the crisis.

![Figure 3: School staffing](image)

However, 48% of the teachers reported deterioration of school staffing in 2016 due to belated and insufficient recruitment of substitute teachers, shortages in specialized personnel and freeze of permanent staff recruitments (Table 2).

Table 2. School staffing

| What are the staffing problems in your school? | Responses | Percent of Cases |
|-----------------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Teacher recruitment freeze                     | 17        | 5.3%             |
| Shortages of specialized personnel             | 110       | 34.2%            |
| Belated and few substitute teachers' appointments | 155      | 48.1%            |
| Other answers – vague answers                  | 40        | 12.4%            |
| Total                                         | 322       | 100.0%           |

The problem of staffing is more serious in rural areas, as, according to a primary school teacher in Samothrace island, “there are teacher shortages for the all-day school, the remedial teaching programme and for the subjects: 2nd foreign language, ICTs and music”. There is also underfunctioning of supportive services that improve learning outcomes due to teacher shortages and late appointments. Such services are the Integration Classes and Parallel Support for special education pupils and the Reception Classes for the instruction of Greek to pupils who are non-native speakers. As stated by a primary school teacher in the Regional Unit of Kavala: “there was a long delay in substitute teachers’ appointments for the Integration Class and the Reception Class. As a result, students do not have the support they need in time. The same applies for the Parallel Support service”. Also, a teacher in a kindergarten stated that “there is no special education teacher for the Integration Class”. Finally, serious staffing problems exist in upper high-schools that prepare students for the national university entrance exams. Many respondents claimed lack of teachers (or even very late appointments) in specific fields for both compulsory and elective courses and assignments of courses to teachers of different subjects, degrading the quality of secondary education.

On the other hand, school infrastructure, including buildings, classes, labs, gyms and yards (Figure 4) in 2016 was neither worse nor better than in 2009 according to the majority of teachers (57%). However, 26.3% believe that school infrastructure has worsened and the minority of respondents (16.5%) said that it has been improved. This finding shows that the financial crisis
hasn’t affected so much school facilities. Yet, it seems that schools with infrastructure needs during the years of crisis, face problems in dealing with them.

Similarly, the crisis seems to have little effect on school equipment (Figure 5), as, according to the majority of teachers (42.7%), schools’ functioning equipment in their schools has neither worsened nor improved. There is, also, a considerable amount of teacher (38.6%) who stated that school equipment in 2016 was better than in 2009. Yet, 24.8% of teachers answered that it has become worse. Respondents’ diverse answers signify the differences that exist among schools in Greece, with some schools still in need of equipment, and others fully equipped.

The last question explored school capacity to financially cover specific operational needs, such as heating oil use, payment of bills and stationary material purchase (Figure 6). Teacher responses show clearly the incapacity of schools to cope with their operational costs. More than half of the respondents (63.4%) state the difficulty schools face to accommodate their operational needs and 21.5% of them declare a lot of difficulty in dealing with their operational expenses. 30.6% of the teachers do not observe any change in school finances and only a small minority answered that their schools can cover their operational needs with ease. In the open question that followed, teachers were asked to pinpoint specific examples of schools’ needs that are underfinanced (Table 3). Most teachers declare shortages in stationery materials, such as copy paper and printer toners and difficulties in paying off heating oil in their schools. As a consequence, many schools have reduced the use of heating oil in a region that has a long winter period. Also, a lot of schools have problems in fixing and maintaining their existing infrastructure and equipment, are unable to buy new equipment and have difficulties in paying off bills (electricity and telephone) and cleaning products. A teacher in a rural primary school stated that they have “difficulty in buying heating fuel, copy paper and other materials for activities. Difficulty in funding theatrical performances and cultural events”.

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Most teachers reported that schools resorted to cost savings and have reduced operational costs. In many cases, parents bear the burden of school stationery material, such as copy paper. Also, the bad economic situation in Greek families has made schools reduce school trips and organize less educational events. All in all, teachers clearly state that Greek schools cannot afford their expenses during the years of the crisis, that also affects the quality of education.

Table 3. Specific problems schools face

| Specific cases showing schools’ inability or difficulty to cover their needs. | Responses | Percent of Cases |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Heating oil pay off – Reduced use of heating oil | 222 | 29.3% 56.2% |
| Stationery material purchase | 275 | 36.3% 69.6% |
| Fixing, repairing, maintaining infrastructure/equipment | 78 | 10.3% 19.7% |
| Equipment purchase | 83 | 10.9% 21.0% |
| Pay off bills and cleaning equipment/detergents etc. | 61 | 8.0% 15.4% |
| Infrastructure | 22 | 2.9% 5.6% |
| Other answers – vague answers | 17 | 2.2% 4.3% |
| Total | 758 | 100.0% 191.9% |

4.3 How schools adapt to the financial crisis

In the previous section, respondents provided answers regarding the problems schools in Greece face due to the financial crisis. In this section, teachers and parents were asked to explain how schools cope with the crisis and what measures they take in order to deal with the problems they experience in their schools (Table 4). Findings show that in most cases schools resorted to cost savings in order to cope with cutbacks on their annual budget. More specifically, schools have reduced operational costs, as, for example, they buy less copy paper and have reduced extra educational material printing. Also, the crisis affected school events and trips, as parents are not always willing to pay the cost of a school trip. As a result, some schools have reduced school trips and organize less educational events, as, for example, going to the theatre.

Secondly, 24.4% of the teachers said that schools receive sponsorships from associations and organizations for their events and operational needs. The most common source of finance comes from parents’ associations either via direct sponsorships or via co-organization of events. Other sources of finance are provided by local administration, the church, institutions, companies, NGOs and local stakeholders. A high-school teacher in a suburban area said that the school receives “sponsorships from companies and the municipality, brunch by “Niarchos Foundation” [and] help from the church”.

Figure 6: Covering of school operational needs
Schools do not only receive financial help, but they also provide financial and material assistance to underprivileged pupils and their families. Specifically, teachers and parents reported that schools and teachers’ boards often help pupils in need and their families. Assistance can vary from purchase of snacks and stationery to pupils, to clothes and food donations to families. The following answer of a primary school teacher is representative, as she mentioned that the school “helps by distributing fruit, mainly, to all pupils. It reduced its expenses and [reduced] the snack prices at the school canteen. It finds affordable prices for school trips and reinforces recycling of stationery and toys”. In many cases, respondents said that the school is paying the fees for school trips and educational activities, when a family cannot afford them.

Table 4. School strategies to cope with the crisis

| How does the school respond to the financial crisis? | Responses | Percent of Cases |
|-----------------------------------------------------|-----------|-----------------|
| Sponsorships                                        | 292       | 24.4% 44.0%     |
| Help to underprivileged students and their families | 226       | 18.9% 34.1%     |
| Cost savings                                        | 463       | 38.7% 69.8%     |
| Volunteerism                                        | 53        | 4.4% 8.0%       |
| Revenues via events                                 | 149       | 12.4% 22.5%     |
| Other answers – vague answers                       | 14        | 1.2% 2.1%       |
| Total                                               | 1197      | 100.0% 180.5%   |

A teacher in a rural primary school in the Regional Unit of Xanthi referred to “school fundraisings for children with financial problems, cooperation with the Parents’ Association for helping students in need (food, clothes), teachers’ financial help to students [in order to participate to] school trips”. Moreover, 12.8% of the respondents answered that schools have revenues through events, such as bazaars with handcrafts and lotteries. As stated by a kindergarten teacher in the Regional Unit of Drama, parents frequently “bear the burden of (the school’s) daily expenses”. Finally, 4.7% of the respondents referred to the increase of volunteer work, especially of teachers and parents, by means of extra teaching hours, fundraisings, repairs and constructions. A primary school teacher and parent in the Regional Unit of Drama mentioned that “the school saves money via events and relies on volunteer work by individuals for specific needs coverage”. To sum up, the financial crisis had both negative and positive effects on schools. On the one hand, schools have reduced their expenses and participate in less educational activities outside their premises, which can have an impact on the quality of education. On the other hand, schools have formed stronger bonds with parents and the local community that contribute to school needs, and have also developed social solidarity.

5. Discussion

The study that took place in primary and secondary education schools of northern Greece reveals the deterioration of schools’ operation as a result of the financial crisis. Social change has affected the educational system in Greece by degrading schools’ operation. During the years 2009 and 2016, the quality of education in Greek state schools seems to have worsened as overcrowded classrooms restrict the implementation of personalized learning and student-oriented teaching strategies, whereas classroom management problems are very frequent. Similarly, poor school finances are responsible for fewer education projects, field trips and events that serve as complementary activities to traditional learning and greatly benefit the educational process. In a parallel manner, schools face serious operational difficulties related to lesson quality (e.g. due to shortages of stationery materials), students’ health (e.g. due to reduced use of heating fuel) and the security of the whole student and teacher community (e.g. due to difficulties in the restoration of damages). The quality of school infrastructure and equipment seems not to be influenced by the financial crisis. This is probably due to the fact that many schools improved their
infrastructure and equipment via European operational programmes, during the previous years. Finally, it seems that the crisis has severely hit education structures such as Music Schools, all-day schools and remedial education. As a result, it is evident that the financial crisis in Greece has brought about crisis in education. All these abrupt changes in the institution of education in Greece, caused by the recession, have urged schools to differentiate and develop strategies and initiatives in order to adapt to the new circumstances.

6. Conclusions

The Greek financial crisis has had a direct impact on the institution of education. The study that took place in Eastern Macedonia – Thrace, a region that was been severely hit by austerity, revealed negative as well as positive effects of the financial crisis in Greek schools and their strategies to cope with education cutbacks. To sum up, social change has affected the institution of education in Greece, as repercussion of the financial crisis, clearly showing the interconnection of social institutions. In the new reality, schools adapt themselves, deploying strategies and forming support systems to cope with recession and the problems it has caused on school operation and their human capital. Specifically, schools adopt a more human approach by developing solidarity and new support systems for students in need and their families. The crisis, therefore, spurred the inauguration of social initiatives in the field of education in an attempt to alleviate some of its negative consequences on children and their families. Schools, also, try to form partnerships with the local community and exploit available funding resources and opportunities, in order to counteract budget cutbacks. As a result, schools, also, gradually develop entrepreneurship and management skills, in an attempt to ensure their regular operation and maintain or even improve the quality of their educational product in times of crisis.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors. This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

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Trajectory of Subject in the Space of Politics and Arts: The Artist, his Body and State Apparatus (Pavlensky’s Case)

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Received 31 October 2017 • Revised 15 November 2017 • Accepted 23 November 2017

Abstract

This research investigates bodily art practices of Russian artist and actionist Peter Pavlensky, who uses his naked body in the urban space, creating corporal statements of political order. His body discourse involves the use of body parts, material objects, as well as urban structures – which fits the body – endowed with sacred and the political value: Red Square, a psychiatric hospital, etc. Using the approach of Badiou, I will show how body discourse on politics separates from the dominant political discourse in the mainstream media. Point of view of Kristeva on the phenomenon of subject let us to understand how naked body and artist’s bodily work constitutes order of signifiers that media audience decodes as political statements. Corporal performance let to subject, deprived of the right to speak, to use his body as language to become the subject of political discourse in artistic sensual way. Act of creation of body text becomes the act of political resistance.

Keywords: subject, Pavlensky, Russian media, state apparatus, body.

1. Introduction

What can people do in the situation of restrictions and prohibitions? Obviously, in a situation where your discourse is forbidden, you are forced to create a new language. However, this new language should be such that mass media system (which you would like to use) can be able to recognize it as its own, habitual. Niklas Luhmann, a well-known theorist of the mass media, wrote that in order for a message to be recognized by the mass media system as information, it must contain the usual code which the system can describe in its usual language. In other words, the mass media system can describe events, messages, information only in its own language (Luhmann, 2000). Thus Mr. Pavlensky makes a little trick to attract attention for his person - he uses sensationalism, scandal, unusual in his actions – everything that attracts the media so much.

Often in order to overcome discursive restrictions and to be heard, consciously or unconsciously, we use a laughing, carnival culture. In our case, we use carnavaledization as a synonym for the concept of theatricalization. Carnavalization let us to put under the sign of the question the one-sidedness of interpretation of the media, offers different options for interpreting the problem covered in the media. Laughter and theatricality tear off covers of falseness from reality, show an imbalance between the external and the internal, and anticipate new things/events (Vice, 1997).
In the case I am writing about, the language is the body language that can be viewed as carnivalized discourse of politics. In the situation, where you can't use speech, the body becomes source of political discursivity.

It’s clear that only body itself is not enough to be socially significant, it must be immersed in a socially important context. In order to make statements, the body should interact with the socially significant ambient - urban space, buildings, history, ideology and recent news.

The main concepts I’m using in my research on theatricalization of politics are subjectivation, discourse and sign.

2. The wall of mass-media

The sensitive thesis that traditional and new mass media becomes less and less free site for opinion exchange and manifestation of controversial discourses is very actual. This happens in different places of the world. At the same time impact of TV broadcasting, which belongs to traditional mass media, is huge on mass consciousness, despite of social networks and other internet projects existence. According to the surveys more than 85% of Russian media audience, for example, get news about the Russia and all over the world by television (Volkov & Goncharov, 2017) (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Where do you most often learn about the news in the country and in the world (%)?](image)

Although we are witnessing the increasing of the number of social network users, their part in whole structure of Internet consumers included in this increasing process are limited to users from 16 to 21 years. Then as many sociologist report, and this is very important factor: “Many of the most popular Internet resources in general reproduce the picture produced by federal TV channels. The state still has many tools for control the information agenda on the Internet. A story with one of the most popular news websites of ‘Lenta’ is typical example of such state managing of the media. In March 2014, the owner changed the editorials of this media, presumably fearing that journalists cover events in Ukraine, presenting in their materials and reports the position of the Ukrainian leadership” (Volkov & Goncharov, 2017).

Let’s remember the situation around Donald Trump during his electioneer and beginning of presidency – the most powerful American TV channels attacked Trump with criticism. There were been a lot of a fake news. As a result, he had to move his political discourse into social networks and twitter but was attacked there by internet trolls and bots, too.

On the other hand, at the East, in Eastern Europe, and in Russia to be more precise, we are witnessing the collapse of independent television. Almost all informational channels are
state owned, while commercial independent television is being pushed out of mass broadcasting for various unfair reasons. For example, a law was passed prohibiting Russian media from having foreign funding of more than 20 percent.

I think that we all know about the great Chinese firewall: all incoming news and information is under control in Internet and in TV. 30 percent of the information Chinese receive from the Internet, they receive using VPN. Google and main Western TV channels are blocked there. In North Korea, there is no independent media in principle.

More recently, European Parliament has passed a law at official level that ban broadcasting some of Russian TV channels in Europe. Propaganda was indicated as the reason, but the real reason for the blockage, I suppose, is an alternative point of view that does not coincide with the official version of the European Union government (European Parliament..., 2017). I’m talking about channel “Russia today” for example.

Twitter also has made the policy decision to off-board advertising from all accounts owned by Russia Today (RT) and Sputnik (Twitter..., 2017).

The main issue is that in this space of information wars and censorship, there are real people – an audience that wants to know the truth, even if this truth does not coincide with the opinion of the government or media owners.

And it does not matter, I suppose, which mechanism is used to ban and exclude alternative opinions to main political narratives: financial domination of private media owners or power control on content policy in state media – these two kind of regulation are both contain ideology and censorship in their core. Anyway we could say that regulation could seem softer in commercial media due to multiplicity of content, telecasts and entertainment while it seems to be harder in state media, which seems to be more monolith and directive without intention to hide the ideology. But in fact both mechanisms produce the same thing – reality reduced to one dimensional representation of world, representation tailored according to major ideology of media owners.

This thesis of mine correlates with the concept “Society of spectacle” suggested by French philosopher and sociologist Guy Debord. He divided the world capitalistic system (that includes media as well) into two kinds. One, which spreads spectacle based on consumption (this kind is presented by the West countries) and another, which produces spectacle based on totalitarianism (this is presented by the Eastern countries including ex-USSR). In both parts of the World (Eastern or Western) a human being is alienated and oppressed by capital and the state regulation of everyday life. In the first case they use more manipulative strategies and in the second they use more authoritative strategies.

Debord explains the idea of spread spectacle in such way (Debord, 1977):

“In the image of the society happily unified by consumption, real division is only suspended until the next non-accomplishment in consumption. Every single product represents the hope for a dazzling shortcut to the promised land of total consumption and is ceremoniously presented as the decisive entity. But as with the diffusion of seemingly aristocratic first names carried by almost all individuals of the same age, the objects which promise unique powers can be recommended to the devotion of the masses only if they’re produced in quantities large enough for mass consumption. A product acquires prestige when it is placed at the center of social life as the revealed mystery of the ultimate goal of production. But the object which was prestigious in the spectacle becomes vulgar as soon as it is taken home by its consumer – and by all its other consumers. It reveals its essential poverty (which naturally comes to it from the misery of its production) too late. But by then another object already carries the justification of the system and demands to be acknowledged”.
Guy Debord predicted, in his late works, that those two kinds of spectacle will become one – integrated spectacle. Today Eastern media landscape became more varied, full of entertainment and commercial broadcasting, while the state is trying more and more regulate the media in the West.

3. Pavlensky as subject (desire machine of subjectivation)

I’m using the concepts subject and subjectivation to underline the differences between so called objectivated and commodified masses of media users and creative subject as he/she resists and transgresses traditional forms of social compulsion through information and language. The subject is trying to be the interpretative artist and not the object of ideology as he thinks and acts in ways that are different from main forms of social communication.

Let me remember the concept of “desire machines” that is basic concept of Deleuze, that explains creativity of subjectivity. Desire machines oppose to “social machines” represented by rigid social structures and hierarchies which we can call machines of information or media machines in our case. The concept “desire machines” reject the idea of an external occurrence, the idea of compulsory causation, focusing on spontaneous self-organization of processuality of the subject (Deleuze & Guattari, 2004).

In general, social represented by Deleuze theory as a process, not just as a procedural act with its beginning and ending, but as a permanent processuality in which there is no original and derivative, but there is a general drift. Non-integrated and autonomous subjectivities form the configurations of flows.

Although Pavlensky uses the same language to create his installations he does not self-repeat – all his art works are very different. The main feature of actionism is that the use of the body in the process of creating a work of art does not lead to a complete result, the body does not become a statue or picture, it is in constant development as an element of the artistic language: “In contrast to classical theory of the subject, the present state of its theory and concept can be described more from standpoint of activity and processual approach, rather than a “static” viewpoint: becoming subject is more important than to be subject; to resist, to elude from standardized practices, social procedures, symbolic signification by social institutions – an indispensable condition in attempt to become the subject: “Run Lola Run”. Huge role in this process of subjectivation plays phenomenon of “becoming” – a key concept of late post-modernism. In classical theory of formation of subject we are talking about stages and phases that an individual passes to become himself or to become just function of any social organization. Today, “becoming” becomes meaningful in itself as a process of subjectivation. Becoming is valuable in itself and not these species of status and existence which it binds. Goals of becoming contained in itself. Being the subject – is constantly being on the “line of flight” (Kombarov, 2016).

That is exactly what we can see in Pavlensky case. He let any person of the audience to become a subject in process of subjectivation. What Pavlensky shows is not the fixed picture of reality with one meaning. Pavlensky invites audience to be subjects of interpretation and move mentally between his body as signifier and social issues as signified.

On the one hand, desire machines and “social machines” are strongly bound, and on the other hand – essentially alternative to each other. If “social machines” represent the rigid structures focused on constancy and on conservation, then desire machines, on the contrary, are sources of the permanent creativity, which makes a social procedural. Deleuze understood relation between desire machines and “social machines” as relation between micro- and macro-levels of sociality.
Carcass

In the comments to his actions, Pavlensky repeats one and the same idea – the enslavement of the human person by state apparatus (Picture 1). He attracts our attention to the increase in the number of laws regulating all spheres of human life in modern Russia: the media, sexuality, political activism and so on.

On May 2013, Pavlensky held a political protest against repressive government policies. His art performance was called “Carcass”. His assistants brought him naked, wrapped in a multilayered cocoon of barbed wire, to the main entrance of the Legislative Assembly of Saint Petersburg. The artist remained silent, lying still in a half-bent position inside the cocoon, and did not react to the actions of others until the police with the help of the garden clippers released him.

Picture 1. “Carcass” (2013). Photograph: Maxim Zmeev (calveertjournal.com)

Pavlensky’s girlfriend mentioned that a metaphor of the action had its immediate realization in the reality: as soon as the barbed wire was cut off, and the artist was freed from it, the same exact wire wrapped him back in with police, ambulances and numerous field investigators (Volchek, 2013).

Pavlensky made the following comment about his artwork (Volchek, 2013):

“Laws aimed at suppressing civic activism, intimidation of the population, steadily growing number of political prisoners, the laws against NGOs, the 18+ laws, censorship laws, activity of Federal Service for Supervision of Communications, Information Technology and Mass Media, ‘promotion of homosexuality’ laws – all these laws are not targeting criminals, rather they are issued against all of us. That is why I organized this action. The human body is naked like a carcass, there is nothing on it except the barbed wire, which by the way was invented for the protection of livestock. These laws like this wire keep people in their individual pens: all this persecution of political activists, ‘prisoners of May, 6’, governmental repressions is the metaphor of the pen with the barbed wire around it. All this has been done in order to turn people into gutless and securely guarded cattle, which can only consume, work, and reproduce”.

It corresponds with how Deleuze understand the conflict between social and desires machines: fascist type of integration stops the flows, suffocating them, turning them back and
dissecting them in accordance with the internal system limits; while becoming subject is running away, and trying to find a gap in the wall that separates him from the production of desire.

4. From the body to the “I” (to ideal subject)

Philosopher, sociologist and semiologist Julia Kristeva also highlights the “motility” and desire that characterize the creation of the subject. But being the follower of semiologist Roland Bart she proposes the semiotic version of the subject and subjectivity which automatically disrupts the totalitarianism of system intrinsically connected to subject: that is language. Subject is becoming via language.

Let’s remember briefly that semiotics is the academic field dedicated to the study of signs. A sign may be recognized by the presence of its two parts – the signifier (word, images) and the signified (the meaning). Semiotics describes any system of signs: texts, books, images, multimedia productions, fashion, daily social life, etc. As the result social reality is represented as a number of texts. The artist that creates unexpected meanings denoting social reality with body language produces also new subjectivity (of himself and of the media audience).

Kristeva uses the approach of Russian philosopher Bakhtin to study of polyphonic subjectivities and dialogical consciousness that he applied in the study on Dostoevsky. Thus Kristeva postulates that significiation of text does not behave according to a universal law. It attacks every structure that says “No” to the subject’s impulses. The “unitary” of subject is replaced by subject in process.

In the book Revolution in poetic language she uses also the Hegelian concept of “negation”. Kristeva interprets negation as annihilation of the object and introduction of object into the structure of the knower. The structure of subjectivity is bifurcated: subject is understood as sensational subject of desires and bodily needs, and on the other hand, the desiring subject finds himself in the discourse, denoting his biological level through the symbolic (Kristeva, 1984).

To explain her concept of subjectivation lets turn to her essay The signs on the way to the subject. This essay is her semiotic research of the sixth chapter of Gospel of John. It can be read as a semiotic discussion. Jesus opposes to the concept of signs of the Old Testament by providing other interpretations. He includes these signs in the arising theory of the subject (Kristeva, 1993).

John comes into semiotic dispute. His narrative begins with the assimilation of the miracles performed by Jesus to these magical signs, which served as the basis for the faith of believers who lived in pre-Christian era. At first, Jesus is a magician: “He was followed by a lot of people, because they saw the signs, which he did on the sick” (In. 6, 2). Finally, “people saw Jesus walking on the sea” (In. 6, 19). Later, however, the John tried to give a different meaning to these wonders.

John makes here a new semiology through Jesus. Sign fulfills its purpose only if it meets the sensory needs of the recipient. So it is necessary to recognize the bodily needs (hunger, thirst). Using the words of Jesus, John increases the sensory duplication of signs. He interprets the speech as spoken in order to meet the vital needs, “Jesus said to them: you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled” (In. 6, 26).

Thus, John begins the interpretation of miracles with sensationalism, then goes on to justify the needs up to the symbolic center of the Eucharist. John insists that the external vision does not exhaust the diversity of your experience regarding these “signs”. You are not simply acts as a recipient of a miracle-gift, but you exist in time and space of my narrative. Therefore, the second shift becomes possible. John did not forget to bring through these wonders with the food,
which you need, necessity to move to “I”, the need to fully trust to this “I”. Who is this “I”? “I am the bread of life” (In. 6, 35), “the Son on whom God the Father has set a seal” (In. 6, 27).

Absolute subject is the “Son of Man”, who nevertheless retains close relationship with God as his Father. Talk about fatherhood involves bodily genealogy. The memory of the origin in the context of signs leads back to the body and senses. On the other hand, the word “seal (sceller)” contains a semantic relationship between subjects: the Son “means” the Father, and this meaning is manifested in us, the recipients of the Gospel narrative. Just as the Son entrusted to the Father, you trust to the Son. Signification – it’s trust to Other, who associated with the trust, to the Father. Subjectivation is based on this triple relationship.

In other words, we must “come” to “I” without using perceived “visions”. From now on, the sign is the trajectory of the subject. This interpretation replaces the sign as a gift.

In Pavlensky’s actions, we can see a similar logic: the audience becomes a subject moving between two poles: the body and the idea that this body denoting – signifying. At the beginning the audience is attracted by the sight of the naked body, but then it begins to move mentally towards the subject who is producing idea and is trying to convey this idea to the audience’s consciousness. The process of subjectification is that the sensory experience is replaced by an intellectual experience that unites the audience with the artist who speaks through his body language.

The usual passivity of the audience, which, let’s say, “eat” what is given to it, is replaced by subjective activity – we understand what Pavlensky says with the help of the body in spite of verbal explanations of TV news which change the meaning of his actions. As it was said above mass media system always seeks to describe events in its ideological language, so the official TV news are trying to change, intercept the signified. For example, for the description of Pavlensky actions it uses stigmatizing expressions such as self-mutilation, the usual practice of prisoners, inadequacy, mentally illness, masochist, exhibitionist etc. It is worth noting that, in this case, the media is trying to keep the meaning of message solely at the level of the body, at the level of object, and thus it is closing the way for the audience towards symbolic meanings of the criticized action.

Despite of this pressure, Pavlensky without using a single word, transforms the audience into a subject, which, contrary to ideological verbal influence can separate truth from lies. The audience thus moves through subjectivation from the silent body as an object to the idea.

**Fixation**

In 2013, while sitting naked on the stone pavement in front of the Lenin’s Mausoleum on the Red Square, Moscow, Pavlensky hammered a large nail through his scrotum affixing it to the stone pavement. His action coincided with the annual Russian Police Day. When the police arrived, they covered him with a blanket and later arrested him. “A naked artist, looking at his testicles nailed to the cobblestone is a metaphor of apathy, political indifference, and fatalism of Russian society”, declared Pavlensky in his statement to the media (Artist Pyotr Pavlensy..., 2013).

The discourse of Pavlensky build the bridge between the corporeality with which we are able to identify ourselves (since we all have hands, feet, head, genitals, empathy as an ability to sense or imagine physical pain) and the ideal “I”, which is the history of society that unites individuals into some generalized whole. The image, the sign of this unified “I” as a whole, is appearing from the symbols used by Pavlensky, and which are actually sacred for Russians. For example, let’s look at the Red Square. It is considered by many to be “heart” of Russia (heart again as a corporeal phenomenon), where we can find Lenin's mausoleum (where the body of this leader is stored in form of mummy). The Red Square is also the former place of mass executions of criminals in the Middle Ages (red square like red blood). At the same time the Red Square is a
symbol of Russia’s power and greatness. It is a symbol, which creates a sense of the identity of society, the collective “I”. In the process of subjectification, this “I” becomes “We” and acquires a pessimistic sound: we are apolitical, apathetic, etc.

At the same time, in the Kremlin, which is separated from the Red Square by a wall, there is the transcendent “I” (separated by a wall) – the president of Russia, the one who corresponds to “the Father” in Kristeva’s theory. He represents a transcendental subject, in which the love and hope of Russians are concentrated (the people's love for the president is known – according to various sources, about 90% of Russian population supports the president). Thus, nailing part of his body to the Red Square, Pavlensky, performs the procedure of sealing the people with the “ideal I” – the president. But unlike the case with Christ in the Gospel of John, this identification with the "Father" is negative. Fixation, the identification of the Russian people with the “ideal I” – a symbol of apathy, dependence and helplessness in the face of power, the allegory of sacrifice.

5. Pavlensky as “apostle” (discursive analysis)

I consider installations of Pavlensky as number of texts that is result of using by this artist of his specific body language. Becoming of the language in the specific social context is no other than discourse – the presence of social and politics structures in the language of the subject of statements.

Badiou wants to show that as long as everything goes on as usual the subject does not exist. While knowledge and its accumulation are possible when everything goes in accordance to the rules taken for granted, the truth is impossible. Truth comes to us as an event.

The story of Paul is well known and can be considered as an example here. Heading to Damascus, Paul, a jealous Pharisee persecuting Christians, hears a mysterious voice, which reveals to him the truth. It was blind and far from being dialectical transition – the subject is resurrected in the Paul (Badiou, 2003).

Extraordinary gesture of Paul, according to Badiou, was that he liberated the truth from the effects of the community (whatever form this community takes – group of people, city, Empire, territory, or social class). For what is true (or fair in this case), the subject does not need to appeal to any objective unity – neither according to its reason, nor according to its destination. Paul separates any process of truth from the “cultural” historicity, in which opinion intends to dissolve it.

_Stitch_

Pavlensky makes something similar. Artist breaks the habitual course of things – the traditional system of representation of events and news in the mass media: instead of verbally enumerating events and assigning certain values to them in the context of a certain ideology, he appeals to universal values that run counter to the existing state of affairs.

Pavlensky first became known for sewing his mouth shut in political protest against the incarceration of members of the Russian art group Pussy Riot. Pavlensky appeared at Kazan Cathedral, St. Petersburg, with his lips sewn up holding a banner that stated: “Action of Pussy Riot was a replica of the famous action of Jesus Christ” (Matthew, 21: 12-13). Police called an ambulance and sent him for a psychiatric examination; the psychiatrist declared him sane and released him shortly after the incident. The artist stated that he was highlighting the lack of regard for artists in contemporary Russia. He said: “My intention was not to surprise anyone or come up with something unusual. Rather, I felt I had to make a gesture that would accurately reflect my
situation... there is a general tightening of censorship, a ban on open statements in contemporary art is being introduced. I see how many artists all accept this. The frames gradually narrow. A year ago this was not. I do not like that people, especially artists, take it very easy. And this process over Pussy Riot is a gesture of power state apparatus, which decided to show to all that it’s time to shut up” (Komarova, 2012).

There are two consequences of this activity. First of all, if the truth comes from the event, it is singular. Secondly, no one from community is able to dispose of this truth. The truth it's not based on any identity. Truth came from the event. It is intended to everyone without restrictions whatever previous experiences of subject were.

Loyalty to the declaration is important, because the truth is a process. It is not an insight. In order to think and to speak, it is necessary to rely on the three concepts which fix the respective state of the subject: the concept, that names the subject at the time of declaration (“faith”); the concept, that names subject at the time of the active manifestation of their beliefs (“love”); and the concept, that names the subject in his capacity to resist the external oppression (“hope”, but it would be better to say “confidence” and “resistance”).

The truth is indifferent to the State, for example, to the Roman state. This means that it's free from ideology, which the State prescribes.

Let’s touch briefly the Subject in Discourses of Paul.

Paul creates a “Christian discourse” by distinguishing it from the actions of the Jewish and Greek discourses. What is the Jewish discourse? The prophet is a subjective figure that creates it. Thus, we can assume that the Jewish discourse is, above all, the discourse of the signs.

The wise man acts as a subjective figure of the Greek discourse. Wisdom is in assignment of the established world order. It is in correlation between Logos and life. The Greek discourse is cosmic. It locates the subject in natural totality.

Deep idea of Paul was the fact that Jewish and Greek discourses are two faces of one and the same figure of domination. Both discourses, Greek and Jewish, are the essence of the Father. That is why they shape community in the form of subordinated dependence (Space, Empire, God, or Law). The ability to become universal, free from all particularism has the only subject who will present himself as a discourse of the Son (Badiou, 2003).

Lubyanka’s burning door

In this action Pavlensky came to the first entrance of the Lubyanka Building, which is the headquarters of the Russian Federal Security Service on November 9, 2015 at 1:15 a.m. Moscow time, and doused the front door with gasoline and set fire to it with a cigarette lighter. The doors of the building were partially burnt. Pavlensky was detained after 30 seconds without resistance, and charged with debauchery. A few hours after the action, a video appeared on the Internet with an explanation of the meaning of the burning (Jonathan, 2015).

According to gallerist Gelman, the action shows Pavlensky’s “obvious symbolism”. “The Lubyanka door is the gate to hell, the entrance into the world of absolute evil. And against the backdrop of hellfire is a lonely artist, waiting to be captured ... Pavlensky’s figure at the door of the FSB in flames – is a very important symbol for today’s Russia, both political and artistic” (Russia Update..., 2015).

We can see how the artist, making this action and others, embodies the figure of a son who opposed himself to the symbolic father – the figure of power and violence – to the state apparatus. The artist as a subject is represented only by nude “little” body that put himself in
opposition to the “big” state apparatus, but despite that this big one was not able to injure him more than himself really did.

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Sufism: A Cultural Integration Potential

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Received 30 May 2018 • Revised 21 July 2018 • Accepted 24 July 2018

Abstract

Europe’s history is like a manuscript of divisions between East and West: a boundary that stretches more than a thousand years. This history is full with more or less unsuccessful examples of attempts where this boundary was to be thrown away or at least minimized to certain degree. But, the actual failure in these attempts doesn’t mean that the impact left behind, moreover the religious impact in current social context is to be considered as rather irrelevant.

Keywords: multiculturalism, religious diversity, cultural integration, Islam mysticism, Sufism, foreign policy.

1. Introduction

The current processes of globalization that are founded by various activities throughout last century had their apex in creation of the international European Economic Community which will result in European Union: a way for economic proximity between various nations and cultures considering the complexity of the European continent.

Nevertheless, the true challenge for Europe was the concept of multiculturalism in whole its aspects pointing towards cultural diversity. This concept has found its true challenge within the area of religious diversity, religious tolerance and coexistence surrounded by situation where two super religions share vast history of antagonism and dominance one over another.

Discussion that has appeared considering the following subject is rather intriguing, founding its core among awareness of these religious doctrines in their capacities for tolerance and coexistence inside multicultural ocean of possibilities. What has reality to teach us these days is a crack in religious coexistence worldwide that gets deeper and deeper every minute. The vision about civil society where economical welfare of its subjects is a priority and where specific attention has been paid towards cultural and religious aspects of its fellow citizens has come to particularly difficult terrain considering the case with Turkey: constitutionally secular country with predominant Muslim citizens that has expressed its aspirations and will to become a rightful part of European Union. What is certain, the concept of unity in diversity has questionable commodity by this perception of religious diversity. Turkey has entered the twentieth century as constitutional secular country that guarantees freedom of religion for its citizens. Statistically, Turkey has a high majority of Muslim citizens: 96.4% Muslims from which 73% are nonreligious Muslims (Country – Turkey, 2014).
In its structure, Islam has certain elements of warlike religion. There are examples where Holly Koran calls for its believers in holly war against nonbelievers. Part of that is true but for complete understanding of these situations we must consider the historical context and social circumstances of the formative period.

Islam subjects its followers to strict discipline so it could penetrate and thus affecting personal activities on daily basis. In such manner, personal life of the followers gets to be modulated in the way that is rather exotic in common western citizen context.

On the other side, European Union was created as an economic community of independent states. They unite themselves creating the Union in achieving greater economical in first place, and thus cultural benefit for their subjects – citizens of the Union. Not imposing its hegemony onto any other nation, the Union has created the highest principle – United in diversities. Virtually, one could found a lot of those qualitative diversities that could initiate possible fields of unity. Nevertheless, what appears to be the greatest hiatus in this context is more or less, on thing that is one and the same for all members of the Union, the religion. European Union is in a way a single religion union: all member states, all member nations are in a way, a Christian followers. Christian religion considering its denominations is a religion of the all EU member states. In our view, Christianity is a platform that shares a single ethical concept from Helsinki to Athens and from London to Kiev.

2. European integrations and Islam religion

Solemnity of the subject was raised with the question of Turkey mining its aspiration for full right membership. Turkey is happened to be a distinguished NATO member; its territory enters the European continent, and is not an EU member. Demographically, Turkey with a 97% Muslim population, appears to be a symbol representing the others, the others with other religious beliefs, and that other is not just other but is Islam: an Abraham religion just like Christianity is, that share rather terrific war history with more than a few attempts for geopolitical and social domination. What is obvious and manifest quality of Christianity is the spiritual message of love and compassion, brotherhood and serenity. This Christian ethic is more or less represented in all its denominations. And what is served today as a spiritual message of Islam, well slightly different, irrefutable obey towards holly scripts, the Sharia law that’s normatively prescribes and affects every particular aspect of the follower’s life. Charging with such normative concept gives a dose of certain manipulative collective consciousness and a risky lack of individual, more logical decision making considering a wider social perspective. In the end all one can expect is a highly manipulative society.

Critical analysis in this area having in mind the formative period of Islam religion points to a certain spiritual core that is consisted of strong ethical principles toward individual development and treatment of other fellow citizens, especially the ones having a different religious believes. This is the introvert aspect of Islam that as the time passes by has more and more latent appearance in spite of more dominant religious jurisprudence.

Heading towards religious tolerance and respectful coexistence in this manner, our vision must pierce throughout this barrier built by Islamic law. Within our first critical steps towards Islam what is obvious is the message of spiritual and ethic perfection of its followers, a concept quite similar with Christianity. Islam promotes love and compassion, ascetic life and tolerance towards other people. What is different here, compared with Christianity, this ethical concept is promoted in rather different way. It is Sufism and Sufi groups where those aspects of Islam are located. Ever since the early beginnings Sufis were important part of Islam.

History speaks of high level importance in this aspect for consistency of Islam. The formative period is a particularly rough and turbulent situation in Middle East area that was
populated with various Semitic tribes that were engaged in time long battles in-between or with other civilizations for hegemony in the region. In such situation of constant virtually never-ending violence, basic teaching of Islam gets to be divided in various similar teachings in struggle for attracting more and more followers. This is especially the case in first three centuries after the prophet Muhammad. In that time Islam spirituality and mysticism are quite dominant and is manifest part of this newborn religion. Hence, Sufism played the most integral and comprehensive role for what is considered to be later an Islam religion. This defensive position once taken by Islam’s spiritualism and mysticism will be manifested again in late middle century when after that it slowly begins to be marginalized.

3. Sufism: Not just a part from Islam religion

Today, besides remote connection that exists between Sufism and Islam according to some scholars, it is evident that Sufism is immanent part of Islam. Although there’s vast number of examples where Sufism is marked as everything but Islam, what makes it immanent for Islam and no one will deny that is the principle of purity of faith or al-ihsan, which has a central role in all Sufi writings of wisdom. What is meant by this purity of faith? What is so important about it? Purity of faith when considered by Sufis means immanent awareness for individual behavior that anticipates a divine presence in every mental and physical action. This awareness is not interrupted by ego’s desires, by the past actions or future plans. In such manner, Sufism is representing the core of Islam as a human religion that is dedicated for preparation of the followers towards ultimate divine presence.

This dialectic woven that exists between Islam and Sufism needs a precise analysis of the history of Sufi orders, especially at the time of early beginnings – the time known as a formative period: time when Islam was founded in Medina where Muhammad created the first Muslim community in 662AD and where he personally have educated the first generation of Muslims.

According to the written texts that are describing this very moment of early days in Islam, in one private situation when Muhammad was in divine mystical presence of Angel Jibreel (Archangel Gabriel – The divine messenger in Christianity), the Prophet was asked to describe the three most important aspects of the faith, on what he give the answer by numbering them in order (Baran, 2004, 4):

- **Al-Iman**, which means to have thrust in divine deity, in divine angels, in divine books and messengers, in Judgment Day, in divine path that leads towards divine presence and to have trust in divine order that affects everything and everywhere;

- **Al-Islam**, which means practice, and refers to withstand that there’s no other but divine deity and Muhammad is its prophet, to offer a prayer and to express mercy, to practice fasting in ninth month of Ramadan, and to visit the divine house in Meka, known as pilgrimage and represents the symbolical quest of the followers for the holly trail;

- **Al-Ihsan**, meaning the purity of faith, and is described to believe in deity as it’s stands visible right before the eyes, and if one can’t see the deity to be certain on divine presence in every action.

During the first centuries Islam has a rapid expansion that was followed by intellectual glaze, high crank was to be presented by devoted Muslims, intellectuals that gave special effort towards systematization and codifications of what will be come to be a new mega religion. Like so, this group of new teachers – *Ulama* begins to specialize in certain areas that are of practical importance for everyday life of the followers as in particular that is the case with the standardization and memorization of the Holly Quran, widespread studding of the Arabic language and grammar, which therefore contributed in exact interpretation and recitation of the
Holly Quran and Holly Scripts – Hadith. In such manner, all of that effort helped in creation of widespread, rather orthodox belief system that was contrasting the heterogeneous and heretical groups and this system in major contributed for codification of primordial, rather basic way of Islamic daily life, known as Islamic jurisprudence or Al-Figh. What followed in terms of further effort was anchored on early attempts for standardization of Holly Quran, attempts to establish the teaching, and collections of eligible texts and writings of Hadith. In short, establishing of specific orthopraxy – Al-Islam and specific orthodoxy – Al-Iman have occupied the attention of majority religious scholars of the time.

While sensing the possible danger in this tendentious and exclusive religious scope of needs and demands that in a way has pointing toward surrounding settlements, certain Muslims have undertaken actions in clarification and codifications of the basic teaching, actions that in time became a complementary discipline directing the inner life of the followers or Al-Ihsan, a discipline that was rooted inside Holly Quran, particularly in prophet customary and his closest followers. Certain scholars will name this discipline as Afterlife discipline. This discipline included one practically action-directed or pragmatically knowledge that incorporated a highly ethical aspect and was focused toward purification of the heart, but also and theoretical dimension that represented the mystical part of the teaching. Acknowledging the current situation, where the need of pragmatically directed jurisprudence was essential in supporting for this new religion, these scholars of the inner way shared the opinion how manifest elements of this teaching were insufficient and in doing so they pointed the attention towards exploration of attitudes, intentions and mental conditions that are crucial for purification of the hearts and their direction for at some point starved, divine way. Like so, the sphere in which these doctors of afterlife were exercising their authority and their judgment was the invisible dimension of the heart, a rather subtle area that is out of physical perception and yet touchable for spiritual experience.

In time certain leaders will achieve to become a perfect scholars and practitioners of this discipline. Until the twelfth century there were recognizable a certain groups in which spiritual core were Sufi aspects. Each of those groups was to be guided and represented by a grand leader or Sheikh followed with a personal appointed represent or Caliph for each generation. Spiritual eligibility of each Sufi order was proven with the existence of the uninterrupted line of spiritual teachings and formations that were transferred from one generation to another, carrying their beginnings all the way back to the time of the prophet and from the prophet Muhammad himself.

Sufism, in such manner has spread not just theologically but also as a social movement that with each one group of followers was affecting substantial mass of people. With further enlargement of the followers, these leaders have gained with tremendous amount of power and authority, as in spiritual manner but also as physical control of the masses. These leaders was given the thrust and respect of the thousands of people, ten thousands of followers were in their hands and each one has given the vow of divine obey, which was represented by the prophet whom represents the Sheikh that’s in a way represented by the Caliph.

Sufism that helped spreading the Islam in Central and Eastern Asia, South-East Asian archipelago, Indian subcontinent and sub-Saharan Africa was social and spiritual power. Thus, the legacy was the Islam: religion that preached with cultural sensitivity, religion that promoted tolerance, inter-religion cooperation and has never traded the inner life dimension and spiritual core for any kind of sole political activism (Karamustafa, 2007: 47).

Middle age Islam spiritualists built the Sufi orders mostly to help the followers in achieving the highest level of efficiency during their travel and quest for the kingdom of what is invisible. Having in mind the importance of qualified leadership in this quest, the great Muslim mystic and writer, Rumi will point that walking the road without a guidance one will need a hounded of years for a two days journey to be completed (Baran, 2004: 6).
In essence, this journey is a struggle – Jihad against all the human weaknesses. Quran speaks about human souls, Nafs that are under the command of evil as one of those weaknesses. This struggle continues thought eternity of life just like soul remains with the body until death. That is the case also with those that have achieved the highest level of proficiency. That struggle isn’t directed towards human soul but against all evil habits. In constant following of those efforts, Sufis undertake the speech of the prophet as their base point, especially the speech where Muhammad qualifies the human soul as men’s dangerous enemy.

This struggle is a medium that Sufis are using to reach the highest level of proficiency which they are calling a perfect man or al-Insān al-Kāmil (as it was mentioned above, the inner proficiency was one of four most important aspects of the faith for which prophet Muhammad was asked). Here though, spiritual tradition of Sufism is represented by three different levels of dedication:

- Ilm-ul-yaqeen, competence through learning;
- Ayn-ul-yaqeen, competence through contemplation and visualization;
- Haqq-ul-yaqeen, competence through experience.

The last one is considered to be the highest form and is also described as a divine knowledge that couldn’t be achieved by all Sufis but a thing that all Sufis are headed towards.

Ali, the fourth caliph and prophet’s brother in law gives a substantial personal example for this level of faith. Ali would say: “If the veil of unseen gets opened, the strength of my faith will not increase” (Baran, 2004: 6). In other words said, his faith was so powerful that even the divine image will not make it stronger. This is the reason why Ali is considered as a Sultan: ultimate spiritual leader of all Sufis.

Since the figure of Ali is of significant importance for Sunni as well as for Shia Muslims, it is very important that this significance could be used as a bridge of unity between those two traditions. Sufis in Sunni tradition are paying a huge importance considering the figure of Ali. In this manner, Sufis could promote dialog among Shia and Sunni – traditions that are politically opposed and yet theologially identical.

As a primary source of Sufi are considered the holy Quran and Hadith. Nevertheless, there are similarities that suggest the closeness with Judeo-Christian tradition. Later Sufi tradition has elements as a consequential influence of close examples of converted Judeo and Christian spiritualists but also by wide cultural interaction that will continue throughout seventh century and also during the period of Crusade wars. As a result of this wide interaction a lot of Sufis consider Jesus (Isa) as a prophet, and took its example as important spiritual example. There are also Sufis who continued the tradition of celibacy in a way as continuity of Jesus celibacy. Nevertheless, besides the fact that Muslim were interacting with Christian and Judeo mystics and spiritualists, and they were also giving a high respect in this manner, what is considered as a main source of Sufism are the holy Quran and the holy writings, Hadith.

Most of the Sufis remained faithful for basic teachings in Islam but these contemporary processes of social development exposed the new challenges in their life. As for example, Turkey has left the Sufis, rather dramatically in first decades of 20th century and there are still Sufi orders who try to adapt to the modern life challenges. The Naqshbandis have kept their popularity in political also cultural life in Turkey. Other Sufi orders have their newspapers, journals and various financial institutions.

There are some religious oriented civil movements, technically not considered as Sufi but their ordinary traditions incorporate Sufi elements as a part of their spiritual life. In this manner, it’s to be mentioned the followers of Fethullah Gulen. This movement is promoting a rather conventional, version positioned between modern life and Islam spirituality. This
movement has a structural differences compared to other Sufi orders, especially in its lese fer internal structure with lack of hierarchy. Nearly the same as other Sufi orders, this movement has kept the dimension of heart in its teachings. Simply putted, this movement is in quest for universal balance. The founder of this movement is not to be considered as a Sheik or a leader of Sufi order but he is the author on many writings that are pointing toward Sufism. In other words, this could be understood as a new form of Sufism, namely neosufism (Faghiory, 2003: 28).

Considering the future, the traditional way of Sufism will reconstruct itself according new and modern demands. As a spiritual form of Islam, it is certain that Sufism will have prosperity, although less potent and latent. That explains how neosufism will attract certain publicity making its moves through spiritual aspects in social, political and economical dimension.

Throughout the history of there were visible tensions between Sufi and Islam scholars considering whether the Sufism is or isn’t founded in holly Quran and Hadith. These currents are divided in two groups:

- Those who reject Sufism as a Islam related;
- Those who reject Sufism in aspects of modernity.

First group correlates Sufism as a sort of quasi-religious innovation directed against Islam and its teachings, and the second claims that Sufism is a loosely beneficial as a popular religious view, simply putted as a form of pacifism that resulted with continuous backward of Muslim society in contemporary era of science and technology.

As a core base in this tendency appears to be the fact that most prominent religious leaders have their interests inclined towards Sharia law, and the thing about Sufi is they highly respected the Haqiqa – the mystical truth. Islamic scholars seek for obedience for Sharia from Sufis. Nevertheless, significant number of Sufis saw the codex as a rather irrelevant and pointless, heading their interest for the rational aspect of Islam that was described in the Holly Quran. Sufis believed that the holly scripts – Hadith were encouraging the Muslims for rational and critical approach in their quest for the meaning of holly creation. Some Muslim scholars followed this way directed by the holly scripts. Likely, Islamic jurisprudence and most of the Islamic thought were produced as a result of such academic efforts.

Today this tension is following a rather extreme path as a complex struggle between Wahhabism and Sufism.

This new ideology, in a common manner called Wahhabism – today is occasionally referred as Salafism, was explained as a new form of purification of the Muslim praxis around the world, purification from the Sufi influence mostly but also from interferences of other religious beliefs mainly originating from the West. This new ideology locates the failure in its activities as a result of corruption of the faith. This corruption is based with the attitude that Muslims are very permeable considering new cultural trends, referring the modern social currents that are influencing and penetrating the Islam. As a consequence of such reality, these people have made themselves worthy for God’s wrath.

Sudden success of this political fundamentalism could be explained with possibility of uniting the common cause capable to confront the West. The solution was relaying their activities on Holly Quran. Aiming to exploit the Holly Scripts – Hadith, a maneuver has been made to redefine the Islamic law based on literally translations, literally and sole implementation of written

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1 Salafi movement is often erratically described and used as a synonym for Wahhabi movement, but Salafs are considering this comparison as rather humiliating – as stated by Roy (1998). As a distinctive quality compared to Wahhabis, the Salafi movement is a group of highly educated and puritanical Islamic activists.
religious traditions were product of social situation during past centuries. Speaking of which, a common complex situation that overwhelms the common reader has arose: the Holly Scripts are explaining about ancient times, time when the Prophet walks the Earth, they do incorporate plenty of practical life solutions that are logical for the time when they were made and find their sense back in the days described as a Formative period of Islam religion. This solution has its success. Nevertheless people didn’t realize what Wahhabist did was a sole reinterpretation of pragmatically theological and jurisprudential solutions that were there for years and centuries ago and mainly made for certain time with a certain social and cultural situation in the history. What was here done by Wahhabists was a solemn import of historical praxis in a totally remote in time societies, in contemporary social and cultural context. This situation had appearance of an effort made to perform a sort of faith purification.

The process of globalization in all its complexity is active on the world scene from the second half of 20th century and its effects are manifesting in virtually every aspect of human life, have brought the discourse: considering the relevancy of many practical questions directed towards foreign policy, closer to national security and international relations. In this manner there are a few things to be underlined.

In Christian Europe there was an early days attempt to be understood a thing or two about Islam, for classical Arab literature etc. This attempt can be traced earlier at the time of the high middle century and is based on rather solid, more practical observances on the whole thing here. Nevertheless, Islam warlords have attacking Europe, and Europeans were sensing that something must be done. Islamic studies have continued in this manner were not stopped with the fall of the threat. After the 16th and 17th century till and on, there were departments that were studding the Arab culture as a part of European universities. First department of such kind in France was established at the beginning of the 16th century. First military invasion of France inside Arab world was in Egypt at the end of 18th century. Important thing is that French men were studding the Arab language and departments of such kind were established as a result of considering the Arab language as biblical language, a classical language together with Latin, Greek and Hebrew. What was missing here, were the studies, considering Turk and Persian language and culture. As main reason for this were university studies: they weren’t upholding in these languages. Studding Islam was to be continued in many attempts for its understanding, an approach what we now recognize as orientalism.

But all of that in a way didn’t correspond with West. Pointing a different aspect, there can be found a total lack of interest considering this subject within European perspective until the moment when attention has arose following the imperial conquests and race for territorial and social domination. While European orientalists were studding classical Arab language and closely studding the Holly Quran, the intellectual base of the Middle East that was occupied with European languages was only concentrated toward contemporary issues. For example there was a substantial literature for the period of 18th and 19th century published by distinguished authors, European Christians and Jews, concerning the Islamic law and theology. What is a rarity is to find a certain comprehensive study of Christian doctrinal theology made by a Muslim author. It just seems like there’s no particular interest for making such effort. Simplified, we are talking here about difference in perception.

Modern times are speaking the global tolerance; we also sense thing or two for legendary Spanish Islamic tolerance from the Middle Age. This correlates that tolerance is in essence a particularly intolerant ideal.

In rather simple understanding, one could defy tolerance as a particular allowness on part but not all of the rights that are enjoyed until certain rules are being followed. This looks like a fair definition of tolerance according to European practice but also in other parts of the world. Obviously it’s a lot better than intolerance. If there could be made a comparison between Ottoman
Empire and these days Europe, or modern West, all the odds considering tolerance are on the Ottoman side. Word is, Jews had a shelter inside the Empire, or in other Muslim societies around Northern Africa. In fact that was a stratified citizenship, anyway more than nothing.

What is obvious, Sufism is a concept that is acting as a social power that in first place connects the people, affecting the interpersonal relations. Acting as a bridge among other, different nations and cultures, gives explanation about its success in every part of the world. Becoming leaders of nation is not a Sufi objective, but to become society builders. Sufi harnesses themselves with other people from certain society thus learning their certain cultural traits. They do promote communication among people and this was especially notable when traveling was not a visa restricted. Considering Sufi social actions, we can trace in many societies the beginnings of interracial marriages originating from Sufi ethical aspects.

The holly writings – Hadith are teaching to have faith in the prophets and to challenge ourselves in making pleasant and trustfully relations with all creations in this world because behind every creation there is divine purpose. These actions include Jews and Christians respectively: *Don’t disappoint them because if you do, social problems will multiply till eternity* (Baran, 2004: 19). What Quran teaches and that resembles one of the five pillars of Islam is to worship divinity as they see it and if they don’t see it for sure sees them. This could be understand with a little touch of mysticism, meaning that if supernatural is out of human perception, what is visible are its signs.

Sufi has a rather different way in perceiving and understanding on these things: If one doesn’t see himself (ego-centrically), if one relocates its desires in absence, then he will be able to perceive divinity. Furthermore, for sure it will be perceived divinity in each and every individual – it must be seen because what Sufi teaches is to recognize every single one thing as a consequence of a divine effort. This is the aspect that keeps Sufi untouchable considering what would be ethically inappropriate behavior.

In other words, Sufis doesn’t need to spread their heart’s love with any means of weapon. Sufis doesn’t have any armies and in their relations they are using spiritual means. Namely, Sufis have attacked thousands of followers with their tradition in Central Asia, Indonesia, South-East Asia, Turkey and Europe.

Today this is not the praxis mainly because Islam is closely identified with nationalism. In the beginning of the 20th century during popular uprisings against European colonization in Muslim world, Muslim intellectuals were headed towards Quran implication in a way that will attract a higher level of support worldwide. Following such actions Sufi teachings were completely thrown in shadow forgotten by daylight of the period. As a main examination for such actions was continuity of the religious struggle with the West. This Wahhabi resistance, this movement in the end will claim the right to represent the Muslim world.

Wahhabism has a central position inside Islam religion, maybe as important as a main tradition in certain time, and compared with Christianity is similar to Ku Klux clan in USA. Major difference between these two religious groups is in circumstances that affected the Wahhabis and luckily as praxis didn’t happened with Christian world: the change in the house of Saud and local tribal Sheiks in Necc according to Wahhabi doctrine in 18th century, the establishment of the kingdom of Saud in 1920s that incorporated Mecca and Medina, and perhaps the worst of all, the importance of oil as valuable energy source. This meant that all the sudden the Wahhabi monarchy was washed up with fresh oil cash and was in control of two the most holly places in the world for Islam religion, and this meant dominant influence on to the fifth pillar of Islam religion, the pilgrimage.

What is notable are the difficulties that Westerners have with understanding the importance of pilgrimage for Muslims, considering that there’s no exact similarity in Christianity
and western history. Well it’s understandable that Christians do have pilgrimage as a ritual praxis but these rituals are mostly individual quests that are made in individually selected moments and mostly for individual purposes.

On the other hand, Muslim pilgrimage was and still is a well organized group activity that has a strict time – period of each year for it to be performed thus attracting followers, believers, Muslims from every corner in the world at one and the same place. Pilgrimage created a certain level of communication within Muslim world that has no adequate parallel inside Christian world, that will induce the same social transmission effect in this numerous homogeneity population, at least till mass media era took its grip. Each year Muslim believers come and took part in common ceremonies and naturally exchange knowledgeable information. This is what we call interpersonal communication within Muslim world and through this custom of pilgrimage which importance is a bit difficult to estimate when knowing that its effect has a merchant value. And when the house of Saud took over the control of the pilgrimage, the Wahhabi influence arose. It would be just enough to add the oil cash income in this situation to understand the outcome: transformation in to world power country of what otherwise would be a mind sick sect on the edges of a marginalized country.

Following the conclusions, the story of one Chinese Muslim that was caught in a temporary visit of Indonesia and in discussion considering the Chinese religious policy in the time when government activities were headed towards Islamic population, he explained that in fact Chinese authorities were took an extreme actions in closing down all Wahhabi mosques in China. On the question to give a clarify on which group he belongs, man answered that he is a Sufi from Uigur, so he made a clear statement that Chinese authorities didn’t had any issues what so ever with Sufi groups until they stay clear off Chinese governmental policy. Here’s his statement (Baran, 2004: 20):

“The only problem that we encounter today in China is the one with the pilgrimage. In early days people go in thousands in Saudi Arabia and all the pilgrimages were encountered at Jeddah by the Wahhabist and they were giving the pilgrimages various literature brochures. All the sudden pilgrimages took their path in direction of Wahhabi doctrine, so the came back in China to destroy our temples and shrines, to burn our writings. This is how our thousand years old Muslim civilization becomes ruined by Wahhabist”.

If Wahhabi movement can penetrate such enclosed Chinese country we can only imagine the situation with western democracies. Prior to 1960s there were no identified at least such major issues with Western world. Then teachers and activists of Wahhabi start to spread this doctrine. Their actions gave the thought that Sufi concept was a rather weird form of practicing Islam religion. What is obvious is that what one can see traveling around the world and that is the reality of Sufism as an integral and crucial aspect of Islam religion as a whole. Namely, Indonesia has fifty millions of Naqshbandi students and twenty million followers of other Sufi brotherhoods; furthermore this number is similar with Malaysia, Brunei and Turkey. Even in Saudi Arabia there are Sufis, and they are being forbidden public practice.

Nevertheless the example with USA gains on relevancy, namely the situation whether the US will give support on Sufis or will they cooperate with Wahhabis. If second to be chosen there is a risk tendency in cooperation with terrorist organization; this isn’t the case with Sufis. The case is very simple at this point: USA must reach and give support to non-Wahhabi Muslims if they wish for success in this struggle. What we’re facing here is a proposition with no shortcoming.
4. Exceptional cultural integrative dimension of Sufism

But Sufism is exotic. Sufi offers something different than just tolerance. The approach toward followers of other religions that is shown in Sufi writings is unmatchable. We’re not talking here just about tolerance; we are talking about acceptance and inclusion in every aspect of social life. There are certain poems of Rumi, or Ibn Arabi written on Persian or Turk language respectively, that are indicate that all religions in essence are the same. All religions have the same goal, same message, same communication, and they all glorify same divinity, but the path they pass achieving their goals is different. Furthermore, this path is different for each one follower individually. That is the idea of centripetal dispersion of the thought and action of every one Sufi brotherhood, on every one Sufi order: the path towards the center or source is never the same for each two individuals and this is to be respected. What is the same is the ultimate goal that is final and eternal. The way Sufis perform their rituals is different and distinctive but divinity is equally present in Churches, Synagogues, and Mosques etc. Seems that this concept of acceptance, as a bit different as solemn tolerance is crucial benefit and it could take significant role with establishing better relations within and between communities not just for today, but in future also. If we look the Ten Commandments for instance, what is notable is that they all mainly refer on relations among people and just small portion is faced toward divine relations. Most of them prescribe the mutual relations among men. Today, in everyday Islamic text within Muslim communities enormous accent is placed on relation among men and divinity. In this manner Sufis again make a balance: Sufis point the scales towards men to men or intrapersonal relations. They are also dedicated in actions among men and not just divine relations. There’s a notable Indian Sufi, Sheikh Saraffadin who gives a rather dramatically explanation on this concept as a whole. Namely, the Sheik speaks of the hard times and insults that are present among men and how they are more serious and having deeper consequences compared with sins against divinity. That means if a person does a sin against God, that person hasn’t done any particular damage so forgiveness may be granted in some divine way, but the damage done to other man, brother or sister could be uncorrectable (Baran, 2004: 19). In such case the question of forgiveness could become really complicated. All this looks like a pretty interesting benefit towards moral debate at a highest level.

5. Conclusion

The quest for integration potentials of Sufism in achieving the highest level in process of Euro integrations, in managing the following processes of cultural integration have brought us to the ultimate message that one school can emit, and that would be ultimate respect for every creation as a result of divine effort, empathy and compassion for ones close to us, our neighbor and fellow citizen, our companion. That would be the basis, the cause and ultimate goal of Sufism. That is the potential of Sufism. That is the message emitted by Sufis embraced with a touch of extraordinariness. This is how we find the centripetal course of the Sufi’s creative thought.

Considering the epistemological approach, there could be nothing more important then knowing yourself, achieving higher conciseness, more human conciseness then what one have yesterday. In present day global situation, this precious message that Sufis deliver towards global chaos was recognized by USA where Sufism has its social peak in popularity. We are not talking here about any sort of wide spreading certain religious beliefs. What we are talking here are intrapersonal relations within global multicultural social situation where everything has its place on the table. This is where US society has sawn the current situation and their advantage is having face directed toward the World. In such manner we should perceive modern society: as a society opened for the World as a whole, and this is the point where Sufis brought the crucial message. Sufis but not as the first who have found the peace inside the heart, but as the ones who widespread flow the open sea of diversities thus teaching in one and universal equality.
Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The author declares no competing interests.

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Table and illustrations

Table 1. Turkey demographical structure: [https://joshuaproject.net/](https://joshuaproject.net/)

| Number of People Groups | People Groups Unreached | Progress Level |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| 68                      | 46 (67.6%)              |                |

| Total Population         | Population in Unreached | Largest Religion  |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| 80,369,000               | 79,766,000 (99.3%)      | Islam (96.3%)     |

| % Professing Christian | % Evangelical | Evangelical Annual Growth Rate |
|------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| 0.6%                   | 0.04%         | 1.2%                           |

(Global Rate = 2.6%)

Image 1. Arabati Baba Teke, Tetovo, Macedonia. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arabati_Baba_Teke,_Tetovo.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arabati_Baba_Teke,_Tetovo.jpg)
Image 2. Dervish Arabat Baba Teke, Tetovo, Macedonia.
https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Arabati_Baba_Teke,_Tetovo.jpg
Creating Shared Value

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Received 2 July 2018 • Revised 24 July 2018 • Accepted 31 July 2018

Abstract

This research investigates how shared value can be created when both public and private organizations collaborate at various fronts. Particular attention is paid on how public-private collaboration would develop through discussions and open communication between government and business so as to contribute to building interest in the strategic development agenda of a state and lead to the adoption of mechanisms that create shared value for government, business, and society. The findings reveal that constructive dialogue and regular discussions could lead to better understanding the priorities of both government and society, to finding common ground for resolving social problems and for adopting a shared agenda through which value is created for all. The lead responsibility rests on government to take initiative for dialogue with business and society, to establish policies that are conducive to business development, and to provide incentives for public-private partnered solutions to public problems. Also, business must shift its classic way of profit-maximization strategy and not view government as merely regulator, but as partner with whom mutually beneficial results can be attained.

Keywords: shared value, public-private collaboration, constructive dialogue, shared agenda, business action for society.

1. Background

Before the second half of the twentieth century, governments and, to a lesser extent, non-profit organizations were regarded largely responsible for solving societal problems. The role of government was more that of regulator and not as much that of provider of public services, safety and security. Changes in the role of government were influenced by neo-liberal and democratic theorists starting with Friedrich (1944) but gradually more intensely with Moore (1995), Bozeman (2002) and others who placed emphasis on the role of government as creator of public value. In that context, the role of non-profit organizations took on different portrayals that centered on collaboration and partnership for value-added outcomes for society.

In line with changes in the public sector, starting in 1950s and 1960s, the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) emerged in the form of corporate philanthropy and referred to “the obligations of businessmen to pursue those politics, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of actions which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of society” (Bowen, 1953: 6). Strategies and programs that private enterprises considered under CSR were rather superficial at times and were primarily directed to increasing their business reputation,
market share and profit. Many viewed CSR as a necessary expense to complement advertising and promotion efforts.

Subsequently, the notion emerged in discussions of corporate culture and values that employees ought to embrace (Schein, 1985; Amsa, 1986; Stubbart, 1988; Chatman & Cha, 2003). The leading definition of “corporate value” was proposed to mean “organizational values [that] make a significant difference in the lives of employees, as well as in ... performance” (Posner et al., 1985). This could be interpreted as an organizational strategy for aligning corporate vision and goals with those of individual performance goals and objectives; for increasing ownership of corporate values by employees; and for increasing productivity and profits. By the turn of the century, the understanding of shared value evolved to establish new meaning as business “policies and operating practices that enhance competitiveness ... while simultaneously advancing the economic and social conditions in the communities in which it operates” (Porter & Kramer, 2011: 66). This definition is broader than CSR in that it incorporates business and society interactions and adoption of shared agenda for action.

This study attempts to integrate “public value” and “shared value” through linkages among government, business and society. Particularly, it answers the question of how shared value is created at the state level when public and private organizations cooperate on various fronts. Drawing on the cooperative models and processes relevant to the private sector, how would public-private dialogue and strategic collaboration create “shared value” for government, business, and society? Considering that the theory of “shared value” is progressively taking on more importance, this study attempts to analyze concepts that have benefited government, business and society in order to identify or underscore those factors that are the most influential in fostering development.

2. Creating shared value for growth

The theory of shared value claims that economic values can be created by addressing societal needs thereby creating value for society. Applied to the private sector, addressing the needs of society would lead to business success. Thus, the success of a company and social development are interdependent. When a business operates on the principle of creating shared value, gaps between society and business diminish, and the latter is elevated by society and accepted as a legitimate enterprise. In that process, business takes into account societal needs through a process that creates value or positive impact, which is transferred to or shared with society.

However, in order to create shared value, profit chasers had better think in new ways, restructure internal practices and cooperate across sectors. Considering new ways of doing business, scholars posit that shared value initiatives could transform capitalism and initiate new connections between business and society. Moreover, the theory of shared value is applicable to both developing and developed countries even though particular areas of common interest and mechanisms may vary among countries (Lenssen et al., 2012; Porter & Kramer, 2011; Pol Longo et al., 2005). Along those lines, Porter and Kramer (2011: 7) identify three ways of creating shared value: “Reconceiving products and markets, redefining productivity in the value chain and building supportive industry clusters at the company’s locations.”

As such, the process of creating shared value entails first identifying the kinds of societal needs and problems that exist, government programs that tackle those needs, unmet issues, and potential economic opportunities that could be created through solving those unmet and persistent public needs. When business and government partner to undertake specific actions for solving public problems, this creates new opportunities for business and new value
for society. Thus, positive outcomes created in one sector are transferred to other sectors and to the broader public (Porter & Kramer, 2011).

Moreover, increasing the speed of development requires public and private sectors to work together within a strategic partnership framework set to implement shared value initiatives in support of the state development agenda. This would place the creation of shared value at the center of development generating collaboration around common goals and reducing social inequalities in health, education and other public services. Within an environment of collaboration in support of shared public goals, businesses continue to strive for profits, but also take responsibility for solving societal problems along with government or partially shouldering the role of government to create public value. This would enable governments to reach development goals more rapidly provided state budgetary resources are allocated for achieving partnered targets and shared value strategies (Pol Longo et al., 2005).

Moreover, when governments adopt policy instruments or regulatory mechanisms that inspire and encourage private entrepreneurs to incorporate the principle of shared value into core business strategies, value-producing trade-offs among social objectives and economic gains are made possible. Thus, the phenomenon of creating economic value by addressing societal needs becomes more feasible and leads to faster development (Porter & Kramer, 2011). In this regard, Prato (2013) argues that when lead actors in the public and private sectors unite forces and work towards mutually beneficial solutions, they serve as models for other businesses to also align their business goals with public needs. Moreover, he identifies a number of factors that contribute to productive public-private partnerships, two of which are given added importance: establishing a shared agenda and well-defined incentives for all partnered sides. Thus, from the perspective of the private sector, resolving public issues should not be viewed as doing philanthropy, but as business opportunity. In this context, Borgonovi et al. (2011) argue that since government alone does not have enough resources to solve all societal needs, working closely with business is significant to creating mutual benefits for both government and society.

3. Establishing government-business dialogue

For the business sector, adopting the principle of shared value is a creative approach for finding new business prospects and helping the government cope with social issues that hinder development. There is a viewpoint that when the private sector does not recognize that business achievements are closely correlated with social results, it fails to achieve long-term positive outcomes (Porter et al., 2011). But who is to guide private enterprises to view social issues as new business opportunities?

Longo et al. (2005) argue that government should contribute to the process of creating shared value and boost the social impact generated by the business sector. For this purpose, government should engage businesses in constructive dialogue about the possible ways in which companies could help the government to achieve development goals while advancing their own business interests. Moreover, not only governments, but also non-governmental, multilateral and community service organizations could bring the private sector into regular discussions on the most important social issues and jointly find possible approaches to resolving or preventing them.

When governments fail to promote investments that support business development, they lose such important instruments as the power of influence on the business sector. Only by engaging the private sector into productive dialogue it becomes possible to create an environment where the business sector takes a path of looking into social issues as attractive business opportunities. Moreover, only by diagnosing social problems in productive dialogue it
becomes possible to accelerate the process of achieving state strategic goals and amplifying social change through the participation of business.

Establishing constructive dialogue serves as catalyst for creating public-private partnerships. As Herzberg and Wright (2005) argue, only when the public sector understands how the private sector works and what it needs, it will be able to establish policies that benefit both. In turn, as the private sector becomes better aware of the priorities of government and engages as partner in working toward state priorities, it will then be ready to support government in achieving its goals. Continued dialogue and discussion between public and private facilitate the process of finding alternative policy solutions but also lead to a higher probability of success. Thus, an environment of mutual support, trust and consideration between public and private stimulates the implementation of policies and programs that create shared value.

4. Research design and methodology

The study uses a qualitative methodology with an explanatory research design aimed at analyzing discourse to map out the most relevant strategies and arrangements for creating shared value. Inductive reasoning is used to draw a model from dominant patterns found in the collected data. The study uses in-depth interviews with select leaders in the public and private sectors in the Republic of Armenia to measure the level of interest in and compassion for collaboration, as well as to understand the level of readiness for making a sustainable paradigm shift in this realm. The questions steering the data collection relate to how shared value is created and how public-private collaboration contributes to shared value creation. The qualitative approach has made possible the collection of rich sets of data from the interviews affording an understanding of the different positions on the concept of “shared value”.

Purposive sampling was used in selecting the interviewees to allow for maximum variation of data collected. Twelve (12) interviews were conducted in February-April 2018 with key actors from both public and private sectors. The interviewees included officials from the RA Ministry of Economic Development and Investments, particularly with heads of units responsible for tourism development and investment policy; the Centre of Strategic Initiatives of Armenia; top management of the RA Ministry of Health; representatives of leading companies in telecommunication, banking, insurance, dairy and wine companies; and subject matter experts. The interviewees focused on their respective sectors and sub-sectors, the current state of development and how they envision public-private collaboration.

As mentioned earlier, the study uses inductive analysis to draw a model that depicts mechanisms for creating shared value as opined by the interviewees. It is proposed that building high levels of social capital leads to dynamic collaboration between government and private sector entities. The study addresses how shared value is created and how public-private collaboration contributes to the dynamic progression of that effort. It is also assumed that establishing persistent working relations between government and business leads to adopting a shared agenda and value platform thereby creating shared value for all.

5. Data analysis and discussion

5.1 Analysis of in-depth interviews

The analysis of interviews (n=12) focused on identifying the most critical building blocks required for realizing “shared value” to produce the best outcomes for business and society. In the first instance, the interviews explored the prerequisites of public-private
collaboration and moved on to understand the level of prevalent openness among public and private organizations for making the necessary paradigm shift in this domain.

The dominant theme in the interviews was that government and business should first identify common interests and potential platforms that would bring them together to engage in collaborative decision-making to achieve mutually beneficial solutions. The more the sectors come together to reach a shared understanding of public problems, the more the chances of adopting collaborative approaches to solving those problems through actions that benefit all parties and deliver added value to society. In that context, one interviewee explained that “if government and business were able to find common interests in solving public problems, mutual benefits would be created for all – government, business and society.”

Many interviewees (6/12) are of the opinion that productive and mutually beneficial working relations between government and business start with instituting constructive dialogue between them. In order to engage in cooperative arrangements, private enterprise should feel that it is an integral participant in the process of solving public problems. As was articulated by one interviewee, “… in order to establish focused working relations between government and business, it is necessary to hold regular discussions on mutual concerns and openly deliberating public needs.” Only by coming together and discussing issues would political actors and entrepreneurs gain a better understanding of public needs and grasp their relative criticality.

Moreover, in the absence of constructive dialogue the gap between state agenda and business interests widens, as maintained by several interviewees. One specifically argued that “frequently business does not even understand how government works and in what strategic direction it is going.” The same also is true for the other. In most cases government is unaware of the mindset and issues prevalent in the private sector and, conversely, business does not have a grasp of critical public issues so as to be able to take action in mutually beneficial ways that create shared value.

Moreover, four government representatives interviewed stated that if government gets a handle on the major concerns of private enterprise it will be able to develop policies conducive to growth. As mentioned by one interviewee, “... if the private sector were to make more effort in presenting and explaining to government the major issues that they face, we would be in a better position to draft policies that are favorable to growing private enterprise in Armenia.” Through regular dialogue, common private and public interests and concerns would be identified thereby establishing top priority areas for all regardless of the diversity of issues and preferred solutions. By adopting a shared value platform, public and private sectors could together reach workable solutions on critical issues that would result in benefits for all.

Another factor emphasized by the interviewees from private enterprise was the relatively high degree of readiness to engage with government in collaborative arrangements provided their business position is not undermined. As one interviewee articulated, “many businesses would be readily motivated to cooperate with government and other public agencies provided such cooperation is based on just grounds and fair principles. Also, the important condition here is that the solution fundamentally aims at realizing shared goals and is derived from constructive and sustained dialogue among various businesses from different sub-sectors, as well as between the private sector and government.” This suggests that the private sector would undertake solving social issues when they see in it business gain, such as increase in market share, product advantage and satisfaction, or economic profit. According to one respondent, “the overarching purpose of any business enterprise is to maximize profit. Businesses usually pursue filling public demand for goods and services such that they increase satisfaction thereby retaining or increasing market share. Aside from that, businesses would be interested in solving social problems provided action in that regard does not create barriers to realizing their business strategies and fulfilling their planned targets. More, this would
enable connecting the needs of society with business success.” In contrast, philanthropy would not create sustained business advantage.

Several respondents (4/12) from the public sector also raised the need for not looking to government as simply a source of financing or subsidy for achieving mutually beneficial solutions. One interviewee stated that “… for a long time the business sector has looked at government as purely a resource from which to draw technical or financial assistance. This mindset should be changed. The private sector should consider projects that consider working with the public sector toward achieving shared goals instead of consistently looking for monetary or other types of assistance from government to benefit their business.” It is possible, they claim, to establish effective working arrangements between government and the private sector when the latter begins focusing on public needs and preferences aside from focusing on profit-making priorities and, together with government, it aims at generating public value for society.

The factor of identifying common interests and platforms was mentioned most frequently by the interviewees from both public and private sectors. The most important requirement for engaging in cooperative agreements and connecting the needs of society for business success is identifying common interests and platforms. Only when business and government find common interests, they will be able to establish focused working interrelations and adopt a shared agenda for achieving mutually beneficial outcomes. As elaborated by one interviewee, “each approach directed to establishing effective or constructive cooperation usually moves toward finding win-win interests. … And that is good! Similarly, at the state level, identifying and nurturing shared interests and platforms is the most important factor for establishing focused working relations between government and business.” The idea behind this argument is that the main purpose of business is to derive as much revenue and profit as possible, whereas the main purpose of the public sector is to solve as many social problems as possible. Government has the added mandate to deliver public goods and services efficiently, effectively, and equitably. That is why only in those cases when government and business are able to hold constructive dialogue and find mutually beneficial solutions they will be able to work together toward achieving shared value.

Further, the issue of maintaining focus on public priorities, critical needs and preferences was pointed out by all the interviewees representing government. They emphasized that when discussing common concerns with the private sector, there should be added focus on public preferences. After all, no less than the public sector, the business sector also should make every effort to meet public demand, focusing on preferences vis-à-vis products. When the private sector keeps all that in mind and also collaborates with government to keep abreast of strategic public priorities, the country is able to achieve win-win results. In line with this argument, several interviewees (5/12) indicated that government should be in a position to identify and/or determine the strategic priorities of the public and assume a leading role in linking the needs of society for business success.

As one interviewee articulated,

“Governments should identify the areas that would stimulate business interests while presenting a relevant action point in the government’s strategic agenda. Based on that, government should take initiative in getting the attention of businesses onto those public issues that need most attention and/or inviting businesses from respective industries or sectors for dialogue on those issues.”

Another interviewee added,

“The only way of motivating the private sector to take interest in public needs and take part in delivering optimal solutions is to motivate businesses to look to social issues from an innovative standpoint. This will not only lead to solving social
issues but also will push development forward and make the private sector more robust.”

However, in order to be able to find appealing prospects for solving social problems with a business perspective, the specific problems should be better understood by all, but especially by business; this suggests that the government should assume a leading role in connecting the pressing or more important social problems with business. In that regard, government should partner with the private sector in defining unmet public issues to jointly define and analyze the level of criticality of those problems making information transparent to both sectors and to the public at large. The transparency of the process is critical to preclude or dismiss any impression or perception of corruption, including decisions related to possible solutions and inclusion of such actions in the national development agenda and strategic plan. The idea in support of this argument is that when businesses have a clear understanding of the unattended social problems and are apprised of the segments of society affected by those problems, they would be in a better position to propose innovative solutions that also fall within their business strategies.

Furthermore, government should develop and promote policies conducive to business development that will simultaneously connect the needs of society for business success. After all, this also would help grow the private sector, especially the small and medium-size enterprises, which in turn would help develop the economy and increase the middle class (elements very crucial for moving developing countries forward). As one of the interviewees mentioned “the government should set up a clear strategy that will unify the interests of business, government and society.” In the same line of thought another interviewee brought up that “government should identify the most critical public goods and avail businesses with such vital information that are bound to stimulate new interest in the private sector and bring together government and business to work together for achieving the state development agenda.” Another interviewee added that

“The single most essential element in government-business collaboration leading to development lies in establishing focused working relations between government and business from relevant respective domains. Only by engaging in constructive discussion and sustained dialogue would it be possible to reach agreement that produces collaborative arrangements between government and business for solving public problems.”

Concerning the critical success factor of promoting policies that are conducive to business development, four interviewees (4/12) emphasized that government has the principal responsibility for creating shared value. In that context, when developing policies, rules and regulations, government should take into account the major issues prevalent in the business sector and look to alternative solutions to those issues while simultaneously attracting businesses to collaborate in addressing public needs.

Another factor that was emphasized by three interviewees (3/12), all three being from the private sector, was the key reason that keeps the private sector interested but not engaged in solving social issues is driven by their own operational budgets and revenue targets. Although the business sector may project additional revenues from solving a specific social issue, they often do not commit because of the business risks involved. If the business sector were to have confidence in government support, it would work more seriously with the government to achieve mutually beneficial solutions.
6. Findings and conclusion

The discourse analysis of and findings from the in-depth interviews afforded the information necessary to construct a model of how shared values are or can be created. The collected data helped validate the assumptions embedded in the theory of Creating Shared Value according to which economic values are created by addressing societal needs thereby creating value for society (Porter & Kramer, 2011). The analysis also showed that the critical element necessary for creating shared value at the state level is the identification of common interests and platforms and adopting a shared agenda. This finding is identical with the argument brought by Longo et al. (2005), which states that for optimal results in development, public and private sectors should strive to work together in order to achieve mutually beneficial solutions.

Likewise, the data analysis revealed that establishing constructive dialogue between government and private enterprise is critically important for identifying a common platform and interest that leads to adopting a shared agenda. This will lead to establishing focused working relations between public and private sectors and to creating shared value while promoting the process of development throughout the country. This finding is supported by the argument by Borgonovi et al. (2011), which claims that government alone does not have enough resources to solve all societal needs.

Moreover, the analysis of interviews disclosed the fact that solving social issues with an innovative business perspective is one way of achieving mutually beneficial solutions for government, business and society. This finding corresponds to the viewpoint discussed in the literature according to which solving social issues from a business perspective is a way of addressing societal needs in a participatory manner, such that the positive impact created by business is transferred to society.

The interviews revealed that in order to be able to achieve mutually beneficial solutions there is a need to establish focused and strategy-driven working relations between government and private business. When public and private sectors have common interests they would be more interested in working together in order to achieve mutually beneficial solutions. However, in order to establish focused working relations between government and business, both should come together in constructive dialogue centered on the purpose of resolving public problems or unmet needs. Moreover, through sustained dialogue common indicators are created for understanding social problems and for adopting an agenda that creates value for all.

In addition, the study showed that at the current stage of Armenia’s development, the lead role still rests on the government to create opportunities for connecting business and society while establishing policies that are conducive to private sector growth. However, congruent to the argument brought by Porter and Kramer (2011), the analysis revealed that business has to shift its classic way of thinking restructuring its internal policies and not looking to government as merely a regulator, or a source of financing and subsidies, but as a partner with whom mutually beneficial goals can be realized.
No doubt, the only possible way for achieving development goals for a country with limited human and social capital requires joining forces and putting to optimal use the strengths of both public and private sectors. Working closely and strategically, government and business would be able to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, which will improve the quality of life while advancing the national development agenda. Such mechanisms hold promise for economic growth and sustained development. As argued by Longo et al. (2005), public and private sectors should work together toward achieving shared goals and moving forward the national development agenda.

Thus, this research confirmed the assumptions stated in the theory of shared value put forth by Porter and Kramer (2011), according to which economic values are created by addressing societal needs thereby creating value for society. Sustained dialogue between government and business was found to be a prerequisite to adopting a shared development agenda. As the proposed model shows, only through sustained dialogue and discussions around the state development agenda can priority public needs be resolved through partnered arrangements between government and business operating in relevant domains. As stated by Herzberg and Wright (2005), continued dialogue and discussion would not only facilitate the process of finding mutual platforms and strategies for economic development, they also would make possible the successful implementation of policies because of the transformed perception by the private sector of being a part of policy decision-making. Thus, an environment of mutual support, trust and reciprocal consideration between public and private sectors makes possible the implementation of policies and achievement of developmental goals. Above all, mutual trust between government and business transcends all other priorities in this domain as much as in others. Moreover, as indicated by Borgonovi et al. (2011) in the current age of development it is possible to solve social problems and to maintain equilibrium of economic and social benefits only in those cases when government and business have established mutual trust and cooperate on a sustainable basis.

Acknowledgements

This research did not receive any specific grant from funding agencies in the public commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

The authors declare no competing interests.

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