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The main aim of this journal is to attract papers from a wide range of fields, including social and political sciences, economics and business, international relations, psychology, social policy, social work, sociology, legal issues, history, geography, linguistics, cultural studies and other related areas. With its efficient and qualified double-blind peer review process, The International Journal of Balkan Studies aims to present the newest relevant and emerging issues of Balkans and not only to both academia and the broader public alike, thereby maintaining its place as a dynamic platform for engaging in social sciences research and academic debate.

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ijbs@unyt.edu.al
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TABLE OF CONTENT

FOREWORD

The theme of the First International Student e-Congress is ''The Power of Effective Communication: Challenges and Opportunities''. This congress has been an opportunity to discuss key points of scientific and professional policies and strategies, helping us to define how we should encourage responsible conduct in our decisions, promoting effective communication, and also establishing personal contacts with colleagues from other parts of the world.

Participants have expanded their knowledge by sharing their ideas and learning about others. Hence, the congress became an essential element of modern society, with its aim to benefit society through a seamless flow of ideas, experiments, and knowledge. Selected participants from 17 countries, which are: Brazil; Russia; Turkey; Azerbaijan; Egypt; Malaysia; Pakistan; Palestine; Georgia; Philippine; India; Albania; Kosovo; North Macedonia; Serbia; Rumania, and Switzerland made this Congress a truly International initiative.

Today, as the world sails through the uncharted waves of insecurity due to a global pandemic, the importance of sharing knowledge has never been so evident, especially when it comes from and to the youth.

Enjoy your reading!

IJBS Editorial Office

GREETING WORD FROM THE RECTOR

Dear Reader,

First of all, I would like to welcome you all to the 1st Edition of the International Journal of Balkan Studies (IJBS). I would also like to express my gratitude to all the scholars who have shared their knowledge and experience. Your research papers signify a meaningful contribution for all audience members of the First International Student e-Congress (ISC'20) with the topic "*The Power of Effective Communication: Challenges and Opportunities.*" Your valuable participation is an outward demonstration of your perseverance and effort to feature diverse problems in the areas of research in which you are interested.

I would like to assure you that "IJBS" will be an integral part of the development of the academic life of Albania, the region and entire World. In this 1st Edition we are proud to have scientific papers from young talented scholars from different countries of the world; such as, Brazil, Egypt, Romania, Russia, Azerbaijan, Kosovo, Ukraine, Malaysia, Pakistan, Serbia, Philippines, Georgia, Turkey, Palestine, India, etc.

Through it, we will promote the development and dissemination of theoretical knowledge, conceptual research, and professional expertise. Our intention in establishing this journal is to build and disseminate knowledge concerning progress in distinct fields of research.

As the first private university of Albania, UNYT's commitment to excellence is rooted in a number of values which are at the heart of this institution's operation. UNYT values research and internationalization as the most strategic part of its education which advantages the scholars in strengthening of their career.

Let me once again thank all of the international participants who will present their academic work in ISC'20, Tirana, Albania, and our distinguished guests for their collaboration and contribution to the success of this first congress.

Thank you very much!

I wish the best of health and success,

Prof. Dr. Ismail KOCAYUSUFOGLU
RECTOR

MOBILE CONNECTION, DIGITAL GENERATION AND VISIBILITY:

A study on the use of smartphone applications among adolescents in Brazil

Admilson Veloso da Silva[1]

[1]Ph.D. Student at the Doctoral School of Sociology and Communication Science at Corvinus University of Budapest, sponsored by the Stipendium Hungaricum Scholarship Programme, Hungary.
E-mail: milsonvelososilva@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Smartphones have become an important tool for adolescents to access information, talk with friends, consume online content, and share images on social media. How do teenagers appropriate these platforms to express the world around themselves and to build on their identities through mobile applications? With the objective to contribute to the knowledge about this phenomenon from Communication perspectives, this article discusses the use of apps among adolescents in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, as a channel for visibility from the context of digital culture. It begins with an understanding of the development of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), highlighting the advent of smartphones; after that it addresses the concept of digital generation and its specificities in the age of connectivity when it comes to visibility, dialoguing with Le Breton (2017a, 2017b), Palfrey and Gasser (2008), Livingstone (2011), and Sibilia (2016). From this point, the author presents an empirical qualitative research conducted with 32 teenagers, using participant observation (Cottle, 2009) and semi-structured interviews (Triviños, 1987), in a public school in Belo Horizonte, applying Content Analysis (Bardin, 1977) to analyze the transformations that the mediation of mobile devices bring to the relations of this young generation with visibility practices. Results show that although coming from an underdeveloped community, the group has been using smartphones in their daily life since an early age, a majority of them spend more than ⅓ of the day online, mostly on social media, and ephemeral images are now a significant part of their visual digital expression.

KEYWORDS: Adolescents, Visibility, Digital Culture, Smartphones, Mobile Applications

Introduction

The attentive eyes watch the screen, while the fingers touch digital images in an experience of visibility that involves the body, the mind, and the almost uninterrupted connection. From time to time, a performance is placed in front of the camera for recording and

sharing with the world that also watches on the other side of the screen. Teenagers' daily lives are transformed into imagery fragments, Stories told with the addition of visual elements such as stickers, geotagging, hashtag, and other filters.

In the digital culture traversed by mobility and visibility games, several details of the perceived world - bodies, food, landscapes, phrases, music, selfies - gain brief, ephemeral records, which remain in the air for up to 24 hours. Soon, they disappear to make room for new images and new experiences. For adolescents, the relationship with smartphones shows a latent hyper connected behavior in contemporary society, as studied by Le Breton (2017a), Livingstone (2011), Palfrey and Urs Gasser (2008), among other researchers.

The relevance of smartphones for communication and comfort in performing daily tasks - transportation, food, entertainment, shopping, imaging records - can be seen when observing the penetration of devices in society. According to data from the Pew Research Center (2019), more than 5 billion people rely on mobile devices worldwide, most of them smartphones.

Something that is still not entirely clear refers to how adolescents use these platforms to express the world around them and develop their identities among peers through ephemeral images. In this sense, this article summarizes part of the dissertation research carried out during the master's degree in Social Communication that analyzed, over two years, the mediation of the visibility experience in digital culture, studying the applications and social networks of ephemeral publications on devices among adolescents in Belo Horizonte, Brazil (Veloso, 2018).

In this article, it is specifically addressed the field research part conducted in 2017 and 2018, in which the author had a participant observation practice (Cottle, 2009) to gather initial insights into teenagers' smartphone usage habits, followed by a semi-structured interview (Triviños, 1987) with 32 adolescents to collect and analyze data regarding their experiences with mobile devices and ephemeral content consumption. The main objective here is to explore and typify their practices and habits of mobile applications usage and the relationship the subject keeps with mobile devices, adding their own perspective to this phenomenon.

Smartphones and visibility

When the look is directed to contemporary practices, flows and processes involving smartphones, the same mobile device is found with new configurations and covering even more technologies and functionalities. Cell phones now incorporate, through applications, a good part of the functions of other technology tools - radio, music or video streaming, etc. -, the consumption of products and services, entertainment by digital games and many other practices are available, as we discussed in another paper (Veloso, 2017).

Sibilia (2016) shows that the development of new technologies and the incorporation

of functionalities to digital devices, such as the cameras present in computers and cell phones, promote changes in terms of visibility - in relation to previous periods, such as modernity. The visible becomes, then, intrinsically allied to the intense connectivity of the mobile Internet.

Visibility and connection without pause are two fundamental vectors for the ways of being and being in the world more in tune with the rhythms, pleasures and demands of today, guiding the ways of relating to us, with others and with the world. (Sibilia, 2016, p. 21, our translation)

This cyberspace is becoming more complex and gaining new configurations with the advent of other Information and Communication Technologies, the uses that society gives them and the sociocultural and economic transformations of the contemporary world. One can point out smartphones here as an example of devices that have been expanding cyberspace, in a movement to intensify practices, flows and processes in the digital universe, as explained by Serafinelli and Villi: "With smart mobile devices photography has become so ubiquitous that the existence of events, people, and objects seems to be directly connected with being photographed". (2017, p. 3).

It is not a question of giving technique, technology, or technological apparatus an extreme, deterministic power, but seeking to understand their intersections, interconnections, and reverberations in society with today's cultural formation.

Adolescents in the digital culture

Thinking scientifically about adolescence makes it clear that this is a too complex object, with a multiplicity of relationships and processes that are not always possible to be perceived and understood in all its extension. To exemplify, the very classification of the demographic structure of this period is diversified among the institutions that comprise it, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) - 10 to 19 years old -, the United Nations (UN) - 15 and 24 years old - and the Brazilian State, through the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA) - 12 to 18 years old.

According to the 2015 TIC Domicílios survey, the most frequent profile on the Internet corresponds to 13 to 14 years old (88% of the public connected) and 15 to 17 years old (85% connected). Of this total, another relevant data is that 85% of children and adolescents already accessed the Internet via cell phones in the analyzed period, as it can be seen in the following infographic (Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Percentage of children and adolescents online in BR

Percentage of children and adolescents online in BR

56%

71%

85%

88%

90%
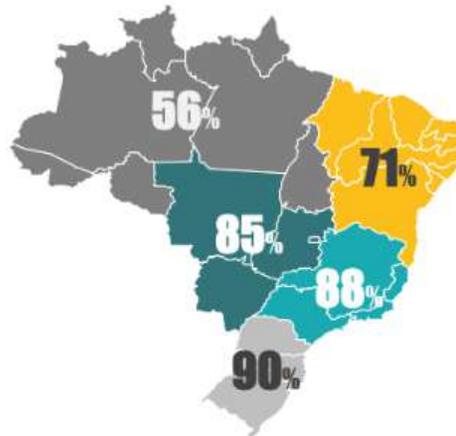
- 23,7 millions youth on the Internet
- 80% of those between 9-17 are online

TIC Kids Online 2015

For Le Breton (2017b), digital social networks gain space in the universe of the studied public because they acquire the aspect of a mirror that helps in the narrative construction of themselves, their identities.

Social networks promote an exposure of multiple identities. They become the main tools of socialization and experimentation for young generations, a place for confronting the intimate experience with the experience of others. The recognition coming from this transmission is undeniable, they are increasingly absorbed by the reality that they themselves help to build. (Le Breton, 2017b, p. 20, our translation)

Researcher and director of EU Kids Online, of the LSE (London School of Economics and Political Science) Department of Media and Communication, Sonia Livingstone (2011), argues that it is important to look beyond the positive and negative issues that the Internet brings to that audience. When analyzing the uses, possibilities, risks and opportunities, among other aspects, that the younger portion of the population has in relation to the Internet, Livingstone (2011) emphasizes that "while young people make the transition from their family of origin to a culture of broader peers, they realize that the media offers a fundamental resource for the construction of their identity and for the mediation of social relations" (2011, p. 1).

Other researchers dedicated to assessing the impact of technology on young people's lives were John Palfrey and Urs Gasser (2008), with the publication "Born Digital: understanding the first generation of digital natives", which infer that there is a common

culture connecting such an audience: "Major aspects of their lives—social interactions, friendships, civic activities—are mediated by digital technologies. And they've never known any other way of life" (p. 2).

In a game between visibility and invisibility, public and private, intimacy gains new contours, the permanent connection and the communication crossed by mediatization in the digital culture make the limits more fluid, flexible and elastic, when these do not disappear completely. The addition of augmented reality and ephemerality, among the other features of Stories, with the acceleration of communication flows on the Internet and the mobility of new ubiquitous devices, takes this game to an unprecedented level.

Methods

Regarding the methodological contribution and procedures adopted, the first part of the complete Maters' research, which is addressed in this article, consisted of a participant observation (Cottle, 2009) followed by semi-structured interviews (Triviños, 1987) with 32 adolescents aged 16 and 17 from the second year of high school at Padre João Botelho State School, in Belo Horizonte. Throughout the participant observation period, the researcher immersed himself into the school environment, delivered weekly workshops on Media and Information Literacy to a diverse group of High School students and had discussions in these classes about smartphones and mobile technology. Thus, the participant observation (Cottle, 2009) provided the scope to collect basic information on the group habits to further structure and develop the interviews.

Following the first step and already with an initial understanding of the group smartphone usage, the interview was designed and delivered in a one-to-one person process, giving space for each student to point out their response choices and to openly talk about the subjects. The 32 students all belonged to one specific classroom of second year of High School. This choice was made considering their average age (between 16-18 years old) and the availability to individually take part in the interviews, after consultations with the school pedagogic coordinator.

The form with the questions and questionnaires applied to the students addressed three main points about the researched process: 1) survey of the sociodemographic profile of the interviewees; 2) consumption habits and use of smartphones and mobile Internet; 3) The relationship with Stories and ephemeral publications in applications and social networks on smartphones.

To systematically analyze the material, the researcher adopts Content Analysis (AC) - as methodological procedure - (Bardin, 1977), first organizing the semi-structured interviews (Triviños, 1987) to generate patterns of the sociodemographic characteristics and then analyzing and classifying the open responses. By adopting these two methods, it is possible to cover the research purpose, explore and typify the adolescents' practices and habits of mobile applications usage, as well as their relationship with mobile devices,

gathering in-depth understandings from the subject's perspective. Before its development, the research was submitted and approved by the Ethics Committee of the educational institution.

Research findings

The first part of the research with the participant observation (Cottle, 2009) of adolescents, together with data from the semi-structured interview (), brings elements to assist in the understanding of who these analyzed subjects are and the context to which they belong. In the set of demographic information surveyed, it appears that adolescents started using cell phones in childhood, usually for entertainment. Of the 32 respondents, 21 had the first access to the devices before the age of ten, while the other group started between 11 and 13 years old.

When asked about the time they spend using the Internet effectively on cell phones, the minimum times - which would be "I rarely use the Internet on cell phones" and "less than two hours a day" - were not indicated by anyone. At the other end, represented by the use "most of the time", are 29% of students, followed proportionally (22.6%) by those who spend between 8 and 12 hours daily on the mobile Internet and those who use the Internet between six and eight hours a day (22.6%).

After consulting smartphones to count the applications, it was questioned which were the five apps most frequently used by teenagers. It was found that 31 of them (96.9%) mentioned WhatsApp, 22 (68.8%) Instagram, 21 (65.6%) Facebook, 12 (37.5%) YouTube and 11 (34.4%) Snapchat. Other applications were also mentioned, such as the music player on the device itself and the digital music service Spotify, with six mentions each.

From the above, the prevalence of social networking applications, messaging, and video consumption among the most used by adolescents is perceived. In addition, four of the five most mentioned apps had a tool for ephemeral publications in the period (except YouTube), putting a good portion of students in direct contact with the function, even if it is not used effectively by everyone.

Next, the form addressed the motivation for using the applications. All participants said that "watching videos and photos" is among the main reasons, followed by "listening to music" and "talking to friends and family" (both mentioned by 30 people), "maintaining work or study contacts" and "getting around the city" (with 25 mentions), "posting videos and photos" and "meeting new people" (mentioned 23 times). By making a comparison between the most used applications and the reasons for their use, one can see how the issue of visibility is constantly present. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat are platforms in which images have great strength, bringing as one of the possibilities to see and be seen.

It is common for teenagers to do a second activity concurrently with the use of the cell phone. Studying was the most cited among nine possibilities: 29 of the 32 respondents

reported accessing smartphones while studying; eating and watching television appear next (23 responses each); 19 talk in person with other people at the same time that they touch the devices. Two situations stood out in the area designed for "other activities", for open responses: bathing and doing household chores, each mentioned by eight people.

And by accompanying this audience in many of the daily activities, the smartphone starts to occupy a prominent place in the lives of teenagers. It was found that the impossibility of using the cell phone to connect with the world is seen in a negative way by many adolescents. Openly asked about what they feel in this situation, they demonstrate intense use of the devices on a daily basis and some of the reports indicate symptoms similar to disorders found in contemporary psychopathological classifications[1] - although the proposal here is not specifically the clinical diagnosis - as if you can see below:

"It is very difficult to be without the Internet because I have nothing to do. I consider myself addicted to cell phones", informs @Adolescent28, 16 years old. "Empty. It seems that something is missing. I feel that a piece of me is missing. My mother even complains because I get very nervous", points out @Adolescent25, 17 years old. "Despair. Empty. There is nothing to do. In a farm, a place, those places that do not use the Internet, I don't even go", claims @Adolescent13, 16 years old.

The dependence on smartphones even crosses the discourse of those who claim not to use them intensively, referring to the need to "detoxify" or "relief", since they carry the meaning of "intoxication" and "overload", respectively. It can be seen from the opinion of @Adolescent9, 17 years old, how the constant connection behavior is fed through the capture and maintenance of the users' attention, without them being able to perceive this agency. "Social networks today and the Internet on cell phones are an addiction. Sometimes you think: 'it's just 5 minutes', but then you see something else, something else... and when you run out of Internet, desperation comes."

With the constant and intense use of cell phones, being applications with ephemeral publishing tools among the most popular, teenagers' exposure to this type of content also becomes frequent. However, there are different ways of appropriating these apps, be it Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, or Facebook. Regarding the use of ephemeral publishing tools, only one teenager commented that he did not use any of them. Most of the teenagers interviewed, (68.8%) use Instagram Stories effectively, whether to publish and view content or just to see what other users share. However, during the follow-up, only seven (46.6%) out of the 15 participating profiles made any posts.

The content brought to the realm of the visible in ephemeral publications was the subject of another question, to which the most recurring answers indicate records of important

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1   The two main classifications of mental disorders caused by obsessive behaviors are the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM – 5) - Manual of Diagnosis and Statistics of Mental Disorders 5th edition - of the American Psychiatric Association, and the International Statistical Classification of Health-Related Diseases and Problems (ICD10) from the World Health Organization (WHO). Issues and aspects related to disorders due to excessive use of smartphones, internet connection and video games are under discussion in both entities and were mentioned in the appendix of DSM – 5.

events or activities (concerts, celebrations, trips etc.), and images in public places (squares, landscapes, parks, streets, restaurants etc.). In parallel, there are publications portraying spaces more restricted to intimate life (in the bedroom mirror, in the bathroom etc.), everyday situations (breakfast, lunch, dinner, studying, exercising etc.), in addition to content from third parties (memes, quotes, prints, lyrics etc.) and promotional images (product/service announcement, poll, Instagram sponsored or informative content).

The variety of formats of the publications, application of elements on the images, themes and situations addressed and intensity of use reveal different appropriations for the tool in the group of adolescents studied: while some use Stories to show any fact of their daily lives, without a specific criterion of relevance among the experiences made visible, others choose to share mainly what is highlighted on the agenda. There are also those who rarely share an image, but nevertheless stop using Stories and, consequently, gain some visibility among peers.

In response to the question *"what do you think motivates people to use Instagram Stories?"*, we find evidence of the practice. "To keep the friends informed about the moment, what is happening, to be closer to people" (@Adolescent20); "To share the day, something more momentary, that doesn't always have to remain in there" (@Adolescent13); "It's more for you to show your mood at that moment, whether it's good or bad. For people to see what you are doing, a song you like..." (@Adolescent29); "There is an audience on Instagram that is not on Facebook or WhatsApp. Each social network has a segment and there are things that people just post there [on *Stories*]" (@Adolescent14).

The words "moment" (mentioned ten times spontaneously) and "show" (13 mentions) are noted as constant in the responses, indicating characteristics of ephemeral publications. Based on the interviewees' report and on the evaluation of the 63 publications, it can be inferred that instantaneousness is one of the imperatives of the tool. Apart from specific dates - such as Thursday, #TBT (Throwback Thursday) - *Stories* is used to make something that is lived instantly visible. "It's like this: you saw it, you shot it, you posted it!", summarizes @Adolescent12, 17 years old.

Final remarks

The dialogic exposition made up to this point, with the articulation of empiricism and theory addressed in this paper (Le Breton, 2017b; Palfrey and Gasser, 2008; Serafinelli and Villi, 2017; Sibilia, 2016) together with the methodology applied in the research, sought to deepen the study and theorization about the mediation of experience in mobile devices as processes and phenomena of cyber culture. With that, it was possible to explore and classify elements present in the adolescents' mobile practices and to point out some transformations that applications with ephemeral publications on mobile devices bring to communication in the context of the digital culture.

Our main discussions and findings from this research can be summarized as it

follows:

- Although coming from an underdeveloped community, the group has been using smartphones in their daily life since an early age;

- A majority of the teenagers spend more than ⅓ of the day online, producing and consuming content;

- The most used apps are social media and messaging apps, with ephemeral images being a significant part of their visual digital expression;

- They multitask when on their phones: it's common for them to do more than one activity simultaneously while using smartphones;

- Mobile phone usage impacts on the mediation of their various experiences, from private life (intimacy) to public activities.

It was also noticed evidences that adolescents tend to present symptoms of psychopathology disorder when they can't connect with their smartphones to use the Internet (especially anxiety), but this characteristic needs further studies from other research fields, such as neuroscience and psychology. Therefore, the mention in here aims to highlight this subject and motivate other researchers to develop more analysis into the matter, since it was not the focus of the present project.

To conclude, it is also noted that social networks and cell phones are increasingly becoming a resource for continuous connection, even during sleep intervals at night. This practice towards the digital universe is not permanent, but also part of being an adolescent today, of life itself, as pointed out by Le Breton: "disconnecting is, for many, a symbolic death, an impossibility to think about the continuity of their presence in the world" (2017b, p. 19). In this way, these technologies enable multiple experiences and bring new possibilities for living adolescence in the contemporary times.

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US Sanctions on Iran: An On-going Covid-19 Analysis

Alina Younis [1]

[1]Department of International Relations, Cyprus International University, Cyprus, aleenayounis@live.com

ABSTRACT: The aim of the research article is to assess the dire consequences of the US economic sanctions on the public health of the Iranian citizens in times of a global pandemic. The world at present is witnessing an unprecedented and unique outbreak of the deadly COVID-19, commonly referred to as Corona Virus, that has resulted in approximately 198,921 deaths in the US alone and approximately 953,482 deaths worldwide. The decline in the medical imports and overall healthcare system in Iran significantly point towards the dire repercussions of US economic sanctions on Iran especially in times of a global pandemic. As the situation develops the figures and statistics are not yet as clear but the trend shows how drastically these sanctions have affected the right to health of the Iranian population. Although the US government has made tall claims regarding the humanitarian exemptions on sanctions, it is also making it difficult for companies to obtain special license for humanitarian aid like medicine and food to the Iranian citizens. The US government needs to come up with a holistic and clear policy regarding humanitarian exports to Iran

KEYWORDS: COVID-19, Coronavirus, Public Health, US Sanctions, Iran.

Introduction

The aim of the research article is to assess the dire consequences on the public health of the Iranian citizens in times of a global pandemic. The world at present is witnessing an unprecedented and unique outbreak of the deadly COVID-19, commonly referred to as Corona Virus, that has resulted in approximately 198,921 deaths in the US alone and approximately 953,482 deaths worldwide (Johns Hopkins University 2020). In Iran, one of the epicenters of the pandemic, positive cases of the virus have reached an approximate figure of 1,04,691 (Johns Hopkins University 2020). With six deaths every hour, the total number of deceased in Iran has surpassed 27,000 mark as per reports (Johns Hopkins University 2020). Despite several causalities, the US has continued to impose several economic sanctions on Iran under its "maximum pressure" policy. Since the emergence of Iran as the epicenter of corona virus pandemic in the Middle East, several world leaders have called on the US to withdraw economic sanctions in order to assist the Iranian government to contain the virus. However, the US has only added more to the sanctions instead of providing relief to the government of Iran (European Leadership Network 2020; Foreign Policy 2020).

The current situation, statistics and facts raises an important question: What are the implications of the US sanctions on the right to health of the Iranian citizens during COVID-19?

Hypothesis The economic sanctions on Iran imposed by the US violate the basic human rights on health of the Iranian citizens which is a subsequent violation of US commitments to the World Health Organization, International law and to the Human Rights regime hence making the sanctions on Iran illegal during the outbreak of a global pandemic.

Literature Review

Dursun Peksen (2011) in his research, "Economic Sanctions and Human Security: The Public Health Effect of Economic Sanctions" analyzed data for the mortality rate among children under five-year olds as a parameter for health conditions in targeted countries under US sanctions. His study reveals that economic sanctions impact the public health conditions in the targeted country to a great extent due to the imposition financial and trade restrictions. These restrictions directly or indirectly curtail public's access to "basic needs, deteriorating economic well-being of civilians, and undermining the effective functioning of health services" (Peksen 2011). Furthermore, Peksen argues that the sanctions imposed particularly by the US are more detrimental than others and the economic wealth of the targeted countries has little or no influence over the public health crisis as a result of the US economic sanctions. However, Peksen's research article does not give a holistic picture of public health of the targeted state and is focused on one parameter of health condition. Richard Garfield, Julia Devin and Joy Fausey in their research article, "The Health Impact of Economic Sanctions" gives a rather whole picture of how economic sanctions have continued to impact the health of the citizens of the targeted countries. Through a country case studies analysis, the authors have explained health impacts of economic sanctions in Nicaragua, Cuba, Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Haiti, South Africa and Iraq. Through these individual case studies, the authors explained how trade embargoes led to the shortage of medical supplies, equipment and food resources. Drawing a comparison between military warfare and economic warfare the authors argue the limited possibilities to distinguish civilians in economic warfare leashed in the shape of economic sanctions. Moreover, in military warfare, civilians and vulnerable populations are still protected under international humanitarian law but on the other hand, economic warfare has no principals of proportionality or necessity in place hence increasing the chances of a humanitarian crisis (Garfield, et al. 1995). Furthermore, the authors argue the need to develop standardized criteria, definition and procedure for humanitarian exemptions on sanctions in order to ensure the citizens of targeted states have easy and quick access to aid and relief.

The literature on economic sanctions is limited in its scope. Predominantly, work done on economic sanctions mainly focuses on whether or not sanctions are effective tools of foreign policy. Significant amount of research has been done through sample-

testing, cross-sectional data analysis and case study analysis to test the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of economic sanctions on targeted states. However, the literature on the intended or unintended consequences of economic sanctions on targeted states is quite limited (Peksen 2011). More so, while there is growing literature present on the consequences of economic sanctions on the humanitarian aspects of the civilian population, research on the impacts of human health is still limited in terms of research. As the COVID-19 is an on-going crisis, the data and research are limited to newspaper articles, local and international press and on the statements being given out by leaders of both parties. Hence, this research has broadly reviewed literature based on how human rights on health are affected by economic sanctions. Therefore, this research aims to add to the growing literature of how US sanctions and embargos violate the human rights on health of the Iranian population especially in such exceptional circumstances of a global pandemic.

US Sanctions and its impact on the Iranian Public Health during COVID-19

US Sanctions- A Background

 US sanctions on Iran are not a new phenomenon - The Islamic Republic has lived under US economic sanctions almost since its inception 40 years ago. The first round of sanctions go back to 1979 when the US embassy in Tehran was attacked and 52 American diplomatic staff was detained and held hostage by Iranian students for 444 days (Borszik 2016). As a result, Washington froze Iranian assets and cut off all US trade and investment worth $12 billion with Iran with additional measures that were applied in 1987 and 1995 for alleged support to Hizballah and concern regarding Iran's pursuit of weapons of mass destruction (US Treasury Department 2012). Later, in the wake of 9/11 under President W. Bush Presidency, further executive orders led to tighter sanctions on Iran for target sponsors of terrorism and money laundering (Samore 2015). Later from 2006-2010, the UN Security Council passed six resolutions aimed at targeting Iran's nuclear and ballistic missile programs. However, the enmity soon ended when in July 2015, France, Germany and the United Kingdom, together with the European Union and China, Russia and the United States (P5+1) as one party, and Iran as the other signed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), also known as the Iran Nuclear Deal (Dagres and Slavin 2018). In 2018, however, United States' newly elected President, Donald J. Trump withdrew from the Iran Nuclear Deal- fulfilling his campaign promise (Davenport 2018). As part of the formal withdrawal of the Trump administration from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) in 2018, economic sanctions on Iran were re-imposed that were previously targeted at curtailing Iranian nuclear ambitions and the regime's alleged support to Hezbollah. At present, the US continues to put "maximum pressure" via economic sanctions on Iran despite the global outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic.

Current Sanctions and its Impact on Iranian Public Health

At present, Iran remains among top-10 countries most affected by COVID-19 (Deutsche Welle 2020). The on-going situation has to be seen in retrospect with the re-imposition of economic sanctions on Iran by the US in 2018. Prior to the global pandemic, the health care system had been greatly impacted when the sanctions came into force and with the outbreak of COVID-19, the situation is being predicted to be even worse.

In 2019, a report published by Human Rights Watch (HRW) suggested that patients in Iran with rare disease found it most difficult to have quick and easy access to imported medicines (HRW 2019). According to research, COVID-19 has negatively affected people with a rare disease with 9 in 10 people facing interruption in access to care and medical facilities (EURORDIS 2020). Hence, in Iran, patients with rare diseases who are also infected with COVID-19 are more prone to be a victim of the economic sanctions imposed by the US.

Apart from the issue of availability of medical supplies and resources, a major constraint is the hike in prices of imported medicine and other medical supplies. Before the 2012 sanctions were imposed on Iran, the government had provided its citizens with free primary healthcare services, however, the healthcare provision drastically changed when the sanctions were imposed as a result of inflation hitting the healthcare sector of Iran harder (Kokabisaghi 2012). As a result of the current economic sanctions, the cost of health care in Iran has rose to 18.8 percent (HRW 2019). Iran has also largely dependent on the European Union (EU) pharmaceutical markets for its medical imports but according to latest reports the imports from EU have shrunken down to 15 percent in just three years (Motevalli 2020).

According to the International Monetary Fund (2020), inflation in Iran has reached 42 percent from 37 percent in 2019 (IMF 2020). Production and manufacturing have come to a standstill in Iran due to the difficulties in accessing imported goods and over all supply-chain management (Rhode, 2019). The World Bank in its monthly assessment of Iran's economy has associated the on-going economic recession to the US sanctions on Iran (World Bank, 2020). The assessment details that Iranian GDP currently suffers a 7.6 percent contraction owing to the decline Iran's oil sector of 37 percent. Furthermore, the report has touched upon the economic repercussions as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak. Predicting the future outcomes, the report states that Iran's GDP growth is projected to remain low in the upcoming fiscal years. As the sanctions had particularly hit Iran oil sector hard, the COVID-19 is more likely to affect the non-oil GDP of Iran such "commerce, tourism and trade as well as higher production costs" (World Bank, 2020).

Despite several calls to the US administration to mellow down economic sanctions on Iran during the pandemic, from within and outside US political circles, the administration has instead tightened the restrictions on the Iranian economy. On October 8, 2020, the current US administration announced a fresh round of sanctions that is aimed to completely bar Iran from the global financial system (Al Jazeera, 2020). This move makes it harder or

rather impossible for any foreign bank to do business with Iranian banks which further adds to the deteriorating financial situation in Iran during especially during COVID-19.

Right to Health- A Fundamental Human Right

The right to health is a fundamental human right of an individual given by birth. Although the state is responsible for healthcare of its citizens, it is often constrained by economic pressures imposed through sanctions by foreign states. Similarly, in case of Iran, the health care system has been under tremendous pressure due to the sanctions imposed by the US. It is significant to detail the importance of health rights of citizens affirmed by international institutions and organizations that are universally accepted by all states.

According to Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948):

"Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control." (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

In addition to that the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights ICESCR (1966) has also reaffirmed the right to health of every individual. In fact, with regards to the COVI-19 situations, the Article 12 (2) (c) specifically implies access to health care for "the prevention, treatment and control of epidemic, endemic, occupational and other diseases" (ICESCR, 1966). Although the US has only signed and not rectified the covenant, it has the moral obligation to follow the human and humanitarian aspects of it.

Moreover, according to the World Health Organization's 1946 constitution, the "highest attainable standard of health" is a fundamental right of every human being- this implies that health is treated under the parameters of basic human rights (WHO, 2006).

This entails that curtailing the right to health of Iranian citizens through targeted and secondary sanctions, the US is doing more harm to the Iranian civilians than to the regime itself. It is also violating its obligations as a member of the international community of states.

US Response to COVID-19 in Iran

The US sanctions are authorized by either executive or by the legislative body of the US government (Treasury Department, 2019). Typically, the president launches the process by issuing an Executive Order (EO) which is then administrated and executed by the Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) of the US Department of the Treasury (Treasury Department, 2019). While legal experts and scholars continue to contribute to the academic debate, the legality of economic sanctions during a pandemic in general

remains unanswered. In particular, no attempt has been made to develop a framework on limitations or exemptions on economic sanctions in times of such a global pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has raised several questions regarding the legitimacy of the US backed economic sanctions on Iran in a time where the latter has suffered most positive cases and most deaths than any other country in the Middle East (Katzman, 2020). It is significant to note that the secondary sanctions imposed on Iran by the US hinders non-US entities like foreign states, international banks and financial institutions to conduct any financial transactions or trade with Iran, hence completely curtailing Iran's economic freedom.

However, the US treasury department has claimed to have made efforts to ease out tensions between the two countries by providing "humanitarian relief" through exemptions on sanctions through various humanitarian relief arrangements. The treasury department restored certain exemptions with the issuance of a General License to permit transactions with Iran's Central Bank for the purchase of humanitarian items (Katzman, 2020).

The U.S. Departments of State on October 25, 2019, published guidelines on Swiss Humanitarian Trade Agreement (SHTA), a humanitarian framework under which states and financial institutions may establish transaction mechanisms to provide financial and humanitarian aid to Iran (Treasury Department, 2020). In January 2020, the US government processed the first transaction worth $2.55 million under SHTA before COVID-19 was declared a public health emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO). The SHTA is a Swiss payment mechanism that is aimed at providing humanitarian aid and assistance to Iran by providing foreign states and foreign financial institutions with a "voluntary option for facilitating payment for exports of agricultural commodities, food, medicine, and medical devices" (Treasury Department, 2020). The first transaction was made through the channel for the shipment of cancer drugs and drugs required for organ transplant to Iran (BBC, 2020).

Moreover, the US Treasury Department has also maintained that despite a strict economic crackdown on Iran, the US has never restricted its citizens from sending humanitarian assistance including medicines, food supplies and money to the Iranian citizens (U.S. Mission in Geneva, 2013). In February 2020, the Treasury Department also clarified that humanitarian purchases could be made via Iran's Central Bank accounts abroad without the fear of US sanctions (Katzman, 2020). Such an arrangement was also made in 2001 during President Bill Clinton's administration on the sanctions he imposed on Iran in 1995 (Purdum, 1995; Sen, 2018; Motevalli, 2020). Moreover, during the Bam earthquake crisis in 2003, the US under President George W. Bush's administration provided a 90-day general license for humanitarian purchases to Iran (BBC, 2012). Similarly, in the aftermath of the Bam earthquake in 2012, OFAC issued a temporary authorization that allowed US citizens and residents to send humanitarian assistance via nongovernmental organizations working for earthquake relief in Iran (U.S. Mission in Geneva, 2013).

The effectiveness of US humanitarian exemptions on Iran sanctions

The effectiveness of these exemptions, is however, debatable. Peksen (2011) argues that the detrimental effect of sanctions imposed by the US is relatively higher than sanctions imposed by any other country in the world. This is particularly due to greater economic influence of the US in the trade market. The broad US sanctions against Iranian banks and the aggressive rhetoric of the US officials has drastically constrained Iran's ability to finance the humanitarian aid provided by non-US entities (Human Rights Watch, 2019). Moreover, on October 25, the US government went forward with its plan to designate Iran's Central Bank under its counterterrorism authority which curtails the flow of humanitarian trade to Iran (Human Rights Watch 2020). Reports also suggests that under Trump Administration, the rate of the issuance of special license for medical and food imports has increased manifolds (Cunningham, 2020)

Moreover, the humanitarian exemptions imposed by the US are non-effective also because research suggests the involvement of IGO for humanitarian assistance for child health care is unlikely to "increase or decrease the effects of sanctions on child mortality" (Peksen, 2011). More so, no universal definition exists to explain the meaning, criteria or the procedure of humanitarian exemptions which gives unilateral sanctions unprecedented authority over targeted state. It is argued that the effectiveness of the exemptions on economic sanctions can only be improved if the sanctioning state follows a universally accepted standardized procedure of humanitarian exemptions (Garfield et al., 1995).

It is also significant to add here that years of economic sanctions have greatly reduced the investors and financial institutions confidence in the Iranian market. There is little to no "commercial incentive" that could motivate International banks from making humanitarian transactions with Iran (Motevalli, 2020). Moreover, the US still requires "additional authorization" from non-US entities like foreign sates and financial institutions that puts companies and states under risk of secondary sanctions (Treasury Department, 2020). One evidence to prove this is to see the drop in U.S. exports of mostly humanitarian goods from 88% from February 2016 to $3.9 million in February this year (Motevalli, 2020).

It is perhaps a paradoxical situation, on one hand, the US has claimed to have issued special license to foreign companies and on the other hand, facts reveal that the number of license issued under the present administration has in fact decreased. Without these licenses and tightening of economic sanctions, it would be quite impossible for the Iranian government to battle the looming virus.

Conclusion

The decline in the medical imports and overall healthcare system in Iran significantly points towards the dire repercussions of US economic sanctions on Iran especially in times of a global pandemic. As the situation develops the figures and statistics are not yet as clear but the trend shows how drastically these sanctions have affected the right to health of the civilian population. Although the US government has made tall claims regarding the humanitarian exemptions on sanctions, it needs to come up with a holistic and clear policy regarding humanitarian exports to Iran. It is highly unlikely that the US administration will succumb under pressure and withdraw sanctions at this point however, the EU and international community at large can pressurize the US government to layout a clear policy plan regarding either a partial-withdrawal or standardized process to make humanitarian transactions and purchases to Iran.

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Negotiating Boundaries in Multi-Cultural Communities

Andreea Pausan

National School of Political and Administrative Studies, Bucharest, Romania, Email: apausan.ap@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: Living in a global, multi-cultural world brings various challenges connected to communication and identity. Dealing with ambiguity and cultural differences become essential skills in a world filled with communication technology and migrants. The current research focuses on three coordinates: language (communication), digital skills (using digital tools), and community (negotiating identity). The researcher takes an ethnographical approach within the social learning theory and community of practice (CoP) framework of analysis on three different Erasmus+ international training courses.

Methods: The article uses the researcher's journal, personal observations, the artefacts created by the participants for the courses, their reflexive feedback and open-ended questionnaires received at the end of each course.

Conclusion: By taking part in such exchanges, the participants gained valuable digital skills and improved their communication and cultural awareness. Sharing practices and personal histories allowed them to negotiate different cultural boundaries, thus creating new learning experiences and shaping their identities to encompass new values.

KEYWORDS*: Multi-cultural, Identity, CoP, Digital skills*

Introduction

Living in a global, multi-cultural world brings various challenges connected to communication and identity. The school formal learning subject matters are useful to establish a knowledge base where personal values, skills, attitudes, and cultural background are grafted, subsequently topped by negotiation, problem solving, critical thinking - all skills that allow navigation through the rapid organizational and technological changes occurring in the global market.

These skills are gained through experience and knowledge expansion, and allow ease of transitions and better dealing with uncertainties. The migration phenomenon adds to the issue by challenging the identity and cultural heritage of the immigrants. The European Union has an established program called Erasmus that helps people to learn about each other in a safe environment. It also enables them to communicate across cultures to build bridges of common understanding (Erasmus+, 2018). In the crucible of cultures that is

Europe, learning by sharing personal experiences becomes the cornerstone of unity in diversity.

This article will follow three main coordinates in three international Erasmus+ training courses: : language (communication), digital skills (using digital tools), and community (negotiating identity) in a multi-cultural environment, using the theoretical framework of Communities of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 2002) within a ethnographical approach.

Literature Review

Within the larger social learning theory, Wenger' CoP theory puts learning at the intersection of experience and practice, including both the explicit and the tacit, and having different modes of belonging: engagement, imagination, and alignment. (Wenger, 1999a). In the nexus of multi-memberships created by the overlapping circles of vying interests and affiliations in a person's life, the community remains a locus of strength and safety that encourages sharing and peer support, thus shaping and reshaping identity as a duality between participation (active and mutual engagement in the community) and reification (the instruments, creation given form). (Wenger, 1999a)

As the world opens more with the help of technology, new skills and competences are required: analytical and critical thinking, the ability to cooperate and communicate, the ability to adapt to an ever changing cultural and institutional environment. (Date, Type, & Price, 2000)

Changes bring both opportunities and challenges for learning. On one hand, the web has become the primary source of information. Google is accessed 63,000 times per second every day (Google, 2019), while Facebook had 2.38 billion monthly active users as of March 31, 2019. (STATISTA - The Statistic Portal, 2018). On the other hand, trust is an issue with internet information, augmented by a certain intellectual laziness that gives the tendency to reach towards information that confirms existing beliefs, also referred to as "confirmation bias".(Kiviniem & Tuominen, 2017).

Safely navigating the waters of the world wide web requires training. In the Digital Agenda for Europe (European Commission, 2010), the European Union promotes a skill called digital literacy as one of its development areas for 2020. For education, a program named after one of the greatest man of the Renaissance, Erasmus, deals with student and youth exchanges to promote the different points on the 2020 agenda, including digital skills and learning to use media in responsible way. (Erasmus+, 2018).

The CoP framework will be used to assess nascent communities whose members step out of their comfort zone and use new digital skills to create artefacts that would share their stories online with the rest of the world.

Methodology:

Ethnography is a methodology based on observation, where the researcher listens to the stories of the people involved, reads their documents and asks them questions. (Gobo & Marciniak, 2016). The researcher was an active participant in the three trainings concerned and used for this article direct participation and interaction, journals, transcription of the participant's responses to the reflective parts of the programs and qualitative thematic analysis of short questionnaires delivered at the end of the programs. The questionnaires held four open-ended questions to assess the participants experience as compared to their previous international exchanges. The themes were linked back to the reflective feedback used throughout the courses.

Due to the article limits, each training course is presented below in a few details, with focus on three dimensions that appeared as important in the participants' feedback: language (communication), digital skills (online tools used), and CoP (CoP features present in the group dynamics that allow the formation of a community)

Findings and discussion:

1.1 TURN Online

The first course took place on May 2018 in Holloko, Hungary (90 km from Budapest) with fourteen participants from six countries (Romania, Bulgaria, Greece, Poland, Hungary, and Spain). The aim of the TURN Online course was to present digital skills and to introduce different digital tools to be used in both formal and non-formal learning environments. At the end, the participants, divided into groups, produced their own course using the new tools. The final works were loaded on Facebook and afterwards presented and commented upon by the entire audience: participants and trainers. The group evidenced signs of a CoP in the coalescing stage (Pausan, 2019), and shared many personal and cultural details throughout their stay.

1.1.1. Language

The main language of the course was English. However, the participants' levels of English were different. M from Greece needed constant translation, however this did stop her from expressing her opinions, while the opposite happened to M from Spain, who was withdrawn and preferred to keep interactions to a minimum, at least for the first days. S from Italy stated that one of the main reasons for coming to this course was to be able to converse in English as he did not have this opportunity back home. Despite the differences in language, the participants were not confined to the smaller country groups, but chose to participate fully and made efforts to get their message across. They reflected and shared their experience using emotion words "We have seen – *feeling* it from our own skin- how teamwork dynamics work analyzing how we were behaving during the boat building" (M. from Spain). The connection which Wenger describes as "shared ways of engaging" (Wenger, 2002, p. 125) kept the group together outside the given assignments: "Since this is a *specific and personal* way to go through, we had a couple of hours […]

All previous days were full of *emotions* and *new experiences*…. Even though, in general it sounds as an individual process, we stayed together as a group" (V from Bulgaria).

In their own words, the participants shared their emotions and this allowed them to strengthen the connections within the group.

1.1.2. Digital skills

Although most young people are very familiar with the use of media tools, they do not use it for learning. (Waycott, Thompson, Sheard, & Clerehan, 2017). A. from Macedonia confessed the first days were really uncomfortable, even if he was an experienced social media user.

The participants taught about platforms such as Moodle, Edmodo, or Google classrooms, tools such as Padlet, Google docs, Big Blue Button, Kahoot. They used and appraised their functionalities and ease of usage.

When asked about the impact of technology, K from Greece said that "…in a world full of knowledge, where you have the chance you learn literally anything all you need is to find the right way. In the year we live technology have changed our lives completely and it for the best to use these changes to benefit from it". This goes back to the metaphor of the "ocean of knowledge" used to describe the digital world. This researcher views it rather as an ocean of information that requests research and context to become knowledge, which here was achieved through testing and social interaction between the members of the group.

M from Spain discussed another benefit of digital tools, constant communication, with a special reference to migrants: "Online tools, in the correct hands, can improve learning and be an opportunity. Another example that comes to my mind, related to my last experience in Greece working with the migrants and asylum seekers who are living in the refugee camps, is the way how online tools make them be connected with their past life, with family and friends who are far away. It is not only a tool for the social media, but they also use it to learn languages or use it to denounce their situation". She links the new learning with the previous experience working with migrant groups who use ICT to keep in touch. In the same context, M from Greece related her own experience with Syrian refugees, thus bringing a new emotionally charged perspective to the group which allowed new negotiation of meaning in relation to both refugees and own cultural identity as non-refugees.

All the content of the course was loaded onto Facebook. Furthermore, the participants keep in touch a year later on a Facebook group and share news and latest activities, despite the fact that their lives are constantly changing and they are located in different parts of Europe. Technology allows them to feel close, one message away from each other.

1.1.3. Community:

At the end, the participants created five different projects that expressed their individual aspirations and ideas: a Parkour demonstration, a blog about intercultural exchanges and the refugee experience, a public speaking course, a sexual awareness questionnaire, and

an introduction to ergonomics course. The project represent ideas and thoughts translated into documentation, thus reifying the participation to the course (Wenger, 1999a). Even the participants who did not bring their own idea took part fully in the creation of the final projects, sharing their own experience, yet another indicative of the second stage of CoP, namely *coalescing* (Wenger, 2002).

1.2. Let's Digital Story tell

The second training took place in Bucharest, Romania in July 2018 and had twenty-four participants from six countries (Romania, UK, Lithuania, Spain, Portugal, and Bulgaria), with trainers from UK and Romania. Let's Digital Story tell hosted a mixed group with ages between 18 and 50, with very different background and experiences (from professor to actor to librarian).

In the research context, digital storytelling "profit[s] from the grounded way the method inserts indigenous empirical material into research endeavors". (Gubrium, 2009). It allows personal, intimate stories to reach a larger audience using images, movies, and text.

The author participated as part of the UK team and one of the challenges was to make a five minutes comprehensive presentation of the country, with common places and little-known facts, with traditions and recommendations. The four people representing UK had all different nationalities: two Romanians, one Irish and one Thai. How to present the essence of a culture with a rich history that none of them was born in became an opportunity to share personal backgrounds and experiences, quirks of the cities each came from, food likes and dislikes, school and jobs adventures, personal observations of people and habits both from outside and inside the given framework. It was a useful bonding experience that translated later as awareness and tolerance of difference into one of the digital stories created at the end of the course.

1.2.1 Language

The common language used was English. At the beginning of the course, when asked about motivations for participation, some participants said they wanted to improve their level of English. For them, it was a challenge to speak and present in English every day. Moreover, while the digital stories were created, transforming personal stories into scripts, images and, at the same time, getting the whole to make sense to a larger audience while keeping the essence of the original idea proved to be a challenge of translation and a task that made the participants become more aware of both their differences and similarities.

Furthermore, because Erasmus+ trainings promote inclusion, two participants from Spain were hearing impaired and they came with a sign language translator. That posed a different set of challenges: the translator had to go from English to Spanish and then to sign language and back for every utterance, which changed the rhythm of the conversation and raised additional issues of patience, understanding, and communication. It also made the participants more aware of things taken for granted, such as the ability to hear and speak,

following which arise an understanding of attitudes such as inclusion and tolerance. It allowed a change of pace in the dialogue, thus according more time to reflection and the negotiation of different boundaries, outside of the individual comfort zone.

1.2.2. Digital Skills

The aim of the training course was to inform on tools to record and present stories. The participants learned to identify narratives in everyday life, script them, refine and distill them and, subsequently, translate them into short story videos with photos, moving pictures, sound, and text. All became literally three minutes films that could be shared with the world using the internet. They used cell phones for filming videos and programs like Video Maker and Sony Vega to put photos and filmed materials together.

Surprisingly, learning how to use the tools was considered less of a challenge than agreeing on the story and how to create it: "beginning difficult work, to collaborate, and little the people adapted" (R from Spain); "some struggles, troubles in the beginning, everything was new" (E from Lithuania). In the end, it became "more about the team […] because I start things and I give up on them and I admire them for being so persistent and encouraging me" (V from Romania). The comments reveal that, while there is some difficulty related to new skills acquisition, the real challenge lies within the participants' discovering how to work together.

All the content of the course was loaded onto Facebook on a group that the participants still use to post videos or news that might be interesting to the whole group.

1.2.3 Community building

The six three minutes movies presented at the end reified the participation at the course (Wenger, 1999b), while the themes proposed challenges identity boundaries and misconceptions: isolation vs. inclusion (impaired people and their everyday life), tolerance and hate (gay people) ; climate change (nature and animals preservation,); friendship (passion vs. everyday life).

F's (Spain) story "talk[ed] about stereotypes and prejudice". J from Portugal filmed a short video of herself and shared her gratitude with the group, mentioning she is "… going out of my comfort zone, because […] I needed to do this. We are living our own adventures; we are all on our process with these challenges and everything … If you wouldn't have been yourselves, I could not have been myself. It was like a therapy, because you made me so comfortable". This speaks of the level of connection within the group that created a safe zone where the participants felt comfortable to shed masks and share personal experiences and practices transformed into digital stories. It is also evidence of a renegotiated boundary, allowing personal space to extend to public scrutiny, albeit through symbols embedded in the digital work

1.3. Making culture Gr8 again

The third course took places in Daugirdiskes (near Vilnius), Lithuania, in December 2018.

It hosted thirty-two participants from eleven countries (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Spain, Italy, Romania, Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Bulgaria, and Poland). Again, it was a mixed group with ages between twenty and thirty-nine, with people working as librarian, surgeon, freelancer, youth worker.

Among the aims of Making Culture Gr8 again were to train participants on how to create innovative qualitative Erasmus projects; to make culture heritage activities interesting for young people by making them participatory, and using the principles of non – formal education and online tools and technologies.

At the end of the course, the researcher asked the participants to answer fours questions about their previous Erasmus experiences, living/travelling abroad, the training course, and their memorable student experiences. The participation was voluntary and eight replies were received, giving the researcher a deeper insight into the motivations of the participants.

1.3.1. Language

The main language of the course was English, however the participants had very different levels of English. Furthermore, almost half of the participants spoke Russian, so the Russian speaking participants tended to band together for smaller assignments.

R from Macedonia revealed her challenge as" transport connection and the language. I think they are like a barrier for me", an opinion shared by S from Spain who mentioned in a group conversation that "it is difficult for me to explain in English".

More than the spoken language, a lot of the participants shared common beliefs and history (members of the former communist bloc) and it was something of a shock to discover they knew about other countries' history from the use of toponymics. When asked to share things on the surface and things hidden in an exercise called " the iceberg", V from Italy revealed she"…did not do this before and after I did it on myself, I could understand better the others when we shared". U from Estonia said that "the hardest one for me was the iceberg [sharing] because I live in one small community where everybody knows everybody and when I go across the border I just don't know". The boundaries here are physical, as well as emotional (small community vs. big community, Estonia vs. Lithuania) – U underlined the changes happening to her identity as an individual, and as a part of an existing community, which Wenger names " reconciliating identities" (Wenger, 1999a, p. 160)

The exercises during the course also revealed different names for common places and confusions because of the differences. Toponymics are part of the cultural identity and history. Similarly, at the cultural presentation night, the participants discovered close customs and habits (such as dancing or putting ornaments on tree branches for luck), making sharing all the more valuable.

1.3.2. Digital Skills

All the content of the course was loaded onto Facebook and the participants still keep in touch on a WhatsApp group. An online badge system was used to make the participants

familiar with the skills and abilities necessary for youth work and cultural awareness in the Erasmus agenda.

1.3.3. Community building

The course was hosted in a remote area which made the participants spend eight days together in close quarters, learning about each other, about their cultural backgrounds, family histories, exchanging ideas, opinions, and words. A lot of the cultural heritage is closely bound by language and is taken for granted. The organizers challenged the familiar status-quo by making the participants experience a local neighborhood through the eyes of artist and through the lenses of stories told by the local community. This change in perspective shed a new light on ordinary things, shifting the focus from the mere objects to the richness of the lived, subjective experience.

The participants felt connected and enthused their feedback with personal statements, such as M from Bulgaria who said that she likes to go abroad, despite the fact that "in my first travel abroad I had to deal with the loneliness. I was shy and didn't' really open to anyone which lead to the feeling of not being understood accepted", while R from Estonia is glad that she "[…] found out that youngsters like me are almost the same despite their nationality and culture. That we had the same hobbies, preferences, problems and other stuff"

R from Macedonia summarized her experience as" The most impressive things for me are the stories from the participants, their successes, advantages and work. Because these things makes me to believe in myself and to do the things that makes me happy", which is another example of negotiating meaning and identity where the practice of the community encourages personal development.

D's (Portugal) reason for enjoying such training: "is to better understand the culture, cultural differences and equalities, of others. This is a vital reason! For one to understand another's culture, means to think about it, learn it's ways, learn what's the core of other values in different cultures, and thus respect… and always respect will lead to a uniform, peaceful world, where people are proud to share and learn about others, their countries, their costumes, their realities, themselves."

These statements show how important cultural exchanges are, and how the shift in perspective brings about understanding, tolerance, respect, and desire to learn more, all of which can be used to build a successful community.

Conclusions

2.1. Limitations

The researcher was an active participant in the trainings and, as such, her bias might have an impact on the conclusions. To mitigate bias, and external auditor and peer analysis (Creswell, 2002) were employed. Another limitation is the relatively small quantity of data analyzed.

Recommendations for further research: the current research shows the value brought by the Erasmus program to education. Further analysis into the projects done by the participants during the courses and their dissemination in the local communities is likely to give evidence of different degrees of participation and CoP social learning.

2.2 Conclusion

Stories shape individual identities by merging cultural influences with personal histories. By taking part in the Erasmus exchanges, the participants gained valuable digital skills and improved their communication and cultural awareness. Sharing practices and personal histories allowed them to negotiate different cultural boundaries, thus creating new learning experiences and shaping their identities to encompass new values (Wenger, Trayner, & de Laat, 2011) and broadcast them online to peers on the world wide web. . Cultural understanding, respect, tolerance, better communication face to face or online tools, and not taking things for granted are the values the participants took away from the courses, which is a testimony of the importance of the Erasmus+ program and community.

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Communicating Politics through Artwork

A Case Study on the "Mother Albania" Monument

Erisa Korumi[1]

[1]Graduate Student of International Relations and Political Sciences at University of New York Tirana, Albania, erisakorumi@outlook.com

ABSTRACT: Art has always something to say. And artworks such as the Mother Albania lapidary statue carry much history with it. The Mother Albania is a monument close to the outer part of Tirana. This statue has been there for half a century now, holding history and especially symbolism, which communicates to us realities, that Albania, used to live. The work on this monument begins in a very intense period of political, economic and ideological activity. This ideological activity from the state was part of the 'revolutionization' of the country, where art was also included. By and large, the communication of the leader's political ideology came through art, specifically through sculpture. This paper might seem as a 'find the hidden treasure' game to you, tracking the details in art pieces, specifically in sculpture, that communicated the communist ideology.

KEYWORDS: Mother Albania, lapidary, political, art, communication, revolutionary, significance, Enver Hoxha

Introduction

To a large extent, the majority of Albanian monuments were created between the periods 1945-1990. During this time Albania was under communist regime, headed by Enver Hoxha, the First Secretary of People's Socialist Republic of Albania (Van Gerven Oei, 2015). As such, there was no way for artwork as well, not to be influenced or used by the party's ideologies, historian Van Gerven Oei states (2015). Architect Maks Velo also underlines "Sculpture's development in Albania runs parallel with the roughening of dictatorship and the increasing paranoia of the period" (Velo 2005). Sculpture, and especially the monumental one, took a very important position. This what I intend to mirror in this paper; the presence of the communist propaganda in artworks, by analyzing the political communist rhetoric of First Secretary Enver Hoxha and the party. I intend to

compare and describe the two by providing evidences on respectively, the lapidary statue, the political rhetoric of the head of the state and by thereafter analyzing the two.

Mother Albania Lapidary Statue

The monument was built in 1972 by Kristaq Rama, Muntaz Dhrami and Shaban Haderi, in order to honor the memory of the martyrs sacrificed in the war against the fascist conqueror. They won the competition to design the new cemetery after it was announced, in 1966 (van Gerven Oei 2015). The statue is 12 meters high and placed over a 3 meters pedestal. It is made of granite and cement to gain the white color it was planned to have. Mother Albania stands tall, with her right leg moving forward, creating the idea as if she is walking (Fig.1). Her right hand is lifted up towards the sky, while the left one stands parallel to the ground. Researcher van Gerven Oei interprets this position as the spiritual part of the lapidary. Mother Albania is the one who creates the connection or touch between the martyrs (symbolized by the left hand parallel to earth) and the divine, the celestial (symbolized by the right hand lifted up to the sky). Linking the divine/ immortal to the earthly/ mortal beings; it is as if through this artistic metaphor, the statue makes the martyrs eternal, by connecting them to the divine. As if this is the message it wants to give. Mother Albania has in her right hand a laurel branch and a star (Fig.1). The laurel, according to Oxford Student's dictionary, is an evergreen shrub with shiny leaves, which was used by the ancient Romans and Greeks as an emblem of victory, success and distinction. It can be again linked to the everlasting memory of the martyrs, which will never fade in this case and to the triumph against the fascist conqueror. The statue as well, seems to be facing a strong wind as the robe she has dressed is taken away to the back. The cap has fallen from her head and we can see the hair and the face showing forward. The dramatic effect can suggest a sort of a revolutionary emotion in the way.

Up to this point we encounter no obvious political rhetoric in the lapidary statue. Only the star placed in the right hand could be interpreted as the first direct political symbol in this monument, as the main symbol of communism (Pearson, 2006).

Figure 1, Untitled print

Political rhetoric

To better analyze the aforementioned elements of the statue, we will have to explore and perceive an idea of the overall socio-political rhetoric in Albania during the time the lapidary was built. Similarly, to all communist countries, the political and economic plan of Albania was organized in five-year cycles alongside party's conventions. As Smirnova and Zavalani describe in their researches, this meant that with the beginning of every cycle there were massive campaigns coming from the party (Smirnova 2004 & Zavalani 1998). By 1969, the Albanian party ideologists gave to the political plan the character of a new era of discovery and of a revolutionary one. The word 'revolutionary' was added to every initiative (Smirnova 2004 & Zavalani 1998). In one of the plenums of the Central Committee of Albanian Labor Party in 1969, Enver Hoxha unveiled the slogan: "1970 must be the year of an unprecedented revolutionary attack in all directions" (Smirnova 2004).

In specific, art was part of these campaigns. The beginning of the 70's, as Pearson emphasizes, brought to life the campaign of 'ideo-aesthetical war' against outer and foreign influences, specifically against those of liberal character. This period also brought many changes for women's role in society. It was part of the socialist agenda the emancipation of women in society, their right to vote, of inheritance, etc. (Pearson 2006). Even the term

"Mother Albania" was used widely during communism. The party was differently called "Mother Party". Therefore, we see that the terminology of the socialist package was used in many aspects.

During another plenum of the party in 1973, First Secretary Hoxha would state: "Writers and artists are aiders and helpers of the Party for the communist education of the people" (Velo 2005). In other words, it was evidently expected for art to serve political aims and educate people on the system. Not only, but the well-known architect Velo goes on to further the limits. He writes: "Dictators look for artists to do symbol artworks of themselves. They recruit sculptors to do their busts and monuments, during their lives and after it" (Velo 2005). And in fact, on May 5th 1985, a picture of Mother Albania in the Drita newspaper, as presented in Figure 2, was published. In the photo there are numerous small pictures of partisans and martyrs drawn in the robe, of the statue, and right in the middle the face of Enver Hoxha wearing the signature scarf of the partisans. To be specific this happened on the National Day of Martyrs of the Nation. According to Van Gerven Oei this is a concrete attempt to equalize the figure of Hoxha with the nurturing figure of the nation-mother (Van Gerven Oei 2014). Could this be an attempt for Hoxha to eternalize his figure, through personifying himself with the statue and its message? By the time Hoxha had passed away, and this photo is classifying him as a martyr. There is a clear intention to use art as a form of political embodiment.
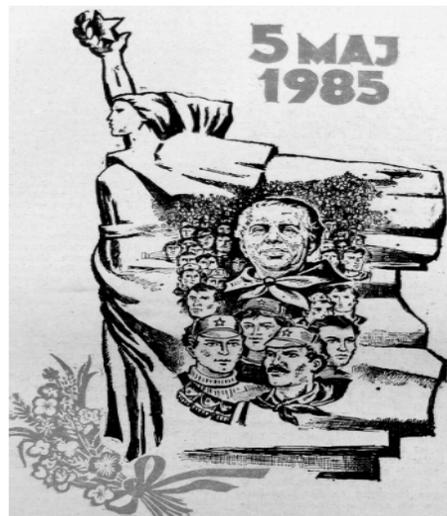

Figure 2, Untitled print, From Drita, May 5, 1985

Analysis and Discussion

One of the first details that Van Gerven Oei also emphasizes is the fact that the lapidary is specifically a woman. This should sound particularly odd in a society as patriarchal as the Albanian one was. But while studying Pearson and understanding that the emancipation of women was part of the socialist agenda, the monument takes much political nuances. It becomes clear that the fact the lapidary itself is a woman gives a political message. The figure of mother, the nurturing and caring one, was equalized with the party. "Mother Albania' or 'Mother Party', kept being used, hence we can create an immediate link between the monument and its political significance. The artwork is in this case communicating an element of the political ideology; that of the emancipation of women.

In addition, considering the position the statue has, (tall and in a walking motion) the specific way it stands gives the idea of a 'revolutionary' act. The wind that moves back the veil she has dressed, adds up to this tone, as if she is facing the Wind of Change. It we go back to Hoxha's rhetoric about the 'revolutionary' actions of the party, it could create a relation with the effect created by the position of the statue. The revolutionary ideas being mirrored in the statue. Furthermore, we observe the hand lifted to the sky, where Mother Albania holds the laurel branch and a star. Let us recall that the star is the main symbol of communist era. And it could be the most evident political detail communicated to us from the statue. The fact that it is positioned in the higher position of the monument, headed to the sky could be interpreted as a glorification of communism. The star is at the highest point of the monument, by lifting therefore the symbolic of the system above everyone else. Not only, but if we add to this the position of her hands, creating the spiritual connection between the divine and eternal and the earthly people, by making them eternal, she is making it through communism, or making communism eternal (with the star in her hand facing the sky). So, one could interpret this as if the martyrs are glorified, immortalized and eternalized through communism and with it.

Lastly, going back to figure 2 being published in the newspaper, with the figure of Enver Hoxha pictured in the lapidary we can unify once more the concept of 'Mother Albania' with the 'Mother Party' and their correlation with Hoxha. The maternal nurturing figure being linked to the state and the party. It seems as if willingly the dictator wanted the people to relate his figure to that of a mother, the one that provides for and secures her enfants. And yet again, if the eternalization of the martyrs is messaged through the position of the statue, in this case, more obviously is messaged the one of Hoxha. Hence, that of communism too.

Conclusions

Through our observation we were able to describe the lapidary statue, to present the political background of the time and to finally offer a comparison between the two by using this data. We were able to crystalize the fact that, without considering the political and historical context of the time the monument was built, we cannot see the communist touch on this artwork. But that rather, through studying the language of the head of state, his rhetoric and that of the party, we find numerous ideological symbols mirrored in the monument as well. Hence, by comprehending how artwork and especially the monumental sculpturing were highly linked to the political rhetoric through symbolism. I would invite other students and researchers to further and widen this research through studying other artworks or specifically the Mother Albania lapidary statue by expanding so the work on the communist propaganda. The general lack of research in the field of art related to politics during the communist years constitutes in fact the main difficulties through this research.

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Brain Drain and Communication Factor

Mariam Kiknadze

Georgian Technical University, Georgia, Mariamkiknadze@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT: Brain drain the process in which every country loses its most educated workers to other countries through migration. It has negative consequences on tax revenue and employment, loses potential entrepreneurs. The purpose of this research is to show that we are faced with lost skilled workers and push factors are lack of communication, political instability and less professional interest. Little is known about the role of communication in this process-effective communication of information and decision is an essential component for managing relations and misunderstanding between them causing capital flight. Three case studies have been reviewed for matter of this paper: England- It is problem in developed and wealthy nations, they seen a large number skilled professionals leaving for work abroad. Iran-Their model of brain return, because today Iran is doing to keep their skilled professionals at home, and the Ethiopians physicians, engineers and scientist brain drain. This study recovers the mobilization and productivity of Diaspora as a knowledge networks and initiatives in sample countries and their role. Human capital is a key in the social development of any society. Communication factor is very important in diaspora working process and we can consider it as a communication opportunity. Mainly, the overall image will be about intellectual brain drain as a major headache for every country and some part of the study will include the power of communication in it to avoid losses of skilled workers.

KEYWORDS: Communication, Migration, Diaspora, Society.

Introduction

Brain drain is the process in which every country loses its most educated workers to other countries through migration. It has negative consequences on tax revenue and employment, loses potential entrepreneurs. The purpose of this research is to show we are faced with the threat of losing skilled workers and push factors are less communication, political instability and less professional interest all this are related to communicational misunderstanding. There are several benefits for allowing migration: they gain more experience and knowledge, which can be used when they return and set up business in their native countries. This study is an examination of the analysis and critical approach about brain drain, literature shows that it is a serious issue and less is known about communicational factor in it. The intellectuals of any country are some of the most expensive resources, most importantly, because of the lack of opportunities.

 The first time we face communicational challenge is when technical skills and knowledge leave the company. Another name is Capital Flight. Communication is a core part of the human experience and we are still struggling with it. The problem consists in human

capital is key in the social development of any society. To avoid brain drain, only effective communication skills enable HR professionals to make their business case and keep their skilled workers.

Another useful way is the communication of the government to build up a relationship with students and give chance to get internships or stable jobs, which automatically prevents country from skilled workers drain. Government needs to think about possible ways, create organizations which encourage entrepreneurs and future generations.

Every year, tens of thousands of highly specialized professionals and academics leave the developing world for what they believe to be a better quality of life in countries of north. The majority- doctors, engineers, lecturers, researchers and senior managers as well as students. Government use scarce resources to subsidize the education and specialized training of workers who then take the potential economic and social spin-offs with them when they depart. . In Latin America for example, enrolment in medical schools is high, but countries in the region still have a chronic shortage of doctors. (Association, 2006)

The issue of brain drain is a major headache for the world's universities. In addition, funding cuts in academic infrastructures science and technology subjects or teaching/learning materials and equipment drive a growing number of graduates and researchers out of academia to take up lucrative posts in the private sector. This is also communicational challenge, every student need special teaching equipment's and is an extremely important element in modern university education. (Association, 2006)

Brain drain has advantages and disadvantages: Effects of the brain drain: The loss of highly educated individuals can impose at least three kinds of specific losers on those left at home. First, the loss of skilled and innovative people often means the loss of their ideas for productivity and governance and the benefits they would otherwise provide to their co-workers students and fellow citizens. (Docquier, n.d.)

Second, in many countries a significant portion of the cost of education is paid for our fiscal revenues. The departure of highly educated emigrants then represents an export of human capital in which the nation has invested. In addition, there is a loss of potential tax revenue that might have been raised from the income of the emigrant, though this needs to be balanced against diminished public spending on the emigrant and his or her family as well as transfers to the home economy via remittances. (Dodani & LaPorte, 2005)

Third, the loss of key personnel makes the delivery of critical social services such as health care and education, more difficult. (NCBI, n.d.)

A series of theoretical papers over the past 15 years, summarized that it is possible that high-skilled emigration can lead to rise in human capital levels in the home country. The case studies share two notable features. First, these studies consider populations whose migration is constrained by policy barriers and communicational problems, so that not all who would like to migrate are able to. Second, these studies consider cases in which the supply of schooling can easily absorb the added demand for more educationally. These

factors are likely to apply to the cases of secondary education and undergraduate tertiary education in many countries, but may not hold when it comes to talking about doctors, scientists, and other high ability professionals.

The benefits a sending country might receive from high-skilled immigration are usually listed in terms of return flows of income, investment and expertise from migration back to the sending country. As we seen, brain drain rates are highest from countries with small population and those experiencing political instability and poor prospects for career success. (John Gibson, 2011)

In 22-23 developing countries high brain drain are worsened by coordination failure. In 2000 almost 170 million people, or 2,9 % of the world's population were living outside their country of birth for more than years.

In 1972, about 6 % of the world's physicians were located outside their countries of origin over three-quarter were founded in only three countries: In order of magnitude the USA, UK and Canada. The main donor countries reflected colonial and linguistic ties, with a dominance of Asian countries: India, Pakistan and Sri-Lanka. (Dodani & LaPorte, 2005)

The country's most highly skilled workers are emigrating because they can earn money and enjoy better standards of living overseas, according to university college London. The most popular destinations were Australia, where there is an estimated 1.2 million Britons, the United States, and Canada. Most of this emigration was to seek work in a more favorable climate. Many young university graduates are among those leaving, which has caused the phenomenon to be labelled the ''talent drain''.

The British government decided to go ahead with a plan to boost salaries for scientists and post-doctorate researchers by 25 %, and to increase funding for university professors. After the shock result of the U.K's referendum on its future in The European Union has thrust the region into renewed uncertainty. ''If the U.K takes the opportunity to make itself more attractive for business and easier for skilled workers around the world to immigrate we will see the opposite of a brain drain''.

Iranian Model of Brain Return

According to the International Monetary Fund, the Islamic Republic of Iran had a substantial drain of highly educated individuals. In recent years several measures have been taken to slow down the brain drain by providing work and research facilities for academics and highly skilled workers. . Iran has tried to compensate for the brain drain by introducing the Graduate Record Bill, which calls for internationalization and expansion of education at the graduate level, thus increasing the number of graduates. ''At least 40% of top-performing students with undergraduate degrees in science and engineering left the country to pursue advanced degrees''. '' A government-run organization that supports academically gifted and high-achieving students.'' The return of the Iranian Diaspora coincided with the growing investment of international and domestic private companies, which created job opportunities for educated and talented Iranians. Very important is iBridges is actively fostering and engaging and international network of and investors hoping to collectively build the very kind of knowledge-based economy Iran so desperately needs.

Communicational challenges traditionally not means the different categories of communication the most important is what miscommunication causes. So often when we feel misunderstood it creates feelings of isolation. We tend to retreat because we feel unknown or unseen. While communication is critical in any business, misunderstandings can cause more harm than good.

Diaspora

Diaspora and identity are interconnected and the link becomes stronger as a result of the growth of global communication technologies such as satellite TVs, radio channels, cell phones, and computers and the Internet. This entry tries to show how communication technology played an important role in creating and recreating the diasporic identity through the case study. Internet-based media seem especially suited to fulfill the diasporic desire to communicate as their structures are able to support communication within groups that are widely scattered across countries and continents. (Filipović, 2011)

It is important to emphasize the role of Diaspora in both influencing governments to tailor just smart and practical STI policies, in which Diaspora is represented, and to recognize Diaspora, especially its intellectual and entrepreneurial parts, as potential donor, broker and participants in the project.

Third part is the Ethiopian physicians, engineers and scientist brain drain. The African contain as a whole is losing many highly qualified professionals trained in other fields, which has significant economic ramification Ethiopia, Nigeria, Kenya and South Africa are currently suffering the worst brain-drain of any country in the world. According to a recent study presented at the National Symposium on Ethiopian Diasporas, Ethiopia has lost 75% of its skilled professionals during the past ten years. (Firsing, 2016)

Ethiopia is entering into an irreversible development program at GTP 2. This is the positive challenge for the nation. The government has made structural and policy commitments not only curb the pressing brain drain but also to ensure that citizens and foreign citizens of Ethiopian origin take a meaningful participation in the development of the nation. (Dibaba, 2015)

The government of Ethiopia should closely support the diaspora volunteer program, which facilitates brain circulation to offset brain drain for the diaspora who do not want to return to the country permanently and also for those who have the time, talent and resources, but do not have the money to realize their dreams to be involved in countries development program.

Therefore, there should be a partnership within the Ethiopian diaspora to create a network of Ethiopian diaspora scholars that would serve as a think-tank group to create, co-ordinate and foster partnerships between Ethiopian diaspora and their host institution.

In line with this, the government should focus on giving solutions to constraints mentioned above.

Conclusion

In conclusion, every country needs to avoid brain drain. The government has to motivate entrepreneurs, scholars, students and will give them the source to avert those difficulties. They need to think widely as it is mentioned above, brain drain has influence of a country's economy. Depends on my countries examples, three of them has different political structure, religious variety and economic stability. Diaspora can play linker role between those who left their country and which heading the country.

Also I want to highlight we cannot sustain those skilled workers who left country and accept they well-known as ''brain return'' they need environments which will be equal of their education. Every skilled-workers need a reason to stay, to know what skills they have, because their role is so crucial. Education is the key of everything, every university needs modern infrastructures, trainings, think-tanks, practical works, exchange programs, summer or winter schools to give them chance to know what is good and what needs to change. If all students have supports and well-educated professors there is less chances to live country. Itself for every professor it is important to have motivated students.

It seems like chain reaction, the great way is to build team, which makes relation stronger. Besides, provide better job opportunities irrespective of caste, race of nationality or religious background. Provide adequate research facilities and attractive salaries to highly qualified people on the basis of their experience.

In personal life, we need to communicate to deal with various concerns and problems of daily life. In professional life also, it is communication that helps us to build healthy relations and credibility with co-workers. The inability to communicate can lead to a lot of problems both personally and professionally.

Afterwards we need to know that all of us are unique with our responsibilities and skill and we need a wide way to strengthen it.

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