

Danae Bezantakou, Daria Catalui, Rumen Dobrinsky, Vasileios Kitsos,
Andra-Lucia Martinescu, Alik Mitsakos, Nato Mokverashvili,
Samir Murshudov, Najiba Mustafayeva, Cristina Negoiescu, Maria Nicolaouova,
Mirela Oprea, Todor Petrov, Rebecca Pitsika,
Mariana Semenyshyn, Attiq Ur-Rehman, Anna Visvizi

“Empowering Civil Society in the Black Sea region: a tool for Innovative Social Change”



December 2013

The **International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)** was founded in 1998 as a not-for-profit organisation under Greek law. It has since fulfilled a dual function: on the one hand, it is an independent research and training institution focusing on the Black Sea region. On the other hand, it is a related body of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) and in this capacity serves as its acknowledged think-tank. Thus the ICBSS is a uniquely positioned independent expert on the Black Sea area and its regional cooperation dynamics. **Moving towards a "Green Black Sea" is our new perspective**, one characterised by a focus on development, culture, as well as economic and social prosperity, one that goes beyond the traditional approach and makes the **concept of Sustainable Economic Development, Energy, Regional Governance and Stability our driving force**. Thus, the environmental dimension runs through all of our actions and aims.

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In its effort to stimulate open and engaged debate, the ICBSS also welcomes enquiries and contributions from its readers under icbss@icbss.org.

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International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS)

4 Xenophontos Str.

10557 Athens

Greece

Tel: +30 210 324 2321

Fax: +30 210 324 2244

Email: **icbss@icbss.org**

Website: www.icbss.org

Director General: Dr. Zefi Dimadama

Managing Editor: Athina Korovesi

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Greece, December 2013

ISSN 1790-8396

ISBN

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Preface

The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) launched the first International Black Sea Symposium in 2008, in the context of an ever more pressing **need for multilateral and transnational cooperation in the wider Black Sea region**. Ever since, the Symposium has grown and developed aiming to promote dialogue, understanding and cooperation in the wider Black Sea region. Over the years, it became clear that part of the region's future will be driven by trends and **developments in the areas of sustainable development, good governance, innovation, science and technology**.

In 2013, the 6th ICBSS International Black Sea Symposium on “**Empowering Civil Society in the Black Sea region: a tool for Innovative Social Change**” addressed the current developments in economy and society that demand the in-depth study of the modern reality and the formulation of strategic proposals, and introduced a new dimension, **civil society**, as key element to economic and social development.

In this respect, the enhancement of social dialogue, consultation and consensus seems imperative. European Institutions, such as the European Economic and Social Committee, along with its national councils, seek to build a **strong connection between civil society and EU bodies**, aiming at institutionalising their cooperation and strengthening governance procedures.

In the words of ICBSS' **special guest and keynote speaker, Mr. Henri Malosse, President of the European Economic and Social Committee**, it is necessary to “*create better conditions for the next generation; a promising future that will come from the bottom, from the people, civil society and networks*”. Highlighting the motto of his Presidency in the EESC, “*a wind of change*”, Mr. Malosse underlined the importance of integration within the EU, as well as, of further strengthening EU relations with its neighbours as means to cooperation and sustainable development.

The **empowerment of civil society** is a one-way street for the maximization of social benefits and the minimization of any negative impacts from top-down decision-making processes. Through new forms of partnerships, collaborative solutions, sharing of resources and responsibilities, we can strengthen citizens and communities and develop new models of associations and public governance.

The present collective edition of the ICBSS Xenophon series is comprised of innovative ideas, good practices, challenges and perspectives of social innovation, as they were presented at the 6th International Black Sea Symposium.

To this end, concluding, I would like to thank each and everyone for their significant contribution to the successful outcome of the 6th International Symposium. I hope that this edition will serve as a first step towards closer cooperation and greater achievements for the people of the Black Sea region.

Dr. Zefi Dimadama, ICBSS Director General

Athens, December 2013

Chapter 1

Empowering women entrepreneurship in the Black Sea Region

Danae Bezantakou (Greece), Managing Director NAVIGATOR SHIPPING CONSULTANTS LTD & President iforU-Greek Mentoring Network

Women can be leaders like men, only if we believe in ourselves and think big. It is hard to be a businesswoman but the only way to predict the future is to create it. And this is what we did. 8 women entrepreneurs created iforU – the first Greek Mentoring Network – which aims at empowering the mentoring and networking opportunities amongst women entrepreneurs. The entrepreneurship does not belong to men or women. A successful entrepreneur can be either a man or woman. However the women do not reach the top positions often due to the fact that in the middle of the career pyramid they are creating families.

Through my professional career I have understood that if you really believe in yourself you can be successful. I am managing director of NAVIGATOR SHIPPING CONSULTANTS LTD (www.navigatorltd.gr) representing exclusively in Greece 40 clients (Ship Agencies, Towing Companies, Fuel/Oil Analysis Company) based in 120 countries. One of my important achievements is the organization of NAVIGATOR CONFERENCE since 2001 which is considered to be one of the biggest shipping events gathering the decision makers of the Shipping Community and speakers from all over the world on an annual basis.

Between years 1996 and 2000 I have worked as a Marketing Director in my family businesses known as KEFI TOURS & CONFERENCES LTD (www.kefitours.gr) in Athens and as Reservations Manager in MATILDA HOTEL (www.matildahotel.gr) in Zakynthos Island.

My latest venture includes the foundation of the GREEK FOOD OBSESSIONS (www.gfo.gr), a Gourmet culinary company providing the Greek and International food market with high quality Greek gourmet products derived from all over Greece. Greek Food Obsessions has been shortlisted in Hellenic Entrepreneurship Award in April 2012 as one of the best 10 projects out of 295. The company was also selected to compete for the European Business Award 2013-14.

In March 2011 I have represented Greece in International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) “WOMEN IN LEADERSHIP” initiated by Hilary Clinton, which took place in USA amongst 100 women from 92 countries. After my return I created a non-profit organization named “iforU - Greek Mentoring Network” (www.iforu.gr).

We are targeted to women that have recently started their business or have had their own business for a while but are ready to take it to the next level.

Women have great ideas and a way of going about things that differentiates them from their male counterparts. When they realize their potential and are encouraged to fulfill it, they can be successful in many ways. Albert Einstein has told: "A woman who follows the crowd will usually go no further than the crowd. The woman who walks alone is likely to find herself in place no one has ever been before". Greek society traditionally has not encouraged its women to go into business; "safer" options have always been promoted over self-employment. Greece's economy needs healthy, innovative, extrovert, humane enterprises and for this, it needs to empower its women. During this very hard financial crisis women's empowerment can help in bringing more positive results into the Companies.

Our vision is to see women in Greece achieve their full potential in business, playing an important part in the new order of things. This is the reason why we present our goals to entrepreneurial exhibitions, universities, schools, non government organizations, national and International companies, international conference/forums/incentives. Because the change of mentality start from the young generation who do not believe in changes and are not willing to fight for their beliefs. The cooperation with relevant government authorities and raise their awareness on the problems of young women entrepreneurs as well as the need for favorable legislation for the development of female entrepreneurship may bring the results we want.

Through our networking events we provide counseling and moral support on female entrepreneurship issues and we approach and inform young women who want to start their own business on female entrepreneurship.

The reinforcement, support, networking and promotion of young women entrepreneurs through research and information, so they can achieve their business goals and the study and research of all issues related to women's entrepreneurship (i.e the establishment of a business, financing, training, information, advice and networking) are among our missions.

Our mentors are seasoned entrepreneurs and educators whose experience and insights are helping the women entrepreneurs to see things in a different light, encouraging them in their every day quest for success. One of our mentors, Rebecca Pistika CEO People for Business and awarded by Stelios Hajioannou Young Entrepreneur of the year 2012 pointed out "As a woman entrepreneur, I am really happy about this project - it has all the prerequisites for great results!".

Our relationship and involvement with social and professional networks on a local and international level allows us to share knowledge and expertise with women entrepreneurs around the globe and to utilize it for the empowerment of young Greek female entrepreneurs.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, more adults over the age of 25 than ever before (30%) have college degrees, with more women earning bachelor's and advanced degrees than men. While women have outnumbered men in college enrollment since the 1980s and undergraduate degrees earned since 1996, 2010 was the first time women earned more advanced degrees than men. This leaves the open question: Why are women so poorly represented in senior executive roles? In comparing successful versus unsuccessful companies, the overall median proportion of female executives is 7.1% and 3.1%,

respectively, demonstrating the value that having more females can potentially bring to a management team. By industry, we identify the median proportion of female executives at successful companies as higher than that of unsuccessful companies in the IT, healthcare, consumer services, and business and financial services industries, which are the four largest sectors. We also see that a company's odds for success (versus unsuccess) increase with more female executives at the VP and director levels.

While more women sit on Europe's corporate boards, it is from a low base and so, in most countries, their representation remains limited. Moreover, on executive committees—which are critical given their influence on everyday corporate decision making and the fact that more women here mean more women candidates for boards—the needle on the gauge is lower still. At current rates of improvement, women will still account for under 20 percent of seats on Europe's executive committees 10 years from now.

Government support in the form of tax breaks, legislation, and support mechanisms such as paternity leave or child care facilities can affect women's representation in the workplace. So can the way many women think about themselves and their careers. But much of the hard work that needs to be done to lift women's representation inescapably lies within companies, where, despite the considerable effort applied in many institutions, a disproportionate number of women systematically fail to reach middle and senior management roles, let alone executive ones. It is companies that are the focus of our work. But women's representation is lower where it perhaps matters most—on executive committees. On average, women now hold 10 percent of executive committee roles in Sweden, Norway, UK, Belgium, Netherlands, France, Czech Republic, Italy and Germany, compared with 4 percent four years ago. But in none of the countries has the percentage of women on these committees grown by 10 percentage points over the four-year period. Indeed, given current growth rates, the proportion of women sitting on Europe's executive committees will still be less than 20 percent by 2022.

The recent research “Women on Top” indicates the strong points of the women and the men. The women have strong communication skills, patience, good human relations managers, responsible, insightful, persistent and extrovert while men dare, are determined, strategic thinkers, get help from others, have leadership skills and are risk takers. A combination of all these abilities can bring positive results money and businesswise. Women can be equally good doctors, surgeons, civil engineers, judges, lawyers and university professors. The results of the research “Woman Entrepreneur in Greece” in April 2013 showed that during the years 2009 until 2013 35% of 300 women started their business in this hard financial crisis and only 16% of their parents or 10% of their partners were entrepreneurs. Times never present a barrier for Greek Women Entrepreneurs without necessarily having a family model.

I will use as a conclusion my beliefs. I believe that you cannot have a positive life with a negative mind and once there is a will there is a way. Sometimes you win, sometimes you learn. There are two kinds of people in the world, YOU and everyone else!! Prove for yourself no matter if you are a woman or a man.

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Chapter 2

Youth is the strategic resource of a society!

Daria Catalui (Romania), Policy expert, Founder Danube.EDU think-tank

Executive summary

This paper is about grass root solutions in a world of regionalism. During a time when Europe invests and discusses regionalism, the geographical space between Black Sea- Danube- Carpathians Mountains finds itself at the congruence of 2 big regional initiatives: Danube River Strategy and Black Sea Synergy. Does youth have any role at all in all these? What about civil society? We will unfold the argument that youth should be in the focus, furthermore providing examples from practice.

Key words: local action, youth participation, policy, lobby, social change.

About youth

More than ever youth became a topic of concerns for EU, Council of Europe, OECD, WB and UN policy makers. Zooming in or out, the situation is measured in high statistical numbers of unemployment. For example the last EUROSTAT data for 2012¹ points to a EU-28 youth unemployment ratio of 9.7 %. This paper title suggest towards the potential of youth, but first let us frame the current context of action. Without doubt institutions should sustain the development of the young human capital through their policies. Again an example suitable for the Danube-Black Sea region, namely EU touching also upon the ENP² through its commitments. In the EU Youth Strategy for 2010-2018 we believe that the key solution is set in the second main objectives of the document, namely *To promote the active citizenship, social inclusion for all young people*.

Developing this idea, we should say that an increase in the level of entrepreneurship may bring positive results in all linked social-economic territories around Europe. Further evidence that EU policy-makers address this concern are the Europe 2020 strategy that considers youth, the very focused Youth on the Move Programme, Youth Guarantee scheme building on good practices and secondly expanding to all societies, European Vacancy Monitor, ERASMUS +, EVS, Grand Alliance. Though one can draw similarities and form groups as in the EUROSTAT presentations, countries and also regions are unique regarding cultural determinants.

¹http://ec.europa.eu/youth/news/newinfofromeurostat_en.htm

² European Neighborhood Policy

Participation in education and in the labor market interacts in complex ways, for example by overlapping. In order to count on the potential of youth and use it as a resource rather than a burden, we urge with this paper stakeholder that are in favorable position to REACT.

Cooperation at the Danube river



EU STRATEGY FOR THE DANUBE REGION (EUSDR) | www.danube-region.eu

The cooperation in the large region of Danube river has earned recently new policy³ base through the EU Strategy for the Danube region, macro-regional response of the European Commission started in December 2010.

³ Regional Policy EC: http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/cooperate/danube/index_en.cfm
EUSDR: <http://www.danube-region.eu/pages/what-is-the-eusdr>

The Strategy seeks to create synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives taking place across the Danube Region.

According to the document the area covered by the EU Strategy for the Danube Region stretches from the Black Forest (DE) to the Black Sea (Romania-Ukraine-Moldova) and is home to 115 million inhabitants. The countries from the Danube river basin are: Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova, Ukraine. It addresses: environmental threats;⁴ untapped shipping potential and lack of road and rail transport connections; insufficient energy connections; uneven socio-economic development; uncoordinated education, research and innovation systems; shortcomings in safety and security;

Of interest for this paper are the synergies that can be created for the formal and non formal education providers. In this sense we are going to develop further on a case study coming from a small regional player, namely Danube.EDU from Oltenita, Cluj County, Romania. Regarding the general situation of education providers in the region, the most important impact that the current policy context may have on them is to nurture a cooperation environment and ease the funding solutions. It is known that *the EU is in a good position to facilitate cooperation and that EU already runs programmes in the region and so can provide opportunities for cooperation.*

The point that we would like to make here is on the necessary use of a constructive approach by other stakeholders. Furthermore, small, medium and big stakeholders should act with interest and responsibility and beside making their voice heard also implement innovative ideas at grass root level. Adopting policy was the first step, finding tailored solutions is the second and many more should follow in order to bring the changes in the daily life of Danube river inhabitants, namely Danubians. Cooperation at the Danube river is up on the agenda and in order to feed the realities of the next generation should also deliver some ambitious projects. Educational stakeholders are from this point of view the most dynamic part of the solution.

Cooperation at the Black Sea⁵

⁴ water pollution, floods, climate change

⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf

Annex II - Black Sea Country Map



Taking into account the geopolitical sphere, the definition that we would like to use is *distinct geographical area rich in natural resources and strategically located at the junction of Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East*⁶.

Furthermore the relation between Danube and Black Sea is obvious.

Once again the documents refer to a stronger partnership for key areas like energy, transport, environment, movement and security. What about formal and non-formal education cooperation? The end part of the Synergy develops on it and stakeholders should emphasize on its importance⁷. The region benefits of a specialized fund, Black Sea CBC programme under ENP, but also the work and effort annually sustained by BSEC. Discussing about implemented activities, such an example is the Black Sea Forum event that grew yearly at a high speed. We share the opinion that formal education stakeholders and especially non formal education ones which have less visibility, need to function and progress in a predictable environment. An annual event like the Forum is a solution identified from the needs, on which one can count in participating, getting involved, planning objectives for engagement. The innovative approach coming from civil society of the Black Sea gave a new dimension, more flexibility for

⁶ from the Synergy pag 1

⁷ for example chapter 3.10. Research and Education Networks

action and dynamism to the Black Sea cooperation. However we do raise awareness towards the topics related to youth, where cooperation still needs to gain ground. For example, let us take a thematic case like the European Volunteering System⁸ with some actors from the region accredited and registered. There is a need for data basis of reliable contacts where one can submit a query and timely receive a feedback. Opportunities should be measured in implemented projects.

Case study: example from practice Danube.EDU with Danube Black Sea Youth network

To start with Danube.EDU case study, rooted from the 4 years of practice, firstly we would like to mention the founding mission... *to promote international cooperation in the field of youth, supporting the involvement of young people in the life of the community and stimulating cooperation activities between countries in the Danube-Black Sea region.*

The association's work has a regional dimension and since its foundation in May 2009, each month and every year the team contributed with small steps to the achievement of this generous objective. Daily work consists of understanding the similarities and differences between the region's players, not only internationally in the countries in the region but also internally in the 12 Romanian counties along the Danube river and Black Sea shore. This work involves public authorities, associations and educational institutions, individual citizens and groups of citizens with different interests and variable commitments. For a small size player like the youth NGO, regional work translates in a lot of effort towards achieving synergies and avoiding duplication of work and resources. Most important of all is collaboration and to identify the suitable partner for each activity. It may be simple on paper but in practice regional cooperation is much more complex than expected. And why is this so? Firstly because players do not necessarily work under the paradigm of cooperation and building on synergies. And this has to improve. Secondly because, even if you reach out to the right partner then a long period of waiting installs: waiting for a reply to an electronic mail, waiting for a decision to be taken, explaining over and over again ***“what's the deal with youth projects and why they should be included”***.

We have learned from practice that ***cooperation networks are an excellent idea but in practice there are a lot of challenges that are to be faced.*** To develop further:

- right partners;
- building the trust and maintaining it;
- understanding commitments and facing them responsibly;
- calculating budgets and providing the right information when asked;

Also *local actions or better said grass root activities make a big difference* if implemented with care, enthusiasm and supported internally by the community where they develop.

⁸ Website http://ec.europa.eu/youth/evs/aod/hei_en.cfm

The last point taken from practice refers to the change brought to the societal-cultural set of values, which is the hardest to achieve being a behavioral change.

Furthermore under these conditions we would like to take the time and recommend a plan to follow with medium term objectives to measure. No matter if the reader is more connected to a governmental authority, a civil society organization, an academic institution or a business initiative, may apply the same basic principles:

One should lobby effectively in order to explain the cause and the implications, at the same time mentioning the suggested solutions.

One should advocate more that anything else for the development of the human resource capabilities of the extended region⁹.

Last but not least, give the change to youth to participate with innovative solutions applied to societies where they live. The particularity of these societies is the change process and dynamism that occurs. Incessantly, at a speed not seen before.

⁹ This paper refers to the extended Danube- Black Sea region

Chapter 3

Social Innovation as an Instrument for Social Change

Rumen Dobrinsky (Bulgaria), f. Director of Economic Cooperation and Integration at UNECE

Abstract

Social innovation has been practiced throughout the evolution of societies and many of the now prevailing social practices at the time emerged as social innovation. The proliferation of modern ICT and social networking generated a rapid growth of activity in this area. This paper looks at some of the key characteristics of the newly emerging paradigms of social innovation and explores its potential to serve as an instrument for social change. The paper offers an analytical insight into the operation of social innovation with the support of Internet and social media. Drawing parallels between business and social innovation makes it possible to highlight some key features of social innovation. The paper then looks at how social innovation is changing the landscape of politics and policy making. In particular, social innovation supports the wider application of participatory policies for empowering people to agree on coordinated actions of shared interest and their implementation. The paper concludes that Internet-based social innovation leads to further democratization of politics and policy-making. It can also become one of the instruments to generate, engineer and pursue social and societal change in the Black Sea region.

Social Innovation as an Instrument for Social Change

1. Social Innovation and Social Enterprise

In recent years we are witnessing an outburst of interest and activity in social innovation. While the concept is not new, the rapid progress in modern ICT technology and social networking provided new engines and incentives for the flourishing of this paradigm. It would not be an exaggeration to say that social innovation has the potential to revolutionize the ways society deals with its challenges as well as the established models of politics and policy making. This paper looks at some of the key characteristics of these newly emerging paradigms as well and explores its potential to serve as an instrument for social change.

While “social innovation” refers to practices that can be traced back in history, the term itself entered wider circulation relatively recently and there is no one single established definition of social innovation. Without entering a deeper terminological debate, the following three definitions seem to capture its most essential features and characteristics:

- New solutions that meet a social need more efficiently and effectively than existing ones and lead to new/improved capabilities, relationships, collaborations [1].
- New practices for addressing societal challenges, which are adopted and utilized by individuals, social groups and organizations concerned [2].
- Developing innovative solutions and new forms of organisation and interactions to tackle social issues [3].

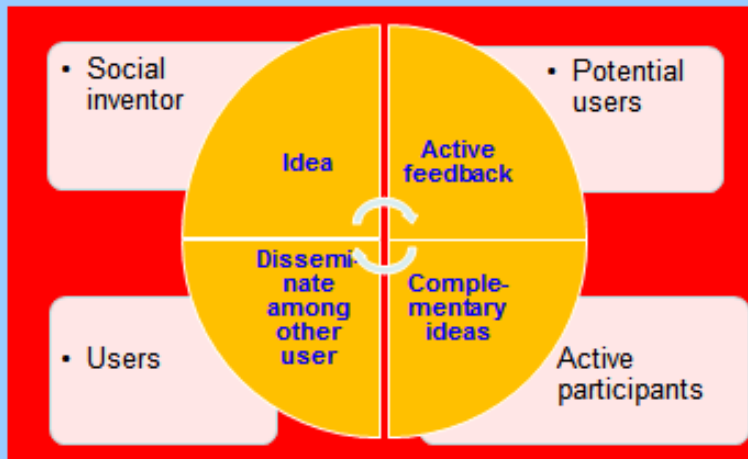
Social innovation has been practiced throughout the evolution of societies and, indeed, many of the now prevailing social practices at the time emerged as social innovations. This pattern in itself has been an established model of socio-political changes when the speed of social innovation was commensurate with the speed of social change. What is new in the 21st century environment is that social innovation is now advancing with much higher speed that the established societal institutions are able and willing to accommodate the newly emerging social practices. The examples of the rapid proliferation of social innovation as spontaneous instruments for addressing specific societal problems are numerous [4].

At present social innovation is driven by a range of factors such as:

- Traditional solutions to societal challenges are inadequate; new phenomena (social issues, challenges and problems) require new approaches to deal with them.
- The increasing speed of social change and of the related societal challenges.
- The incapacity of traditional policy and politics to catch up with the speed of social change and societal challenges.
- The emergence of a disconnect between communities and policy makers: communities do not identify their needs with the official policy agenda.
- The emergence of empowering new technologies enabling societal groups to take the initiative in dealing with new societal challenges; social innovation gained momentum with the proliferation of Internet and social media.

Figure 1 illustrates how social innovation operates with the support of Internet and social media.

Figure 1. HOW SOCIAL INNOVATION WORKS?



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As always, everything starts with an idea about new ways to address a social challenge. The author of the idea, the social inventor, starts sharing the idea with socially likeminded potential users and gets active feedback on its operationalization. The members of the new-born social group continue similar activity involving new active participants in the venture through social networking. Thanks to the snowball effect, both the idea and the mechanisms to operationalize it that are generated in this process are disseminated to a wide network of users and as a result of their joint effort, social change starts to materialize.

While social innovation is mainly regarded as a specific paradigm to address social challenges, one can also draw parallels between social and business innovation. Indeed, one can trace in social innovation all the key components and ingredients that feature in business innovation as well. At the same time, there are important differences both in the nature and in the modus operandi of the innovation process.

The entrepreneur is the central figure in business innovation; s/he is the one who drives the process of transforming an idea into a marketable product or service. Social innovation is also driven by an entrepreneur, but of a very different type. Typically the contemporary social entrepreneur is a collective entrepreneur – an Internet group that drives the implementation of the idea(s) put forward by the social inventor.

Finance plays a key role for the transformation of a business idea into an innovative product. Finance and financiers are also present in the social innovation process but, again, they are of a different nature. Typically the internet community acts as a collective financier, including through in-kind contributions by invest their time and effort for the implementation of social innovation or by employing specific e-mechanisms of raising finance like crowdfunding.

The key objective of business innovation is always to reach the market and capture a share in it, ultimately generating profit for the entrepreneur. In its prevailing form, social innovation is not a lucrative activity and the product of social innovation is not intended for the commercial market. Typically, the product of social innovation is a public good.

Business entrepreneurs usually seek to transform their innovation into a business enterprise as a way to maximize their profit. Continuing this parallel, social innovators can do something similar by establishing a social enterprise to maximize the social impact of the innovation. Social enterprises are new types of organisations that:

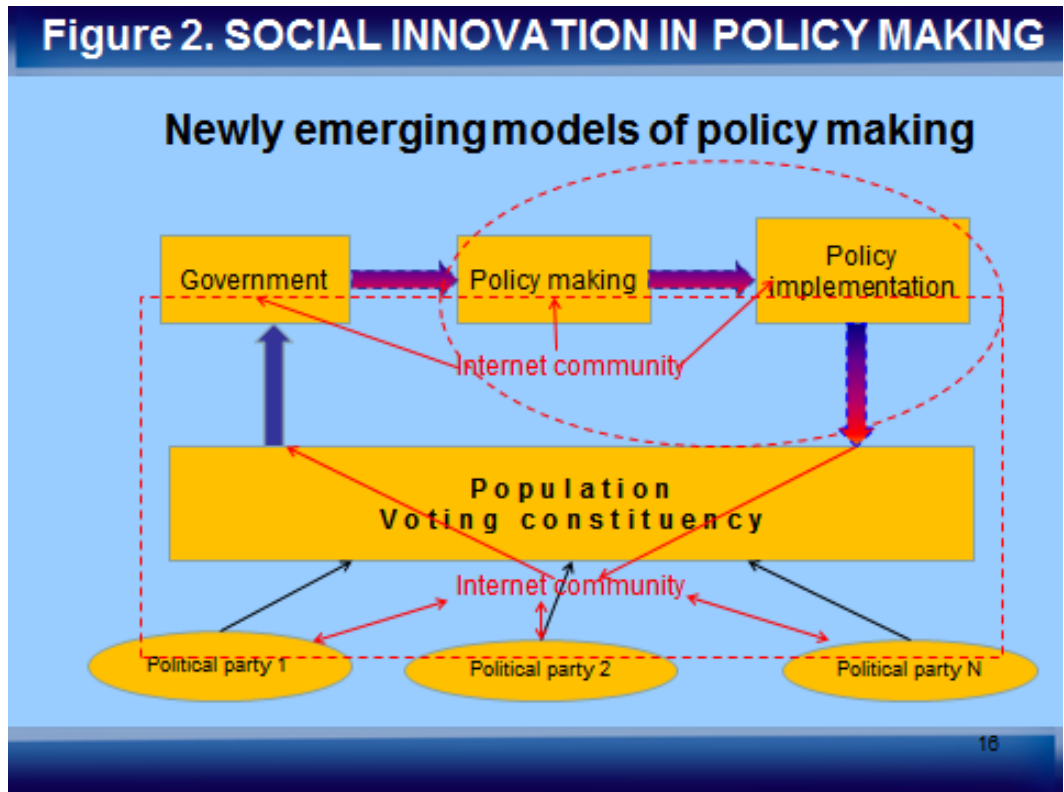
- Are refashioned by the entrepreneurial dynamic rooted in social innovation.
- Apply commercial strategies (such as e-business models) to maximize their social impact.
- Rely on broad representation of stakeholders' interests, participatory and democratic governance and volunteer labour.
- Have a scaling-up potential (potential to grow), in particular, by inspiring and mobilising a growing supportive community
- Can generate formal jobs

Social enterprises and other modern social innovation platforms can operate as efficient instruments for implementing social change through channels that bypass traditional politics and policy making.

2. Internet-Based Social Innovation and Policy Making

Social innovation helps internet communities – and citizens' groups in general – to implement social practices that are traditionally considered as a prerogative of politics and policy making. Internet has established new opportunities for people sharing the same or similar ideas about how the society is to be run to implement such ideas. The domains where such new practices emerge are still limited but they are growing, widening and deepening. Ultimately, in the future this may change entirely the landscape of politics and policy making.

Figure 2 illustrates how the proliferation of social innovation is changing the established policy making models.



The traditional political and policy-making cycle involves the voting constituency which chooses among the political parties that compete for the electoral votes. Once elected by a majority vote, the government of winning party or coalition is expected to implement the program of action that helped it get the voters' support. In turn, this implies policy design and implementation targeting the promised objectives.

As indicated in Figure 2, the proliferation of social innovation and the increasingly active intervention by the Internet community affects both the political cycle and the process of policy design and implementation. The self-organised groups of the voting constituency can actively interfere in the political space already at the agenda-setting phase, compelling the political parties to adjust their agendas in repose to the will of these active constituencies. Moreover, we are now observing a process when new political ideas that originated as social innovations are gaining potential which could be sufficient for them to become self-standing political forces of their own.

In a similar fashion, organised societal groups can and do affect both policy design and policy implementation once a political process has ended with the election of a government. Internet-based social innovation provides such social groups with new opportunities to make their voice heard and impose its integration into the policy-making models. An active Internet community can de facto “boycott” or “vote down” unpopular decisions or policy measures taken by governments. An active Internet community can also initiate new directions of policy-making and impose them on governments. Furthermore, new technologies provide ample opportunities for a much wider use of such a traditional agenda-setting decision-making mechanism as the popular vote. The bottom line is that Internet-based social innovation leads to further democratization of politics and policy-making.

There are many examples of emerging new models of Internet-based policy-making such as:

- Large-scale public investment projects are being opened for Internet-based popular vote.
- Local communities force the local authorities to subject local public investment projects to Internet-based popular vote.
- Public procurement bids are subject to evaluation by the population via Internet-based popular vote.
- The Internet community mobilizes wide popular support for public projects that are different from those envisaged by the governments.
- Extending e-government to design and implement participatory policies.

These are actually the main directions of evolution and change in modern politics and policy-making.

One of the specific newly emerging approaches to address social challenges involving both the society and policy-makers is through participatory policies. Participatory policies and processes are policies for empowering stakeholders – and people in general – to agree on common goals and/or coordinated actions of shared interest and their implementation.

Participatory policies are about governments sharing the responsibilities both in the design of policies and in policy implementation with the stakeholder communities and with the expected beneficiaries. Participatory policies therefore are about further democratisation of the policy process: giving back more power to the people to deal with the issues that are important for them. Introducing and applying participatory policies requires supporting social innovation and introducing policy innovation to engage a wide community in the policy process. Participatory policies and social innovation are usually based on the new communication opportunities provided by Internet.

Ultimately, participatory policies amount to mainstreaming public initiatives into the policy process through social innovation. This enables large constituencies – and people in general – to design actions and implement social practices that are traditionally considered as a prerogative of politics and policy making. The domains where such new practices policy innovation are still limited but they are growing thus changing the whole landscape of politics and policy making

At the international level social innovation and participatory policies based on it can make it possible to engage wide, cross-border communities to address issues of common interest. Such policy processes could include both the actual setting of the agenda for cross-border cooperation and the practical forms of implementing cooperative projects.

Social innovation is fully consistent with the European values embodied in the unified Europe project: it is democratic in its nature and effective in its capacity to achieve social goals. This approach is also fully consistent with the EU's Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and provides mechanisms that are fully aligned with EU's main objectives for the current decade: to connect people, their ideas and needs; to prioritise inclusion, empower people and guarantee ownership. The EU has been a staunch supporter of social innovation and has pledged to provide even greater support in the future.

All of the above fully applies to transnational cooperation in the wider Black Sea region as well. Social innovation can thus become one of the instruments to generate, engineer and pursue and social and societal change in the Black Sea region.

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Chapter 4

A New Role for Black Sea Region Cities

Vasileios Kitsos (Greece), Urban and regional research, freelance architect

Summary

It has already been 20 years since post-socialist urban centres of the Black Sea Region got incorporated into global urban networks and commodity chains. The coast of the Black Sea Region though is still facing important environmental problems. This is directly connected to a relatively fragile political environment and the lack of a common policy toolkit for the region. A set of tools promoting urban networking and strengthening civic engagement could help confront those issues. An active civil society, as well as coordinated transnational initiatives of the private and public sector, provided they develop alongside the Black Sea coast and invest on stable and lasting networking, can become a change factor for the whole region.

1. Globalization & Black Sea Region Cities in Transition

During the past two decades, it has become common ground that urban centres are strongly linked to each other and shape the world economy decisively. Cities are thus seen as change catalysts within a global network. Within the wider European space, parallel-running subnetworks often develop on an interregional path and address the requirements imposed by global production and consumption networks, value, and commodity chains on regional level.

When it comes to post-socialist global integration, research interest also lies on recently adopted governance models and strategies implemented in order to incorporate the given urban centres into globalized networks. The Black Sea has historically held a key role as a transit area, standing on the midpoint of trade paths of global significance. Within this aspect, the development or, as in some cases, foundation of urban centres and ports alongside the Black Sea coast was dictated by the need to respond to these demands. Consequently, Black Sea itself and its geographical characteristics can be seen as a connecting element that shaped the identity and form of port cities.

Following the dissolution of the USSR, the augmentation of a fragmented entity was added to the significance of the Black Sea region. Deindustrialization has been severe and the region's integration into world trade has been overwhelmingly based on raw material exports and industrial goods imports. By the early 2000s, these countries had introduced rather liberal market economies, but still have limited welfare states and democratic regimes with serious quality problems. Following recent developments, significant differentiations among those countries have unfolded, but institutional and geopolitical fragility, together with a divergent sociopolitical patchwork still prevent projections of the Black Sea as a unifying whole.

2. Need for stronger Cooperation

In the case of environmental policies, disregard towards natural resources that dominated previous decades' public policy has resulted into traceable, extended environmental degradation along the Black Sea Coast. In addition to this, the transition to market economy was followed by poor maintenance of critical infrastructure in both regional and urban level. This second era of neglect towards the environment did in turn undermine the existing recreational facilities and therefore has had a direct negative impact on economic perspectives in many cities along the Black Sea.

Meanwhile, modernization of maritime transportation has brought important changes in port infrastructure and redefined the map of Black Sea shipping. The current needs for infrastructure modernization as well as environmental management are pressing local governments, which would long to provide an attractive and competitive urban area and thus attract businesses and capital flows. In general, major improvements in the field of environmental management are difficult to be realized in a larger scale. In overall, the region as such retains a fragmented operational environment. The question is whether institutions, enterprises and individuals can operate on common grounds and respond to environmental as well as global economic challenges.

3. Cities as Connecting Elements

Cities along the Black Sea coast could possibly work towards this direction, if a certain characteristic receives more attention; and that is the fact that the Black Sea has re-emerged as a maritime transport route of significant dynamics. Since relationships between ports are not only of competitive nature and single port mechanisms cannot service alone the requirements of production and consumption systems, effective coordination in that level is necessary, regardless of further measures.

From a territorial point of view, settlements such as ports that serve wider networks are a spatial prerequisite for any territorial formation. But whereas individual countries usually approach Black Sea issues looking at specific national interests and avoid to see the wider picture, cooperation in the level of port development and operation can be a minimum requirement under which a common background could be set. Best practices such as the ones implemented in the North Sea and, more recently in the Baltic Sea, are the best proof. In a second level and assuming that port cities themselves develop synergies, this could function as reference point for city-regions, on their quest to develop their own cooperative framework.

4. Prospects of Participatory Planning in the BSR

Participatory planning in the level of state policy is common in societies with a long track on civic engagement and has developed mostly in North American and Western European countries. In the case of the Black Sea, a region where civic engagement with its contemporary meaning and purpose is not strongly rooted in state administration and society, civic engagement remains comparatively less effective, localized and fragmented.

On the other hand, civic engagement in post-socialist states, in the form of participation in NGOs and non-profit organizations appears to be much stronger in large urban areas. This is not a surprise, since cities with a large population are usually the ones that possess the institutional, financial and academic background that can sustain such networks and lead the way towards international networking. Therefore, the quest towards an integrative, transformative urban policy, especially in the field of environmental management or urban development, would be more likely to flourish if there is a conscious focus on specific cities - which, in the case of the Black Sea, could be the capitals as well as major port cities. In that case, and since all countries in the region are committed to good governance and solid institution building, involving the public in decision-making processes could take the form of the provision of advocacy programs targeting civic leaders and groups.

5. Challenges for BSR Cities

The partnering of selected cities can help reinterpret aspects of contemporary urban and regional development and function as a roadmap for future projects. To team up, facilitate communication and promote mutual understanding, in order to counterbalance specific ineffective nation-state policies and instead empower long-term regional cooperation in the Black Sea.

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Chapter 5

A Civil Society Network in the Black Sea area? A Proposition derived from Social Network Analysis

Andra-Lucia Martnescu (Romania), PhD Candidate in Politics and International Relations, University of Cambridge

Introductory Considerations

After the fall of the Iron Curtain and the dismantlement of the Soviet Union the geopolitical transformation of the Black Sea area has intensified under the influence of both the United States and the European Union. Technical and financial assistance aimed at transforming domestic political cultures and creating a more stable environment to accruing cooperation were provided under various forms of conditionality. To this end, substantive efforts towards the democratization of the post Soviet space extensively underwrote foreign policy priorities. However, the effectiveness of such measures when analyzing the Black Sea area as a whole and the impact upon the quality of the civil society in the region still remains disputed. Most of the littoral countries experienced complex transition processes towards a democratic form of governance, but the development and progress around the region has been uneven. Thus, such policy initiatives are often opposed a pervading status quo of reluctance and mistrust affecting public engagement in post Soviet societies, as well as numerous records of political corruption fuelling the citizens' reticence.

Proposition and Scopes

The brief expands on such limitations, outlining some aspects related to the civil society spectrum in the Black Sea area, and further proposing the creation of a Social Network Analysis (SNA) model that could enhance the knowledge and understanding between the various civil society actors. Essentially, the brief proposes the creation of an E-knowledge platform employing visual input and representations derived from SNA methodology. As it shall be demonstrated, the scope is manifold; on one hand, such systematized forms of knowledge regarding interactions and the actual interrelatedness of civil society actors can lead to a more effective cooperation in the greater Black Sea area. And on the other, at a domestic level NGOs (or other actors) can act more strategically in attaining their goals, enhancing their course of action, by referring to and acknowledging relevant experiences across the region. However, the brief does not develop just yet a model of a regional network

and how civil society actors actually interact, but rather advances the benefits and potential of a more substantive study that can be conducted in partnership with regional organisations.

Various Sets of Limitations regarding Civil Society Movements

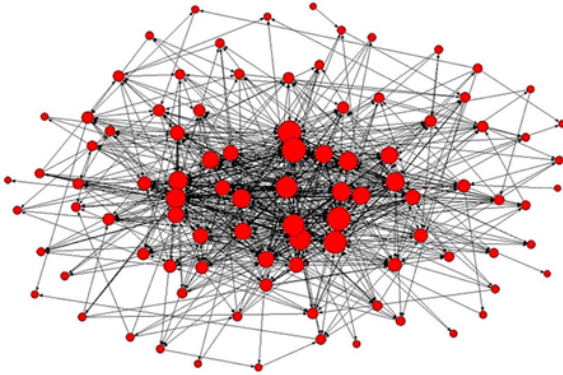
The sets of limitations to public participation and the development of an effective civil society network in the region, can be analysed first and foremost from a domestic perspective, and secondly, inferring the implications for the Black Sea area as a whole. As previously mentioned, underdeveloped democratic cultures, low participatory propensity and rather informal networks of civic engagement, often dependent upon religious mediums or labour unions, are observable patterns in most of the littoral states. Low participation also translates in a rather elitist, competitive and distant or disengaged approach in leading NGOs, which ultimately affects the impact on public policies and the effectiveness of Western aid. We take upon Mary Kaldor's¹⁰ definition of what civil society represents (and also emphasized in most of the analyses regarding its nature in post-Communist transition countries)¹¹. Thus, civil society is an interface in which public opinion is formed, influencing the course of policy-making in more general terms; it essentially reflects the sphere in which social contracts between citizens and political or economic centres of power are negotiated. Therefore, what defines this environment would be its independence from state bodies, find myriad expressions, such as - membership organizations, charities, think-tanks, neighbourhood associations, informal movements, and faith-based groups. However, in most of the littoral states, the observable tendency has been of rather passive public participation, with over-reliance on informal networks (work, religious associations, that at times propagate a negative behaviour such as racism). Subsequently, the civil society does not equate with civic engagement or participation in most of the littoral states and the outreach to greater publics is limited. At a macro-level the same dynamics could be observed in the weak political or economic regional cooperation structures, augmented through differing or limitative border regimes, by a historical reticence of cooperative engagement between littoral actors themselves, by the unequal economic development (fueled by the various, arguably inconsistent aid programmes) or by the entrenched culture of external mediation. Since there has been little success so far in increasing the interrelatedness (economic or political) between littoral states, communication at the level of civil society movements and their regional interaction has remained underexplored. It is not to claim that there are no regional networks that share the know-how and experience, but formal acknowledgement is still rather weak.

¹⁰ Mary Kaldor, *Global Civil Society: An Answer to War* (Cambridge; Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2003);

¹¹ Orysia Lutsevych (March, 2013) 'The Black Sea Region: Missing Pieces of the Civil Society Puzzle' in *On Wider Europe*. GMF, Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation, accessed at http://www.gmfus.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files_mf/1362594481Lutsevych_CivilSociety_Mar13.pdf

Introducing Social Network Analysis Methodology

Figure 1 – A hypothetical model of a social network (visual representation)



Building upon our previous statements, we believe that a rigorous methodology derived from Social Network Analysis can alleviate such limitations and lead to both a domestic and regional empowerment of civil society movements. It is in this vein, that differences in the political and economic development across the Black Sea region can be surpassed, bridging the commonalities and pointing to the shared experiences of transition towards a liberal-democratic ethos and in the overcoming of an authoritarian past.

Without delving into more substantive

theoretical considerations, we shall discuss some general traits and basic definitions of what networks actually constitute and how they can be empirically applied to our discussion.

Thus, according to Smith-Doerr and Powell, network analysis employs 'concepts of location, or nodes and the relations among these positions — termed ties, connections or links — to argue that the pattern of relationships shapes the behaviour of the occupant of a post, as well as influences others'¹². Subsequently, there are two approaches related to networks: 'networks-as-actors' and 'networks-as-structures'¹³. Firstly, a *networks-as-structures* approach analyses the networks as structures influencing the behaviour of their members and through this, producing consequential network effects. Secondly, through the prism of a *networks-as-actors* approach, networks are thought to be intentionally constructed and consciously organized; the focus is placed on networks as unitary actors, networks as a specific organizational form to be contrasted with hierarchies and markets. Empirically referring to the Black Sea region and the interactions and interrelatedness of civil society actors, the visual representation would enable a process of mutual acknowledgment at a regional level, based on the area of expertise, the connections with other similar organisations across the region, but also the actor's position within the domestic spectrum. Essentially, it would act as a comprehensive interactive database exposing the civil society movements, how they interact, what is their area of expertise, which actors act as hubs of connectivity and which are peripheral to the network. The primary data can be obtained from a website analysis of these various civil society actors, referring to the existing partnerships,

¹² Laurel Smith-Doerr, W.W. Powell (2005) Networks and Economic Life. The Handbook of Economic Sociology. Princeton University Press, p. 380;

¹³ M. Kahler (2009) Networked Politics: Agency, Power, and Governance (Cornell, Cornell University Press). p.9;

co-publications, organised events and other such variables. Complementary to this, are also the databases provided by the European Commission through various regional cooperation arrangements (such as the Eastern Partnership) or national databases.

Discussion. Benefits and Implications

Without further expanding on the methodology we shall focus on the implications and benefits of such an E-knowledge platform. Firstly, the analytical utility refers to three sets of evidence: acknowledging similar civil society entities across the region, that pursue similar goals and objectives, enabling a more effective network/coalition building; identifying local NGOs or other bodies, and their capacity to effectively influence domestic policy-making; and last but not least, it provides evidence that can further be interpreted by external actors/donors (i.e. the EU) in adjusting policies, models of development and patterns of civic participation. Informed actions and strategies can be modeled and built on such sets of evidence, which are not only imperative in the policy-making spectrum. Furthermore, concerning the more prescriptive dimension, there are myriad inferences that can be derived and integrated into a better formulated and conducted strategic planning. Mapping the existing connections and making use of the fledgling network would offer an insight into how connectivity between entities (termed as *nodes*) can be improved in a case-by-case approach. Complementary to the already existing (but somewhat limited) networking events, the interpretation of the visual output (representation of the network) can lead to significant structural transformations. As previously mentioned, we can identify the hubs of connectivity, which civil society movements have been more active and established partnerships, or made themselves visible at a domestic or regional level; how the peripheral entities can be better included and how interactions can be improved, which areas remain underdeveloped and why, thus enabling a more effective integration. In this sense, the E-knowledge platform also targets and identifies the channels of opportunity and how actions can be optimized to achieve domestic reforms. If it has been proven that informal networks are more successful in mediating public participation in the Black Sea area, then existing think-tanks and NGOs can increase their visibility within such an environment. Moreover, at a domestic level, there are significant benefits in terms of addressing transparency issues. Since the greater public can widely access such a platform, we can assume that it acts as a model of empowerment through knowledge, an interactive instrument for social change employing one of the core democratic principles, that of public scrutiny. Often, there are protracted doubts concerning the independence of such entities from the political scene or government sphere, and reliability is highly disputed. Therefore, it does not only serve civil society entities as such but also appeals to the greater audiences, expanding the channels through which grievances can be effectively expressed.

In conclusion, the benefits and implications are numerous, and 'The Black Sea Civil Society Network' represented as such can always become formal, setting a stepping-stone within regional cooperation dynamics.

Chapter 6

Black Sea NGO Regional Networks: challenges, opportunities and models of engagement

Alik Mitsakos (Greece), Dean, The International Center for Leading Studies, Secretary General, Greek Association for Atlantic & European Cooperation, Chair, Women In International Security-Hellas

Abstract

The development of human capital is interlinked with the empowerment of civil society as the key factor and “tool” for innovation that can contribute to healthy and sustainable spherical development of the countries.

The International Center for Leading Studies develops programs involving both formal and informal educational methods combined with social assets, addressed to all age groups and backgrounds.

Through a series of interdisciplinary core courses, participants learn to identify connections among areas of interest and engage in problem-solving that crosses ethnic, cultural, religious, regional, and global boundaries. Constructed dialogue fosters intercultural communication skills and develops emotional intelligence, to meet with the demands of professional international markets. This unique combination promotes knowledge, intercultural understanding and enhances the leadership potential of outstanding personalities from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds.

Networking is another key activity that is critical to personal growth and business development.

The International Center for Leading Studies envisions to create a fertile environment for tolerance, social cohesion, and awareness of the international dialogue possibilities, through a non-profit, socially conscious, academic initiative that promotes intellectual innovation, leadership, and Track II diplomacy.

“Extended interdisciplinary knowledge” empowers technocrats, scientists and citizens alike. Critical thinking lead to informed decisions and sustain an active innovative value civil society that can contribute to peace and prosperity for our intertwined world.

Information and communication technologies, promoted during the second half of the last century, have crept into every area of human activity: culture, economy, education, media, business management, management of public services and even the way the political systems work. This process of constant updating, led to the emergence of the “network knowledge society” and, inevitably, a shift towards more participatory forms of urban governance, enhancing the potential of the individuals that constitute the civil societies increasing their functions. Governments and citizens in countries, and cities, with differing patterns of economic growth and socio-spatial inequality can make use of participatory (or integrated) spatial knowledge management to direct urban governance towards more sustainable development.

If we are to understand present-day society and carry out any kind of professional or academic activity we need to take into account the deep-seated changes these technologies in these various areas have brought with them.

The International Centre for Black Sea Studies (ICBSS) supports the model initiative of the Organisation of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), providing useful advice and policy recommendations through constructive projects, such as this particular Symposium, that seek to foster a comprehensive and cohesive approach towards important issues at the academic and political level, ensuring peace, stability and prosperity through friendly and good-neighborly relations in the Black Sea region.

The development of human capital is interlinked with the empowerment of civil society, including particular social groups such as youth, women, etc., as the key factor and “tool” for innovation that can contribute to healthy and sustainable spherical development of the all countries.

Though it may sound monotonous, it must be repeated and emphasized that “education”, defined beyond the formal connotation, is the key element to all sustained development.

The writings of John Dewey over 100 years ago *“all education proceeds by the participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race. This process begins unconsciously almost at birth, and is continually shaping the individual's powers, saturating his consciousness, forming his habits, training his ideas, and arousing his feelings and emotions. Through this unconscious education the individual gradually comes to share in the intellectual and moral resources which humanity has succeeded in getting together. He becomes an inheritor of the funded capital of civilization. The most formal and technical education in the world cannot safely depart from this general process. It can only organize it; or differentiate it in some particular direction”* have surfaced again today, in our quest for better “education” and for developed human personalities rather than just trained humans.

Addressing the challenges of today's world demands going beyond the limits of specialized knowledge and create new forms of understanding and expertise. Undergraduate education has become “departmentalized” following the trend of specialization. The connection

¹⁴ “My Pedagogic Creed”, School Journal vol. 54 (January 1897), pp. 77-80

between various social, economic, political and cultural systems forces us to overcome the traditional barriers between disciplines. Tackling health, environmental, ethical and political challenges requires the ability to consider multiple aspects of the same issue, to work with experts across disciplines, and to integrate disparate bodies of knowledge, as the world may not conform to the boundaries of academic disciplines. Interdisciplinary studies integrate a range of perspectives to provide a more comprehensive understanding of issues and challenges in a perspective which includes several theoretical viewpoints and different methodological tools.

"The aim of education should be to teach us rather how to think, than what to think, rather to improve our minds, so as to enable us to think for ourselves, than to load the memory with the thoughts of other men" Bill Beattie¹⁵ has said, following the similar aphorism of Jean Piaget¹⁶ *"The principle goal of education is to create men who are capable of doing new things, not simply of repeating what other generations have done - men who are creative, inventive and discoverers"*. These persons would be the pillars of a developed innovative civil society, one could add.

Having been involved in non-conventional educational programs that addressed subjects indirectly affecting our everyday life, but were beyond our reach to understand or learn, combining academics and interactive dialogue, formal and informal education processes, for over 25 years, through Universities and N.G.O.s, we acquired the background and experience to validate the need of broader educational experiences for today's youth, them being the forthcoming human potential, the future "change makers", as well as for the "broader society" members.

The Greek Association for Atlantic & European Cooperation and, recently, the new educational platform, The International Center for Leading Studies, have developed programs involving both formal and informal educational methods combined with social assets, addressed to all age groups and backgrounds.

Studying in disciplines as diverse as molecular biology, ecology, biomedical engineering, or psychology and sociology, or for that matter history, religion, and cultural anthropology, there will be a time to expect to face professional problems which combine normative and positive dimensions. Students in these disciplines, who have had the experience in the way these programs envision, will be equipped to deal with such problems more successfully. Even as graduate students or professionals, the experience can add to the possibility to compare and understand influences that cross those boundaries.

Interdisciplinarity is an important and a complex issue. It is important, as modern society increasingly demands application-oriented knowledge, and the usability of scientific knowledge generally requires the combination and integration of knowledge from various

¹⁵ U.S. manager and coach, recently inducted into the Washington State Football Coaches Association's Hall of Fame, <http://www.theolympian.com/2013/01/23/2395673/olympia-football-coach-bill-beattie.html#storylink=cpy>

¹⁶ Swiss Psychologist and pioneer in the study of child intelligence

scientific disciplines learning to identify connections among areas of interest and actively engage in problem-solving that crosses ethnic, regional, and global boundaries.

At the same time intercultural communication skills, recognized as a form of global communication, are developed to meet with the increasing demands of more businesses going global or international. It's no longer enough to be a functional expert. To complement these unique core competencies, there are certain "soft skills" every business activity looks for, for people who are responsive, adaptable and creative at solving problems.

"Soft skills" refer to a cluster of personal qualities, habits, attitudes and social graces that make someone compatible to work with, including "emotional intelligence". Emotional intelligence, often referred to as EQ, is a set of abilities that lets you form optimal relationships with yourself and others. And research shows it can be a far better predictor of life success than IQ. Unlike IQ, which is pretty much established at birth, EQ can be learned, implemented and improved upon at any age.

With business being done at an increasingly fast pace, companies value soft skills. Research suggests and experience shows that they can be just as important an indicator of job performance as hard skills. Today's service economy and the ascendance of work teams in large organizations put a new premium on people skills and relationship-building.

Networking is another key activity that is not only fun, but critical to personal growth and business development. Personal relations with a diverse group of competent peers can uncover a whole host of new business opportunities, raise the personal profile within the current professional circle, and enhance self-confidence & self-esteem. Networking on an international level plays a particularly key role in the development and success of businesses across the world, as well as promote the creative exchange of ideas.

Learning from civic participation in other countries strengthens community activism and in return contribute more to the cause of sustainability.

Finally, there is one more dimension and key aspect for these programs that involve civil society and nations alike. Track Two Diplomacy.

Most often, the term "diplomacy" is used to describe the interactions of state officials as they employ a specific set of skills and knowledge in order to influence foreign policy. This is known as "hard diplomacy", as this type of diplomacy is conducted formally, to achieve established goals that improve international relations. However, the heart of diplomacy is simply the ability to engage in interactions using skill, tact, and sensitivity in a style of interaction that promotes trust and respect and builds mutual understanding between parties without arousing feelings of anger or suspicion. The application of diplomatic skills in this more informal way is known as "soft diplomacy" or Track Two or "citizen diplomacy"¹⁷.

¹⁷ The concept of Track Two diplomacy has been growing rapidly over the past two decades. Because of the diversity of Track Two diplomatic efforts, Track Two diplomacy has been further subdivided into four tracks, i.e. Track Two as above, Track Three, business, multinational corporation interactions;

Today, diplomacy is exercised in various arenas, including public diplomacy, citizen diplomacy, cultural diplomacy, health diplomacy, and even science diplomacy. Each approach uses the skills of diplomatic communication and interaction in order to positively influence a specific concept or sector. There is no formal understanding associated with “education diplomacy” and, therefore, there is no one definition of the concept. In fact, the term is just beginning to be used for the purpose of describing varying ways to shape policies and systems that impact education. In the past, it has sometimes been used within the context of international student exchange programs, which expanded students' educational experience and immersed them in other cultures. Today, interactions with broader-scale implications occurring at the international level are called education diplomacy but might actually be better termed “global education diplomacy”.

In creating the programs of The International Center for Leading Studies we envision to create a fertile environment for tolerance, social cohesion, and awareness of the international dialogue possibilities, through a non-profit, socially conscious, academic initiative that promotes high quality advanced education and intellectual innovation, including development of leadership, another misinterpreted, recently, core issue.

We believe that “extended interdisciplinary knowledge” empowers technocrats, scientists and citizens alike. The quest of answers and solutions relates to every thinking individual who questions every angle, studies, and researches. Critical thinking needs asking the right questions that lead to informed decisions. Education means thinking of the options offered and develop the ability to make an informed choice.

Socrates, the ancient Greek philosopher, argued that education was about drawing out what was already within the student. “I cannot teach anybody anything; I can only make them think.” he has advocated thousands years ago, and the aphorism remains relevant today.

The Socratic method is defined as “A pedagogical technique in which a teacher does not give information directly but instead asks a series of questions, with the result that the student comes either to the desired knowledge by answering the questions or to a deeper awareness of the limits of knowledge” and a Chinese Proverb says “Tell me and I'll forget; show me and I may remember; involve me and I'll understand”.

Our programs are different in this sense.

Through a series of interdisciplinary core courses, participants learn to identify connections among areas of interest and actively engage in problem-solving that crosses ethnic, cultural, religious, regional, and global boundaries.

Track Four, citizen-to-citizen exchange programs of all kinds; and Track Five media-to-media based efforts designed to expose and educate large segments of the population in conflict to the philosophy, ideas, culture and needs of the other national, society, or ethnic group with whom they are in conflict. Together, these five tracks are now referred to as "Multi-Track Diplomacy."

At the same time, constructed dialogue foster intercultural communication skills, recognized as a form of global communication, and develops the emotional intelligence, to meet with the increasing demands of professional markets going global or international.

This unique combination promotes knowledge, intercultural understanding and enhances the leadership potential of outstanding personalities from diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds applying the principles of Socrates in education, engendering value societies across the globe.

They stimulate (TICL) the mind offering education instead of dry knowledge, to develop the knowledge, skill, or character, and they “involve” leading to understanding, according to the Latin origin of the word -educere - meaning “to lead forth”.

The International Academy for Advanced Studies at University level, the Leaders For Our Future, the innovative corresponding program for teenagers, or the Road path of the Apostle Paul and the Cretan Med Gastronomy for constructive tourism combined with education, are aiming at “tickling” the brain power of participants, unleashing their inventive potential.

It is our contribution for the sustainability of an active innovative civil society that will contribute to peace and prosperity for our intertwined world.

Chapter 7

The main problems and challenges of civil society in Georgia

Nato Mokverashvili (Georgia), Association of Young Economists of Georgia (AYEG), intern at the Ministry of Finance of Georgia

I want to talk about the main problems and challenges of civil society in Georgia today. Over the past 10-15 years, the civil society sector in Georgia has developed in many important respects. There is a pool of qualified and experienced personnel sector, organizations have been shaped whose management practices are close to modern standards and they possess the internal resources for sustainable development. The development of civil society rests on several key pillars, including the rule of law, a clear separation of powers within the state, an active political society, and free and independent media. This paper focuses mostly on internal factors that define the quality of public space such as NGO culture, citizens' perceptions of democracy and activism, emerging civil movements and their interaction with the state, and finally the role of Western donors. The main problem which is not connected only to Georgia, but to the whole post-soviet states and troubles them is soviet mentality existed in societies. This is a kind of problem, which needs decades to solve. "Leninist culture" of lifestyle, characterized by a strict separation between the public and private spheres, low levels of trust and suspicion of politics, remained in our society. Almost every citizen thinks that public sphere is not his or her job. They are afraid of state bureaucracy and think that they cannot change anything. This situation makes society to treat with indifference toward civil society. They have got total disbelief, apathy and low level of solidarity. Society's disbelief toward civil society has also other reasons. Nowadays there are many NGOs in Georgia but most of them are ineffective and in some cases have no functions. It is rare fact to create NGO round the urgent problem which troubles society. There is a trend that NGOs are founded for getting grants from different funds. These grants are spent on number of projects, which finally have no results. For example, there are NGOs working on educational problems, but when the students started to protest these problems in the streets, none of them appeared on these actions. Also NGOs in Georgia have little number of members and even these members are indifferent toward the organization's activity. According to the 2007 Caucasus Barometer survey, just about 1 percent of the population attended meetings of any sort of club or association in the previous six months. In the last decade, Georgia has undergone dramatic changes, often described as 'colour' the Rose Revolution in 2003, but Only a few years later it is progressing unevenly on the path to consolidating democracy. The October 2012 parliamentary elections in Georgia proved that peaceful transfer of power is possible, despite numerous obstacles to democratic competition before the elections. So the weakness and inertness of the civil society give strong ruler opportunities not to engage those

NGOs in decision-making process and not to foresee their recommendations. This situation makes governments to become more authoritarian, which damages democratic processes in Georgia.

Chapter 8

I think Globally, I act Locally

Samir Murshudov (Azerbaijan), Consultant, Water Supply Project, World Bank, Azerbaijan

Environmental Protection

Introduction

Environment!!! This is the concept which we consider everything. All surrounding us is Environment. Different ideas say different opinions about creation of the Environment. Some of them say the Environment has begun to exist before creation of human-being. Others say it a bit different, i.e. the Environment was created as the same time as creation of human-being. Coming to my personal researches, I am solid on the first idea. Before creation of human-being the Environment had already existed. But, only one item was different, the Environment was very pure and clean then. Day by day, year by year, century by century the Environment has faced with a lot of changes. To a better way??? Unfortunately, NO! We, I mean humans, have changed it to a wrong direction. As a result, we are suffering now from air pollution, water and soil pollution and etc.

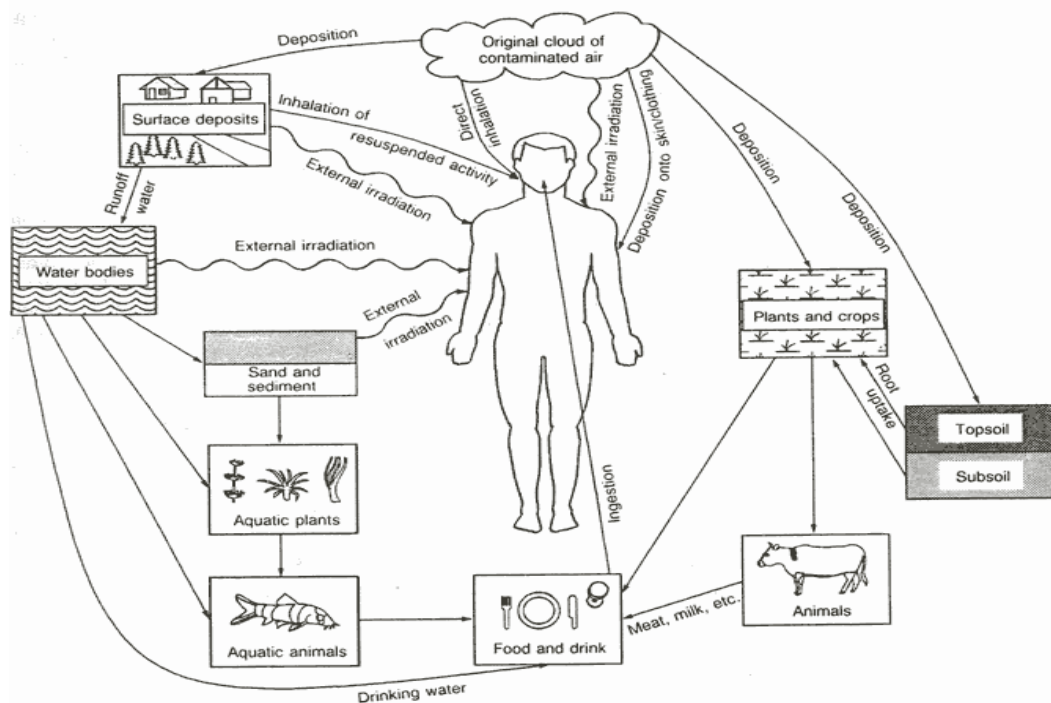
I am not against to technology improvement. I have always appreciated the achievements of the modern technology, but as a very simple example, a knife can cut bread and also can kill someone. Let's use the better way of the technology not the other.

The Environment is our home. Let's keep it clean and peace!!!

As known from the introduction, the article is about the environment. The question might arise why I have selected this topic. I would like to go into detail.

Today, we all know that we are living in a world leading to globalization and modern technology. As I mentioned before, I am a member of population who appreciates the achievements of the modern technology. But, as technology improves further and further, the environment becomes worse and worse. Because, most scientists do not take care much about nature. Trees are being cut, pollution is approximately everywhere. And as a result of that, the researches show the average lifetime of human-being is getting to be decreased rapidly. And comparing people living in villages with big and developed cities, someone can see that village people are more healthy and living long-life than people living in cities. Of course, nobody is against to urbanization, but it is obvious that air pollution is much spread within cities of the globe. And villages are also different point of pollution. Because, forests are being cut rapidly.

Let's think, why we are facing so much floods nowadays comparing with previous decades. Because, human interferes the nature in a worse manner. As an example, nuclear plants are functioning almost all developed countries. This is in one way good, because we get energy, but the other part of the coin, when they have explosions they heavily pollute the air. Just remember Chernobyl, which is a town near Kiev in Ukraine where an accident at a nuclear power station in April 1986 resulted in serious radioactive contamination in Ukraine, Belarus, and other parts of Europe. After the disaster, four square kilometers of pine forest directly downwind of the reactor turned reddish-brown and died, earning the name of the "Red Forest".



Main environmental pathways of human radiation exposure
[Source : IAEA technical report ISBN 92-0-129191-4 Vienna 1991]

Source:

<http://www.world-nuclear.org/info/Safety-and-Security/Safety-of-Plants/Chernobyl-Accident/#.Ue4vJdKnAps>

Many examples can be shown. But, I do not want to return back and tell only disasters that have happened. My mission is how to find a solution for all these air, water and soil pollutions and etc.

It is clear that, pollution has almost occupied the world. Pollution (air, soil, water) from domestic activities (domestic, housing, institutions) agriculture and industry is destroying the natural basis (water and soils are essential for life) of mankind. It is considered that, the origin of this pollution is only construction and commissioning of factories, plants and etc. Also, people consider nuclear plants, smokes from vehicles and etc. as the main source of the pollution. But, only a certain amount of people consider about trees. It goes without saying that, trees are the lungs of the Environment. And also, trees are supporting element to prevent erosion while flooding in mostly mountainous regions.

Environmental pollution is the biggest menace to the human race on this planet today. It means adding impurity to environment. The environment consists of earth, water, air, plants and animals. If we pollute them, then the existence of man and nature will be hampered.

It is true that trees are being cut down rapidly. Our earth is becoming warmer. If pollution continues, the day is not far when our earth will be a boiling pan and become a desert. Or it will be covered with sea water causing destruction of mankind.

Pure air is always needed for inhaling. If we take pure air, our health improves. On the other hand impure air causes diseases and impairs our health and causes our death. Smoke pollutes the air. It is the root of air pollution. The smoke which is discharged from industries, automobiles and kitchens is the mixture of carbon monoxide, carbon dioxide, methane etc. These are all poisonous gases. These cause lung-cancer, tuberculosis etc. which take a heavy toll of life. The glaring incident is the Bhopal gas leak in December 1984. Thousands of the residents of Bhopal died due to lungs problem which was caused by methylamine gas from the Union Carbide Plant.

The garbage emitting foul smell, the decaying plants and animals also cause air pollution. Hence the doctors advise the patients having lungs trouble to settle in some rural places because the air of villages is pure and free from population.

Another item is sound pollution. The harsh sounds of construction, vehicles and their signals and etc. affect our ability of hearing and causes ear trouble. It has been reported that there are two villages in Calcutta where a large number of people have lost their ability of hearing. This is because of the frequent sounds of planes coming in and going out of airport. The results of sound pollution can be imagined from this example.

Another issue which I would like to speak about is related with water pollution. Water and soil protection, sanitation and health are closely interrelated. Approximately, 90% of waste water in developing countries is infiltrated into the soil or is discharged directly into water receiving bodies (e.g. rivers, lakes and etc.) and returns unhindered into the water cycle. Worldwide approximately 1.5 billion people obtain their water from polluted rivers, lakes and springs. The water of rivers and seas is being constantly polluted all over the world by various dangerous chemical and biological wastes. Mills and factories discharge very harmful waste

waters into many rivers and sea. There is no doubt that the fish grow in such waters are poisonous too.

Also, application of chemical fertilizers, insecticides and pesticides pollutes the soil. Vegetables and fruits are quite injurious and genetically modified today, because they contain the poison of insecticides and pesticides and human-being interferes the nature.

If the air we breathe, the water we drink and the soil which produces our crops, vegetables and fruits, all become more and more impure, then our chances of good health and longevity will be very less and less. Environment pollution is a serious menace to our existence. Realizing the danger, we must plant trees in large number to absorb impure air. Impure water from industries can be sent back for purification and then it can be used for irrigation purpose.

Of course, if a person wants to start changing the Environment to a better way, first he has to start from himself, i.e. from his country. We may think about whole Environment globally, but it is obvious that, everybody is able to start his/her motherland easily. Therefore, some examples I would like to give will be related with my country – Azerbaijan and one should not forget that geographical position of Azerbaijan makes it an important link between Black and Caspian Seas.

After gaining the independency, Azerbaijan has moved towards with great steps. The construction works has been started almost in whole country. However, our Government also has decided to take care the Environment. The Government of Republic of Azerbaijan has developed certain State Programs. One of them is about planting greenery in urban areas, settlements, including deserts and valleys. When it comes to forests, currently Azerbaijan ranks low among the countries in the world in terms of the amount of its territory that is covered in natural forests. Only about 11 percent of Azerbaijan's territory is covered in forest though the world standard is about 22 percent. This is about half of the normal standard in world forestry practice. Despite the fact that there are several major mountain ranges that run through Azerbaijan, such as the Great and Lesser Caucasus, still the actual amount of forested lands is relatively low. For this reason, Azerbaijan has undertaken a massive program by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources to double its percentage to about 20 percent within this next 10-15 years. Now, one can observe greenery and trees along the highways also. The 10th of March is celebrated as “Red Crescent Day” in Republic by the statement # 2749 dated 2008, April 7 by Mr. Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan Republic, honorary member of Azerbaijan Red Crescent Society Tree planting campaign was held on the 30th of March regarding to it. All staff of the society as well as leadership participated in this campaign. 400 trees were planted by the Red Crescent representatives in the area situated around the H. Aliyev highway.

At the same time, Government of Azerbaijan is in the ongoing process of construction of modern WTPs (Water Treatment Plant) and WWTPs (Waste Water Treatment Plant). This helps us to get better treated potable water and have more clean effluent of waste water discharged into water bodies. Reconstruction and rehabilitation of water supply and sewerage systems includes all regions of Republic of Azerbaijan.

Azerbaijani Government implements large-scale works in the sphere of environmental protection in recent years. After few years, Azerbaijan, as European countries, will become "green" republic.

As a conclusion, if we want to reach a goal, we have to begin firstly from a local level. After having good results, we can act globally. Because, way of summits always begins from valleys.

Referred links:

(http://www.azer.com/aiweb/categories/magazine/ai114_folder/114_articles/114_planting_future.html)

(<http://www.redcrescent.az/news/en/106/>)

Chapter 9

Development of Human Capital in the Black Sea Region

Najiba Mustafayeva (Azerbaijan), Research Fellow, Center for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan

Abstract

The article studies the youth policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Author gives detailed information on the empowerment of Azerbaijani youth as a certain social group in the rapidly changing economic and political landscape of the wider Black Sea Region.

The main goals of state youth policy, activity of the Youth Foundation and youth organizations, as well as state reforms carried out in this area in Azerbaijan Republic are analyzed by the author. The list of legal acts adopted in noted field is also considered in this article.

Today youth policy became an important integral part of the state policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijani youth is distinguished with activity in all sectors of public life; they play an important role in the implementation political, economic, humanitarian and social activities. As a result of the extensive opportunities created for young people by the Azerbaijani state this social group has become a leading force of civil society.

The State youth policy is as system of measures of defined priorities and implemented events that create an opportunity for youth to realize their knowledge and skills, the effective implementation of their natural potential, in order to create the conditions to take a worthy place in society. The State youth policy found its reflection in the relevant legal documents and actions taken by state agencies.

The main area of the youth policy was determined in the Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan “On the Youth Policy” as follows:

1. moral and spiritual training of youth and participation in cultural life;
2. government support for talented young people;
3. protection of health and physical development of young people;
4. employment opportunities for youth;
5. the state aid to young families;
6. the state assistance to youth organizations.

The first forum of independent Azerbaijani youth was held on February 2, 1996, in order to increase the role of Azerbaijani youth in development of the civil society and to help them in the solution of their problems, to increase their participation in the future development of the country and to create conditions for the exchange of ideas of young people living in the capital and regions, as well as to facilitate communication of young people with state bodies and their officials.

On February 1, 1997, a decree on announcement of day “February 2” as the day of young people of Azerbaijan was issued. Since that time, traditionally every year February 2 is celebrated as a holiday of the Azerbaijani youth.

The decree of the President Ilham Aliyev on “Approval of Azerbaijani Youth State Program (2005 and 2009 years)” was signed on August 30, 2005. The main directions of the state policy for youth in our country were reflected in this document.

Among the necessary documents related to improvement of youth activity in our society “The State Program on development of creative potential of talented children (youth)” (2006-2010), “State Program on development of technical and vocational education of the Republic of Azerbaijan” (2007-2012), the State Program of “Azerbaijan youth in 2011 and 2015”, “Azerbaijan 2020: look into the future” development concept must be mentioned.

I would like especially emphasize the “State Program for study of Azerbaijani youth abroad for 2007-2015” approved by the Order of the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan from October 19, 2006. This program provides the study of young people abroad in the required for the country specialties and ensure their personnel participation in the development of the country. More than 10 000 Azerbaijani students were sent abroad to the world's most advanced universities on different educational levels, majoring in the fields that country need most.

Among the reforms implemented in the noted field the creation of the Youth Foundation established in order to ensure all-round development and active participation of youth in social life deserves special attention.

Moreover, it must be mentioned, that appropriate steps have been taken for the construction of the “Youth House” in Baku and Youth Centre in the regions.

An important role and capacity in the process of formation of human capital in Azerbaijan play youth organizations. They are an inseparable part of society and state through implementing innovative activities, developing non-formal educational tools, organizing the opportunities for receiving social and professional experience for young people, pushing youth mobility and actively participate in the process of the development of human capital. At present, about 200 youth organizations are operating in the country. These organizations see successive investment in human capital as the most effective and continuous way to develop. They pay special attention to the youth in their projects aimed at developing human

capital. Therefore, most of them are working with young professionals to implement its human capital-oriented activities.

In conclusion, I would like to note that an image is taking shape of contemporary Azerbaijan as a society that is being renewed and modernized. In these circumstances, young people need to be active as a symbol of the idea of the future and are the main prerequisite for sustainable development. Young people, who think in a new way, have initiative, are educated and capable and at the same time uphold national values, must give an appropriate response to the challenges facing Azerbaijan and be committed to future success as well as to preserving the achievements of the modern era. And it is these young people who must lead independent Azerbaijan to a guaranteed future while forming an image of a new citizen in Azerbaijan.

References:

1. The Law of the Republic of Azerbaijan "On the Youth Policy";
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Chapter 10

I think Globally, I act Locally

Mária Nicolaouová (Slovakia), Chief state counselor, Office of the Plenipotentiary of the Slovak government for Development of Civil Society

Abstract

The author spends a moment to reflect on the “I think globally, I act locally” phrase, before proceeding to present a related good practice example. The programme designed by the Slovak Committee for UNICEF serves as a concrete proof of how dynamic and diverse volunteering can be. By examining all of its aspects and actors the author comes to a conclusion that being a Junior Ambassador not only fulfills the essence of the headline phrase, but may even outreach it.

I think globally...

For me, *thinking globally* gives rise to all these associations: interconnectedness, interdependence, complexity (of things, events, cultures, people, their values and attitudes), thinking about others, thinking critically, thinking about the effects of my actions, my own individual role in the course of events in my surroundings... In the end, the flow of this mental input and the dynamics of cognitive processes should ideally result in making informed decisions.

I act locally...

Again, my perception of *acting locally* is quite broad: interest, emotional engagement and desire for a change, getting involved, stirring up interest in others, sharing (knowledge, information, emotions) and caring, volunteering...

However, if it had not been for one significant influence in my life, my perceptions described above might have been totally different. To elaborate in the framework of International Black Sea Symposium 2013 topic, I would like to present a good practice example.

For almost four years now, I have been engaged in a volunteer programme named UNICEF Junior Ambassadors. The programme had been developed and implemented by the Slovak Committee for UNICEF, nonetheless, UNICEF volunteer programmes sharing similar features can be found in other countries as well.

Who are UNICEF Junior Ambassadors?

Volunteers count as an added value of the NGO/CSO sector in general. UNICEF is one of the organisations whose work depends a lot on volunteers' contribution. This is true also for Slovakia since the office is personally limited and seated in the capital city of Bratislava, while many activities take place all over the country.

Junior Ambassadors is a title naming the most active UNICEF volunteers in Slovakia who had undergone a special training that makes them eligible to conduct interactive sessions at schools. Schools all around Slovakia, from kindergartens through primary up to secondary schools of all types, including private schools and schools for children with disabilities, can opt for UNICEF schools programmes. UNICEF schools programmes have their specific criteria, it is a model and a process of creating a child friendly environment at schools.

Each school taking part in this effort, is once in a school year visited by a Junior Ambassador. To cut the costs and be more time effective, Junior Ambassadors choose from the list of schools according to their whereabouts (hometown, town they are studying in, or schools in towns and villages nearby). To give you some brief statistics: in 2012, 24 Junior Ambassadors

visited 159 schools and 330 classes of overall 5.556 pupils and students, with whom they spent 786 hours (262x180 minutes, as each session lasts 180 minutes).

The age threshold to become a Junior Ambassador is 18 years (although several active volunteers had been granted exception) with no upper limit. However, since the task is time consuming, Junior Ambassadors are mainly college or university students. The age proximity amplifies the dynamics of the sessions, sometimes it can be literally peer to peer education.

There is one more interesting fact as to who are this bunch of volunteers. They are as diverse as the issues they tackle and the classes they visit. Volunteers of Slovak, Russian, Japanese, Somali, Iraqi, Romani roots – they have all been contributing with their own individual input and life experience.

What exactly, how and why?

UNICEF's agenda is rooted in the concept of children's rights which are often undermined, underrated, overlooked or even invisible. One of the key steps to change this is to bring and develop the concept at places where children spent most of their childhood at – schools. Simply said, Junior Ambassadors conduct sessions with pupils and students to help this process.

Even though Junior Ambassadors focus primarily on children's rights, the sessions are not limited to this topic per se. Children's rights, just like human rights in general, are embedded in global education, which is even a broader concept. In fact, the notion of thinking globally and acting locally is incorporated in it. Global education covers not only content, but also principles such as independent and critical thinking, responsibility towards the others, reflexivity, ethical action, etc. Last, but not least, global education uses informal education methods. These methods are interactive, i.e. learning is generated in a synergy, through dialogue, role plays, discussions and activities challenging the “universal”, “general” or “undoubted” knowledge and attitudes. Moreover, global education attempts to diminish the uneven positions between the teacher and the pupil. Here, learning occurs on both sides: the stakeholder with assumed authority (in our case Junior Ambassador) and those with the assumed superior position (children and youth).

Coming back to the programme's objectives, children are inspired to think out of the box, to step out of their comfort zone of thinking, to sensitize themselves to the coexistence of polarities and differences in the world, and to integrate this complexity into critical thinking. Being considerate of their own rights and needs, as well of those of the others, enables them reflect and identify problems or gaps in society and come up with solutions and responses. Even at a young age, the easiest way to achieve a change is offering one's own skills and abilities through volunteer work. Junior Ambassadors encourage the target group to do so by setting their own example.

To sum it up, educational activities conducted by Junior Ambassadors are one of the puzzle pieces of a big UNICEF's initiative Child Friendly Schools. The aim is to implement children's

rights not only as a topic in schools, but change the atmosphere and attitudes of everyone at stake, so that these rights are sensed and lived in schools on a daily basis.

Schools with child friendly environment are a pool of useful social patterns and behaviour, and a ground for further in-my-back-yard initiatives, children's engagement and empowerment which helps them become active and considerate citizens.

Concluding thoughts

My first and big *ally* in thinking *globally* and acting *locally* has been UNICEF and its volunteer programme in Slovakia. In this sense, I may also compare volunteer work for UNICEF to a catalyst. It has framed, inspired and empowered not only me, but also other co-volunteers of mine and hopefully, through us, the target group of the interactive sessions at schools – children and youth. Still, realising the responsibility of my thoughts and actions, I try to subject my “thinking globally, acting locally” (and my volunteer work) to a never-ending process of critical thinking, self-reflection and self-education.

Naturally, the capacity to act globally may seem limited at first glance as we may not see a direct correlation between our actions and world events. Yet, I believe that our daily decisions and actions are affected and affect systems on a local, regional, national and global scale. Without even trying, we are global citizens, at these times more than ever. Yet, is this acknowledgement enough for me? Am I fine with being “just” a global citizen, or do I strive to be an *active* global citizen? By acting locally through volunteer work for UNICEF, I have chosen the second option.

Chapter 11

Black Sea NGO Regional Networks: Challenges, Opportunities and Models of Engagement.

Elements of Reflection from ChildPact

Mirela Oprea (Romania), ChildPact Secretary General & Senior Liaison Manager, World Vision International & Cristina Negoiescu (Romania), ChildPact Project Assistant

Abstract



Strategies aimed at bringing social change imply innovation and cooperation as fundamental elements - which are also the bases of all the networks created by civil society organisations, as the best way to accomplish social change is by joining efforts with others. But “joining efforts” is easier said than done - there are challenges to be overcome particularly in our intricate region. However, our region also provides numerous opportunities that should be harnessed to the efforts of strengthening the regional networks. ChildPact - Regional Cooperation in the Wider Black Sea Area - is a vivid example of what joint will and efforts can lead to: it proposes an innovative model of engagement of the civil society at a transnational level, gathering 8 national coalitions dedicated to child protection. This engagement is driven by the mission and vision that children in our region should have their rights guaranteed and live in a society that not only protects them, but actively supports their development to the highest levels of their potential, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender or social background. ChildPact argues that its mission can only be achieved throughout regional cooperation because of five essential arguments. Together, inter-country cooperation can bring substantial and long-term benefits for children while at the same time contribute to governance building, democratisation and citizen participation.

Introduction

Strategies aimed at bringing social change imply innovation and cooperation as fundamental elements which are also the bases of all the networks created by civil society organisations, as the best way to accomplish social change is by joining efforts with others.

Challenges

But “joining efforts” is easier said than done - particularly in our intricate region. There are many challenges to regional networking and maybe the first such challenge comes from a low level of “regional awareness”: the geo-political limits of the Black Sea region are not clearly determined and the people of the region rarely “see” the region, in spite of our common historical and cultural legacy. Civil society is still thin and feeble in many countries and their leaders only rarely go beyond the immediate need to consider joining efforts at a transnational and regional level in order to accomplish a more ambitious and geographically extended social change agenda.

A second challenge, connected to this low level of regional awareness, is the scarce knowledge about the work and the role of the regional bodies such as BSEC or PABSEC. Very few NGO professionals (let alone the average citizens) are aware that BSEC is the only treaty-based inter-governmental organisation in the region and very few are ready to tap into its potential. Therefore, the support and involvement of this organisation and of its related bodies is rarely harnessed to regional projects, so that its potentially valuable presence in the region is inadequately weighed and it is far too often under-utilized.

Thirdly, the level of cooperation among the regional actors themselves is, for opaque reasons, rather limited. The only treaty-based organisation in the region (BSEC) is somehow (but not strategically) related with the only Black Sea NGO Forum in the region or with the only dedicated donor for regional projects (the Black Sea Trust for Regional Cooperation), while the only inter-parliamentary assembly in the region (PABSEC) remains largely disconnected from civil society and citizen movements. Each of these actors might have its own vision for the future and its own means to lead the way towards that vision, but the lack of strategic cooperation among them is a challenge that needs to be... challenged.

Finally, an important challenge faced by regional networking is the very weakness of the civil society organisations in the area, defined in terms of: institutional sustainability beyond foreign donors' support and their power to influence public policy through systemic advocacy mechanisms that go beyond the personalized efforts of a few civil society leaders.

Opportunities

It is important to acknowledge the challenges, but there are also many opportunities that should be harnessed to the efforts of strengthening the regional networks. One of these opportunities is represented by the emergence of a new “breed” of European donors, the so-called “new EU donors” (the 12 countries which joined the EU in 2005 and 2007). These new donors join the donor community at a particular time in the history of development thinking when many analysts raise their voices against the dominant development discourse and claim that “development is dead” or it should be so. Moreover, they themselves have been, until very recently, recipients of development aid and these two factors combined (along with others that space does not allow to be mentioned here) make them profess different (if not new) development thinking. Equally important, the priority countries of the new EU donors are in our region and they are willing to help creating a stronger bridge between the EU and the region, at a time when the EU is the biggest collective donor and perhaps one of the most democracy-oriented donor in the world. A second opportunity is represented by the growing network of young “Black Sea region” experts created through the Black Sea Young Reformers

Fellowship program, as well as a growing European political will to engage the region (ex. the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership).

A model of engagement

ChildPact – the Regional Coalition for Child Protection in the Wider Black Sea Area¹⁸ – is a vivid example of what joint efforts can lead to. Having a membership basis of over 600 NGOs from Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Kosovo¹⁹, Moldova, Romania and Serbia, ChildPact aims to represent the interests of more than 500,000 vulnerable children in the wider Black Sea area in policy debates at national, regional and international levels.

ChildPact is a coalition of coalitions and its model of engagement in the region is based on three innovative aspects: collaboration with the regional bodies and initiatives (BSEC, PABSEC, ICBSS, the Black Sea Young Reformers Fellowship Program); the acknowledgement that investment (and more than that: strategic investment) is needed; the effort of reaching out to a wide range of regional, national and European actors.

From its early beginnings, ChildPact aimed to collaborate with the regional bodies, in particular BSEC, as the only treaty-based intergovernmental entity in the region. The Black Sea NGO Forum, an yearly event taking place in Bucharest (with support from the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the European Commission), offered a very useful platform in this sense: it was in this context that ChildPact leaders had an opportunity to learn about BSEC, its related bodies and the influence that these bodies have in the region. At the 2011 gathering of the Forum, the ChildPact leaders learned about PABSEC's forthcoming Recommendation in the field of child protection and took the opportunity to present the PABSEC Secretariat with ChildPact's position in this field²⁰. As a result in March 2012 ChildPact was invited to participate at the 37th meeting of the PABSEC Educational, Cultural and Social Affairs Committee in Sofia (Bulgaria). At this meeting the ChildPact representatives (George Bogdanov as Executive Director of the Bulgarian National Network for Children and Mirela Oprea as ChildPact Secretary General) argued that: a. the next phase for child protection reform in the region should be based on a regional effort to scale up successful services and to expand expert cooperation to build jointly on lessons learnt; b. investing in the future human capital (i.e. children) is not only a moral duty, but a very tangible prerequisite for economic growth and social stability across the region.

The Recommendation 127/2012 on Child Protection in the BSEC Member States acknowledged ChildPact's contribution and it was adopted at PABSEC's General Assembly in

¹⁸ ChildPact's official website: www.childpact.org

¹⁹ This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UN Security Council resolution 1244 and the International Court of Justice's opinion on Kosovo 2008 declaration of independence.

²⁰ ChildPact is grateful to Ambassador Traian Chebeleu and to PABSEC Secretariat staff (in particular Mrs. Evgenia Strati) for their wonderful support through the process.

2012²¹. For ChildPact this was the beginning of a series of activities meant to build awareness about the Recommendation and build on its progressive ideas (such as: building a regional trust for children). At the 2012 gathering of the Black Sea Forum ChildPact convened a special panel to analyse the options for the actual implementation of the PABSEC Recommendation 127/2012, and in particular the idea of strengthening regional cooperation for child protection in the region and building a regional trust for children to make such cooperation possible. BSEC's Deputy Secretary General²², four members of the BSEC Parliamentary Assembly (PABSEC)²³ and various representatives of the diplomatic and civil society community participated at this panel, discussing the role (or potential roles) of national parliaments, civil society and BSEC in improving children's lives across the region. The panel reached consensus on the need to strengthen regional cooperation in the field of child protection, based on the shared legacies from the past as well as current trends of child vulnerability²⁴.

Acknowledging ChildPact's role in promoting Recommendation 127/2012 ChildPact was extended an invitation to participate and address the 40th PABSEC General Assembly in one of the very few occasions (if not the first one) when a representative of a regional network had the privilege to address the General Assembly²⁵. In its speech, ChildPact's Secretary General emphasized the need for PABSEC Recommendation 127/2012 to be implemented and made reality²⁶. The ChildPact Secretary General showed that the principle of regional cooperation in the field of child protection and the idea of creating a funding instrument to support it are commendable, but only if they acquire implications beyond the discursive level. Consequently, ChildPact's Secretary General urged the PABSEC members to support ChildPact's efforts for strengthening the regional cooperation in the field of child protection.

Encouraged by this initial success, ChildPact developed a policy brief bringing solid empirical and academic argument to show why successful child protection reform demands a regional

²¹ PABSEC Recommendation 127/2012 on Child Protection in the BSEC Member States: <http://www.childpact.org/2012/12/18/pabsec-adopts-recommendation-1272012-on-child-protection-in-the-bsec-member-states/>

²² Ambassador Traian Chebeleu.

²³ Namik Dokle, Member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Albania; Aram Manukyan, Member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia; Zhalya ALIYEVA, President of the PABSEC Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee, Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan; Elvira KOVACS, Member of the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia.

²⁴ More information and a video from ChildPact's panel at the 2012 Black Sea NGO Forum are available here: <http://www.childpact.org/2012/11/09/black-sea-ngo-forum-2012/>

²⁵ ChildPact is thankful to the PABSEC Secretariat and Mrs Zhalya Aliyeva President of the PABSEC Cultural, Educational and Social Affairs Committee and Member of the Parliament of the Republic of Azerbaijan for inviting ChildPact to address the General Assembly.

²⁶ The audio file of ChildPact's Secretary general presentation at the PABSEC General Assembly is available here: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FZe5PTJceUo>

response²⁷ and developed the idea of building a Regional Cooperation Mechanism for Child Protection, based on examples from other regions. This Regional Cooperation Mechanism for Child Protection is the focus of a new ChildPact panel at the 2013 gathering of the Black Sea NGO Forum, in an attempt to build a sustainable and viable infrastructure for strengthening regional cooperation in this field.

Another trait of ChildPact's model of engagement is represented by the acknowledgement that strategic investment is needed should a strong network be built. Based on ChildPact experience, at least two areas of strategic investment are needed: on one hand, there is the need to build solidly and sustainably the capacity of the regional network in case, and on the other hand, there is a need to build trust-based partnerships with relevant stake-holders (including donors). Building trust, reaching consensus and making joint, democratic decisions are crucial to ensure the active involvement of all network members, but these are not only a matter of goodwill and negotiations skills existing or not within the network. To build trust, reach consensus and work democratically requires resources that very often are difficult to raise, particularly in a risk-averse philanthropic culture where individual and institutional donors require instant results of the kind that go way beyond their investment. Shaping relevant partnerships with donors, civil society representatives and political bodies requires a long-term strategy that involves face-to-face meetings, participation to regional and European conferences, and event organization. If a regional network aims to be relevant regionally it needs to constantly reach out to a wide range of regional actors. For ChildPact such regional actors are: the BSEC and its related bodies (PABSEC and ICBSS), the European Commission, the national governments with a policy orientation towards the Black Sea region, the new EU Member States (in particular Romania), the Black Sea Young Reformers Fellowship program, etc.

Advocating for regional cooperation: creating a regional cooperation mechanism for child protection

In the past 20 years, governments in the wider Black Sea area have worked to reform their child welfare and protection systems. With the help of donors and members of civil society, governments introduced new legal frameworks, built institutional capacity and tested new community based services. However, reforms have been incomplete in all countries throughout the region. In countries yielding substantial economic growth or in those recovering from situations of conflict, significant numbers of children still fall vulnerable to institutionalisation, trafficking, labour, exclusion, violence and neglect. Nowadays, recent reports and empirical evidence show that in the wider Black Sea area the number of vulnerable children is increasing while the number of children in the general population has decreased sharply in the past 20 years.

Across the world, regional cooperation started to impose itself as a necessity to tackle regional challenges that one nation cannot solve on its own. Examples of collaborative efforts include food and health regulations to prevent the spread of disease and joint capacity

²⁷ This brief is available at: <http://www.childpact.org/2013/07/01/regional-cooperation-in-the-wider-black-sea-area-why-successful-child-protection-demands-a-regional-response/>

building programs to enable cross-border responses to natural and man-made disasters. Similarly, ChildPact believes that if employed correctly, regional cooperation can change the lives of millions of the most vulnerable children across the wider Black Sea area. Because the combination of knowledge, resources, capacity and ambition are necessary to significantly help the most vulnerable children in our region are not found within one state, a cooperative approach could change the story for our most cherished and yet most vulnerable class of citizens.

For these reasons, ChildPact supports the idea of a regional cooperation mechanism to be established. Such a mechanism is proposed with a view to: (1) reduce the number of children exploited through various forms of child labour (including illicit activities such as begging, scavenging, drug dealing, etc.) – because child labour robs children of educational opportunities, creating generations of illiterate, unskilled adults; (2) decrease the number of children who live in residential care institutions (orphanages) because children who grow up in institutions face serious difficulties to integrate socially and most of them are likely to become consumers of social services and law offenders (begging, stealing, drug abuse/dealing, prostitution, trafficking, crime); (3) reduce the negative effects of migration on children “left behind” by parents who move abroad in search of better opportunities - children who are left behind become vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and trafficking, with short and long term negative consequences, often requiring the complex intervention and support of specialized services; (4) increase the number of disabled children who go to school and end their discrimination in any educational and social setting – these children are entitled to lead a normal life.

At the same time, regional cooperation for child protection is likely to take advantage of economies of scale since it provides a platform for small states to share scarce resources and to access capacity and expertise unavailable at the local level. Given the pressing needs, similar situations and limited resources for child protection, regional think tanks and training centres could provide high value for countries not able to fund or establish such centres on their own. Thus, the opportunity to leverage the national assets and resources through regional cooperation should not be wasted in a time of economic hardship and growing need.

Furthermore, when cooperating at a regional level, there is an obvious comparative advantage in pooling expertise and resources. Thus, the ability to create effective strategies to respond to region-wide issues that face children becomes an essential asset for impact. At the same time, each country possesses a comparative advantage on the way it responds to child vulnerability; its political system, infrastructure, capacity, resources or even progress-to-date all impact and individualize a government's current response to child protection. Consider all these advantages replicated at a regional level – once again, the impact of change is meant to be more efficient.

Considering the fact that child rights and their protection is the most uncontroversial issue in the region and that every government in the wider Black Sea area has signed the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, regional cooperation for child protection can build trust for greater collaborative engagement. As a non-sensitive issue, regional cooperation on child protection opens the door to new relationships and trust between governments. Opportunities to pursue peace and greater security in the region should start with children.

Chapter 12

The Current State and the Future of the Cooperation in the Black Sea Region – Bulgarian View

Todor Petrov (Bulgaria), Desk Officer for Greece & Cyprus, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria

Distinguished Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a privilege to participate in today's meeting which provides a valuable possibility to exchange views on the current state and the future of the cooperation in the Black Sea region. I would like to take this opportunity to express deep appreciation to our esteemed hosts, Dr. Zefi Dimadama and her team, for the excellent organization and for the warm hospitality rendered to us here in the beautiful city of Athens.

Since its establishment 21 years ago the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation has been playing an important role in promoting the security, political and economic stability in the region. Our organization enters its third decade of existence equipped with the new Economic Agenda which sets guidelines for enhanced partnership for the next ten years. In our view it constitutes a good basis for developing a more effective and project-oriented cooperation, and sets out a new vision for the role and strategy of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation. It also provides for the strengthening of the BSEC-BSEC interaction.

Bulgaria shares the opinion that despite the existing differences of approaches among BSEC member-states there is a huge potential for furthering our regional cooperation, and enhancing its effectiveness. We all agree on the importance of strengthening the project-oriented approach of our Organization through the development and implementation of viable projects and initiatives which would bring measurable results for our economies and tangible benefits to the citizens of our countries. In this respect, let me reiterate the key significance of the implementation of the two memorandums in the field of transport infrastructure – the Black Sea Ring Highway and the Motorways of the Sea. Being fully aware of the importance of these high-impact projects for the increase of trade and investments in the region, Bulgaria remains committed to their realization.

Let me shortly touch upon some of the other priority areas of cooperation we consider of high importance:

In the field of **energy cooperation** – we need to continue our efforts for the creation of Black Sea regional energy market, including the construction of the necessary energy structure and harmonization of the legal basis of the member-states. The first step in this direction is to

carry out a comparative study of the national energy strategies and the respective legal framework in which they function. The next step would be to elaborate and adopt the necessary regulatory framework for the establishment of this strategic market.

Combating organized crime and terrorism is another key area of cooperation – being at the crossroads of global routes, our region needs establishing common approaches and methods to fight all forms of organized crime and terrorism on regional basis. The Joint Declaration on Combating transnational crimes is a step in the right direction.

Bulgaria supports the regional approach to global issues, such as **environment and climate change**, and is committed to continue the work the implementation of the Joint Belgrade Declaration on Climate Change and Green Economy which is the BSEC contribution to Rio + 20 objectives.

Dear Colleagues,

There is a shared understanding of the importance of strengthening the cooperation between the EU and BSEC. We see a significant potential for enhancing this cooperation in the fields of energy, environment, transport, integrated maritime policy and fishery and others. Building on the experience of common projects, BSEC and EU could engage in even deeper relations in the framework of the future Black Sea Strategy. We believe that the partner countries from the region (all of them members of BSEC) should also be involved, through consultations, in shaping this European strategy.

We consider the regular dialogue between the EU and the BSEC to be an important policy exchange instrument. Being an EU member, and a BSEC co-founding state, Bulgaria will spare no effort to promote the closer BSEC-EU interaction, and a comprehensive EU involvement in the region.

Taking advantage of the recognition of the growing significance and potential of the wider Black Sea region by the international factors and especially by the EU is of priority interest for the BSEC Member States.

In this respect, improving the sustainability and efficiency of BSEC, developing the regional cooperation in all its dimensions, as well as enhancing interaction with other international organizations and initiatives is instrumental.

Last, but not least, this year we mark the 20th anniversary of the establishment of one of the Related Bodies of BSEC - the Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC). Bulgaria highly values the role of PABSEC for the development of the regional cooperation process. I am particularly pleased to mention that in the beginning of July Bulgarian National Assembly, in its capacity of rotating president, will host the next session of the Parliamentary Assembly of BSEC (PABSEC).

Thank you.

Chapter 13

sHRategy: The importance of the strategic approach in human resources management

Rebecca Pitsika (Greece), Career Management Expert, CEO, People for Business

Abstract

In the contemporary word of continuous changes, there is more than ever a strong need for change. In order to develop, it is important to make the change happen by choice and not by chance, to form a specific strategy. Although we are used to apply strategy for business and corporate development, we should not forget about people. Talented people are the heart and mind of each and every corporation; it is them who thing, come up with ideas, create, innovate and add the real value to corporations, to economy to society. People are the real Capital, the Human Capital. A solid human resources strategy – a sHRategy – is a tool that contributes to reach corporate goals, to increase cost efficiency, to ensure a corporate environment in order to maximize productivity, to align individual with corporate goals and to ensure financial results. It can be applied to all kind of corporations and organizations, as it is not linked with the size, the business scope, the corporate structure or the knowhow. All that requires is realizing the need for change and commitment to corporate success. A key element for a successful implementation is the absence of any kind of discriminations, especially regarding sex. Women and Men have different competences, but complementary ones, all required to reach corporate goals. Finally, NGO's can also play a key role in a strategic approach in human resources management, due to their civil oriented nature.

In the contemporary word of continuous changes, there is more than ever a strong need for

- Innovation
- Restructuring
- Streamline
- Development
- Extroversion

In other words, there is a strong need for change. All we knew, the way we acted, we were thinking, we were producing results is over. Economies have changed – some of them are almost collapsed – while new data are on stage. We have to learn how to act in a different way, in order to be effective and produce results responding to contemporary needs.

Change is a matter of fact, it is more than evidence. But the question is if this will happen by chance or by choice.

If it happens by chance, then it is possible not to have the control of the result, to follow and not to lead. “If we fail to plan, then we plan to fail”. Declining results are most likely to follow, as companies' unsuccessful stories prove.

So, it is absolutely necessary to make change happen by choice – to be our choice. That is why we need a clear and specific strategy.

But what is a strategy? The word is produced by two Greek words: “stratos - στρατός” (meaning “Army”) and “ago - ἄγω” (meaning “Lead”) In other words, strategy means the way we mostly lead people, using specific techniques, to produce the desirable results.

We usually apply strategy for business development- we use resources, we take into consideration the corporate environment and the external factors, in order to form and to reach corporate goals.

Therefore, in order to form the corporate strategy, we think of the environment, the resources, the goals, but what about People?

Businesses needs people – not just people, but talented people. Why? Just because technology, materials, natural resources, buildings, infrastructure, equipment cannot produce innovation by themselves. It is People, who think and come up with ideas, who produce and add the real value.

This is why we have moved from the point of just matching people with specific jobs to the point of matching them with corporations, with culture, values, vision. Due to the rapid way of change, we need people able to adapt, to be flexible, agile, to produce new ideas, to innovate and why not, to lead the change?

People is the heart and mind of every company, corporation, NGO, public or private. **People are the core part of every society, especially of every civil society. People are a capital, the Human Capital.**

So, we need a **solid and strong Human Resources Strategy**, aligned with corporate goals, in order to achieve the corporate success. This is the only proven way not just to survive, but to gain a leading position in the market, to be developed in the long run, on a concrete basis.

A solid Human Resource Strategy is normally performed to help companies and organizations best meet the needs and expectations of their employees while promoting and working towards achieving corporate goals.

A solid Human Resource Strategy also deals with any aspects of the corporation that affect the employees, including employee hiring and firing, employee pay, their benefits, training, and administration issues of the employees.

A solid Human Resource Strategy also provides work the incentives to employees, safety information, sick leaves and catering for vacation issues of the employees.

A solid Human Resource Strategy is also concerned with the proactive management of an organization's workforce or employees. It requires thinking ahead leading and also putting up ways for a company to better meet its employee's needs and vice versa for the employees. Strategic human resource management influences the way in which things are done in the organization including training, hiring and firing employees.

A solid Human Resource Strategy helps corporations work hard to meet the needs of their employees and cultivate a work atmosphere conducive for production purposes. It can help

to improve the skilled employees working rate. It also helps an organization to improve the employee retention and help reduce spending on the hiring and training new employees.

It is also important to mention that a solid Human Resource Strategy helps to reduce the costs for the organizations and thus earn them a competitive advantage.

It also plays an important role of identifying and analyzing the external opportunities and the threats that may impede the company's performance. It also helps the organization to be a prospective one rather than just focusing in the present.

A solid Human Resource Strategy also helps the organization focus on its business and ensure consistency in its performance, putting together resources to ensure collective achievement of organizational goals, utilizing their potential to the firm's advantage, using other resources of the organization like finances to ensure achievement of organizational goals.

A solid Human Resource Strategy contributes to translate the business strategies into the human resource practices which helps in turn the business to adapt to changes. This is because the time from the conception of the strategy to the execution of a strategy is shortened. It also helps the business to better meet its customer demands. Strategic human resource management helps the business achieve its financial performance through effective strategy execution.

A Human Resources Strategy – or sHRategy – does not depend on a specific corporate size, business scope, structure or know how. It should be applied on a corporation – public or private- of 10 persons to thousands, on a local or multinational environment, in every sector: energy, FMCG, banks, pharmaceuticals, services, family, private, public, NGO's, universities, national or multinational ones.

Besides, there are a large number of effective Human Resources management models that may be chosen, based on specific needs, culture and goals:

- Generalist
- Business Partners
- e- HR
- Performance based
- Personnel and Administration
- Outsourced
- Centers of Excellence
- KPI's based

In order to form and apply a successful sHRategy model, we just need:

- Real and deep will to change, being convinced about the value of it, being agile
- Clear, smart and specific corporate goals – to know exactly what to reach, what is the destination
- Clear and specific vision – to plan the future and being prepared for it

The methodology is structured and simple, based on specific techniques and subsequent steps:

- Why there is a need to change
- To identify the corporate vision

- To specify corporate goals
- To form the specific sHRategy

sHRategy affects all the aspects of the Human Capital Management:

- Recruitment
- Development
- Compensation
- Coaching
- Training
- Payroll
- Job Roles
- Metrics
- Appraisals
- Retention
- Talent Management

All in one in a simple cycle, as they all tightly connected – they are all parts of the same chain. Of course, we can focus more or less to one part, based on our needs, culture and goals, but we cannot forget about the whole one.

The key element to success is a balance between women and men. Women and Men are not the one opposite to the other; they have different but complementary skills and competences. Their combination is a key element to achieve goals. On top of that, we really need the whole talent pool, without any discrimination, in order to be efficient and to maximize the utilization of it. We need to use all skills, competence, abilities. In a world with strong demographic changes, by discriminations – by any kind of it – we eliminate potentiality. And the real question is why to put such limitations, why limit potentiality to succeed?

We need to count on competences – and just on it. We need to think out of the box, beyond stereotypes, personal or physical characteristics. We need to change culture in the long run, even throughout career reorientation, based on sex characteristics. Competences are the only ones we need to invest on, to use, to exploit, to maximize, in order to get the maximize the value of the Human Capital, in a civil society.

After all, it is not a women or men's world – we are together to achieve common goals. sHRategy aims to develop human competences – not male or female ones! – to help all parts to reach the desirable target.

NGO's in civil societies can also play a strategic role in the application of Human Resources strategies, as by nature they are society oriented, no matter their core business. They could act a key stake holder to empower civil society, to initiate and drive innovative social change. They can provide useful information and support from the initial stage of career orientation linked with the educational system till the creation of an effective strategic human resources management of public and private resources, linked with the long term fiscal and trade policy. State policies, linked with jobs, labor costs, career reorientation, and competence development are areas where NGO's can have a significant partnership role.

sHRategy is not just a theoretical tool; it is a profitable and of great importance tool when put into practice. It should be pursued to the limits and - at the end of the day - **it is a prospective investment that is not worth ignoring.**

Chapter 14

A Social opening of the Black Sea region?

Mariana Semenyshyn (Ukraine), MA in Russian, Central and East Studies, University of Glasgow, Intern at the ICBSS, June-August 2013

This report presents a short overview of social media potential for the Black Sea area, focusing on the representation of the Black Sea as a region in social networks and conducting a research in the region using social media tools.

Nowadays, social media are confidently expanding its audience and spheres of application. From instrument of narrowly informal communication social media turned to be a powerful tool of spreading information, conducting research, advertising, and mass mobilization. “Arab Spring” opened the sequence of other events where “social” element gained a crucial importance, such as: democratic protests in Russia (2011-2012) and July events in Turkey. On the other hand, social media potential for marketing purposes has already been acknowledged by a number of companies which integrated social media into their strategy and successfully outperformed their competitors²⁸. Moreover, social media is gaining popularity among social science scholars who are adjusting research methods to current trends²⁹. In the light of abovementioned developments, here, I would like to discuss some prospects of the social media usage in the Black Sea region, mainly, for the purposes of conducting research in the region, promoting the concept of the Black Sea as a region, as well as an institutional activity within the area.

For the purposes of this report, I use the next definition of social media “technologies that facilitate social interaction, make possible collaboration, and enable deliberation across stakeholders”³⁰. Thus, social media tools are represented but not exclusively by Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Flickr, YouTube, Google+. However, data used in this report is limited to Facebook and Twitter. Here, by “Black sea region” I mean “wider” Black sea area represented by twelve member states of the Organization for Black Sea Economic Cooperation.

Despite the fact that events in Russia and Turkey demonstrated an extreme popularity and mobilizing potential of social networks in two largest Black Sea countries, Black sea region as

²⁸ Burgin and Chui, 2010; Shearman, 2011 cited in M., Corstjens, A., Umblijs, The Power of Evil: The Damage of Negative Social Media Strongly Outweigh Positive Contributions, Journal of Advertising Research, 2012, Vol. 52, p. 433

²⁹ G., Blank, Blurring the boundaries: New social media, new social science, International Journal of Market Research Vol. 55, Issue 3, pp. 461-64

³⁰ T., Bryer, S., Zavattaro, 2011, cited in T., Bryer, Designing Social Media Strategies for Effective Citizen Engagement. A Case Example and Model, National Civic Review, 2013, Volume 102, Issue, p. 45

a whole is poorly represented in social networks. For example, organizations pursuing their activities in the Black Sea area, related institutions of the BSEC and civil initiatives acting in the region, demonstrate an extremely low activity in social networks. Thus, official page of the BSEC gathered 131 “likes”, Black Sea Trade and Development Bank (one of the most active bodies of the BSEC) – 25 “likes”, UNDP Black Sea – 51 “likes”. Moreover, these institutions are not represented in other social media, including Twitter. At the same time, groups of activists, researches and professionals working in the region, such as the “Black Sea Young Reformers”, “Black Sea – Danube Regional Innovation Network”, “Black Sea Peacebuilding Platform Initiative” remain largely a platform for news sharing, but are deprived of active debating or discussion.

One can see such “dormant” activity of the regional institutions and initiatives strange, especially, if we take into account recent study of Twiplomacy, indicating that Ukrainian Government (Twitter account @Kabmin_UA) is among top-5 among most active leaders on Twitter, Turkish president and prime-minister (@cbabdullahgul and @RT_Erdogan) are fourth and fifth among the most followed world leaders³¹. Russia and Turkey are in the top-20 countries in terms of Twitter accounts³². The total number of Facebook accounts registered only in littoral Black Sea states is more than 50 million³³.

On the other hand, this could be explained by rather fragmental and largely declarative activity of governmental and non-governmental institutions established in the Black Sea area. Numerous initiatives introduced by the Black Sea states, as well as by international actors (such as EU's “Black Sea Synergy”) remain unknown for the wider public and, thus, do not stimulate a big interest among the users of social networks. Moreover, the idea of “Black Sea regional identity” is ill-developed, some analysts even question whether the Black Sea area is region at all, arguing that it is not seen as such from the outside (by the international community), nor from inside (by the Black Sea countries themselves)³⁴. These factors influence the level of “popularity” of regional organizations (initiatives) in social networks. However, they do not fully explain the low activity or, in some cases, ignorance of social media showed by regional governmental/non-governmental stakeholders in times when institutions across the world creates accounts in all possible social networks promoting their activity.

In addition to the abovementioned, social media could be a useful tool for the conducting research. Here, I will summarize advantages and disadvantages of the conducting research

³¹ Twiplomacy: Twiplomacy.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Top5_infographic_final.png

³² East-West Digital News: www.ewdn.com/2012/02/06/Russian-twitter-users-triple-in-one-year/

³³ Socialbakers: <http://www.socialbakers.com/facebook-statistics/>

³⁴ M., Aydin, Regional cooperation in the Black Sea and the role of institutions, *Perceptions*, 2005, Autumn, p. 59

using social media described by Dr. Grant Blank in his article³⁵ and analyze challenges for this research method taking into account realities of the Black Sea region.

First of all, taking into account that the data collected in social media networks is already in digital form, it is easy to collect, store, and prepare it for statistical analysis. Secondly, since “the social media often record actual behavior or actual communication in the form of Tweets, emails or blog posts, so researchers do not have to depend on self-reports and the uncertain memory of respondents”³⁶. It increases the reliability of data collected. Moreover, large share of population covered by social media enables researches to study different subgroups. However, social media research tool possess a number of weaknesses. First of all, it is the question of ethics. Weak anonymity in social media could pose some problems to the data collection. Secondly, reliability of information about the respondents (age, nationality, gender) could not be verified in some cases. Thirdly, despite the high level of social media penetration, researches should always take into account those people who are not represented in social media.

Conducting research in the Black Sea region with a help of social media tools will pose some additional challenges. First of all, Internet penetration in the region remains relatively low, ranging from 28.3 % internet users in Georgia to 60.6 in Armenia³⁷. Moreover, users registered in social networks could not proportionately display the country's population. For example, Ukraine with a population of nearly 45 million people has 2.3 Facebook users, whereas Bulgaria with a population of 7 million people is represented by 2.5 users³⁸. Language used by social media users in the Black Sea region could also pose some obstacles for researches. Especially problematic could be Russian-language internet which is relatively isolated from the global internet. As Markku Lonkila argues, “the development has shaped Russian blogosphere into a relatively closed cultural community of Russian-speaking diaspora around the world”³⁹.

Despite the surge of on-line activism in the Black Sea region, social media remain largely underestimated by regional governmental and non-governmental initiatives. However, it could only facilitate interaction and networking within the region and contribute to the development of Black Sea regional identity. In terms of social media as a method of social sciences research, Black Sea region remains one of the most interesting, especially taking into account recent developments, however complicated, area where researches will face a number of difficulties. However, they do not diminish the potential for the social media based research in the region.

³⁵ G., Blank, Blurring the boundaries: New social media, new social science, *International Journal of Market Research* Vol. 55 Issue 3, pp. 461-64

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Internetworldstats: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/>

³⁸ Socialbakers: www.socialbakers.com

³⁹ M., Lonkila, The Role of Social Media in the Moscow Opposition Demonstrations in December 2011, FIIA Briefing Paper 98, February 2012, p. 4

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Chapter 16

The Role of Civil Society in Promotion of Human Security

Attiq Ur-Rehman (Pakistan), Senior Instructor in International Relations Department, NUML, Islamabad

Presently, it is difficult to separate the global network of civil society organizations from the international political system wherein states are constantly developing the lethal weapons along with the devastating devices against each other for the maximization of their existing spheres of influence. The role of civil society has become significant in contemporary international system, because the civil society networks always prefer the human security over the traditional domains of state security. Therefore, the proponents of civil society support the safety and security of human rights instead of supporting the culture of strategic clashes between states, which ultimately cause bloodshed between or within states. Therefore, civil society tries to protect the human right while protecting the humans across the territorial borders of states, but still the emerging clashes between states are fabricating internationally an ambiguous security environment, in which states are cultivating toxic relations against each other. As a result, the international campaigns of human rights have challenged the traditional wisdom of security while advocating the notion of human security. Therefore, the central theme of this short and comprehensive piece of writing is to highlight the significance of human security by highlighting the role of civil society in promoting the human rights.

The age of twenty-first century along with the emergence of globalization has shifted the mankind into an entirely new domain of security where the unthinkable and unimaginable security challenges have encircled all nations, and all states are trying to overcome their deficiencies before the new facets of security threats. The escape from the contemporary threatening face of international system is impossible to manage because all states are equally vulnerable before the contemporary transitional security threats, which includes the degrading environment (climate change and global warming), scarcity of energy resources, food inflation, uncontrolled population growth, cyber-crimes, rocketing levels of poverty and unemployment etc. The security threats of globalization have caused the awful occurrence of social unrest, political instabilities and economic crisis, which are no more abnormal and unusual happenings for states. Contrast to the traditional values of security which usually refer to the defending of territorial borders from external threats, the concept of human security deals the security of individuals. Therefore, the role of civil society in highlighting the issues of human security is difficult to ignore today because it is busy in engaging the policymakers while they are addressing the issues pertinent to the interest of the citizens. In this way, the primary purpose of this work is to highlight the significance of human security and the role of civil society in promoting the campaign for the security and protection of human values.

What is Human Security?

It is essential to understand the basic notion of human security before developing its association with civil society organizations. Primarily, there are two concepts regarding the conceptual foundations of human security. At narrow level, the security of humans means the protection of individuals from violent threats. On the other hand, the border version of human security deals the security from different threats such as epidemic diseases, hunger, pollution etc⁴⁰. In other words, human security leads toward the defense of human right, protection of human rights activities and engagement in a process for human rights enforcement⁴¹. In collective sense, the traditional concept of security has been theoretically extended in the presence of new security threats which are particularly non-traditional in nature. In this way, safety and security of citizens under human security has become an undeniable reality for every state.

Safeguarding the people in the prevailing insecurities always refers to prioritizing the human security over the traditional domains of security because the advocates of human security always focus individual values in the broader framework of security while promoting the democratic culture. The elevation of an international culture containing the ideas of justice, human rights, freedom of speech, right of self-determination and political freedom can ultimately ensure the human security. The prevention of illiteracy, culture of inequality and lack of transparency are also helpful in establishing the norms of human security. In post 9/11 world, the human rights violation has become the issue of immense importance under the ongoing forces of terrorism and the US-led war on terror. Such patterns of world politics have undermined the attributes of human security globally. As a result, the problems of refugees and Internally Displaced People (IDPs), germinating from war consequences, have become the focus of attention of leading world's human rights organizations like Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch etc.

In the contemporary international system, the traditional practices of maintaining the opposing forces against each other are difficult to erode from the strategic thinking of states and their leaders. The antagonistic ideologies of leaders are hindering the human security by separating the social, political and economic quarters from other states. The advancement of such an unsympathetic environment is fabricating an intimidating and hostile culture between states and around the globe, while undermining the ongoing diplomatic efforts. In this way, the contemporary world is rapidly approaching towards an anarchical and chaotic system which needs serious attention. In such a distressing international environment, civil society has gained prominence in highlighting the agenda of human security.

⁴⁰ "Human Security Background," Human Security Report Project, <http://www.hsrgroup.org/press-room/human-security-backgroundunder.aspx> (accessed on July 20, 2013).

⁴¹ Monica den Boer and Jaap de Wilde, *The Viability of Human Security* (Amsterdam, Amsterdam University Press, 2008), 182.

Role of Civil Society

The phenomenon of civil society has become very prominent among state citizens, diplomats, politicians, social campaigners, academicians, international agencies and NGOs. The fundamental objective of civil society is to manifest human security internationally. Investing the human development and providing the international organizations like UN a clear mandate for the promotion and advancement of the agenda of human security. In this way, the connection between civil society and human security has brought many changes on the surface of the earth. The active and vibrant performance of civil society has introduced number of new strategies for the safety and security of human rights and public security⁴².

With the efforts of global civil society, the issues of securing the human values have become one of the serious problems at the international realm. Human security needed to be preferred over the limited scope of traditional security in international political system. The promotion of international culture of human rights instead of advancement of weapons and militarization is becoming a global agenda with the efforts of civil society. In the presence of transitional network of civil society organizations and NGOs, there is need for adopting a universally comprehensive and rational approach for the protection of social, economic, political and environmental rights of the people. In this way, the development of international system will be attained if the humans living on planet will be free from all types of fears. In this regard, the effective network of civil society organizations can play an effective role.

Engaging the international community in international cooperative initiatives by taking appropriate measures for the promotion of human security is an immediate demand of present time, which can only be possible in the presence of global network of civil society. In this regard, the consistency of transnational network of civil society coupled with advocacy of change can change the traditional wisdom of states inherited by strategic differences against each other. The collective decision making mechanism like, UN, EU, needed to be expanded across the globe. The regional and global integration models should be promoted internationally in order to create a worldwide cooperative system of shared values. Ultimately, the protection of human values can forecast a more secure and prosperous future because it must be cleared that the security of citizens across the borders can advance the global security.

⁴² Ira C. Colby et al, *Social Work and Social Policy: Advancing the Principles of Economic and Social Justice* (New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2013), 76.

Conclusion

The safeguarding of human rights has become the tragedy of the commoners. The issues of human rights violations have reached its zenith. Points to be worried about are various with varying values for all states. There are number of questions which need serious international attention. They are:

- Are we able to advance a technologically developed international system by controlling the environment degrading factors?
- Can we develop a world of cooperative boundaries instead of world of strategic clashes?
- Are we powerful enough to overcome the widening gaps in the international system by controlling the overwhelming effects of economic crisis, social unrest and political instabilities?
- Are we sufficiently competent to secure the humans residing on our planet?

In short, an active global network of civil society has sufficient potential to bring change by developing a system of shared values and common interest beyond the territorial boundaries of states. The efficient work of NGOs and policy makers of states can explore the reasonable avenues for future cooperation at global level, because international cooperation is the only viable and applicable option. Consequently, the active and vibrant role of civil society organizations can formulate a nexus between civil society or human security organizations and state governments which can effectively work on denouncing the dehumanization and marginalization of citizens of all states.

Chapter 17

Social innovation in the EU and the Black Sea region: trends, challenges and opportunities

Anna Visvizi (Greece), Political and economic analyst, Associate Professor, DERE - The American College of Greece

Abstract

The objective of this paper is to dwell on challenges and opportunities inherent in social innovation seen as a (policy) field and from this perspective to explore the EU's ability to capitalize on it, also with regard to its eastern neighbours. To this end, the definition of social innovation is critically discussed against the background of historical connotations of the concept. It is argued that although the EU, the “normative power”, is naturally predisposed to effectively engage with this policy-field, it is necessary to realize that social innovation in the EU remains a function of broader policy-frameworks designed at national- and at the EU-level (where relevant). Since for social innovation to be efficient private sector involvement is necessary, a case is made for the state, and for the EU respectively, to assume the role of a smart regulator that generates incentives for private agents to get more actively involved with social innovation in the EU.

Introduction

There is little consensus in the literature about the meaning of social innovation. This fact suggests that, on the one hand, social innovation is an emerging field of socio-scientific enquiry and, on the other hand, that it is a practice-led field. For the purpose of the discussion in this paper, the concept of social innovation shall be defined as representing “new solutions (products, services, models, markets, processes etc.) that simultaneously meet a social need (more effectively than existing solutions) and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and better use of assets and resources” (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012: 18). In this view, social innovation acquires the attribute of empowerment, because it enhances the society's capacity to act by fostering the development of largely unexplored linkages across different sectors of the economy to the benefit of the society at large. Social innovation can take diverse forms ranging from (new) products, services, processes, through markets, platforms (frameworks), to new organizational forms and new business models.

Given the breadth of the definition provided above as well as its emphasis on empowerment and the production of new relationships, examples of social innovation could be as diverse as washing machine, bicycle, boy-scouts and international organizations, e.g. the International Monetary Fund. In its most frequent usage though, social innovation tends to be applied to refer to initiatives such as microfinance, fair trade, new models of eldercare, preventative interventions in health and criminal justice, co-production, and online platforms which enable sharing, crowd funding, mass collaboration and peer-to-peer learning.

The objective of this paper is to dwell on challenges and opportunities inherent in social innovation seen as a (policy) field and from this perspective to explore the EU's ability to capitalize on it, also with regard to its eastern neighbours. The argument is structured as follows. In the first move, the definition of social innovation is critically discussed against the background of historical connotations of the concept and its most recent application. In the next step, the specificity of the EU's approach to social innovation is explored and the major challenges inherent in it are highlighted. The subsequent part offers a brief insight into the opportunities that social innovation offers in context of the EU's broader policy-frameworks addressed to its eastern neighbours such as Eastern Partnership and Black Sea Synergy. Conclusions follow.

Revisiting the concept of social innovation

Although significant effort has been devoted recently to the discussion on the meaning, application and implications of social innovation for contemporary societies, it is important to realize that although social innovation may be a new term, it is by no means a new social phenomenon. Several prominent figures from the past, known to the average public, were in fact social innovators. Suffice it to mention Benjamin Franklin and his innovations such as the Junto Club⁴³, paper money⁴⁴, fire brigade or police force (Mumford, 2002). Another figure whose ideas benefit the society today is Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the father of the scout movement. In a similar manner, it is worth mentioning Andrew Carnegie and John D. Rockefeller Sr. Although typically conceived as philanthropists, it is more accurate to refer to their work in terms of “scientific philanthropy”. The reference to “scientific” suggests an approach to philanthropy based on an understanding that “aid and relief, when systematized, organized, and even prioritized, could make a greater difference [than traditional approaches

⁴³ “Gentleman's” Clubs: in essence a club serving as a platform for like-minded critical individuals devoted to self-discipline, personal development and through their hard-work to improving the quality of life of the society.

⁴⁴ At the core of the idea of paper money was to establish a par between paper money and land. As land scarcity coupled with growing demand for it would drive its price upward, so the value of the paper money would increase, rather than inflate.

to charity] in solving immediate problems” (Rodin, 2013). In fact, the work of both Rockefeller and Carnegie, from vaccines through public libraries to endowments for peace, education and democracy etc., were perceived not as a tool to address an ad hoc need but aimed to empower the society in a sustainable manner. In this view, it is possible to suggest a broader definition of social innovation; a definition that emphasises the goals and the broader logic behind it.

Social innovation is about changing the way things are done and social needs are conceptualised. Thus, at its core lies the notion of empowering people and therefore assisting them in improving the quality of their lives. What follows is that social innovation seeks to make people, networks, communities, and organizations resilient to unexpected events. That is, it seeks to make them better able to respond and to adapt to new circumstances (Rodin, 2013). Accordingly, social innovation as an approach seeks to improve the functioning of the existing institutions (North, 1990), be them formal, informal, social or market institutions, as a means of benefiting the society. Consequently, social innovation aims at mobilizing the unexplored potential of the economic system by facilitating new forms of cooperation, participation and financing. In particular, through the (new or alternative) relationships and modes of cooperation that it fosters, social innovation encourages building bridges across the different sectors of the economy, including the public sector, the private sector, the non-profit sector and the informal sector (Caulier-Grice et al., 2012: 26-28) capitalizing on the largely unexplored potential that emerges at the cross-section of respective sectors.

In the discussion on the various types of partnerships, the public-private partnership is said to bear the most promising potential. While quite a fashionable concept in the literature today, in fact it was first introduced in early-90s in research on the different facets of development policy in Africa (Shaw, 1993; 2004). Recent international practice suggests that public-private partnerships do produce very encouraging results, especially in the field of broadly-defined development policy (Natsios, 2009) as mechanisms facilitating progress towards inclusive growth. Likewise, the potential inherent in the private-private partnerships, i.e. including the private-sector and the non-profit or informal sectors of the economy – an issue still largely absent in the scholarly debate – should not be downplayed.

As a means of illustrating the above argument, it is useful to mention the Business for Millennium Development Goals (B4MDG) a not-for-profit organization – supported by the government of Australia – that encourages and facilitates inclusive business activities that contribute to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals. The accusations of M.Yunus – the father of the twin-concepts of microcredit and microfinance – personal integrity notwithstanding (Yunus, 2012), the benefits of these social innovations remain

⁴⁵ For an interesting and informative overview of A.Carnegie's social innovation see: <http://library.columbia.edu/locations/rbml/units/carnegie/andrew.html>

⁴⁶ For further reading see:

<http://ppp.worldbank.org/public-private-partnership/overview/ppp-objectives>

⁴⁷ For further insight see: <http://b4md.com.au/about-b4md/>

uncontested. It is also quite telling to mention the Anchonchego Programme⁴⁸, a scheme that brings together students unable to afford accommodation with elderly people who while leaving alone long for company. The winner of the European Social Innovation Competition⁴⁹ in 2011, the Anchonchego Programme offers a tiny insight into the practice social innovation on the EU-ground.

Social innovation in the EU

The European Union has a long-standing tradition of involvement with policies, programmes and initiatives aiming at empowering citizens and organisations and targeting social issues and societal challenges⁵⁰. These policies, programmes and initiatives are framed by the wide range of the EU's policy fields, incl. regional policy, common agricultural policy, consumer policy, health policy, and initiatives, such as Lisbon Strategy and now Europe 2020, to mention such as few of them. They have been designed to help national, regional and local actors and to shape socially innovative practices and new governance modes (Commission, 2010). The defining feature of social innovation in the EU is that it is seen as an approach and a (policy) field that aims at generating incentives for singular innovative initiatives to develop. In this view, "the social innovation approach is understood to mean not only a new governance mode working across traditional fields of responsibilities with an active involvement of citizens, (...) but also the culture of trust and risk-taking which is needed to promote scientific and technological innovations" (BEPA, 2010: 7).

Significant differentiation among different policy sectors, policy actors and pathways to social innovation exist in the EU. Increasingly, this variety of efforts aimed at social innovation is streamlined to deliver in a more efficient and a more visible manner. Apart from the provisions of the Lisbon Strategy and Europe 2020 initiative, this renewed commitment to social innovation transpires through recent Communications of the Commission (Commission, 2013a) and relevant Council Conclusions (Council, 2013). In this context another development that is worth mentioning is the Employment and Social Innovation Programme (EaSI). This relatively new initiative, sealed by a political agreement on June 28, 2013, is designed to provide support for the MS efforts to design and implement employment and social reforms at European, national as well as regional and local levels by means of policy coordination, identification, analysis and sharing of best practices (Commission, 2013b).

⁴⁸ For details refer to:

<https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/socialinnovationeurope/directory/organisation/aconchego-program-porto-social-foundation>

⁴⁹ Organized by DG Enterprise & Industry.

⁵⁰ These challenges include: demography (migration and ageing of the EU population); environmental trends (water, climate issues and energy); new community trends (diversity and the new community providing IT solutions; digital society); poverty-related trends (poverty, social exclusion and child poverty); trends in health and well-being (health inequities, happiness and caring); the trend of ethical goods and services (fair trade and local production).

Irrespective of hopes that social innovation awakes and regardless the potential inherent in it, several challenges still effectively affect the possibility of reaping its full benefits on the EU ground. In particular many projects and programmes remain small, under-funded, and are not sustainable. Therefore, their impact in view of the societal needs they seek to address is limited. Importantly, social innovation's potential is substantially affected due to the fact that as a field it is fragmented and dispersed across diverse EU policy-fields. As a result, funding for social innovation remains limited; at times the EU-level approach to social innovation is inconsistent, thus inefficient and rendering the EU's support for social innovation invisible. Issues of limited capacity and bottlenecks as regards implementation of specific projects should be mentioned in this context too. Execution of social innovation-related projects is equally problematic, particularly as regards the notions of financing, manufacturing, scaling up, marketing, and managing. Clearly, the issue of funding bears the most important implications for social innovation. Two issues should be highlighted in this regard.

First, several civil society actors that stay at the forefront of social innovation, e.g. NGOs, highlight the red-tape that renders access to EU funding literally impossible. Here the problem is that in many cases, the existing framework for funding requires the NGOs to commit their own funds upfront. Since this may require them to take loans, given the frequent delays in reimbursement of funds by the EU institutions, many NGOs were forced to wind-up as a result of their involvement with the EU funded programmes aimed at social innovation. From a different angle, in cases, when funding had been ensured, the problem is that the existing rules on managing the EU funds are not conducive to actual field-work aimed at addressing a given social need. Frequently, the existing rules frequently demand the tiny NGOs to reimburse the so-called technical input of experts, rather than to channel the funds to the actual delivery of the social innovation project.⁵¹

Second, indeed, “the issues of funding, governance, skills and measurement of social innovation are the most commonly raised” in the debate on obstacles to social innovation in the EU (BEPA, 2010: 10). It is also argued that Europe's finance systems are not well-suited to supporting social innovation (BEPA, 2010: 11). In particular, the most frequently upheld criticisms include regulatory, fiscal, and legal conditions as well as banking and finance regulations that make it difficult to obtain funding for the various stages of the social innovation process. This is partly due to the culture, knowledge and attitudes of financial institutions and entrepreneurs (BEPA, 2010: 7). This is why when discussing social innovation it is so important to emphasise the salience of the culture of trust and risk-taking necessary to promote scientific and technological innovations and their implications for social innovation.

Finally, and from a different vantage point, the problem of conceptual over-stretching and ideological abuse of the concept of social innovation should be mentioned. The essence of this problem is that due to the positive social connotations that this concept evokes as well as due to the variety of societal challenges that it seeks to mitigate, it falls prey to ideological abuse by some very specific political actors. The danger here is that the frequently leaning-to-the-left framing of social innovation may effectively discourage potential donors and investors from getting involved with this field of action.

⁵¹ I would like to thank the participants of the 6th International Black Sea Symposium held in Athens, July 4-7, 2013, for sharing with me their practice-driven observations on this issue.

Overall, whereas the EU, the 'normative power' (Manners, 2002), is uniquely predisposed to serve as a harbinger of novel solutions designed to further social innovation, much more has to be done to capitalize on this predisposition. In specific, on the one hand, more coordination across the EU policy fields and respective initiatives is required; on the other hand, the broader institutional framework that provides funding for social innovation needs to be rethought in view of improving its efficiency.

Social innovation, the EU and the Black Sea region

In the discussion on social innovation, the question of the EU's ability to transpose its experience in the field to the Black Sea area should be posed. Essentially, the idea and the goals behind social innovation are as valid in the Black Sea area as they are in the EU. Virtually all societal challenges that social innovation seeks to address are the same both in the EU and across the EU's 'near abroad', thus including the Black Sea basin. Therefore, it can be argued that social innovation as a (policy) field gradually will be inserted as one of the mechanisms of implementation and execution of the broader policy frameworks (e.g. European Neighbourhood Policy, incl. Eastern Partnership and the Black Sea Synergy, as well as Association Agreements) that the EU addresses to its neighbours. Thanks to the modes of cooperation and partnerships that social innovation fosters, incl. novel modes of financing, partnerships, governance modes, the efficiency of above mentioned broader policy-frameworks could be improved. This is due to the positive spill-over effects that social innovation approach may have on the by now central to the EU's policy-frameworks notions of "ownership" and "participation".

Of course, for these two components to be strengthened and thus for social innovation as an approach to benefit the implementation of the broad policy-frameworks, it is necessary that local partners from the private and not-for-profit sectors of the economy be identified and mobilized. The opportunity consists in the fact that the EU, due to its credibility and 'soft' power of attraction, may prove quite successful in attracting this kind of partners. Furthermore, it is reasonable to suggest that the propensity of this kind of partners to engage with the EU-guided social innovation projects will be far greater in countries of the Black Sea region than it is in the EU itself. This is because state institutions in this region are relatively weak and state-intervention does not crowd out private sector agents from the economy. In this view, by strengthening its focus on social innovation and the mechanisms upon which it draws, the EU may serve as a fundamental source of institutional trust-building. The EU may also serve as facilitator of alternative modes of financing in the Black Sea region eventually becoming a catalyst of socio-economic development in the area.

Concluding remarks: social innovation in the EU

The objective of this paper was to highlight the challenges and opportunities inherent in social innovation seen as a (policy) field and from this perspective to dwell on the EU's potential to foster it. To this end, the definition of social innovation was critically discussed

against the background of some fundamental historical connotations of the term. Simultaneously, the contemporary applications and implications of this concept were elaborated. The basic conclusions that the argument developed in this paper allows to make include: Social innovation remains a dispersed and fragmented policy-field in the EU. Increasingly, social innovation is seen as a mechanism of bypassing crisis-related budgetary constraints in the EU members-states in that it aims at mitigating a number of societal challenges that the current eurozone crisis aggravates. Due to its focus on social well-being and improving the quality of life, social innovation acquires the status of an instrument designed to attain the EU's basic goals and objectives as defined in the founding treaties.

In this sense, social innovation becomes a tool suitable to further European integration, whereby its efficiency is conditioned by the single market. The latter serves in this context as a quintessential mechanism to transmit social innovation across space and policy-fields in the EU. Social innovation is therefore a tool that has the potential to stimulate a more dynamic, inclusive and sustainable market economy in the EU and to contribute to socio-economic development beyond the EU's borders, i.e. in countries included by policy-frameworks such as Eastern Partnership and Black Sea Synergy. In this view, it is possible to argue that social innovation, as a (policy) field, can serve as a leverage to address the inefficiency of the state to provide for specific needs of the society by capitalizing on the potential inherent in the private sector. Consequently, the debate on social innovation suggests that social innovation has the potential to complement and possibly replace the distributive, inefficient "European social model(s)". This is possible due to "social innovations" potential to attract and engage a variety of actors from across the four different sectors of the economy and to capitalize on the largely unexplored, or dormant, functional linkages that exist between them. This is best illustrated by the public-private and private-private partnerships that social innovation encourages.

Regardless the opportunities inherent in social innovation, it is essential to realize that the effectiveness of social innovation is limited. That is, social innovation is a function of broader policy-frameworks designed by national- and (as in the case of the EU and in specific policy areas) by the EU-authorities, in particular of the broader economic policy-frameworks. For instance, social innovation may mitigate the consequences of poverty related to high unemployment, but it will not solve the structural origins of unemployment and recession. Since for social innovation to be efficient private sector involvement is required, it is vital that the state does not crowd private agents out of the economy through, for instance excessive regulation and taxation. In this sense a case is made for the state to act as a smart regulator rather than as an ultra-powerful actor in the economy. Social innovation and its future in the EU depend on it.

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